



FIRST FRIDAY LETTER

The World Methodist Council December 2020

Greetings from the President

“Let us go now to Bethlehem!” (Luke 2:15)

Dear people called Methodists, let us praise together with a multitude of the heavenly host: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” (Luke 2:14)

Would you join me in an imaginative pilgrimage to the present-day Bethlehem? Recollecting my visit to the occupied West Bank in July 2019, I would like to guide you in the mode of contemplative prayer to the tragic yet blessed site of the Nativity. Presume that baby Jesus is going to be born in the Tent of Nations which is located on a hilltop 9 km southwest of Bethlehem. Mr. Daoud (David in Palestinian Arabic!) Nassar, who is the recipient of the World Methodist Peace Award, has served the Tent of Nations in the land known as Daher’s Vineyard which his grandfather purchased in 1916. “We refuse to be enemies” is the slogan of the Nassar family choosing a way of non-violent resistance and peacemaking actions. Isn’t this a better location of the 2020 Christmas than the Church of the Nativity in downtown Bethlehem full of pilgrims who are allowed to stay only four hours?



First of all, you need to cross the checkpoint and travel near the annexation wall which separates Bethlehem from Jerusalem. This Palestinian Wall represents the walled world of global apartheid which also includes the Demilitarized Zone in Korea, the Australian Northern Approach in the South Pacific, the United States-Mexico Wall, the Melilla Border Fence/the Ceuta Border Fence in Northern Africa, the Schengen Border in Eastern Europe. We believe Messiah comes to the fallen world to break down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between people. (Eph 2:14) Bethlehem belongs to the sacrifice zones in the West Bank where Israeli dump their pollution and waste in their disempowered neighbors’ backyards. Jesus is born at the dump-site margins of

Empire signifying the borders into a new world to come. Could you hear Mary’s song of Magnificat breaking out from the barriers which will be turned into the channels to renew the church as a sign of God’s justice and mercy? Couldn’t you see people on the move, namely, Messiah’s companions coming toward you, meeting Jesus on the road in the most despised bodies of Empire (Matt 25:43)? Then let us sing together Isaiah’s song: “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isa 52:7)

What will happen if wise futurists from the East come to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?” (Matt 2:2) God forbid a Herod once again orders to kill “all the children in and around Bethlehem who are two years old or under!” (Matt 2:16) Do you expect so many settlers surrounding Daher’s Vineyard to come to pay tribute to the new-born king? If President of the World Methodist Council announces the good news that “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. He will be called Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.” (Isa 9:6-7), who will be the first among the world leaders to believe it and be willing to come to worship Jesus Christ? Shall we find the President Elect of the United States of America among the pilgrims? Only God know! But I would like him as well as his in-coming team to know what happened in Khirbet Humsa of the Jordan Valley as the attention was focused on #USElection2020. Israel chose the evening of Wednesday 4 November to demolish the Bedouin hamlet which is home to 74 Palestinians, including 41 children, one as young as three months old. It has been reported that the child wailed as a cold wind blew through their makeshift tent, hastily erected the previous night to protect them from the rain. Her name is Hadeel, granddaughter of Aisha Abu Awad, 56.

One and only thing for us to do in this season of good tidings is to go radical. Yes, go radical to move the world upside down as the early disciples of Jesus did. Christ’s Reconciling Love compels (2 Cor 5:14) us to be radical. It urges us to be united in deconstructing the walls that are divisive and discriminatory in terms of race, caste, ability, sexuality or gender. Peace of Christ unites and reconciles while peace of Empire divides and rules. When you dare to build another dividing wall among you or between you and the least of those who are members of the one household of God, think and let think whom you will serve, Jesus or Caesar.

Continued...

Greetings from the President continued...

“If tomorrow God would see us holding stones in our hands, like those who carried in former times, may they not be thrown at each other. May they not be used either to build walls of separation and exclusion. Rather, may God find us building bridges so that we can come closer to each other, houses where we can meet together, and tables where we can share bread and wine, the presence of Christ, who has never left us and who calls us to abide in him so that the world may believe.” (Rev. Martin Junge, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation)

“The Word ‘pitched his tent’ (eskenosen) in the midst of the human world, and we have seen his glory, such glory as befits the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) Indeed, the Word became flesh, a vulnerable body. The Spirit of sweet Jesus allures us to be empathetic for the tired, infected, sick, and dying bodies of the others in the family of God in the times like this. May the bond of love in our hearts and the solidarity of justice in our bodies be expressed and enacted in the unity and sanctity of our beloved communities! Therefore, let me warmly invite you to go radical; yes, go to your own Bethlehem in your locale to find the face of Christ among the hungry, the thirsty, the strange, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned.

