



FIRST FRIDAY LETTER

The World Methodist Council October 2020

Greetings from the General Secretary

Dear friends,

If you have not yet been inspired to get up and dance to the beat of Master KG and Nomcebo Zikode's "Jerusalem" global dance challenge, you are missing out.

The song, "Jerusalem," has more than 200 million views on YouTube and spawned thousands of videos on social media. The song got the world dancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has not just caught the attention of Portuguese soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo and American singer Janet Jackson but of many other celebrities and common folk alike.

The words; "Jerusalem ikhaya lami" is a lament to God to take the singer to Jerusalem, the Holy City sacred to three religions. A place where prophets and patriarchs once walked. Jerusalem, with its long and troubled history. Interestingly, this song became a "global trend" with some musical commentators referring to the music as a "global anthem." Suraya Dadoo, a freelance writer, points out that it became "a rallying point for displaced Palestinians who had their homes demolished and pushed out of the city." She shares how a group of Palestinian dancers created their version of the song by adding the dabkah, a traditional Palestinian dance.

As I reflect on the song, the lectionary readings of the past few weeks, and our world in crisis, I am convinced that this is a time for prophetic lament – even our silence is a form of violence. At a time when Eric Garner's cry, "I can't breathe" and George Floyd's plea, "take your foot off my neck" resounds in so many places around the world, I pray like Moses that "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets." (Numbers 11:29) In the same way that Christianity became a counter-culture to the Roman Empire, it needs to be the embodiment of a prophetic community today.

We have a mandate to make a difference in God's world. We need to passionately engage the issues of the day and work towards healing and transformation of ourselves, our neighbors, and the world.

As we seek to lift ourselves above our daily struggles, let us have a bit of fun by expressing solidarity with people all around the globe through song and dance by accepting the Jerusalem challenge (<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=gYhm6PCUtSg>)

Keep safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Ivan



GSU Wesley Foundation spreads love – not germs



COVID Care Packages

These days, a knock on the door usually means one of about two things: dinner has arrived via DoorDash or Uber Eats or an Amazon package has been delivered.

But in Statesboro, the knock may mean the Georgia Southern University Wesley Foundation has deposited a COVID Care Package on your doorstep.

According to a report from the New York Times, Statesboro has become a COVID-19 hotspot. Several hundred students have been diagnosed with the virus or are quarantined because of exposure.

The COVID Care Packages are a way to show those students they are cared for even when they are isolated and alone, said Dr. Jonathan Smith, director of GSU's Wesley Foundation.

"We thought it would be a way to bless them and say, 'We see you, we care about you.'"

Each cellophane-wrapped basket contains a journal, a water bottle, a package of Gatorade mix, snacks, candy, Seedbed's "Field Guide for Daily Prayer," and an Upper Room devotional. Inside the journal is a brief note that tells the student they're being prayed for.

"This isn't the season to promote ourselves," Dr. Smith said. "This is the season to tell students that we care, they matter, and that we're in this with them."

Gillian McGuillard, a senior secondary education major

who also serves as a Wesley Foundation intern, helps create the care packages. Attending college during a pandemic has been crazy and challenging, she said, but she hopes the baskets are helping bring a bit of joy in the midst of chaos.

"We're getting to bless students and are also giving their parents a little bit of peace of mind knowing that there are people in Statesboro looking out for them when they can't be there in person," she said.

Dr. Smith said they've created and distributed about 20 care packages so far. Word has spread primarily via social media, and several parents have contacted him asking if care packages can be delivered to their ill or quarantined children.

The care packages are just one way the GSU Wesley Foundation has been creative and shifted its ministry since the coronavirus pandemic struck.

The ministry now meets virtually via livestream instead of in person and all of the small-group discipleship and community groups meet online via Zoom.

Despite the unknown, Dr. Smith says he keeps returning to Jeremiah 29 where God sends a message via Jeremiah to the people who were exiled in Babylon.

