First Friday Letter

The World Methodist Council October 2021

Greetings from the Vice President

'Pray without ceasing…'

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

At this time of year, some of us are noting the new growth and promise of spring-time while others are experiencing the beauty and fruitfulness of autumn, the fall. However, for many, it is neither promising nor fruitful: rain hasn't come, so seeds have not sprouted; or rain has come too heavily and washed seeds away; in other places, there have been catastrophic fires, earthquakes, tornedos and other natural disasters.

As I write, the Season of Creation 2021 is coming to a close. This annual time of prayer for the earth runs from September 1st to October 4th. In 1989, the late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios 1 proclaimed September 1st as a day of prayer for the environment and October 4th is the day on which many Christians remember St Francis of Assisi, that great lover of God's creation. Across the church traditions, we are called to pray and act for God's world. And that should not stop on October 4th!

Environmental issues are frighteningly big and many people feel helpless and hopeless facing them. A supermarket chain in my part of the world has the strap line, 'Every little bit counts,' and so it does when it comes to the care of creation – we need each to reflect on how we live and to ask what impact our way of living may be having on the earth and on vulnerable people; and together, we can lobby governments and industry.

Those most affected by climate change and consequent shortages of food and water are remembered in October when World Food Day (16th) and International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17th) form a weekend of ecumenical prayer and action against hunger. We might challenge ourselves to put aside the price of a meal or to join in a very simple meal - and in prayer - with others in support of those who don't have sufficient to eat…

Sadly, environmental issues are not the only forces preventing the growing and harvesting of crops. We have been deeply saddened to hear reports, through the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem, of attacks on fruit trees at The Tent of Nations farm in Palestine; the Nasser family received the 2017 World Methodist Peace Award for their work of reconciliation and peacebuilding. Please do support them in prayer at this difficult time. The World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel happens in late September, but we are urged to remain steadfast in prayer for peace in the region on the 24th of every month.

Writing to his many friends in the early church, Paul constantly urges them to support and to pray for each other. My prayer is that we may do likewise!

Blessings,

Gillian Kingston

Faith leaders call for climate action ahead of UN conference in Glasgow

United Kingdom Senior Faith Leaders have signed the following multi-faith declaration ahead of the UN conference on climate change that begins in Glasgow next month:

Glasgow Multi-Faith Declaration for COP26

Our faith communities are united in caring for human life and the natural world. We share a belief in a hopeful future, as well as an obligation to be responsible in caring for our common home, the Earth.

We recognise the opportunities that COP26 brings in addressing the urgent need for action in limiting the effects of climate change and the critical importance of decisions made in this conference to take forward the agreement made in Paris in 2015.

People have exploited the planet, causing climate change. We recognise that the burden of loss and damage falls most heavily on people living in poverty, especially women and children.

We acknowledge the commitments made through the Lambeth Declaration in 2015. Now, because of the gravity of our situation, the impact of climate change around the world, and the inequality of its effects we seek to strengthen those commitments.

We commit to respond to this challenge by:

· Reflecting deeply in prayer, meditation and worship to discern how to care for the earth and each other, and to encourage our respective communities to do the same.

· Making transformational change in our own lives and in the lives of our communities through individual and collective action.

· Being advocates for justice by calling on governments, businesses and others who exercise power and influence to put into effect the Paris agreement; to make the transition to a just and green economy a priority; and to commit to science-based targets that are aligned with a healthy, resilient, zero-emissions future.

We remind governments of their commitments made in Paris in 2015 to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, and of Article 17 of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights to protect the environment, the biosphere and biodiversity. We call upon them to take the urgent action needed to avert the loss, damage, and forced migration threatened by climate change.

We look to governments to work together and with others to create a positive vision for 2050 where addressing climate change is not just an opportunity to stop burning fossil fuels, but also: to achieve cleaner air and water; to reduce food wastage; to ensure a just and equitable sharing of the earth's resources; and to protect the habitats we share with all other life on whose health we also depend.