Let us go now to Bethlehem!

Merry Christmas!

Rev. Dr. JC Park, President



Compensatory, Healing and Restorative Nature:

A Tribute to Community Activist Sipho Citabatwa

Judith Shklar, late political philosopher, in her work *“Faces of Injustice”* points out that an adequate theory of justice cannot be found without seeking the meaning of injustice. She points out that it is easier for political systems to see chronic injustice as “misfortune” rather than injustice is found in British government’s policy failure to determine justice for the Irish people during the Irish Potato Famine of 1846–47. The British explanation was that the Irish people had brought “misfortune” upon themselves, were unable to cope with the potato blight and were entitled to remedies from neither the British government nor their landlords! By extension, Indigenous cries for justice against slavery, theft of land and resources cry out worldwide for healing, compensation and restoration rather than facing Western blame, shame and ongoing victimisation for our “misfortunes.”

I therefore recount here the little told story of Mr. Sipho Citabatwa who was central to the organisation of “Street Committees” or community conflict-resolution forums, that mediated domestic, interpersonal and community conflicts in an African “Township.” In the mid ‘90’s the owner of a well-known, local community restaurant which was to reach international recognition by 2002 reported a burglary and theft of meat which valued at approximately US\$ 3,000 in today’s terms. Investigative work by Sipho and “Street Committees” revealed that four school leaving youth had been tracked as the offenders. The restaurant owner was concerned for the futures of the youth and persuaded Sipho to pursue an Indigenous conflict resolution mechanism for the dealing with this community crime. A reluctant but sympathetic State Prosecutor agreed to the case being handled at a traditional styled hearing similar to what is known in African tradition as an “Nkundla” or “Lekgotloa.” At this “meeting” the offenders, their families, the restaurant owner, local leaders were present to resolve the conflict. All actors present had an opportunity to “tell their stories.” The young offenders admitted responsibility. The community pooled funds together to compensate the offended restaurant owner for losses while the offenders agreed to perform community chores and work in the restaurant. Sipho insisted that understanding the context and knowledge of “causes” is the essential and a “natural” way of healing wounds was an appropriate analogy for overcoming fractured community relations.

By no means a person of any faith or religious persuasion, I find the words of Fred Kaan’s hymn “For the Healing of the Nations” an appropriate Advent tribute to Sipho who succumbed to COVID-19 in July this year. *“You Creator God have written, Your great name on humankind. For our growing in Your likeness, bring the life of Christ to mind. That by our response and service, earth its destiny may find.”*

Statement prepared by Keith Vermeulen, Researcher, WMC

WMC General Secretary tapped to lead Fort Hare University

World Methodist Council General Secretary Bishop Ivan Abrahams has been elected to lead The University of Fort Hare Trustees.

The appointment of a new Council/Trustees - the highest decision-making structure at the University of Fort Hare - is a significant milestone for the 104-year old institution. Council Inauguration Guided by the revised Statute, a 22-member Council was inducted on 24-26 November 2020, culminating in the appointment of the Executive Committee of the University Council (EXCO). Membership comprises 14 external appointees, and eight members constituted from internal university structures.

Dr. Siphokazi Koyana - an entrepreneur who owns and manages a socio-economic development-focused research consultancy, will serve as his deputy. When addressing the group, University Chancellor Adv Dumisa Ntsebeza SC said, “May each and every one of you leave an indelible mark and construct a legacy for the University of Fort Hare because this is our mother university.”

Chair Bishop Abrahams thanked fellow members for the vote of confidence shown in him. “Today, we are the new story of the University of Fort Hare. This is an opportunity to recalibrate our moral compasses and connect with the institution. We must not forget that we stand on the shoulders of giants who passed through the doors of this iconic institution. We dare not let them down. May all of us believe we can fly into a future that is pregnant with possibilities,” he said.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Sakhela Buhlungu said, “We are very optimistic about the future. The period 2020-2030 has been earmarked as a Decade of Renewal at Fort Hare. I am confident that UFH staff and students welcome the new council and are committed to doing their best to help steer Fort Hare back to its days of glory as the uppermost African institution of higher learning, which gave birth to world-renowned leaders as well as fine scholars and prolific academics.”

