



FIRST FRIDAY LETTER

The World Methodist Council February 2020

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

Greetings from the General Secretary

It is seven weeks after Christmas and little more than a month after we welcomed in the new year. 2020 is well into its rhythm.

As we contemplate a theme for 2020, Lester Kiewet, a South African journalist, suggests that it can be found in “the Australian emergency warning issued by the people trapped in fire-hit areas, “the safest option is to take shelter. It is too late to leave.”

Climate justice advocates have warned of pending disaster if we don’t act immediately. Global geopolitics also seem to be on a knife-edge with political posturing between the United States and Iran, fascism and nationalism is increasing in places like India and Europe, the outbreak of the coronavirus in China has now been declared “a global medical emergency” by the United Nations, there is a growing rise of strongmen in South America and Africa and so we can continue to lament the woes of the world. However, we are a people of hope who know how to sing at midnight and our mandate is to transform the world. (I Samuel 15:11, Luke 6:12, Acts 16:25)

During January, I represented the World Methodist Council (WMC) in Thailand, India, South Africa and Britain. As I traveled, I was reminded of the first two verses of the sonnet by English poet John Keats, “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer.”

Much have I travell’d in realms of gold

And many godly states and Kingdoms seen.

While I did not travel to the imaginary world of Greek philosopher and poet, Homer, I could not have asked to be in more interesting places to experience the heartbeat and pulse of global Methodism.

A special thanks to Reverend and Mrs. Sea Kwan Oh of The Thailand Union Methodist Church for their gracious hospitality. President JC Park and I were taken to the Methodist Theological Seminary in Bangkok, the Umrat Kindergarten in Chiagmail, and introduced to a number of young pastors and missionaries. It was encouraging to see the flowering of a young autonomous Methodist Church with a growing membership in a predominantly Buddhist country. The Church has applied for membership in the World Methodist Council.

Greetings from the General Secretary continued..

It was a singular honor, privilege, and joy to participate in the 36th Session of the Synod of Church of South India (CSI) held in Tiruchirappalli, a bustling city in Tamil-Nadu. It was good to hear the robust debates on topical issues as well as share in the celebration and fellowship of the Synod. The CSI, birthed in 1947, was a result of the union of the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and United Church of Christ (Congregationalist). It is the second-largest Christian church in India with a membership of almost four million. The CSI was the first to engage in a practical attempt at union. They are an inspiration and example to all denominations. Their motto is:

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. (John 17)

I encourage you to pray for the newly elected officers, executive committee and various boards as they seek to give bold and prophetic leadership to the CSI for the triennium.

While in Britain, I participated in a Holocaust Memorial Service, was on an interview panel to search for a new Director for the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome, delivered greetings and a presentation of the WMC at the British Council, met with the Chair of Ecumenical Affairs, Rev. Tony Franklin-Ross and met the Swedish host Committee to plan for the 2021 Conference in Gothenburg.

During this month, many South Africans will critically reflect on 2 February when South Africa crossed the Rubicon as the then State President delivered a speech at the opening of Parliament 30 years ago when he announced reforms that marked the transition from apartheid to constitutional democracy. Nine days later on 11 February, Nelson Mandela, leader of one of the oldest Liberation Movements in Africa, was released after being incarcerated for 27 years. I will be doing a live interview on News and Current Affairs programme on UCB1 – UK Nationwide DAB Radio at 9:25 am (UK time) on 11 February.

As stated in the opening paragraph of this First Friday Newsletter, 2020 is well into its rhythm and so am I. I encourage you to go into the second month of the year with renewed confidence and passion in the knowledge that God is in charge. Psalm 46:10 encourages us:

Let go of your concerns! Then you will know that I am God. I rule the nations. I rule the earth. (GW).

With every best wish,

Ivan

Bishop Ivan Abrahams (left) gets an update from host committee members Rev. Lasse Svensson and Rev. Øyvind Helliesen (right) and Mr. George Olvik (not pictured) at their London meeting



Final Call for 2020 Peace Award Nominations

If you have been planning to nominate someone who exemplifies Courage, Creativity, and Consistency for the World Methodist Peace Award, you must act now.

Applications submitted by March 15 will be considered for this year. Any application received after March 15 will be reviewed later for 2021. All supporting documents must be included at the time of submission.