Across our doctrinal and political differences, we know that we must change our ways to ensure a quality of life which all can share, and we need to provide hope for people of all ages, everywhere, including future generations. To offer hope in the world we need to have confidence that those in power understand the vital role they have to play at the Glasgow COP26.

Our collective energy and prayers will be with those working for a successful outcome.

Read more at *https://ukcop26.org/*

Alert! WMC Conference further postponed

Due to the continuing challenging times from the COVID-19 Pandemic, the twentysecond Conference of the World Methodist Council was further postponed.

At the two-day virtual meeting of the Steering Committee in August, it was unanimously agreed that the global WMC family from around the world could not safely gather in Gothenburg, Sweden in August of 2022. President J.C. Park announces that a new date for the Conference will be set in the Spring of 2022.

WMC Program Chair Rev. Dr. Martyn Atkins and members of the host committee including Bishop Christian Alstead, Uniting Church President Lasse Svensson and others were consulted. Everyone agreed that a more meaningful Conference could be held at a later date. *On the Move* will continue to be the theme, and the issues of Migration, Justice and Hospitality are evident to be more pertinent now than when the theme was initially chosen.

More information on the Conference will be published as available in this newsletter, on the web pages of the Council and Conference, and Twitter.

Thank you for staying with us in partnership, as we the Methodist, Wesleyan and United church family, continue together *On the Move.*

AME Church elects new leadership, begins LGBTQ+ discernment

NASHVILLE, Tenn.— The 51st Quadrennial Session of the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church met from July 6-10, 2021, at the West Concourse of the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida. Over 1600 delegates met as the church's supreme governance body to review and change the denomination's laws and policies, receive reports from its agencies, and elect denominational leadership.

Due to restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 200 delegates representing countries on the continent of Africa were unable to travel to the United States and were able to participate via a satellite location in Cape Town, South Africa. After the South African government restricted in-person gatherings due to public health concerns, a virtual platform was created to allow these delegates to participate in the deliberations virtually.

"The 2021 General Conference was truly a test of the denomination's resilience and capacity to adapt," stated Dr. Jeffery B. Cooper, General Secretary of the AME Church. "In spite of the last-minute difficulties, we were able to ensure that all members of our family were able to share in this important aspect of the life of our Church. I am proud of our planning team and grateful to the AME Church leadership and delegates for their patience and understanding as we made this shift."

In addition to the business of the General Conference, greetings were received from the President and Vice President of the United States. AME Church member Congresswoman Val Demings of Florida delivered a keynote address to the assembly as well. Demings exclaimed that the role of the Church is to ensure that no one is left behind and that the most vulnerable among us are protected. Representative Demings called the Church to collective action, "The urgency is now."

Among the legislation approved by the AME Church General Conference was an "AME Sexual Ethics Discernment Committee" designed to begin a three-year process to bring back recommendations to the 2024 General Conference. The committee is designed to "develop and propose legislation that undergirds the evangelical responsibility of the church 'to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people' – including people of sexual orientations and gender identities."

At the General Conference new Bishops, General Officers (Department Executives) and members of the Judicial Council were elected. The five incumbent General Officers were retained. New persons elected to leadership in the AME Church include:

Bishops

- The Right Rev. Silvester Beaman, 139th Elected & Consecrated Bishop (Pastor of Bethel, Wilmington, DE).
- The Right Rev. Marvin C. Zanders, II, 140th Elected & Consecrated Bishop (Pastor of St. Paul, Jacksonville, FL)
- The Right Rev. Francine A. Brookins, 141st Elected & Consecrated Bishop (Pastor of Bethel, Fontana, CA)
- The Right Rev. Frederick A. Wright, Sr., 142nd Elected & Consecrated Bishop (Pastor of Quinn Chapel, Cincinnati, OH).