Today the University serves 12,000 students working from three campuses — since 2004, in the port city of East London, Bisho, and, for the past 100 years, in Alice, in the Tyhume Valley, Amathole. Alice was the birthplace of the Freedom Charter, signed in 1955 as the blueprint for a future democratic South Africa. It was the student home of Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, two of South Africa’s four Nobel Peace Laureates, of Oliver Tambo, Govan Mbeki, and a host of other leaders in politics, government, the professions, business and academia in South Africa and across the African continent.

The late Mandela described Fort Hare as “a beacon for African scholars from all over Southern, Central and Eastern Africa. For young black South Africans like myself, it was Oxford and Cambridge, Harvard and Yale, all rolled into one.”



Fort Hare Board of Trustees chaired by Bishop Abrahams (lower right)

WMC Statement on Ethiopian/Tigray Region Humanitarian Conflict

#SilenceTheGuns, African Resolution by African Leaders for African Conflict

The World Methodist Council (WMC), joins the World Council of Churches (WCC) in its condemnation of violent attacks in the Tigray region of conflict in Ethiopia. In addition, WMC General Secretary, Bishop Ivan Abrahams, hears with deep distress that UNHCR, the UN's refugee agency, reports that women, children and men have crossed the border at a rate of 4,000 per day in Tigray, adding to more than 100,000 Eritrean refugees in four camps in Tigray who were displaced in the 1998-2000 Ethiopia-Eritrea border war. In the light of WMC's call on the United Nations to adopt UNSCR 2532 and support a global ceasefire amidst the Coronavirus pandemic, WMC General Secretary appeals to all African political, civil and faith leaders in the African Union to support #SilenceTheGuns, an African initiative to address African problems by Africa's leaders.

The WMC further notes that AU President, HE President Cyril Ramaphosa, emphasised in a meeting with Ethiopian Prime Minister, HE Sahle-Work Zewde that "Ethiopia occupies a place of pride and honour in the history of Africa, having successfully resisted colonialism, and played a leading role in the decolonization of Africa. The decision of the Founding Fathers that Africa's foremost Continental organisation, the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), should be established and headquartered in Addis Ababa, was a fitting tribute to Ethiopia's role as a symbol of African unity." Ramaphosa indicated, however, that "the ongoing conflict ... is a matter of great concern not only for countries in the region of the Horn of Africa, but for the continent as a whole."

Bishop Ivan Abrahams, in response to #SilenceTheGuns initiative, therefore, "calls on the 'People called Method-

ist' as well as all humans globally to be mindful of and work in every way possible for an end to this historic, regional conflict and to seek the promotion of a just, peaceful and sustainable solution to this ... fragile conflict in Africa." "We call on all people who are committed to global solidarity to mourn the unnecessary loss of life and look to the legacy of historic peace and co-existence that Ethiopia has been and remains able to contribute toward the future of African co-existence, humanitarian peace and solidarity." To this end, the WMC calls on its membership on the African continent and in the rest of the world to support the African Union President, HE Cyril Ramaphosa's deep desire "that the conflict ... be brought to an end through dialogue between the conflict ridden parties and that such initiative be viewed against the background of the African Union's objective of #SilenceTheGuns, intended to achieve a conflict-free Africa, prevent genocide, make peace a reality for all and rid the continent of wars, violent conflicts, human rights violations, and humanitarian disasters."

The WMC calls on all to pray, work and call for a just and peaceful resolution to the conflict raging in Ethiopia's Tigray region and the Horn of Africa: *"God of healing, light and compassion; we bring to You all who suffer in body, mind or spirit as a result of war and conflict in Ethiopia or because of fears, suspicions raised by cultural, religious or human differences. We pray for all who seek refuge, for those who have been displaced from family, livelihoods or securities. Show them Your mercy and compassion, O Lord and grant strength to those who seek victims' relief in any form of distress; for Your Name's sake. God bless Africa. Guide her leaders. Guard her children; And give her peace. Amen"*

Celebration and sympathies extended

The World Methodist Council joins Esme and Ivan Abrahams and their family in celebrating and mourning the life of Esme's mother, Freda Mostert. The latter died on 12 November in Johannesburg at the age of 98. Married to the late Edward Mostert, they had six children, many grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Mostert enjoyed her birthday celebration with family and close friends, then died peacefully only 12 days later. Her lifelong work will be memorialized through a nursing scholarship. She dedicated more than 50 years to nursing and delivered three generations of babies as a practicing professional midwife. Her exceptional legacy affected many lives as she continued to be a lodestar to many. She has been described as a no-nonsense person who put others above herself, including serving people irrespective of their social standing. Payment for her services might be monetary, fruits, vegetables, or prized ornaments, or from others who had had nothing to give, their deep self-respect.