The nominee should show courage in regard to physical danger or putting personal interest at risk. Creativity should include opening new initiatives and attracting others in working for the cause of peace. Consistency is judged by effort over a period of time and intensity, despite setbacks. Here is the link to read the full criteria:

<http://worldmethodistcouncil.org/whatwedo/world-methodist-peace-award/>

The recipient receives a medallion, citation and US \$1000 which is symbolic of the larger recognition achieved in working for peace, justice and reconciliation. The recipient is included in the World Methodist Council Peace Award booklet and their photo is hung on the wall of the World Methodist Museum with other recipients of this prestigious Award.

Go to www.worldmethodistcouncil.org and click on the “About the WM Peace Award” tab on the left side of the homepage and complete the online application. Please send all nomination forms to Bishop Ivan Abrahams at info@worldmethodistcouncil.org.



Dominican congregation rings in year with new believers

Leaders of the church-type mission in Boca Chica, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, organized the first service of 2020 as a way to attract new community members and share the gospel with them.

They held the service on 5 January outside of the Nazarene church building. Nearly 150 people, including children and adults, met in the street to worship the Lord with praise and to hear a message from the Word of God.

Seven people accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. The pastors of the congregation, Alexandra Gautreaux and Joán Paulino, have planned visits to begin discipling the new believers. Four of them asked the pastors to share a devotional time in their homes with their families.

“All of this is possible because God has allowed it, and we declare that this will be the year of multiplication from God for us,” Gautreaux said. “We will grow, we will strengthen ourselves, and we will be filled with wisdom under the covering of the grace of God, as it says in Luke 2:40.”

At the end of the celebration, Paulino prayed and thanked the Lord for the people who were present, and especially for the seven people who gave their lives to the Lord.

The church-type mission celebrated its second anniversary on 3 December. It had 22 members and 32 children in attendance.

--Church of the Nazarene Mesoamerica Region



Puerto Rican Methodists tackle earthquake response

A series of earthquakes in recent weeks has left the people of Puerto Rico in a constant state of unease and distress.

The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico has shared in that unease, but also is responding to the situation through its own disaster response organization and through partnership with the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

Experience gained from the Hurricane Maria recovery has been an asset in this response, said Glorymar Rivera-Báez, program director for disaster recovery with Rebuilding Communities With Hope (REHACE). Rivera-Báez was in touch with UMCOR's U.S. Disaster Response team immediately after the earthquakes began.

“Although this is a time of great hardship, one positive aspect is that we already had a strong disaster response system in place because of our Hurricane Maria work, plus we have an ongoing relationship with UMCOR,” she explained. “The advice, trainings and financial support they have provided to the people of Puerto Rico will most certainly help us respond to this current situation.”

On January 6, the Methodist Church's central office staff and the REHACE disaster case managers, who serve people living in 26 municipalities across the island, were advised to work remotely and travel only if it was safe to do so.

The agency's structural engineers and case managers then started the process of evaluating the structural integrity of the more than 600 homes REHACE has repaired during the past two years. Staff also assessed the condition of camps and host sites where some of the more than 2,500 volunteers from mainland United Methodist congregations have stayed when visiting the island to work on these



A home in Guayanilla, Puerto Rico, lies in ruins following a series of earthquakes. Hundreds of homes along the island's southern coast were destroyed or severely damaged, leaving many people afraid to sleep indoors. Photo courtesy of the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico

homes. Early reports indicate minimal to no damage so far.

On January 8, Bishop Hector F. Ortiz, episcopal leader of the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico, traveled to Guayanilla — located on the island's southwest coast near the earthquake epicenter — to inspect damaged churches and residences. “Our duty right now is to provide all the support, help and hope we can to our communities,” Ortiz said.

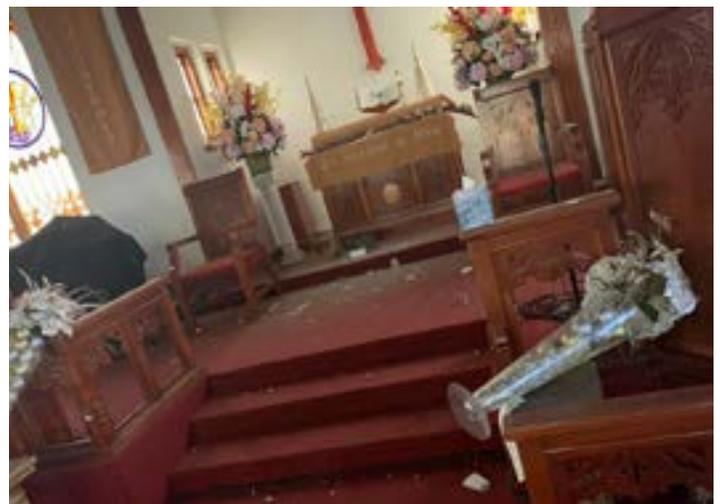
A home in Guayanilla, Puerto Rico, lies in ruins following a series of earthquakes. Hundreds of homes along the island's southern coast were destroyed or severely damaged, leaving many people afraid to sleep indoors.