General Officers

- Mr. Marcus Henderson, Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer
  Rev. Dr. James Miller, Executive Director, Department of Retirement Services
- Rev. Dr. John Green, Executive Director, Global Witness & Ministry
- Rev. Dr. Marcellus A. Norris, Executive Director, Department of Church Growth & Development

Judicial Council Members

- Rev. Dr. Jonathan C. Augustine, Judicial Council – Clergy
- Rev. Dr. O. Jerome Green, Judicial Council— Clergy
- Advocate Thabile Ngubeni, Judicial Council – Lay
- Mrs. Monice Crawford—Lay Alternate

These elections marked several significant milestones. As a South African, Advocate Ngubeni became the first African lay person elected to the General Conference to serve in the AME Church in any capacity. Bishop Beaman delivered the benediction for the inauguration of President Joseph Biden. Bishop Zanders is the first Morehouse College graduate elected as a Bishop in the AME Church. Bishop Francine A. Brookins is the fifth woman elected as a Bishop and is the daughter of the late Bishop Hamel Hartford Brookins. Bishop Wright is the first Bishop elected from Ohio since 1948 and the son of the first AME female Presiding Elder, Reverend Cornelia Wright.

The AME Church General Conference will next meet in July 2024 in Cincinnati, Ohio

"The 51st Session of the General Conference had ended with its joys and sorrows, challenges, and accomplishments and through it all we saw the hand of God. To God, be the Glory!" stated Bishop Anne Henning Byfield, President of the Council of Bishops.

Story and photo provided by John Thomas III, 615-601-0450, articles@thechristianrecorder.com

Tent of Nations remains optimistic in spite of many challenges

The Nassars say the family chooses to use its energies in a positive way. After adversaries in so many ways, family spokesman Daoud Nassar explains, “When you stand up and act, you empower yourself, and you help empower others.”

The Nassars and its farm, known as the Tent of Nations, received the World Methodist Council’s most coveted recognition in 2018, the Peace Award. Recognized for their untiring efforts on behalf of peace and justice, the Nassars have been a superb example for many people. However, things have not gotten any easier since the receipt of the Award.

The past year has included an arson attack on the fruit trees, the felling of more than 50 olive trees, a lack of international volunteers or tourist visits due to the pandemic, harassment, uncertainty, pressure and devastation.

Previously, the Nassars’ way of coping and preserving attracted thousands of visitors from around the world, many returning to work on the land as volunteers. They come to learn, to share, and to offer their solidarity. The visitors have ensured – through their donations towards legal costs, as well as being a presence on the farm - that the Nassar family land and farm has not been taken. Their situation has caused international awareness of their plight, and also that of the Palestinians who are also fighting similar land issues with the Israelis.

Recently, the harvest has been occurring along with new planting to assure future harvests. At all the positive movement, a neighbour commented, “You Christians never retaliate! No wonder the Nassar family was awarded the World Methodist Peace Prize award!”

Last Easter, Daoud shared, “We live in a different reality, we are people of the resurrection, we are people of hope, we are people of light. We don’t know what tomorrow will look like, but our call is to remain, to change hearts even in times when we feel we are still in the dark tomb.”

Looking over to Neve Daniel settlement from the Tent of Nations

Story and photos provided by Rev. Angleena Keizer

For the full story follow the link https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/FFL-newsletter-TON-2-1.pdf

Palestinian peace prayer

As we join an international wave of prayer this week for peace in Palestine/Israel, we stand with the World Council of Churches in asserting that all forms of violence are deplorable and should end. We affirm that religious affiliations should not justify the application of different moral standards for different communities. We insist that International law, as an expression of justice for all peoples, must be respected as a moral norm to be implemented politically and socially. We continue to stand with Palestinian Christians and Palestinian and Israeli human rights groups working to uphold international law. The Methodist Liaison Office is one sign of our ongoing response to the cry of Palestinian Christians for their sisters and brothers in faith around the world to come and see the impact of the occupation.

In this week, we continue to pray that the conflict and division that have crushed so many lives in the region over generations may cease. We pray that the hope we share for a renewal and peace be a source of strength for all who work towards reconciliation and for those whose lives are dominated by fear and uncertainty in Israel/Palestine.

Photo from Zefart | Dreamstime.com

Climate Justice For All

From 28th to 30th September, young activists from the 197 member countries of the UNFCCC (the United Nations Convention on Climate Change) will meet in Milan to discuss the issues that will be addressed at the Pre-COP26 in Milan which will be held on 30th September-2nd October and at the COP26 in Glasgow which will be held on 1st - 12th November.