This legacy of nursing and leadership will be carried on

through The Nurse Mostert Scholarship. The scholarship will provide social, educational, and economic empowerment to women and safeguard women's educational rights from disadvantaged backgrounds.

You can make a difference in the lives of young women in Cape Town, South Africa, by contributing to this non-profit scholarship.

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Freda Mostert

Church Transforms Sanctuary's West Wall into a Prayer Wall



Standing at the Western Wall

Prayer is essential to the life of any church. What is a building block in the faith walk of individuals and congregations, alike, is now part of the physical building of West Austintown First United Methodist Church (Mahoning Valley District) in Ohio.

“We had spent over four months trying to figure out a way for our church to join their prayers as a sort of living time capsule, something that wouldn’t just be a fleeting moment on a Sunday morning,” said the Rev. Jeffery Harrison.

After much discussion among church leaders, the answer came to Harrison in February during a young clergy pilgrimage to the Holy Land with Bishop Tracy S. Malone that was made possible through the generosity of the Methodist Foundation of Ohio.

“While we were in the Holy Land there were three things that were really impactful for me,” Harrison shared. “Baptisms in the Jordan River, visiting the Sea of Galilee, and standing at the Western Wall. Being surrounded by Rabbinic Jews, Hassidic Jews and Christians from other cultures all united in prayer together was incredibly impactful for me.”

Upon returning home to the church Harrison presented to church leadership his vision of the church creating its own Western Wall experience.

“They thought it would be a cool thing. Our sanctuary needed upgraded anyway, and the rear wall of the stage area is the actual western wall of the church building,” said Harrison. “This is really about the congregation coming together.”

Planks of wood were cut out of simple pine, and members of the church were invited to write their prayers on the back side of a plank.

“Everyone received a two-foot long plank,” said Harrison. “They wrote a prayer for life, a prayer for the church ministries, a Scripture for life or even a favorite hymn.

Most every prayer plank is filled out with someone’s name or some sort of prayer. Even if someone didn’t want to do it themselves, I put their name on one as a gesture that we are all surrounded by all the saints.”

The planks were stained one of seven different colors – some mixed specially for this very project – to add warmth and texture to the wall and the work began of assembling the wall. The church’s prayer wall was completed in July, but it wasn’t unveiled publicly until in-person worship resumed on Sunday, November 1. One of the church members remembered during the All Saints Day service that Sunday was a woman whose prayer plank is part of the wall but who, sadly, passed away shortly after the wall was completed.

The wall is to be more than just a new backdrop for the sanctuary. Harrison and church leadership want to be able to incorporate it into worship life on a regular basis. “I hope when we learn to live differently with COVID we can all come to the wall to place a hand on it and pray. Maybe during Lent, we can even be placing a paper with what we need to work on in our lives, leaving it in the wall and removing it on Easter morning.”

This Western Wall of the church building has become more than just another wall in the building. It is indeed a living time capsule with a purpose.

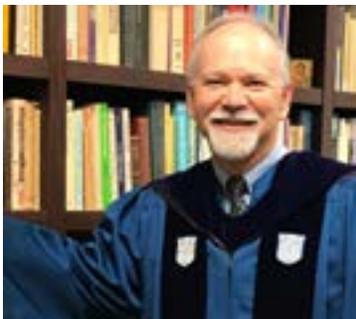
Read more at <https://eocumcnews.com/author/eocumc-blog/>



Western Wall inspiration built in West Austintown First United Methodist Church.

Director of Global Wesleyan Theology Announced

Wesley House Cambridge announces the appointment of The Revd. Dr. Paul Chilcote as its Interim Director of Global Wesleyan Theology.



The Revd. Dr. Paul Chilcote

The Principal of Wesley House, the Revd. Dr. Jane Leach said of the appointment: “We are delighted that Paul is joining our core staff

team and team of research supervisors. Paul is an eminent Wesley scholar who is active in addressing urgent social, political and theological issues. He brings with him experience, expertise and wisdom that will enhance our work and the experience of our students.”

