



FIRST FRIDAY LETTER

The World Methodist Council February 2021

Greetings from the General Secretary

“For last year’s word belong to last year’s language

And next year’s words await another voice.”

T.S. Eliot

When, in early 2020, COVID-19 shook our world, little did we know that “lockdown” would be added to our vocabulary and declared the word of the year! Lockdown very much sums up 2020 but with a new year comes new hope. The hope of recoveries, scientific breakthroughs, and the hope of equitable access to vaccines.

Although we live in unprecedented times, many of us thought that we had put the most challenging year in recent times behind us. Still, we soon experienced a second wave of infections with more loss of loved ones, travel bans, and new lockdown restrictions. While we do not know what tomorrow holds, like Ralph Abernathy, the American civil rights activist and Baptist minister, we can say with confidence, *“I don’t know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future.”* Like the Israelites standing on the banks of the Jordan, we feel helpless and anxious, but we take assurance in the word of God, “Don’t be afraid! Stand your ground, and see what the Lord will do to save you today.” (Exodus 14:13) God holds this ever-expanding universe in God’s hands. God is our refuge, strength, and hope.

Right now, change seems to be the only constant. We need to respond to the shifts happening around us and extend our peripheral vision to survive in an ever-changing world. Despite a change in management, professional assessments, and bold initiatives to sustain the World Methodist Museum at Lake Junaluska, we are sad to announce the museum’s closure. According to a recent survey by the American Alliance of Museums, as COVID-19 continues to surge across the US, museums are losing mission dollars leaving about one-third of all institutions at risk of permanent closure. (see an announcement in this edition of the FFL and an article by the American Alliance of Museums <https://www.aam-us.org/2020/11/17/museums-losing-millions-job-losses-mount-as-covid-19-cases-surge/>) We will keep you updated regarding the deaccession process.

I was looking forward to honoring my first invitation of the new year from Judge Mohammed Abu Salam, General Secretary of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, to celebrate the 2nd International Day of Human Fraternity on February 4 in Abu Dhabi. The COVID-19 restrictions made travel impossible, but please find my greetings and a short message on behalf of the WMC. (<https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/A-Message-by-the-General-Secretary-to-the-Gathering-on-Human-Fraternity-Feb-4th-2021-003.pdf>)

The Methodist/Wesleyan and United Church communities have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic with love, compassion, and prophetic witness. We would love to hear about the initiatives in your local churches, districts, and conferences. In this edition, we celebrate with Rev. Chad Garinger and The Potter’s House, a compassionate ministry of the Sciotoville Church of the Nazarene.

On February, 17 we observe Ash Wednesday as we begin the Lenten Season. Please support Wesley Men (<https://FastPrayGive.org/lent-2021>) and World Methodist Evangelism, who celebrate their 50th Anniversary this year. Both organizations have exciting new resources to guide us in our Lenten journey.

Stay safe and healthy!

Blessings,

Ivan

Nominees sought for 2021 Peace Award

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

Applications submitted by May 31 will be considered for this year. Any application received after May 31 will be reviewed later for 2022. All supporting documents must be included at the time of submission.

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

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

The recipient receives a medallion, citation and US \$1,000 which is symbolic of the larger recognition achieved in working for peace, justice and reconciliation. The recipient is included in the World Methodist Council Peace Award booklet and their photo is hung on the wall of the World Methodist Museum with other recipients of this prestigious Award.

Go to www.worldmethodistcouncil.org and click on the “What We Do” tab and then click on the “World Methodist Peace Award” tab and complete the online application. Please send all nomination forms to Bishop Ivan Abrahams at info@worldmethodistcouncil.org

CCA endorses joint interfaith statement welcoming the coming into force of UN Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) has endorsed an interfaith statement on ‘The Entry into Force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)’, and joined with many other renowned faith-based organisations from around the world in signing the interfaith statement.

The United Nations (UN) Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), a legally binding instrument, is a decisive step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It includes a set of prohibitions and undertakings that prevent the development, testing, acquisition, possession, stockpiling, use, or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The TPNW was adopted with the support of 122 states in 2017 and is set to come into force on 22 January 2021. To mark the historic and ground-breaking moment, several interfaith organisations released a joint statement that reaffirmed the moral, ethical, and theological imperatives and importance of the global disarmament movement.