"All of us are trying to scramble for a new normal, but what if God is asking us to be comfortable in this land, in this place? How do we do ministry when face-to-face contact isn't a reality? How do we let people know we still care for them even though we can't reach out and give a hug and can't sit down with them?"

The COVID Care Packages are one way to do that, he said.

"Our students are fired up about this (the care packages)," he said. "They think it's the most fun thing we've done. They're a great way for them to put into action the concern they have for their fellow students."

Article by Kara Witherow, Editor for the South Georgia Advocate

Follow the link to read more stories like this one <https://www.sgaumc.org/>

Fix broken migration policy, religious leaders say

A recent fire that destroyed an overcrowded camp for asylum seekers on the Greek island of Lesbos once again exposed “the fundamentally broken state of European migration and asylum policy and the suffering it has created,” says a statement from religious leaders in Europe.

Released Sept. 22 by the World Council of Churches, the advocacy statement noted the frustrations all around, including the desperation of those forced to live for years in inhumane conditions and the anger and frustration of locals dealing with the challenge of reception and care of those individuals.

However, the reaction by the European Union, the statement said, “expresses sympathy but shows no real commitment” to either refugees or their local hosts.

That lack of commitment by European nations is the problem. “Migrants and refugees are human beings, loved by God, and not a threat,” said retired Bishop Rosemarie Wenner of The United Methodist Church of Germany.

Wenner, representing the World Methodist Council, was part of the working team that drafted the statement. “Methodists all over the world are committed to welcome strangers so that we overcome the ‘us’ and ‘them,’ she told United Methodist News in an email. “And we join hands with other Christians and all people of good will to advocate for a humane treatment of those at the move.”

A commitment to “radical hospitality” and advocacy on behalf of “the stranger” currently is a central theme

for the World Methodist Council, says its top executive, Bishop Ivan Abrahams.

“We continue to work together with everyone, everywhere, in accompanying migrants, refugees and asylum seekers sharing their tears, hopes and dreams for sustainable life and livelihood,” he said.

Stressing the need for solidarity “as a guiding principle,” the Christian communions and organizations directed their statement toward the European Union Commission, which was to present a new Migration Pact on Sept. 23.

“We expect the EU to reject the discourse and politics of fear and deterrence, and to adopt a principled stance and compassionate practice based on the fundamental values on which the EU is founded,” the religious leaders wrote.

As a European citizen, Wenner said she was grateful for the coalition’s engagement with the EU, “urging it to overcome a crisis mode and to create regular migration channels and compassionate practices towards those who come to Europe that reflect the core values of the European Union.”

The Rev. Ioan Sauca, a professor and Orthodox priest from Romania who serves as the WCC interim general secretary, pointed out that everyone is part of a precious human family that is entrusted to care for each other.



Volunteers carry a child ashore on a beach near Molyvos, on the Greek island of Lesbos, on Oct. 30, 2015, after a group of refugees crossed the Aegean Sea from Turkey in a small overcrowded boat provided by Turkish traffickers to whom the refugees paid huge sums. The refugees were received in Greece by local and international volunteers, then proceeded on their way toward western Europe. File photo by Paul Jeffrey/Life on Earth Pictures.

Fix broken migration policy, religious leaders say continued..

“Every nation’s asylum policies must reflect this sense of caring and trust as a shared journey, a solemn responsibility and a common witness,” he said. “We have high expectations of the EU Commission’s presentation of its new pact on migration and asylum on 23 September.”

In the advocacy statement, the churches and church-based agencies commit to being proactive “in offering a compassionate welcome, and promoting social integration and a just and peaceful living together, in Greece, the whole of Europe, and beyond.

“Churches on the Greek mainland have opened their doors and offered hospitality to those relocated from Lesbos and other ‘hotspots,’ the statement says. “Churches are also among the driving forces for offering relocation spaces in other EU countries and have been instrumental in welcoming and receiving new arrivals.”