Paul, an award-winning author and retired United Methodist historian and theologian, has a career in theological education that spans the globe. He has a PhD in historical theology from Duke University where he completed a definitive study of women in early Methodism under the direction of Prof. Frank Baker. Author or editor of nearly 30 books, he is a frequent speaker and workshop leader in applied Wesleyan studies, particularly in the areas of theology, spirituality, and Christian discipleship.

Speaking from the USA about the move to Cambridge, Paul said: “I am so excited about this privilege to serve the Wesley House community at time such as this. I am particularly thrilled to be able to reconnect with Kenya and Zimbabwe through the partnerships of the Centre for Global Wesleyan Theology, to participate in such a diverse community, to teach in the areas of my passion, and to provide guidance to doctoral students from around the world. As a person who deeply appreciates a global vision of the church and seeks to be God’s servant in a world parish, I could not be more honored.”

Paul and Janet are looking forward to spending a portion of each year in Cambridge, engaging in the ongoing life of the Wesley House community. Janet is also a retired United Methodist minister who currently serves on the staff of ZOE Empowers, a mission program of The United Methodist Church that enables orphans and vulnerable children in Africa and India to become self-sufficient. We look forward to welcoming them as soon as COVID-19 travel restrictions allow.

Wesley House is a community of Methodist scholars and students at the heart of the University City of Cambridge. It was a founding member of the Cambridge Theological Federation, an ecumenical grouping of theological colleges in Cambridge.

To learn more email The Revd. Dr. Jane Leach at jl332@cam.ac.uk

Lopes to Coordinate WME for Emerging Leadership

João Paulo Lopes has accepted the role of Coordinator for Emerging Leadership at World Methodist Evangelism. Paulo’s responsibilities will include overseeing our Metanoia ministry including planning a series of virtual events during 2021 and the in-person gathering which will take place in Sweden in 2022.

From the Methodist Church in Brazil, Paulo studied International Relations and believed his calling was to become a diplomat. During a moment of crisis, on a train ride in Germany, God called him to become a “different kind of diplomat.” He and his wife Juliana came to the US shortly after marrying in 2007 where he attended Asbury Theological Seminary. They currently live in the Richmond, Virginia area and have three Brazilian-American daughters, Carolina, Sofia, and Olivia.

Paulo also provides leadership and organizational change coaching through Spiritual Leadership, Inc (SLI), where he partners with leaders and ministry teams. He is currently pursuing an Executive MBA and has been on staff at the local church and denominational levels.

Paulo is passionate about developing people and organizations, helping leaders grow, and connecting people. He loves to preach and teach anytime he gets a chance.

WME leaders say they feel blessed to have Paulo as part of the team, and are confident that his work will bear much fruit.

For more information about WME visit: worldmethodist.org



Paulo Lopes

Thursdays in Black ambassadors: “The resolve to end gender-based violence must remain strong”

The “16 Days” campaign is an annual international initiative that began on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ends on 10 December, Human Rights Day. This year, the World Council of Churches (WCC) is highlighting the links between the household of God and the fundamental need to make our homes safe and loving spaces.

In a unified statement, the 17 ambassadors reflect on why it is so important to protect those who are vulnerable and abused. “We can create safe spaces for all people who are targets of this violence, especially women and girls in our societies,” reads the message. “We should promote transformative masculinities and femininities based on respect and equality.”

The message also honours resistance and resilience to violence, and expresses a vision of a world without fear of sexual and gender-based harassment, abuse and violence.

“And with ongoing physical restrictions due to the spread of the coronavirus, violence against women and girls has intensified,” the message reads. “The resolve to end gen-

der-based violence must remain strong.”

The Thursdays in Black ambassadors, in their various spaces, are working to effect change in policies and practices in churches, workplaces and communities. “Together with the WCC we are actively involved in preparing liturgies and Bible studies, which challenge attitudes and norms that foster gender-based violence,” reads their message. “As people of faith and of goodwill, we appeal to individuals and community agencies to stop the spread of gender-based violence.”

