



Happy New Year

*You crown the year with Your goodness,
And Your paths drip with abundance.*

PSALMS 65:11



FIRST FRIDAY LETTER

The World Methodist Council January 2020

You will notice a new format this time as the WMC wants the translation to be available in your language.

New Year Greetings from World Methodist Council President Rev. Dr. J.C. Park

At the dawn of the third Sunday of the Advent last year I woke up from a dream, a mysterious dream illuminating my spiritual struggle for many years. In my dream I was lifting up a large shellfish full of beautiful and shiny pearls. I remember just before that moment I was in the turbulent sea, wrestling or rather dancing with both a dark and cute baby whale and a bright and slim shark. I had been exhausted after I sent “An Open Letter to the People Called Methodists in the United States” a few days ago. However, sensing the gracious powers that so wonderfully shelters me, I can now witness that my soul was clear and joyful in that blessed Sunday morning.

“By gracious powers silently surrounded, I feel quite soothed, secure, and filled with grace. So I would like to live these days together, and go with you into another year.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer in prison) The modern martyr and theologian Bonhoeffer wrote this poem as he was facing the fatal year of 1945. He could not survive to see the fall of the Nazi regime for he was executed a few months before the end of the Second World War. In the midst of despair and destruction he never lost the joy of the gospel until his last breath: “By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered, and confidently waiting come what may, we know that God is with us night and morning, and never fails to greet us each new day.”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! The year of 2020 is a kairos time for me and Korean people in both North and South. It is the 70th year of the Korean War. On July 12, 2019, the U.S. House of Representatives passed an amendment to a bill calling for a formal end to the 1950-1953 Korean War. The U.S. fought alongside South Korea against North Korea in the three-year conflict that ended in a truce, not a peace treaty. The historic amendment recognized that diplomacy is essential to achieve denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and that a formal end to the war is critical toward that goal.

I humbly and solemnly ask you to pray with your hands pressed together for the peace treaty between North Korea and the U.S. so that the God of peace may start to work in the Jubilee Year for the 70 million Korean people. Let our peacemaking evangelism begin as we prepare and straighten a highway for our Lord, Prince of Peace who is coming. Let it be a voice in the wilderness of our tragic history of sin and suffering. Let the voice be an echo of our gracious Savior Jesus whose first proclamation was “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). Dear People Called Methodists, let’s joyfully and boldly proclaim that neither Washington, nor Beijing, nor Moscow, but God reigns!

Amen.



Ecumenical Diakonia must prioritise its agenda

CHIANG MAI, Thailand: A refresher training for diaconal mission agencies of churches and related organisations facilitated jointly by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) focused on the churches' participation and mission in prophetic diakonia within the Asian context.

A coherent and coordinated approach to churches' engagement in prophetic diakonia was addressed in the various sessions of the training, which was attended by 41 participants from across CCA and WCC Asian member churches, as well as those from specialised ecumenical diaconal agencies in Asia. The training was held at the headquarters of the CCA in Chiang Mai, Thailand from 5 to 8 December 2019.

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of the CCA in his thematic address outlined the metamorphosis of the ecumenical perspectives on diakonia. He stated, "The challenge of diakonia as emphasized by the ecumenical movement through WCC's facilitation has always been to encourage diakonia to move from a charity-model approach to justice, and leap over national and ecumenical frontiers to respond to local and global issues; to partner in God's mission, and be prophetic, transformative, and justice-seeking."

The CCA General Secretary critiqued the lost vision of the ecumenical movement in the area of equipping churches, whether small or big, in successfully fulfilling the mission and vision for diakonia and development, for which the churches must have adequate trained leadership.

"In Asia's diverse contexts where there is a widening of economic and social disparities, where there is a reduction in the sustainability of economic growth. Where

the fragility of ecological balance is further accentuated, churches need to be equipped in the real witness of diakonia, and must cover a wide spectrum of engagement: from advocacy, care for the marginalized, participation and solidarity in struggles for justice, responsible stewardship of creation, and keeping hope alive in the heart of the community," said Dr Mathews George Chunakara.

Uplifting that diakonia is not just a department of the church but the very basis of why it exists, Rev Asir Ebenezer, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in India, in his presentation on 'Diakonia as the Mission of the Church' elaborated, "Diakonia is that which adds to the value and message of mission. The images of the church as salt, light, vinedresser, and gardener capture this diaconal task of the church."

Various leadership models from both biblical and management perspectives were presented by Rev Abraham Varkey of the Christian Agency for Rural Development (CARD) in India.