“Churches in many places offer hospitality to the newly arrived, an open ear to the concerns of existing inhabitants and newly arrived alike, and a space for encounter between new and old neighbors, irrespective of nationality, gender, age or belief.”

In an interview for the World Council of Churches, Orthodox Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece declared that with no assistance, the burden of this hospitality overwhelms local communities.

“The repressive policies implemented by the EU have resulted in thousands of international protection seekers having to endure long confinement in the overcrowded hot spots of the Aegean islands, living under indecent conditions with insufficient access to fundamental goods or services,” the archbishop said.

Because of that, he added, the fire in Moria “was just a tragedy waiting to happen.”



A volunteer embraces a sobbing refugee woman who just landed on a beach near Molyvos, on the Greek island of Lesbos, on Oct. 31, 2015, after crossing the Aegean Sea from Turkey. File photo by Paul Jeffrey/Life on Earth Pictures.

The Sept. 22 advocacy statement supports “immediate humanitarian assistance to enable the Greek authorities and humanitarian actors on the ground to respond to the needs of the displaced people, as well as for long-term structural solutions for the region’s response to people on the move.”

Such action needs to occur within all EU member states, the statement says, and fearmongering needs to be replaced with compassion.

Bloom is the assistant news editor for United Methodist News Service and is based in New York.

Read more stories at <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/>

Additional information on this topic can be found at <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/christian-organizations-representing-2-8-billion-people-call-for-more-compassionate-eu-migration-policy>

The statement is co-signed by the ACT Alliance, the Anglican Communion, the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe, the Conference of European Churches, the European Region of the World Association for Christian Communication, the Evangelical Church of Greece, the Integration Center for Migrant Workers – Ecumenical Refugee Program, Non-Profit Organisation of the Church of Greece, the Lutheran World Federation, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (European Region), the World Council of Churches and the World Methodist Council.

Justice as Sanctuary: Countering Retributive and Punitive Justice

In 927, King Aethelstan, ruler of England, granted the Minster of Beverley privilege of sanctuary. The Minster was a monastery where anyone fleeing from vengeance would be granted safety from arrest and seizure. Hugh Bianchi, a Dutch historian and jurist, defines this period as predominantly restorative rather than punitive and titles it “Justice as Sanctuary.” Records for this period indicate that the majority who sought refuge were related to offences of manslaughter, yet “punishment was the exception and compensation was the rule.”

William Blackstone’s “Commentaries on the Laws of England” at the time list the co-existence of 10 different types of law, including “the right to sanctuary” which is recorded as an element of “Divine Law.” No single legal procedure, however, answered all situations and a view that Western legal justice systems have been selected and tested after a process of evolution is mythical, says Bianchi. Western legal institutions, having given up the right to sanctuary, have lost diverse perspectives of justice. By the end of the 1st millennium, justice became the main target of metaphysical order rather than a way of life. Scholars arranged law in hierarchical order with human law as natural law reflected in divine law. All this sequencing gave secular judges a tremendous confidence and authority in the same manner that law ruled the Church and justified Church rule. However, as heresy became the Church’s judged mandate, crime became the State’s, especially when Martin Luther burned the Church’s rule books.

When the Law of Nature lost its character as a belief system, the appeal by secular law to natural law became impossible and the law without a well-conceived idea of justice became incongruent. The evolution of the discourse “The War against Crime”, says Bianchi, pits the solidarity of “Good” versus “Bad” citizen into an irrec-

oncilable challenge. Such irreconcilable contradictions Bianchi terms a “dissensus,” meaning a split of “truth” into irreconcilable opposites and a denial of universal norms. In order to overcome this, Bianchi proposes an “assensus,” a term borrowed from Cardinal John Henry Newman’s “Essay in Aid of The Grammar of Assent” which asked the question how one conveys truth or unity of meaning when someone has not experienced it. Newman’s argument by “notional assent” and “real assent” was pounced on by Bianchi, who similarly argued that, in criminal proceedings, an offender will receive a “notional assent” to justice but never a “real assent.”

