



FIRST FRIDAY LETTER

The World Methodist Council May 2021

Greetings from the General Secretary

While the COVID-19 pandemic has crushed many hopes and dreams, paradoxically, it has capitulated us into a virtual revolution of new technologies, knowledge production, innovation, and research. It has also forced us to press the reset, recalibrate, and revision button of our institutional and individual lives, recognizing that we have to turn the tide towards a just and sustainable existence for all on this fragile planetary home called Earth.

I trust that you have been following our “**Climate Justice for All**” Campaign and made your contribution during Earth Month through simple acts of caring for creation like recycling and planting trees. (<https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/cj4a/>) During the past few months, there has been an increased number of climate refugees, often poor farmers forced to leave their homes because of floods or drought.

In many churches, we commemorated **Workers’ Sunday** or **International Workers Day**. May 1 is a national public holiday in many countries worldwide to celebrate workers’ contribution to humanity. In the USA and Canada, Labor Day is celebrated on the first Monday in September. It is important to note that the Bible does not differentiate between what we understand as secular or sacred work. God is a worker, and we are coworkers; therefore, all work has intrinsic value. (Colossians 3:24-4:1)

On May 9, people around the world will celebrate **Mother’s Day** or Mothering Sunday by honoring their mothers in various ways, some with flowers, gifts, special lunches, prayers, and visits to gravesites. In America, the idea of honoring mothers was conceived by mother and daughter Ann and Anna Jarvis. The first Mother’s Day Service was held on May 1908 at St. Andrew’s Methodist Church, Grafton, West Virginia. Please watch the video link to learn more about this rich history <https://www.umc.org/en/content/methodist-history-the-founding-mothers-of-mothers-day>

When reflecting on the influence of Susanna Wesley on the lives of the Wesley brothers, Riley Waldo Emerson is correct when he stated, “Men are what their mothers made them.” Susanna knew that “Jacky” was spared for some special reason, “a brand plucked from the burning” after his near escape when the Rectory was destroyed by fire in 1709. When John sought his mother’s approval to go to Georgia, she assented, “Had I twenty sons I should rejoice they were so employed though I should never see them more.” Two years before her death, Susanna came to the London headquarters of Methodism at the Foundry, where she continued to support John, which shaped his life.

About sixty years ago, I was part of a Sunday School Anniversary celebration to respect femininity and motherhood. Each child displayed a card with a letter of the alphabet. **M** – is for the million things she gave me, **O** – means only that she is growing old, **T** – is for the tears she shed to save me, **H** – is for her heart as pure as gold, **E** – is for her every shining light, **R** – is for right she will always be. Put them together, and they spell **MOTHER**. A blessed Mother’s Day to all mothers.

Keep safe.

Ivan



Photo by Jackie Bolden

Are you ready?

One of the wonderful things we do at World Methodist Evangelism is train believers all over the world to show and share the love of Jesus. We do this through in-person gatherings as well as virtual gatherings. A few years ago, I was in Kenya teaching about Embrace, an understanding of faith sharing that focuses on six essential values – humility, clarity, prayer, integrity, worship, and urgency.

Early in my visit, I had an interesting conversation with Bishop William Muriuki of the Methodist Church Kenya. Bishop William is part of our Africa Regional Secretary team, a group of dedicated volunteers who help guide us in our work. He mentioned that he may have to leave during our teaching session because he was a witness in a court case regarding an accident of some kind. Because of his busy schedule, the court official told him he didn't have to be present for the entire case; they would just call him when it was his time to testify. Sure enough, later that day he received a call and left to testify.

Because I live in the United States, I found this whole scenario surprising. No one called to testify in court in the US would ever be allowed to come and go as they pleased. We would be stuck at the courthouse for the entire day – maybe even longer!

Yet, as I thought about it a bit more, it occurred to me that in this kind of system, Bishop William had to be ready to give his testimony at a moment's notice. There is no special preparation time, no organizing a big event, no assigning the job to someone else. Bishop William had to

be ready to give his testimony at whatever moment he was called upon.