Read the full statement and watch the video in the links below:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/thursdays-in-black-ambassadors-the-resolve-to-end-gender-based-violence-must-remain-strong>

<https://youtu.be/r68aAEKvmKo>



This statement was signed by the Thursdays in Black Ambassadors

The 2022 General Conference Announcement of the CME

Pursuant to ¶202 of THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE, REVISED 2018, the 2022 General Conference of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church is hereby called to meet at 9:00 A.M. on Saturday, June 25, 2022, at the Duke Energy Center, Cincinnati, Ohio. Delegates should arrive in time to be present for Episcopal District caucuses on Friday evening, June 24, 2022. The General Conference is slated to end at some time on Friday, July 1, 2022.

+ Senior Bishop Lawrence Reddick

Celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Methodists around the world are invited to organize and celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. For those living in the Northern Hemisphere, we mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity from 18-25 January each year. Throughout the Southern Hemisphere where January is the middle of summer and often a vacation month, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) is observed at a later date, for example around Pentecost. Regardless of when you celebrate WPCU, now is the time to organize.

A special coordinating committee between the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church prepare resources for the 8-day celebration. For 2021, the World Council of Churches invited the Community of Grandchamp to choose the theme and draft the resource materials. The Community of Grandchamp is an ecumenical women's monastic community located between Basel and Geneva in the village of Areuse on Lake Neuchatel in French-speaking Switzerland and brings together sisters from different churches and various countries. The community maintains a close relationship with the Taize Community.

The WPCU theme for 2021 is "abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit" from John 15:1-17 which focuses on abiding in God's love to bring reconciliation with oneself, bear fruit, grow communion with others, and increase solidarity and witness.

In this time of COVID-19, our local WPCU observances will look different. For local congregations, you may want to:

- Organize a short outdoor prayer service (where weather permits and local laws allow) with neighboring churches,

- Convene a Bible study on the WPCU theme online and invite church members from another denomination to join,
- Ask the local radio station to air a local church leader's sermon on John 15 and the importance of Christian unity,
- Invite individuals to pray for Christian unity at home on a specified day and time,
- Organize local clergy and lay leaders to write about Christian unity for the local newspaper, or
- Pick a local charity and invite area churches to donate to it.

Of course, there are many other ways for congregations to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity during the COVID-19 pandemic! I would love to hear your other suggestions so we might share them with others. Email me at meor@worldmethodistcouncil.org.

Resources for the Week of Prayer of Christian Unity can be found on the World Council of Churches website: www.oikoumene.org/week-of-prayer. Also, look to your national or regional council of churches who may have additional or adapted resources for the Week of Prayer of Christian Unity.

Submitted by Rev. Matthew A. Laferty, Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome

Hurricane Eta wreaks havoc in Central America

Hundreds have been killed in Central America where Hurricane Eta made landfall in Nicaragua as a Category 4 storm on 3 November. Eta's heavy rains and slow movement pushed rivers past their limits and caused flooding and landslides across Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, and Mexico. The mudslides claimed hundreds of homes; in Guatemala, one mudslide killed an estimated 100 people. Even after the storm passed, catastrophic flooding continued.

Washed-out bridges and impassable roads have isolated many communities, making it nearly impossible to communicate or deliver aid. The Church of the Nazarene is responding in compassion throughout the region. In Nicaragua, Panama, and Mexico, many churches are collecting food, shoes, and clothing for distribution to families with the greatest needs.

In Honduras, 12 Nazarene churches have opened as shelters for those who were displaced by flooding or damage. Church members, many of whom were rescued themselves, are providing meals, shoes, and clothing to those in the shelters.

Twenty churches in Guatemala are hosting displaced families, and buildings at the Nazarene Bible Institute, a child development center, the seminary, and a district center have opened as shelter spaces.

Like those in Honduras, Guatemala church members are providing meals to those living in the pop-up shelters as well as those in government-run shelters. Though landslides and flooding are still making travel difficult, a team of volunteers, which includes a doctor, is making its way to a particularly hard-hit area in Guatemala with crisis care kits, clothing, medicine, and shoes.

Pastor Santos, from the North West District in Guatemala, shares his congregation's response to their community. "We are ok! The church has come together to feed them and give them clothes," he says. "Let us help them with what God has given us." In a region where many are considered low-income, the impact of this storm will continue to be felt for years.

To read more stories go to <https://www.nazarene.org/>



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 **Monday, December 21** at communications@worldmethodistcouncil.org if you would like your story to be included in the January edition of the First Friday Letter.

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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About the First Friday Letter

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