We have already indicated in a previous edition Martin Buber’s erudite and creative translation of the Hebrew *tsdekah* (justice as God’s righteousness, peace, mercy and compassion). Bianchi has in fact worked with Buber in its adoption as a double system of justice calling for the reinstatement of the right to sanctuary, allowing offenders immunity from prosecution as long as they were pursuing an agreed settlement.

We shall conclude FFL’s reflections on Restorative Justice in the next edition with a story of how this possibility to the good was pioneered with open hands in a remote corner of a South African township.

Keith Vermeulen is a retired presbyter in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and researches for the World Methodist Council

Herman Bianchi, *Justice as Sanctuary*, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994). David Cayley, *The Expanding Prison: The Crisis in Crime and Punishment and the Search for Alternatives*, (Anansi: Toronto, 1998).



Join Uniting Church of Australia President Deidre Palmer and Rev. Charissa Suli in an online conversation for UCA young adults. Share your reflections, hopes and concerns and stay connected to one another.

Join Us

Choose one of the following dates:

Monday October 19, 7:30-9:00pm AEST

Thursday October 29, 7:30-9:00pm AEST

Sunday November 15, 5:00-6:30pm AEST

Wednesday November 25, 7:30-9:00pm AEST

Friday December 11, 7:30-9:00pm AEST

WesleyMen and FastPrayGive.org find Wesley's General Rules of Discipleship a Rallying Cry during Global Pandemic



Do No Harm masks sold by FastPrayGive

Many congregations have had tough decisions to make during the global spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Identifying ways to mitigate the spread of the virus was at the forefront of many leadership decisions. Looking back to our early beginnings can provide inspiration and comfort during these stressful moments. One only has to look to Wesley's General rules on discipleship to be reminded that we should first, "Do No Harm."

In July, when advice from health officials in the United States confirmed that wearing a face covering during the pandemic could protect others from the spread of virus, WesleyMen and FastPrayGive.org decided that encouraging others to wear masks by providing a face covering would be a great way to push Wesley's words out into the world, and also be a small fundraiser for general administration of the WesleyMen organization.

Over 230 masks have been sold generating over \$1,000 in net proceeds to help fund marketing and promotional activities for the global movement to end hunger by Wesley's means of grace. WesleyMen added 157 new connections and have been able to utilize that connectional data to target and advertise to people who might be interested in joining us.

When you order your mask (!) you will see that FastPrayGive.org/store has other promotional and educational items for sale. The FastPrayGive.org small group study is available for purchase in paperback and digital download for e-readers. It is also available for free as a PDF. At this time, physical products can only be shipped within the USA, but digital downloads are available globally.

Andy Morris, Director, FastPrayGive.org, a program of WesleyMen, World Methodist Council

Guatemala Nazarenes respond to landslides

The Church of the Nazarene in Guatemala quickly mobilized support for 200 people who lost their homes in a landslide that occurred on 8 August in Purulhá, Baja Verapaz, Guatemala. A Nazarene Compassionate Ministries team from the North Central Field traveled to the disaster site after coordinating with Miguel Ángel Alvarado, pastor of the Central Church of Purulhá, Baja Verapaz. There they delivered 25 pairs of shoes from The Shoe that Grows and 60 Crisis Care Kits containing a towel, toothbrush and toothpaste, bath soap, nail clippers, shampoo, paper towels, comb, and a stuffed animal for the children.

"In the Nazarene Church, we are moved by compassion," said Jose Alvarado, a local lay leader. "When the slides first happened we immediately thought about the kids and families. We started collecting donations for the affected. We put together a distribution center to collect donation in one of the Nazarene churches in the community."

More Nazarenes nearby continued to serve and provide for the needs of the people in the shelter, including the Nazarene Disaster Response team from the Verapaz del Norte District. They brought food and clothing for those affected by the landslide. The local pastor said this was donated by the entire community through the Church.