The Christian churches in Milan have also taken steps to take part in the debate. At the forefront are the Italian young Methodists of the international project Climate Justice for All (CJ4A), who in collaboration with the Council of Christian Churches of Milan (CCCM) and the churches of Milan have prepared three events in this framework.

These events will be held on the 1st - 2nd of October in Milan. On the 1st of October a panel discussion at the Methodist Church in Milan will take place. On the 2nd of October there will be a flash mob of the Young Christians in Milan which will be followed by an Ecumenical service that will take place in Basilica di Santo Stefano Maggiore.

CJ4A's next short film and worship resources will focus on different communities from the continent of Africa. This content has been primarily assembled by a team of volunteers from Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The short film will discuss what is currently being done in Africa to adapt to the impacts of climate change, for instance through planting trees and drought resistant crops. The worship resources will feature eco reflections, prayers, facts about climate change in different African nations, songs from Zimbabwe and a poem from Uganda. We hope that churches around the world will listen to these voices from Africa in services, study groups and personal worship.

COP26, the UN's climate change conference, will take place on the 1st -12th of November. Climate Justice for All is fortunate to have a presence in Glasgow during this period, where we will continue to share the voices of the global Methodist family. We will host an exhibition of science and art created by young people from around the world. Four of our workers will be presenting stories from their nations on the topics of Energy, Youth Engagement, Loss and Damage, and Gender, which will be livestreamed and made available to watch on our YouTube channel afterwards.

Our main activity at COP26 is CJ4A LIVE, another livestreamed event which will occur at 15:00-21:00 UTC on November 6th , and 7:00-13:00 UTC on November 7th. We hope that most people can tune in at a time that works for them. The event will feature all of the stories we have shared over the past year, including updates from these communities, and some new voices too. These will be accompanied by song, dance, prayer, poetry, and other forms of worship from CJ4A's global volunteers, as well as time for quiet reflection.

We hope that our sisters and brothers will join us in these events, and that they will encourage the Methodist family all over the world to take further steps in fighting for climate justice.

Our resources and information about upcoming events will be available on our website: https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/cj4a/

If you are interested in contributing content to our events in November, please contact us via email: webelieveinclimatejustice-4all@gmail.com

Story and photo provided by CJ4A Team

Letter to President Biden appeals for reconsidering North Korean sanctions

"While we share many of the concerns upon which these sanctions are based, they have failed to resolve those concerns, despite being among the most rigorous, systemic and longest-standing sanctions regimes ever imposed," reads the letter. "Moreover, the direct and indirect effects of the current sanctions have had very serious negative impacts on humanitarian access and action in North Korea."

Though it is often affirmed that sanctions are not intended to harm ordinary people or to prevent humanitarian assistance, in practice the sanctions have presented major obstacles to such efforts, notes the letter.

"In addition to food shortages, reported health crises, and recent floods in North Korea represent a heavy toll of suffering for the people of the country," reads the letter. "Several of our organizations are ready and standing by to offer needed humanitarian aid and services as soon as circumstances permit."

General Secretary Sauca also called for a new general license for humanitarian goods and services, and an approved banking channel for these purposes. "Furthermore, we consider that the current sanctions regime and travel ban are counterproductive to the pursuit of peace in the region and to the reduction of the risk of potentially catastrophic conflict," continues the letter. "In our view, the failure to consider even incremental relaxation of sanctions was a key factor in the collapse of recent efforts at political engagement for peace."

The rigid maintenance of 'maximum pressure' sanctions has only served to poison the political environment for dialogue and reduction of tensions, notes the letter. "A more flexible policy is needed to create new possibilities for constructive engagement," the text reads. "We believe that people-to-people encounters are essential for building peace."

Policies that prevent such encounters can only entrench conflict and division, the letter concludes. "Accordingly, we also urge you to bring to a permanent conclusion the travel ban that prevents US citizens from meeting and providing assistance to North Korean people in their country," the text reads. "We hope that these concerns can be taken into account in the current review of US sanctions policy mandated by your Administration."