The joint interfaith statement espouses, “As people of faith, we believe that the possession, development, and threat to use nuclear weapons is immoral... these technologies are part of structures and systems that bring about great suffering and destruction. We commit, therefore, to the ethical and strategic necessity of working together for economic and social justice, right relationship with the Earth, and accountability and restoration where there is violence and harm.”

The TPNW recognises the damage wrought on people and the environment by the use or testing of nuclear weapons; it requires nations to implement the required remedial measures to rectify all harm.

The statement concludes with the declaration: “At this historic moment, we must act decisively to strengthen the power of the TPNW upon its entry into force, and to work for peace, cooperation, and common security.”

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of the CCA, stated, “The CCA has expressed deep concern about the catastrophic human-

itarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. The rush to develop and procure such weapons anywhere in the world is incompatible with the desired goal of achieving genuine standards of a humanitarian polity. As the world grapples with the task of addressing even the most basic of human needs, the tendency to divert precious resources towards the acquisition and maintenance of nuclear weapons has grave ramifications.”

The CCA General Secretary lauded the Treaty for representing the commitment of the nations and the willingness of many heads of states to make a significant shift from the ever-escalating arms race to a period of peace, justice, and wellbeing.

“The mandate on States to uphold the Treaty is in keeping with the life-affirming proclamation that envisions security in our world and future. It endorses the right to protect the world for future generations and validates the principle of stewardship,” observed Dr. Mathews George Chunakara.

Read more at <https://www.cca.org.hk/>



Youth and Young Adult Scholarship Application registry now open

Scholarship opportunities for the 22nd World Methodist Council Conference are open now. Register by clicking on the link below.

<https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/what-we-do/youth-and-young-adult-scholarship/>



Ohio church doubles yearly food distribution amid pandemic

When a farmer in Oregon needed a place to distribute more than 400,000 pounds of food, someone tagged Chad Garinger, lead Pastor of Sciotoville Church of the Nazarene, in the Facebook post. That generosity allowed the church's food bank to distribute double its annual amount.

The Potter's House is a compassionate ministry of Sciotoville Church of the Nazarene, a small church with an attendance of less than 50. More than 80 percent of the surrounding county's 78,000 residents live at or below the poverty line, and nearly half of the residents visit the church's food pantry.

Garinger received even more than the 400,000 pounds of food the farmer had initially mentioned. Potter's House worked to distribute the food at multiple points across the county as well.

"Last year we distributed 434 tons of food to our community," Garinger said. "When you add the farmers' program, we have distributed over 800 tons of food to our county." Garinger commended the action of their small church.

"Not everybody in the church participates in everything, but everybody in the church participates in something," Garinger said. "[It could be] an elderly lady sitting at home who says she can't come help in the distribution but can certainly pray for us. That's huge."

Under the direction of Erika Stepp, Potter's House offers more than just a food bank. They help community members sign up for health benefits, heat assistance, SNAP benefits, and many more social service programs. The staff, who are all IRS certified tax volunteers, also help prepare nearly 2,500 individuals' state and federal tax returns during tax season.

"People know that if they have a need, even if we can't meet that need, we will find someone who can," Garinger said. "We know who to ask."

The Portsmouth/Sciotoville area is a post-industrial city along the Ohio River, closer to Kentucky than the next city in Ohio. All but one of the factories in the area have

closed up over time, and the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have hit the already-struggling community hard.

The community supports the Potter's House in many ways. Local churches send volunteers or financial assistance, and sometimes both. One day, Garinger found the alley behind the building paved after mentioning to the mayor that the gravel made it difficult to offload food with hand-trucks and sometimes ruined fresh produce as it spilled. A bar in a local city donates one third of its tips every quarter to the food bank. Some of the bartenders have even volunteered at Potter's House.

"I'm guessing some of those clients and patrons of that institution probably come here and participate as well," Garinger said.

Just as the community is aware of Potter's House's impact, the church knows that the community needs the hope it provides.

"The whole tagline for Potter's House is 'Reshaping lives in Jesus' name,'" Garinger said. "If you walk the neighborhoods, if you see the people in the community, you ... know for sure that these people have felt real needs. What I love about this church is that we are willing to do everything it takes to meet the needs."

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



PNW Conference obtains \$100K UMCOR grant for wildfire recovery

Recovery efforts from devastating wildfires in the state of Washington will be ramped up significantly in 2021 thanks to a \$100,000 recovery grant the Pacific Northwest Conference received from United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

“This sets us solidly on the path to do some significant work and we just feel blessed,” said Dana Bryson, who is the co-disaster response coordinator with his wife Kathy Bryson for the PNW Conference.