The NCM and Nazarene Disaster Response team from the Verapaz del Norte District also went to the shelter and delivered clothing and food for the families. In an effort to encourage the 30 children who are in the shelter, the Nazarene church in the Purulhá community invited the community to donate sweets, juices, and cookies to give to each child. Inside each package, they placed a Bible message. The church is seeking donations through its Facebook page for non-perishable food for families and additional items to continue reaching children in the shelter. Alvarado noted the unity between all the different Nazarene Churches and organizations that came together to aid the community.

"We're not concerned about which local church is doing what, we came together as a denomination," Alvarado said. The government noticed the work the Nazarene Church has done in the location. They have expressed the desire to partner with the Nazarene church to do that which the [government] cannot do. People in the community are very grateful for the work the Nazarene Church has done."

Read more stories at <https://www.nazarene.org/article>

Laferty takes on Director of the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome

The Rev. Matthew Laferty began his duties as the new Director of the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome (MEOR) in September.

As he looks to the future, he shares his vision for MEOR includes several points. “First, the MEOR continues to build upon the strong work between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church. We continue to find opportunities to educate those in the Methodist and Wesleyan family about the importance of Christian unity and Ecumenical engagement.” He added that he believes, “MEOR not only is an important center of Methodist/Catholic relations but becomes a place where Methodist can encounter Christians from all different traditions for mutual understanding, learning, and personal growth.

“It is important to point out that the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome is a ministry of the World Methodist Council. So, while it has its distinct features, including how it is governed, it is a ministry of the WMC and promotes the work and ministry.” Laferty shared in explaining the WMC’s role. “Part of how the WMC can help is by thinking about how [the Council’s] member churches can be engaged with the work.

“Of course, with COVID, things have been upended. Normally we would have opportunities for study and for learning. We are discerning how we might expand those programs after COVID to bring people to Rome for types of pilgrimage and learning opportunities. We need people in member churches to come and participate. We are also exploring, during particularly the next year, how realistically, we may be able to use online platforms to do both short-term and long-term programs. There would be several educational opportunities,” he stated.

“Promoting the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome, I think, is one of the ways member churches can be involved in their churches about MEOR’s offerings and opportunities for growth.” Laferty explained that by sharing the other work that MEOR is related to, such as

international dialogue, which takes on a very different feature and has a different purpose, these resources could be shared with the member churches for education and ecumenical engagement.

In response to why he wanted to be Director of MEOR, Laferty, who grew up in a small town in Northern Ohio, USA says, “Our life as a Methodist family was shaped deeply by ecumenism, such as Vacation Bible School, Lent, helping out local food pantries, etc. So, I grew in an environment where it was explicit that we seek opportunities for learning, worship and discipleship with other Christians for social action together. The older I got, the more I realized that it wasn’t a given in every place.

“In my pastoral work, I have sought opportunities to work ecumenically. While in Moscow for four years serving a Methodist, Lutheran and Reformed Congregation.” Most recently in Vienna, Laferty said the United Methodist Congregation he served drew its membership from many different Christian traditions.

“I want to share the experiences that I have had as a Pastor,” Laferty explained. “The things I have learned and the struggles that I have encountered allow me to use the opportunity as the Director to address them head-on, to encourage those in the Methodist/Wesleyan family to work more closely with other Christians, wherever they are, so that together they might proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and invite people into God’s saving love.”

In conclusion, Laferty said that he is interested in the field part of it. “The professional part of it is around the work I have already done as a Pastor. I like strategic thinking, I think where we are as an office right now, that long-term planning and strategic thinking is an important piece of the work,” he concluded.

WMC Communications Director Michaela Bryson met with MEOR Director Laferty via Zoom for this interview.