Read the full story here

Story and photos provided by WCC

Photo: Paul Jeffrey/WCC

WME releases anniversary edition of the Faith Sharing New Testament

For 25 years, the *Faith-Sharing New Testament with the Psalms* has provided a clear understanding of the basics of Christian faith, along with guidelines to effectively show and share the love of Jesus.

Under the leadership of the late Dr. H. Eddie Fox, World Methodist Evangelism (WME) the first edition was produced and since that time, the concepts have been taught all around the world. We are honored to be able to offer a revised and updated edition of the *Faith-Sharing New Testament* to mark both the 25th anniversary of its original publication as well as the 50th anniversary of the ministry of WME.

In keeping with the original, the material is laid out in the form of short questions and answers with biblical passages included for reference. The front section – *Basics of Christian Faith* – is devoted to the fundamentals of Christian faith. As the title implies, it is focused on the *basics*, so the answers are not exhaustive. Rather, they are the simple, "plain truths" about the Christian faith necessary to begin a life-long journey of following Jesus Christ. WME has created a series of videos entitled *Plain Truth*, which coincide with the questions and answers in the *Basics* section. Find these videos on the WME website and the WME YouTube channel.

The back section of this New Testament focuses on the essentials of sharing our faith in Jesus Christ. Through the metaphor of embrace, those who are seeking a relationship with Jesus and those who share their faith are given a way to envision both the Wesleyan understanding of salvation and a model for offering that salvation to others. Along with this model for showing and sharing the love of Jesus, six essential values are provided to ground all our efforts to reach out to others with the love of Christ.

Our hope is that as Christ followers ponder the questions and answers, they will grow deeper in their own understanding and experience of faith and through that process their sense of competence and confidence in sharing the Christian faith will grow as well. Each of us has a unique story to tell. Our prayer is that the entire Wesleyan Methodist family will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to tell our stories of faith authentically, gracefully, and with integrity.

Learn more here and purchase copies.

Story by Kim Reisman, WME Executive Director

Humankind: A Hopeful History
A review

Rutger Bregman is a journalist who, wrote the book Humankind. After seven years with the Dutch publication, De Correspondent, a publication "…with no news, no advertising and no cynicism but one which offers solutions." Its appeal in the Netherlands is perhaps illustrated by the fact that it set a world record for crowdfunding. The book, says Bregman, is a product of "innumerable conversations with readers who honed, improved, or overturned my ideas, (and is) … powered by that magical stuff known as intrinsic motivation."

The psychologist Gustave Le Bon's work, Psychology of the Masses, says Bregman, shaped the thoughts of Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Churchill and Rooseveldt, world players in global conflict at the time of WWII. Central to his thesis, Le Bon claimed that, in response to crises, "Man (sic) descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization". It was largely Frederick Lindemann, Churchill's confidante, who urged the prime minister to adopt "tit for tat" bombing in order to break what he claimed would break the spirit of the German people. Twenty-five years after the Second World War, the US would drop three times the amount of WWII firepower on Vietnam!

The idea behind "Humankind" is that, contrary to "the veneer theory," popularized by Dutch biologist, Frans de Waal, "most people are pretty decent." De Waal claimed that civilization is nothing more than a "veneer that will crack" when provoked in the least. Bregman, however, strongly criticizes de Waal's theory as leading people to become cynics at best and turning the human species to be filled with angst. Our basest human nature turned into a nocebo has the effect of self-doubt. Bregman points out that such cynicism and angst reign supreme in philosophers such as Augustine, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Luther and Calvin who hold to Augustine's line that "No one is free from sin ... not even an infant whose span of earthly life is but a single day."