The participants worked out holistic strategies for human resource development in their respective churches and related agencies. They identified key issues related to SDGs that CCA and WCC member churches and their diaconal missions can effectively respond to.

The training aimed at helping participants to contextualise the role of the Church in working towards SDGs in ecumenical engagements as well as aided in creating a network for future exchange of resources and encouraging cross-learning of best practices in ecumenical diaconal engagements.

Read this story and more at <http://cca.org.hk/home/>



WFMUCW receive 'Karibu' welcome

World Officers of the **World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW)** and members from across the Southern and East Africa Area attended the Area Seminar in Nairobi 27-29 November. They were given a warm 'Karibu' welcome by the Area and Unit officers, by the women of Kenya who hosted and by the staff at the Methodist Resort and Conference Centre that was the venue for the event. Participation included women from Methodist, United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal and United churches, Women's Association, Women's Auxiliary and Women's Manyano Units. A team of young people from Meru provided stewarding and support throughout the week.

The pre-seminar Weaving Together Program was attended by representatives of most Units. The reports from each Unit were fascinating and inspiring, explaining how 20,000 Kenyan women gathered for a day of prayer in preparation for the seminar; how South African women are supporting girls in education and knitting **'octopals' for premature babies** to deter them from pulling at their medical tubes; how women of Zimbabwe are rising above the enormous challenges facing their country and raising funds to send a young woman through University. The Congo shared about the training they offer in agriculture and small industries. The group heard from the women of Kenya about the traditional practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) which is a serious and ongoing issue they are tackling through mentoring and encouraging a Christian alternative rite of passage into adulthood. A statement was prepared for sending to the media. Women of this Area are working towards the Sustainable Development Goals 1,2,4,5 and 13 that are particularly relevant to the Southern and East Africa Area.



It was clear that Area Officers, Sipiwe Chisvo and Patricia Mapani, had been busy deepening relationships and strengthening commitment across the Area during the last three years. Phiwe Ngwadla, one of the Area's Helen Kim Memorial Scholars shared about her initiative to supply young girls with sanitary pads so they can continue to attend school during their menstrual period.

Devotions and presentations were led by women clergy of Methodist churches in Kenya and Zimbabwe who used the theme 'Chosen People: Called to Proclaim' from 1 Peter 2:9-10 and urged attendees to speak out against injustice in the power of the Holy Spirit. There were five workshops offered, on Entrepreneurship, Human Trafficking, FGM, Well Woman and Child Marriage. On Thursday, the *Thursdays in Black* campaign was supported. Elections were held for the Area Officers for 2021-2026.

*Respectfully submitted by Alison Judd
World President, World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women*

Church building micro home village for homeless

Can you imagine being released from the hospital after surgery and having nowhere to go to recover but a park bench?

That question is what led Glenclyff United Methodist Church to envision a micro home village where homeless residents could recover. The congregation is dedicating a section of its grounds to construct a mix of 200-square-foot single homes and 400-square-foot homes for two people. Twelve of the planned 22 homes are currently under construction.

“A lot of our folks have open-heart surgery, hip replacement, chemo or radiation they’re going through, and they’re just told to go back to their camp or wherever it is that they stay. That’s not a good place for healing,” said the Rev. Ingrid McIntyre, executive director of the project and one of the pastors at Glenclyff. “This will provide community for people as well as safe space to heal.”

McIntyre said the vision is almost a decade in the making. A massive flood that struck Nashville in 2010 displaced many of the city’s homeless from a large encampment on the banks of the Cumberland River known as Tent City.

McIntyre, whose appointment is quarter-time to Glenclyff and “the rest of the time to the streets,” helped found Open Table Nashville, a nonprofit advocating for the homeless. In 2016, the church voted to partner with Open Table Nashville to house the micro home village. Valerie Stringer, Glenclyff’s chair of trustees, said the congregation was almost unanimous in its support. “It’s a super concept. What wouldn’t you like about helping someone who really needs it?” she said.

One unexpected challenge was a lawsuit filed by members of the surrounding neighborhood concerned about the church’s plans. The church won the initial suit but had to continue defending it through several appeals. Ultimately, the Tennessee Supreme Court dismissed the suit on the grounds that housing the homeless falls under a federal law that protects a church’s mission as a religious organization.

Though \$400,000 of the projected \$1.3 million budget still needs to be raised, McIntyre hopes to formally open the village by the end of May. Construction is on schedule, but staffing positions need to be filled and programming must be designed. The programs are intended to provide community and human connection — another important part of healing that the homeless often lack. She also hopes to convert part of the church grounds into a walking trail for exercise.

Residents will have access to medical teams for on-site care, and there are plans to contract with online medical

practitioners so many of the residents’ issues could be addressed without them having to travel in between on-site visits.