The recovery grant will be used to assist the long-term recovery group to help communities devastated by the Okanagan, Douglas and Ferry County fires in northcentral Washington begin to fill many unmet needs that just keep piling up.

Dana Bryson said the grant was written so that it can be added onto, which means they hope to support the Pine Creek Community Restoration long term recovery group working in Malden and Pine City recover after nearly 80 percent of their buildings were leveled in the fires that roared through the dry, hot, and windy conditions in eastern Washington.

In many of the communities which stood in the pathway of some of the most devastating wildfires in recent history in Washington, UMCOR case managers and long-term recovery groups work with the uninsured and underinsured who lost everything to help pick up the pieces.

“(This grant) is basically designed to help survivors move to the next phase of their life,” said Kathy Bryson.

In addition to providing recovery funding, the grant also funds UMCOR case management training, which the Brysons said is critical for volunteers and case managers who will be working with survivors. Just last week, eight trainees began the UMCOR case management training.

“We wanted to get the ball rolling and get in early,” Dana Bryson said.

In the emergency response world, where volunteers from a variety of agencies are trying to provide services, Kathy Bryson said UMCOR brings credibility to the work.

While a long-term recovery group is already in place in the Okanagan area (created after wildfires ripped through the area in 2014 and 2015), the long-term recovery group is still being pieced together in Malden and Pine City.

“Everyone there is a survivor,” Kathy Bryson said.

The PNW Conference benefited from two \$10,000 UMCOR solidarity grants that helped with immediate response in communities while the wildfires were raging, in addition to UMCOR hygiene kits, cleaning kits, ash sifters, and school supplies for children. Additionally, the Brysons were able to secure a \$10,000 AmeriCares grant which supported primarily Spanish-speaking farm laborers displaced and distraught by the wildfires.

Long-term recovery is expected to take four to five years, which is why the Brysons are thankful to have the ability to leverage the \$100,000 UMCOR grant into more resources.

As disaster response stewards for the PNW Conference, the Brysons are grateful to have received significant additional disaster response donations from local church giving to help with targeted wildfire disaster response. At least \$30,000 of these funds will be used in direct support of the current UMCOR recovery grant. Advance #352 funds are also being used to help with survivor needs because of the flooding that happened in February in the Blue Mountain area in southeastern Washington.

“Our congregations have been incredibly generous,” Dana Bryson said.

Read more at <https://greaternw.org/>



Ash shifiting kits assembled for wildfire survivors. Photo provided by Dana & Kathy Bryson

World Methodist Evangelism celebrates 50 years

Greetings in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

This is a milestone year for World Methodist Evangelism! 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of WME and we are enthusiastically planning to celebrate throughout the year.

Since 1971, when the World Methodist Council established WME, our vision has been that Christ followers within the global Wesleyan Methodist family would become agents of transformation by sharing the Gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit. In pursuit of that vision **we continue to equip and encourage Christ followers around the world to share their faith in the context of today's realities.** It is an honor and privilege to be able to bring together the over 80 different denominations in over 134 countries around the task of multiplying the witnesses for Jesus Christ.

The World Methodist Council continues to play a significant role in our work, and we are deeply grateful. As an affiliate of the Council we are blessed to be able to offer equipping ministries to the global Wesleyan family. Whether it be through the Order of the FLAME (Faithful Leaders as Mission Evangelists), international evangelism seminars, Connecting Congregations, faith-sharing resources like the Faith-Sharing New Testament and Embrace: Showing and Sharing the Love of Jesus, God has used WME to strengthen the witness of Christ followers during these 50 years.

I would like to invite you to join us as we celebrate during 2021. You may have stories to tell about your experiences with WME. We would love for you to share those! You may also want to host an Embrace training event (live, hybrid, or fully virtual) for your area. Embrace has impacted Christ followers worldwide, empowering them to go deeper into their own faith experience in order to better show and share the love of Jesus in their own circles of influence.

We would be grateful if you would spread the word about the milestone we are celebrating. We are planning a variety of teaching opportunities as well as producing an updated anniversary edition of the Faith Sharing New Testament, which contains vital information about the Christian faith and guidelines for showing and sharing the love of Jesus. Your support and participation, as well as the participation of the laity and clergy in your area, will greatly enhance our celebration.