Such human depravity is a feature in the mind of William Golding, author of the fictitious story, *Lord of the Flies*, says Bregman. Golding's tale of a plane of British schoolboy survivors on an island in the Pacific, says Bregman, had the zeitgeist of the 1960's on his side. That generation wanted to know whether the Nazi legacy was present in the British nation. Golding conceded that he had written Lord of the Flies because he wished to reveal his inner, unhappy identity. Bregman, however, goes in search for a "story" of a "real life *Lord of the Flies,*" discovers and learns from a retired seafarer and group of Pacific Island youth (in about the '70's) about their life venture when stranded on a deserted island. Their story differs significantly from that of *Lord of the Flies*. Not least is their decision to stick together, to cooperate and resolve their disputes amicably is a breath of fresh air from Golding's novel. In the section, "Colonel Marshall and the Soldiers who wouldn't Shoot", renowned anthropologist, Brian Ferguson, indicates that cave paintings and unearthed skulls indicate an absence of warring conflict. War therefore had a specific time of origin and we ask whether in his battalion of more than 300 soldiers, how was it that in a time of danger, only 15 to 25 percent of soldiers actually pulled the trigger?

Humankind: A Hopeful History is translated from the Dutch original by Elizabeth Manton and Erica Moore and published by Bloomsbury Publishing.

Story by Keith A. Vermeulem, Researcher for the WMC

Prayer & Action Weekend against Hunger

'Give us this day our daily bread…'—Matthew 6:11

Famine has no place in the 21st century and is entirely preventable.

The World Methodist Council joins churches and organizations worldwide to declare a *Weekend of Prayer and Action Against Hunger* on 16-17 October 2021. This coincides with World Food Day on 16 October. You are asked to pray, engage and act against hunger.

Resources are available at https://www.wvi.org/publications/emergencies/hunger-crisis/weekend-of-prayer/hunger-facts . Included are as liturgy for worship which is adaptable for local churches, videos, information and material for families, etc. Some of the materials are available in Spanish, French or Portuguese.

The weekend is a milestone in a long journey for many including the WesleyMen who invite Methodists, Wesleyans, and Uniting churches to 'Fast, Pray, Give' where churches and agencies support others in sustainable food productions, farming, gardening projects, and soup kitchens. Others may find inspiration to reflect on their lifestyle in the light of a global hunger crisis, to share gifts, advocate for systemic changes towards access to food for all and pray more concretely and creatively and to extend God's abundance to all people.

Methodist ecumenical leadership celebrated

The 100th anniversary of the birth of the late Methodist ecumenical leader Rev. Philip Potter was celebrated on 19 August by the World Council of Churches. The first General Secretary from the Global South, he held this position from 1973 to 1984.

Potter was a pivotal figure in the ecumenical movement from the very beginnings of the WCC at its 1st Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948 when he was the spokesperson for youth. A special webinar celebration was held by WCC, and a recording can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDgxM8jEgko

The late Rev. Philip Potter

Potter was born on the Caribbean island of Dominica. After initially working in a lawyer's chambers and for the attorney general of Dominica, he trained for the Methodist ministry in Jamaica and later in Britain. He represented the Jamaican Student Christian Movement at the second World Conference of Christian Youth in Oslo 1947, a turning point in his life which propelled him into the international ecumenical movement.

He worked in the WCC youth department from 1954 to 1960, and as director of the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism from 1967 to 1972.

Potter had also worked as a Methodist missionary in Haiti and for the Methodist Missionary Society in London. Throughout his life, he was committed to supporting youth in the ecumenical movement, and served as chair of the World Student Christian Federation from 1960 to 1968.

A 2013 WCC publication, "At Home with God and in the World; A Philip Potter Reader" is available for free download. There is also a special free virtual issue of the WCC journals The Ecumenical Review and International Review of Mission: "Philip Potter: Prophet of God's Oikoumene"

250th anniversary of Francis Asbury's historic journey to the USA

A portrait of Francis Asbury, reproduced with the permission of the Trustees of Wesley's Chapel

This autumn marks 250 years since Francis Asbury sailed from Pill, near Bristol, to Philadelphia, having been commissioned by John Wesley as a travelling preacher. Asbury went on to lead the Methodist movement in America for over 30 years.

Starting life with little education and from a humble background as an apprentice in the industrial West Midlands, Francis Asbury went on to become a major influence in the USA, and where he is still revered, over two centuries on.