UMCOR has awarded a solidarity grant to help with immediate needs. An UMCOR special assessment team will be traveling to the island the week of Jan. 13 to conduct site visits and determine how best to support the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico and REHACE in their response efforts.

Meanwhile, the earthquake aftershocks are expected to continue for several more days and keep people on edge. “The mental stress that these earthquakes are causing, and the tremors that don't seem to ever stop, is amazing,” said Gusmary Blanco Mersie, the church's social media director and the mother of two young children.

“Everyone is afraid to sleep because they're worried about a building collapse, babies don't want to be in their rooms because everything moves and kids only feel safe in the park or on the street. The aftermath of this is going to be much bigger than we can imagine.”

The Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Ponce, Puerto Rico, suffered extensive damage in a series of earthquakes that have rattled the area since December 28. Photo courtesy of the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico



Church network shelters homeless in Anchorage

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (KTUU) - A network of churches in Anchorage is sheltering families and at-risk individuals from the overnight cold, alleviating some of the strain on the city's larger shelters.

Churches have provided overnight shelter for about ten years in Anchorage. This winter, there are ten churches that can provide beds to as many as 25 individuals in a night.

The churches rotate shelter responsibilities to distribute the burden. St. John United Methodist Church, for example, will be open twice in January. Tina Racy and Karen Shields are members of the church volunteers who help lead the sheltering effort.

Racy says many of those seeking shelter are not homeless by choice, rather by necessity.

"I think oftentimes we kind of jump to conclusions as to why people are homeless," Racy said. "Sometimes it's not a matter of a person having a home -- it's just not safe for them to be in their home. So they find themselves on the street. This system is able to provide those folks with a safe haven."

St. John United Methodist Church recently added a full basketball court extension onto their building which they use to provide shelter. The court meets building standards for fire safety, which is just one of the prerequisites churches need to provide overnight shelter.

Racy says just making the necessary upgrades to become an overnight shelter cost their congregation \$10,000, and another \$5,000 per year to provide services.

When it's their turn to shelter they provide a hot meal and shower, toiletries, and beds with clean sheets and pillows.

Churches do not publicize their shelter dates in part as an extra layer of safety for the families and at-risk individuals. United Way of Anchorage sponsors Alaska 2-1-1, an answering service that connects people to shelters.

If you are an at-risk individual or family, dial 2-1-1 and United Way will connect you to services. Christian Health Associates partners with United Way to coordinate the efforts of the churches providing cold weather shelter.

Other churches include St. John's United Methodist, ChangePoint, Cornerstone Church, First Presbyterian Church, Muldoon Community Assembly, Central Lutheran Church, First United Methodist Church, First Covenant Church, Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, and Anchorage City Church.

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WCC's interreligious YATRA Programme to expand globally

The WCC's interreligious training programme YATRA (Youth in Asia Training for Religious Amity) launched by the World Council of Churches after its 10th Assembly in 2013 is to be launched in a new format. From its earlier focus on Youth in Asia, the programme is now renamed to "Young Adults Training for Religious Amity" and expanded to the global ecumenical movement, allowing young people from other regions to participate. This is largely due to the increasing demand for a training of this kind in other parts of the ecumenical fellowship. The expansion is also possible due to the collaboration with other ecumenical partners including the World Communion of Reformed Churches, World Methodist Council and the Council for World Mission.

Following the decision of the WCC to embrace the motif of pilgrimage for its programmatic focus, the name of the YATRA programme – which is a common term for pilgrimage in many contexts and languages- was intended to reflect the idea of a pilgrimage of justice and peace.