MEOR Forum Holds Annual Meeting

ROME (MEOR) – The MEOR Forum, the oversight committee of the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome, met virtually on 3 September for its annual meeting. WMC General Secretary Bishop Ivan Abrahams and Rev. Ruth Gee from the Methodist Church in Great Britain are the Forum co-chairs. Due to COVID-19, the annual meeting was shortened and focused mostly on administrative matters. The Forum thanked the Rev. Dr. Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman who served as the MEOR interim director from 2019-2020 for his service. They also welcomed the new MEOR director and WMC representative to the Roman Catholic Church the Rev. Matthew A. Laferty; Laferty was appointed to serve for 5 years.

During its meeting, the Forum agreed to start a strategic planning process in 2021 to be organized by Bishop Abrahams. Serving in a temporary capacity, the Forum also welcomed Ms. Stefanie Gabuyo from the Methodist Churches in Italy to work as the MEOR acting administrator for 2020-2021.

In other news, the MEOR guesthouse remains closed through the end of 2020 due to COVID-19.

Finding strength in the worldwide church family

When Thomas Kemper became the first non-U.S. chief executive of The United Methodist Board of Global Ministries he said he wanted the mission agency to help local churches everywhere “to feel and see themselves as part of a worldwide family.”

Now, a decade later, the German native has left that position after overseeing an expansion of the agency’s international presence and collaboration with global mission partners. On Sept. 1, he was succeeded in that office by Roland Fernandes, chief operating officer and general treasurer of Global Ministries.

Kemper remained a missionary at heart long after his own service in Brazil from 1985-94 and 11-year tenure in the German United Methodist Church’s mission office. Maintaining a solid core of missionaries — who witness and serve in different locales and cultures and engage in a range of professions and activities — also continued to be a priority for the agency. Global Ministries has some 350 missionaries in international and U.S. domestic service at any given time.

“The missionary kind of incorporates the global nature of the church,” he told UM News in an interview in August. “They represent that the gospel is more than one culture, one language, one nation. This is so essential for the church.”

Not surprisingly, that mindset helped Kemper form an intimate relationship with the missionary community, he noted. “They trusted me as a fellow missionary,” he said.

About 200 active and retired missionaries or missionary families took part in an Aug. 11 Zoom farewell gathering with Kemper, which included a video of statements of appreciation in various languages and a song highlighting the phrase that became Kemper’s mantra about mission and missionaries: “From Everywhere to Everywhere.”

“We have felt supported and included under the collegial approach to leadership that you have fostered,” said Katherine Parker, chairperson of the United Methodist Missionary Association, in the video presentation. She credited him for bringing Global Ministries “into a new wave of mission that moves from the center to the margins and the margins to the center.”

Kemper told UM News he was particularly excited about the growth of the Global Mission Fellows program for young adults. What started with a handful of people on assignment now includes dozens commissioned into new multiyear terms of service annually. In July 2019, for example, 50 young adults from 26 countries were commissioned in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to serve in 33 countries for The United Methodist Church. Global Mission Fellows is creating the young cross-cultural leaders the world needs, Kemper declared. “I had dreamed of having 500 (fellows) at the end of my term but the financial situation

did not allow this,” he added. “It also requires good mentoring and accompaniment, which costs money.”

One of the highlights of Kemper’s time as top executive, he said, was helping orchestrate the successful departure of three young fellows from the Philippines in 2018 after they faced false political accusations from the government. Kemper recalled visiting Tawanda Chandiwana of Zimbabwe at the detention center in Manila, where curiosity about the anchor cross Chandiwana was wearing allowed him to witness to inmates that he was anchored in Christ. That visit and the worldwide support for a campaign by Global Ministries to free the trio was inspiring, he said. “Suddenly, you felt you are part of a real movement, standing for solidarity and human rights.”



United Methodist missionary Tawanda Chandiwana (left foreground) is embraced by Thomas Kemper, head of the Board of Global Ministries, at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila, Philippines, on July 1, 2018, after Chandiwana was released from a detention center and allowed to leave the country. 2018 file photo courtesy of Thomas Kemper, Global Ministries.