Francis Asbury grew up in Sandwell in the West Midlands, his childhood home now the location of the Bishop Asbury Cottage Museum. Barbara Easton, Vice-President of the Methodist Church, who lived in the same area for over 40 years, has written of her admiration for Francis Asbury: "Why am I such a fan of Asbury? I think it's because, by rights, he was someone that no-one should ever have heard of. Most things in life were stacked against him – he was an apprentice nail-maker with little education. Yet he was fired up by the faith that he found and this gave him an energy which nothing could stop. He didn't have a lot of learning, but he studied (and kept studying) to get the education he needed. At a time when most people didn't travel far, he went round and round the preaching circuit of the growing, challenging towns encouraging people to find a transformative faith like his. He was said to be an extra-ordinary preacher'. He didn't always have great health or confidence, but he didn't let that define him or what he could do for the church. He put up his hand and said, 'Here am I. Send me.'"

The Methodist Church in Britain and the United Methodist Church planned a series of events on both sides of the Atlantic coinciding with Asbury's voyage to the USA. The UK events were:

A concert on Saturday 11th September evening at the New Room, Bristol, the oldest Methodist building in the world. Magpie22, a Bristol band specialising in Americana music, performed a programme of specially selected songs, to celebrate the partnership with the US. A service on Sunday 12th September, looked at the call on Asbury's life, his response, and the cost of following that call.

In addition the Methodist Church in Britain launched a series of digital resources to coincide with the September celebrations on the themes of vocation, rural ministry, itinerancy and journaling. Sarah Hollingdale, Heritage Officer for the Methodist Church, said: "We wanted to bring some of the key themes of Francis Asbury's life into a contemporary context and offer resources for a period of reflection during the weeks between his embarkation and arrival in Philadelphia."

During September and October video resources will be released by the United Methodist Church and a number of events are planned in late October at Historic St George's United Methodist Church in Philadelphia, the oldest continuously used Methodist Church in the USA.

Read more at https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/

Hispanic Heritage Month highlights contributions

From September 15 to October 15 we celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month. It is an extremely important celebration, since it evokes the achievements and contributions of our presence in this country as well as the first explorations of the Spaniards in the territory of the United States.

Proclamation of National Hispanic Heritage Week

In 1968, Congress authorized President Lyndon B. Johnson to proclaim National Hispanic Heritage Week, which included September 15 – the date on which the independences of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua are celebrated – and September 16 and September 18 – the dates on which Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence.

The Celebration of Hispanic Heritage was first approved as a week-wide celebration by a joint resolution of the US Congress on September 17, 1968.

President Johnson's proclamation urged the American people, especially educational entities, to observe the week with appropriate ceremonies and activities. To encourage participation, President Gerald R. Ford issued a proclamation in 1974 urging schools and human rights organizations to participate fully in that week.

Twenty years later, on August 17, 1988, President Ronald Reagan reiterated President Gerald Ford's call for broader recognition of Hispanic Americans. For this purpose Congress passed Law 100-402 that extended the celebration for a period of 31 days that was called National Hispanic Heritage Month – from September 15 to October 15.

Now the USA celebrates the culture and traditions of the residents of this country with roots in Spain, Mexico and the Spanish-speaking countries of Central America, South America and the Caribbean.

To honor the achievements of Latinos and Hispanics in the USA, Congress, through Public Law 100-402, as amended, has authorized and required the president to issue an annual proclamation designating "National Hispanic Heritage Month" from September 15 to October 15 of each year.

To read the presidential proclamations of previous years, click here.

Read more at https://www.umnews.org/

Photo credits: Perkins School of Theology/ R. Hipps

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 **Friday, October 29** at communications@worldmethodistcouncil.org if you would like your story to be included in the November 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 Council's Conference website is at worldmethodistconference.org.

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

About the First Friday Letter

The First Friday Newsletter is a monthly publication of the World Methodist Council.

Publisher: Bishop Ivan Abrahams, General Secretary

Communications: Michaela Bryson

All stories and photos, unless otherwise stated, are protected by their respective copyrights. Please do not copy without expressed written permission from the Council.

Follow the Council on social media!!

Twitter	Facebook	Instagram
@WMCouncil	@World Methodist Council	@wmcouncil