Applications are now open for YATRA 2020

YATRA aims to equip young Christians between the ages of 20 and 35 in interreligious engagement. This year's intensive training course will take place in Fiji from 15 to 27 May 2020. The focus of YATRA 2020 will be 'Youth in the Frontline of Transformation'. The theme will help focus on the active participation of young people in responding to God's call to "act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8) alongside neighbours of other faiths.

Partners: YATRA 2020 will be a joint collaboration between the World Council of Churches, Pacific Council of Churches (PCC), the World Communion of Reformed

Churches (WCRC), the Council for World Mission (CWM), and the World Methodist Council (WMC). It will be a cross programmatic venture of the WCC's programme on Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation, and the programme on Youth Engagement in the Ecumenical Movement.

Specific scholarships are available to subsidize course costs and international airfares. A scholarship request must be made at the moment of application and will be decided upon after application screening; all decisions on scholarship requests depend on the availability of funds.

Dates: Deadline for applications: 15 February 2020

Announcement of outcome of selection: by 1 March

Online learning from 20 April to 12 May 2020

Residential phase from 15-27 May (arrivals all day 15 May, departures all day 27 May)

Costs: The cost for tuition, full board and lodging, exposure visits and local transport during the course, as well as medical insurance, is 700.-USD per participant.

All travel costs including local and international air tickets to Fiji, visa costs and en-route-costs are the responsibility of the applicant. Churches/organizations that recommend and endorse an application are invited to make efforts to sponsor travel costs including air tickets.

Email complete applications to youth@wcc-coe.org with "YATRA" and your family name in the subject line of email, by 15 February 2020.



YATRA participants during their stay in Jingwansa Temple, Seoul, Korea, September 2019, Photo: WCC

Kids at partner Haiti school enjoy new spaces to eat, learn and play!



The new kitchen that was built by Kraft-Heinz Netherlands team

When a Kraft-Heinz Meal Ambassador from the Netherlands, Tanja Kempen, joined us for a vision trip to visit our partner Hands for Haiti in 2018, she knew something special would come from her experience. Today, a brand new cafeteria and kitchen at the St. Marc School in Haiti is the result of their dedication and contributions.

The St. Marc School was in need of a new cafeteria, kitchen and other supplies to provide a better environment for the school children, teachers and workers. With the hard work of Tanja and contributions from the Kraft Heinz Netherlands team, the new cafeteria and kitchen were finished just in time for the school's annual Christmas celebration.

Each year, the St. Marc School has a Christmas party to celebrate the children. This year, because of the donations, school supplies and other items, the school was able to provide gifts for all students and have a party in the new cafeteria.

Prior to the cafeteria being built, the children ate lunch at their desks in the overcrowded makeshift classrooms with plywood dividers.

Overjoyed with excitement, the cooks were happy to have a new kitchen to prepare meals for the school, and the children were thrilled to have a new place to sit down and eat their lunches.

Since 2013, Rise Against Hunger and the Kraft Heinz Company Foundation have partnered to empower undernourished children and families in developing countries around the globe to create a brighter future. Inspired volunteers like Tanja and projects like the new school cafeteria and kitchen in Haiti are stepping stones to accomplishing our goal of ending hunger by 2030.

To make a contribution like Kraft-Heinz, donate now or reach out to us about partnering your company with our mission to create a world with zero hunger.

Shared in Blog, Corporate Partners on January 24, 2020 by Janae Curtain

*To donate click on the link below
<https://www.riseagainsthunger.org/#january>*



Looking forward, Looking back...



world
methodist
evangelism

By Rev. Dr. Kimberly Reisman,
Executive Director, World Methodist Evangelism

It's 1971 and the World Methodist Council has decided to proclaim its belief that "preaching the gospel and making disciples of Jesus Christ are the supreme business of the Church." With that commitment, World Methodist Evangelism was born.

Fast forward to 2020 and WME is still committed to preaching the gospel and making disciples of Jesus Christ by equipping people all over the world to show and share the love of Jesus.

Having grown out of the work of the World Methodist Council (WMC), WME continues to collaborate and partner with the WMC as an affiliate member, working within and beyond the network of 80 Methodist, Wesleyan, and related Uniting and United Churches that make up the global Wesleyan Methodist family. What a blessing it is to be a connection point for the over 80 million Christ followers in 138 countries that make up this amazing family!