Kemper said his previous experience as a director for the Board of Global Ministries also shaped his conviction that the mission agency’s role is as the facilitator of mission rather than the owner of mission. Early on, he said, he decided that staff needed to be hired internationally to achieve not just U.S. diversity but global diversity.

Moving the agency’s headquarters from New York to Atlanta in 2016 was “for missional reasons,” Kemper explained, part of the larger redirection to a global scale that included a plan to establish small regional offices in Latin America, Asia and Africa. He acknowledged that the board’s longtime presence at the Interchurch Center — at 475 Riverside Drive in Manhattan — was advantageous when a number of mainline denominations and ecumenical groups had offices there. “It must have been an amazing time,” he said. “But it was a myth by the time I got there.”

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

Do we love people the way we say we do?

When it comes to sharing the love of Christ with the world, the connection between what we say we believe and how we live out those beliefs is crucial. Our integrity is directly related to the strength of that connection. If there is a gap between what we say we believe and the way we live our lives, we lose our credibility. That's why our integrity – the sense of wholeness that comes when our words are in sync with our actions, is such a vital component in sharing our faith.

Our integrity is critical because as Christians, we base our faith on the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the one we call the Christ. This man, Jesus, is someone whose compassion, whose love and care for those on the margins of society, whose teaching about justice, mercy, and forgiveness, and whose story of suffering and death are well known. And not just inside the church.

That fact that the life and character of Jesus are well known *outside* the church should give us pause when we think about integrity – connecting our beliefs with how we live them out. It should prompt us to continually check in with ourselves and ask some probing questions.

Do we consistently show love for other people? Even those who may disagree with us? Are we interested in knowing others outside the church? Are we willing to actually learn about their lives or genuinely listen as they relate the challenges and struggles of their past or present? Do we *really* love people the way we say we do?

These are more than just rhetorical questions. Because when we appear more concerned with what people do or do not do, than with understanding the realities they are experiencing, people take notice. When we seem to be unwilling to place ourselves in someone else's shoes, the connection between the beliefs we profess and our life in the world is lost, and with it, our integrity.

This is true all the time, but it takes on a particularly painful dimension in polarized times like these when cultures and religions are clashing in so many dramatic ways.

So it's important to ask again: Do we really love people the way we say we do? Are we willing to place ourselves in someone else's shoes?

World Methodist Evangelism's faith-sharing resource, *Embrace: Showing and Sharing the Love of Jesus* focuses on understanding the importance of integrity. We believe it's one of the essential values of sharing our faith. *Embrace* helps us explore our own faith journey and to deepen our understanding of the value of integrity in faith-sharing.

One of the things we recognize when we explore the meaning of integrity is that it involves reciprocity. Earlier in my ministry I was responsible for a Sunday worship service that met in a local theater. Because it was unconventional, it was attractive to many people who didn't feel comfortable in a more traditional setting. Many were Christian in name only; many weren't Christian at all but were interested in exploring faith.

Several years after leaving that position, I ran into a woman who had attended regularly. As we spoke, she recalled that she was in a confused and unhealthy place in her life during those years. She sensed that I knew this about her and in some ways disagreed with or even disapproved of some of the ways she was coping. Thankfully, she said that this was a good thing, because even though we might not have agreed, she felt there was a place for her no matter what. It was the *security* of that space that had challenged her to seriously reevaluate her life.

She went on to describe the mutuality that she had experienced. She said that even though she sensed that I disagreed, it was important to her that I took her seriously and *was always open to the possibility that she might have something to offer me*.

A holistic understanding of integrity is a critical part of showing and sharing the love of Jesus. Mutuality and reciprocity are crucial. When others can see that we really *are* interested in knowing them and learning about their lives, that we really *are* willing to genuinely listen as they relate the challenges and struggles of their past or present; they will begin to see that we *really* do love them the way that we say we do. They will begin to see that the belief in our heart *really is* in sync with our life in the world.