Thank you for all you have done over these 50 years to further the work of World Methodist Evangelism. I'm looking forward to many more years of fruitful collaboration and partnership with the World Methodist Council as we continue to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace,

Kimberly D. Reisman
Executive Director
World Methodist Evangelism



Marking Ash Wednesday safely

With COVID-19 still a threat, worship leaders are urging increased caution in observing Ash Wednesday on Feb. 17. An ecumenical team convened by three United Methodists, two of them from Candler School of Theology, produced a six-page guide to reduce health risks as Christians mark the start of Lent. The guide draws on a range of experts, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

Read more here to help follow guidelines <http://e.umc.org/Xkr06pX1s100QVg76005J50>

World Methodist Museum sells copies of Conference Proceedings Books

Conference	Year	# of Copies	Price - US\$
1	1881	3	50
2	1891	0	0
3	1901	0	0
4	1911	0	0
5	1921	0	0
6	1931	2	20
7	1947	3	20
8	1951	4	20
9	1956	2	20
10	1961	3	20
11	1966	3	20
12	1971	2	20
13	1976	3	20
14	1981	2	20
15	1986	2	20
16	1991	2	20
17	1996	3	20
18	2001	2	20
19	2006	1	20
20	2011	1	20

Please contact the World Methodist Council Headquarters to buy a copy. The books are first come first serve. Please email us at communications@worldmethodistcouncil.org.



Older editions of Conference books

Museum Closure Announced

This is to inform you that the World Methodist Museum will not be reopening after this almost one year of closure. This difficult decision was made by the CEO and General Secretary, Ivan Abrahams, the CFO and Treasurer, Kirby Hickey, and the World Methodist Council Steering Committee, which is comprised of 28 members from around the world.

Since The World Methodist Museum will permanently close, it is in the early stages of this process, which will include artifacts being shared with theological schools and seminaries, museums and/or headquarters of the various member churches /denominations, other museums, etc., and perhaps, some items being sold. Experts are being sought to assist with this important work.

Thank you for the many ways you have supported the Museum. Even though funding for World Methodist Museum improved beyond where it was in 2013, the amount of money coming in was not adequate to cover the utilities, maintenance and repairs, staff or other necessities.

The Steering Committee has conducted a number of studies and assessments and must look forward to the future and stability of the World Methodist Council.

For everything there is a season, and many are thankful for your help and contributions during the seasons of the Museum. Thank you, too, for your support of the Council's decision.

Individuals, museums, schools, and venues interested in asking for Museum artifacts should contact the World Methodist Council Office at office@worldmethodistcouncil.org. Every effort will be made to address communication in the order it is received.

Philippines TEACH program helps students with educational needs

TEACH Ormoc is supporting children and families in the community by providing printed copies of modules from the community school and tutorials for neighborhood children. The center has also provided a learning hub with equipment that allows the children to go online and participate in class and research as needed.

TEACH (Teaching, Equipping A Child Holistically) is a holistic child development center run by the Ormoc Church of the Nazarene in Eastern Visayas in partnership with Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Philippines.

The development center, under the leadership of Susan Balasbas and project director Jemuel Suganob, was born in response to the needs of the children, families, and community after the devastation of Super Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. The work and the passion of the volunteers did not stop in spite of the pandemic.

In addition to supporting the children, the church provides a midweek prayer meeting that the parents diligently attend.

TEACH also partners with other community organizations that advocate for children and has received an award as a major contributor in making Ormoc City the most child-friendly city in Eastern Visayas, Philippines.

“Ormoc Church of the Nazarene is reaching out to its community with their limited resources and with thankful hearts for God’s unlimited provision,” said Jemuel Suganob, TEACH project coordinator at Ormoc Church of the Nazarene. “May the Lord continue to bless this community through the local church.”

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



WesleyMen and FastPrayGive.org offer Lenten devotion resource

Christians worldwide mark the forty days of Lent as a season of reflection and preparation leading to Easter’s celebration. As an extension of the weekly scripture and devotion offering through the FastPrayGive.org program, WesleyMen have published a daily reading of scripture, devotion, and prayer, which seeks to build connections between the scriptures and the call upon our lives to assist and empower people in need.

Available in English for e-book, and PDF formats (delivered via email) as well as paperback (can only ship within USA) at FastPrayGive.org on February 1st. For more information or to inquire about bulk pricing, please contact admin@wesleymen.org.