Our world has seen many changes since 1971 and WME has been on the forefront of those changes. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, we were able to come alongside the people of Eastern Europe as they discovered and rediscovered faith in Jesus Christ. Through our commitment to multiplication, new churches were started in Estonia, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, and Slovakia. WME's commitment to cultivating leaders led us to send a missionary to Estonia for the sole purpose of founding a seminary. That seminary – the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary – has now been training Christian leaders for over 25 years. The commitment to multiplication and the cultivation of leaders continues in a variety of ways such as our newest collaboration with the Methodist Church of Cuba for church planting and the strengthening of their seminary.

In the early 1980's WME began gathering young adults from all over the world to deepen faith and strengthen community. Since 1980, these International Christian Youth Conferences on Evangelism (rebranded Metanoia to emphasize the importance of transformation) have impacted the lives of over 6,650 young adults. Many current leaders across the global Methodist Wesleyan family can point to their experience at Metanoia/ICYCE as a turning point on their journey of faith. Our next **Metanoia global gatherings will be in Sweden in August 2021** and in South Africa in 2023. Learn more at worldmethodist.org/engage/. Have you ever attended an ICYCE or Metanoia event? We'd love to hear from you! Email us at info@worldmethodist.org.

Since 1996 WME has been equipping young clergy and their spouses for evangelism through the Order of the FLAME (Faithful Leaders As Mission Evangelists). Through this ethnically and culturally diverse covenant community, young leaders come to see themselves not simply as pastors to their congregations, but as mission evangelists to their entire communities. Over 2500 young leaders have been impacted through this ministry and we're excited to be able to expand it this year by offering FLAME 2.0 – a mentoring program for a select cohort of young clergy that will launch later this spring.

From our beginnings as a committee of the World Methodist Council to our current work as an autonomous Council affiliate, WME has been blessed to witness the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. God continues to place new opportunities before us and blesses us with new missional and collaborative relationships for the advancement of the gospel. We are grateful to everyone who has come alongside us for the great work!

Learn more about World Methodist Evangelism by visiting worldmethodist.org

MLO reports a busy January

Epiphany and the Armenian and Orthodox Christmas celebrations were held this month by the Methodist Liaison Office (MLO) in Israel.

Demonstrations within the West Bank and Gaza took place, creating many detentions, following a recent international peace proposal.

Three female volunteers from the UK will assist in the area, working from three weeks to three months at the BBC, Tent of Nations, Hope School, Nour and Lajee in Aida Camp.

The MLO organized the itinerary for the Living Christianity in the Holy Land, with the Rev. John Howard as co-leader. The visit included holy sites, seeing and understanding the reality of occupation, and volunteering at Ibillin, Mar Elias High School. The small group had the opportunity for dialogue with Arabs and Israelis in Muslim, Christian and Jewish homes.

Staff participated in a number of prayer and Bible studies. They attended the "The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine Israel (EAPPI)" handover. In EAPPI, international volunteer teams spend three months in one of seven locations across the West Bank, providing protective presence, support and regular detailed reports. Participation included Praying Together and prayers at Checkpoint 300 [the Palestinian entry into Jerusalem].

Angleena Keizer led Hope School Assembly and preached at the UMC Filipino Church in Tel Aviv.

Saint Andrews in Tiberius, the Church of Scotland in the Galilee, an ecumenical English-speaking church. Each Sunday, people gather to share in prayer, song, scripture reading and, on most Sundays, worship includes Holy Communion. The congregation regularly consists of those who live locally and pilgrims, sojourners and tourists.

The staff attended three services for Christian Week of Unity. Along with Zoughbi and Usama from WIAM, we attended the tour at Ein Karem led by Zochrot, an Israeli human rights organization. The tour was to highlight the village before and after the Nakba. Work is beginning on the itinerary for Queens Theological College, who have just booked for Easter week.

This month there were also VIP visitors, including four kings and 26 Presidents for the 75th memorial of the Holocaust. Prince Charles and President Putin visited Bethlehem. As a result of heightened security, Checkpoint 300 was closed; therefore, workers were unable to travel to work in Israel. However, their visit was very highly appreciated.

A visit from the Rev. and Mrs. Dan Randall is expected 8-13 February, working toward the possibility that the family may join the MLO in July.

Staff was very saddened to hear the terrible news that Rev. Kristen Brown had a stroke and continues to receive treatment. Plans are to contact her and her mother, assuring them of the staff prayers.



Checkpoint 300



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.

To subscribe to this newsletter, please email communications@worldmethodistcouncil.org.

About the First Friday Letter

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