Since the project is considered “bridge” housing, there is no maximum length of stay. McIntyre and the church are committed to housing residents until they regain their health and have a permanent place to live. “You’re not stopping the cycle if you don’t go all the way to permanent housing,” she said.

“We know we’re putting our faith into action, standing up for issues of injustice. We have seen people live through the most inconceivable experiences and want to be part of the healing.”

Read more of this story and more at <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/>



Carpenters work on details of one of the micro houses. Photo by Kathleen Barry, UM News.

Embrace: Showing and Sharing the Love of Jesus

All over the world, people have difficulty sharing their faith. They can share about their love for their children, or their excitement about a new movie or restaurant, but sharing about their faith feels much harder. Yet evangelism, at its core is not a rigid set of techniques to be mastered. Rather, it is simply showing and sharing the love of Jesus.

World Methodist Evangelism recently released a new study book titled, *Embrace: Showing and Sharing the Love of Jesus*. This book is an evangelism resource that offers a way to think about evangelism that can help people become comfortable showing and sharing the love of Jesus in a way that is authentic and natural. It sets out six essential values that are at the heart of authentic faith-sharing: humility, clarity, prayer, integrity, worship, and urgency. These values remain constant no matter where in the world we live. Our practices may change from place to place and time to time, but no matter where we are or what kind of culture we live in, these values form the foundation for everything we do to show and share the love of Jesus.

It's been five years since Dr. Kim Reisman joined World Methodist Evangelism as Executive Director and they have been exciting years. A high point was the release of *Embrace*, which grew out of her PhD work. "I've been teaching it around the world for quite some time now," she says. "The response has been fantastic. There is such a need for authentic and holistic approaches to evangelism, it's been really encouraging."

She says she's seen *Embrace* change the trajectory of faith-sharing on three different levels. "People realize that evangelism isn't an on-off thing. It's a process that

involves not just what we preach or communicate verbally – but what we do – how we live – the activity of our lives." And, most importantly, there's the involvement of the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit needs space and time to move," Kim emphasizes.

"To be an evangelist in the manner of John Wesley is about attending to the whole gospel and the wholeness of salvation," she reflects. *Embrace* emphasizes this. *Embrace* brings things together in a powerful, hope-filled way.

Reisman invites those considering *Embrace* to understand that, "showing and sharing the love of Jesus has implications for the here and now, and for eternity. God's salvation is a 'whole-creation' salvation, not just an interior, private experience." *Embrace* presents humility, clarity, prayer, integrity, worship, and urgency as the essence of authentic evangelism.

Embrace evangelism training is available in several formats. In addition to the study book, there is an **Embrace Church Resource Kit** available to augment the study book experience. It includes a copy of the study book, Scripture passages, sermon series ideas, slide templates, and other resources to coordinate Sunday worship with the small group curriculum.

Embrace can be taught in a **1½ to 2 day workshop** context in congregational, district, conference or other organizational settings.

For additional information or to host an event, go to <https://www.worldmethodist.org/resources/embrace/> or contact WME at info@worldmethodist.org.

Terrence "Terry" Alan Butler (22/4/1952 - 10/12/2019)

Beyond his extensive service in the Uniting Church in Australia, Terry involved himself in sharing the gospel across the globe. Active in the Walk to Emmaus movement in several countries, he contributed to Rev John Mallison's 'Mentoring'. He was involved in Fresh Expressions, especially as a Godly Player. He was part of a 14-person, five-nation Peace Observer team in Northern Ireland (post 2000 Belfast Easter Agreement). He hosted ecumenical visitors to Australia from more than a dozen countries and was an advocate for 1st Peoples and Refugees. He wore blue hair to spread understanding about mental health. When physically restricted, he developed pastoral ministry among victims of clergy abuse.

He served Samoan, Fijian, Korean and English-speaking communities. He is survived by wife (Amelia), children, grandchildren and numerous foster and adopted children from across the nations.

Many thanks and Blessings,
Amelia

To send condolences following is Dr. Koh-Bulter's information:
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We welcome your press releases, articles and resources! Please keep submissions to less than a page. We also ask that all stories are written, edited and ready to publish. Please contact us by **the last Monday of the month** at communications@worldmethodistcouncil.org if you would like your story to be included in our next edition of the First Friday Letter.

We Are On the Web

This and past First Friday Letters can be found online at FirstFridayLetter.worldmethodistcouncil.org.

The World Methodist Council's website may be found at worldmethodistcouncil.org.

The World Methodist Museum's website is at methodistmuseum.org.

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