<https://FastPrayGive.org/store>



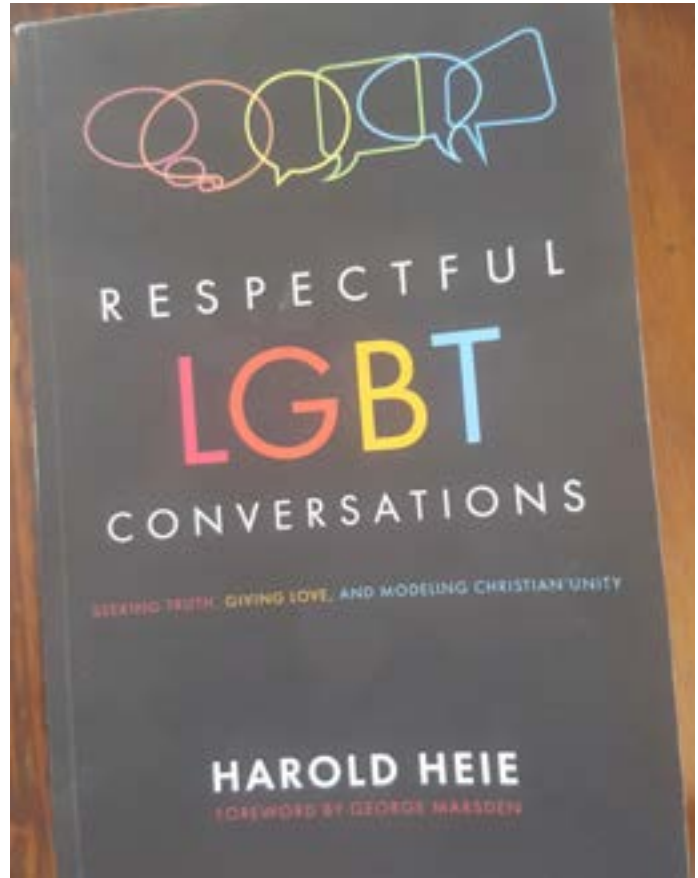
Respectful LGBT Conversations: Seeking Truth, Giving Love, and Modeling Christian Unity

In stark contrast to the shrill and nasty interactions among many Christians regarding contentious LGBT issues, this book models a redemptive mode of engagement by featuring respectful conversations among deeply committed Christians who hold to divergent, traditional and non-traditional views. The foundational values guiding these conversations are the quest for truth, giving the gift of love to all brothers and sisters in Christ, and modeling Christian unity.

Emerging from these conversations are practical steps for a way forward that include creating safe spaces for ongoing conversation and practicing courageous Christian leadership. Based on case studies for a Christian university and two Christian churches, this book provides helpful advice for navigating conflict within churches, Christian denominations, and Christian educational institutions. George M Marsden, the American historian who has written extensively on the interaction between Christianity and American culture, commends Heie's "respectful conversations" as needful since "modern era Protestant churches have tended to operate according to a sort of free enterprise system" while Christians in the public sphere, who receive the most attention, are those imitating "reckless polemics of popular political discourse." Marsden regards Heie as a "welcome prophet," able to cultivate the partisan politics of evangelicalism, "help(ing) people find community, love, support, and reconciliation that teaches generosity in word and deed toward those who differ from them, even their enemies."

C.S. Lewis has maintained that the essentials of "mere Christianity" hold across Christian persuasions today even as it did centuries ago. The characteristics of Christian discourse – even to the point of agreeing to disagree – require more scrutiny today in matters such as gender differentiation, sexual orientation and LGBT. Heie does not offer easy answers or simplistic ways out of a discussion that is gripping the Christian Church, including the People called Methodist across the globe today. Marsden commends *Respectful Conversations* to decision makers of Christian institutions, be they traditionalists differing from contemporary thought and beliefs or progressives who would like to see immediate change. *Respectful LGBT Conversations* enables engagement in discussions and guides participation in the same with grace.

Contents: Voices from the Gay Community; Biblical Understandings; Findings from the Sciences; Constitutional Framework for Public Policy; Same-Sex Marriage: Pluralism; Anti-Discrimination Laws; Voices from Younger Christians; Churches and LGBT Community; Case Study Conversations about LGBT People and Issues; Conclusion: A Possible way Forward



Author: Harold Heie Copyright © 2018

Foreword by George Marsden

Publisher: Cascade Books

Book Reviewed by Keith Anthony Vermeulen



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, February 22** at communications@worldmethodistcouncil.org if you would like your story to be included in the March 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.

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

@WMCouncil

Facebook

@World Methodist Council
@World Methodist Museum

Instagram

@wmcouncil