And when these things come together – our words and our deeds – the belief in our heart and our life in the world – that is when the Holy Spirit begins to move and lives are transformed.

Embrace is a wonderful way to explore your own journey of faith in order to be able to share it with others more confidently and authentically. World Methodist Evangelism provides workshops on *Embrace* in fully online, hybrid, and in-person formats as well as in a small group study context. For more information go to worldmethodist.org/embrace.

*Article written by Kimberly Reisman,
Executive Director of World Methodist Evangelism*

California radio program brings gospel to 500,000 listeners

Hundreds of South Asian people from California's Bay Area have come to know Christ through a radio program hosted by Chris Nallan, pastor of International Christian Center Church of the Nazarene in San Jose.

Nallan was formerly an audio/video pastor at a large church in Gilroy, California, 30 minutes south of San Jose. It was a church of nearly 3,500, and when he moved to take over International Christian Center, it was a bit of a shock. There was no A/V, no sound, and just a handful of people. Nallan had a vision for the church to embody true community, to be a glimpse of "what heaven would be like."

The International Christian Center holds services in English, Spanish, Korean, Hindi, and Telugu. The Bay Area is incredibly diverse, home to many Latin American immigrants as well as a large group of East and South Asian people.

Because of the church's Hindi services, a local AM radio station approached Nallan about running a segment on Saturday nights, free of charge.

Originally, the church shared the time slot with a Hindu priest, but eventually the segment became theirs. The "show" runs almost like a church service, complete with worship, devotionals and messages from the gospel, and prayer. It averaged about 10,000 listeners.

"The South Asians, they love singing and dancing and love to worship," Nallan said. "So we keep our songs upbeat."

Nallan says the most important thing is prayer.

"We're always open for prayer," Nallan said. "We would always promote it, and say, 'Whatever you're going through today, call. God can help you.' And we

would give them scriptures and many people call. Many have come to know Christ."

Nallan and his radio program have since moved stations to Bollywood 92.3, which reaches across the entire Bay Area in addition to San Jose. It is one of the largest Bollywood radio stations in the country, and Nallan's Christian show has grown from 10,000 listeners to over 500,000.

Nallan believes the radio show's growth confirms that God has been faithful to the call He placed on Nallan's life to leave a large church and serve with a smaller, more intentional and international community.

"I truly believe that God had a purpose for us," Nallan said. "His purpose was to reach out to the South Asian community, one that needed the gospel. I truly believe that God had a purpose for us to reach out to that community."

Recently, the radio show traveled to Modesto, California, nearly 100 miles away, because they had been invited by a Hindu community that listened to their program. One of the hundred or so attendees said that some of the local Hindu priests had even been incorporating Christian messages into their own teachings.

Nallan sees it as an even greater confirmation that God was working through them to reach a community to which He clearly had called Nallan.

"Did we plan on being on the radio? No," Nallan said. "They came to us and said they needed a voice from the Christian community just to fill in some space... I think God created that opportunity for us. So why not bring the gospel that is much needed in the South Asian community?"

Read more stories at <https://www.nazarene.org/article>



Best wishes and congratulations to Michaela Hannah Bryson. Michaela married Curtis Bryson on September 19. Michaela is the communications director and administrative assistance for the Council's Headquarters in Lake Junaluska, NC. The wedding date had been planned for some time and while changes had to be made due to COVID-19 that affected the location of the ceremony, number of guests and more, the happy couple now make their home in a community where they grew up.

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YYA Increase the number of Youth and Young Adults (YYA) in the Council's ministry and mission.

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Please send press releases, articles and resources! Submissions should be a page or less (500-700 words), edited and ready to publish. Contact us by **the last Monday of the month** at communications@worldmethodistcouncil.org if you would like your story to be included in the next edition of the First Friday Letter. Please note that articles should be received by October 26 for the November edition.

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.

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