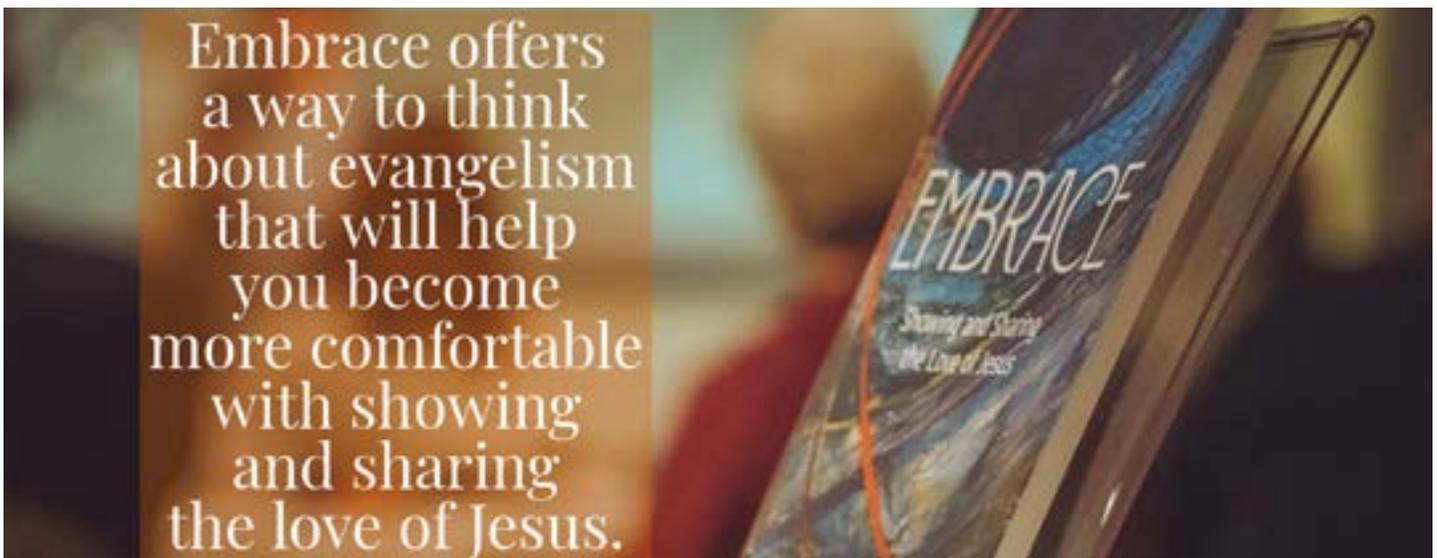
That, my friends, is the situation of every Christian! We are to be ready, even on a moment's notice, to give our testimony. Whenever we are called, we have to be ready to be a witness, to testify to what we have seen, heard, and experienced.

That's what a witness is, actually. It isn't about being an expert witness. Jesus never said that we would be his expert witnesses. He just said that we would be witnesses – people who tell the truth about what they have seen, heard, and experienced.

As Christians, each of us is in the same position Bishop William was in that day he was called to be a witness. So... the question is, what would you say if someone asked you to testify about how you have experienced the love of Jesus in your life? How would you respond if they asked where you have seen God at work?

Embrace: Showing and Sharing the Love of Jesus, is a resource to help people discover authentic ways to share the love of Jesus, through becoming genuinely in touch with your own experience of faith and the way it has impacted your life. Learn more about Embrace or about the mission of WME at worldmethodist.org.

Photo and story by Rev. Dr. Kim Reisman



MEOR Webinar

The Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome is hosting a webinar on the history of international Methodist-Catholic dialogue from 2006 to the present. The Rev. Dr. David Chapman, Methodist co-chair of the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission, will offer a lecture entitled "Grace and Holiness: Catholics and Methodists in Dialogue, 2006-21."

The webinar will take place on Tuesday, 11 May 2021 at 18:00 Rome (+2 UTC) via Zoom. The event will last 45 minutes and will be conducted in English. A recording of the event will be posted on YouTube in the days following the webinar. To register for the webinar, visit the MEOR website - www.meorome.org/events

Last call for 2021 Peace Award nominations

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

Applications submitted by 31 May will be considered for this year. Any application received after 31 May 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 a featured article in WMC and Wesleyan/ Methodist publications.

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

Photo and story by The World Methodist Council



DARING GREATLY: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead by Brené Brown

“It is not the critic who counts; not the person who points out how the strong stumble, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the one who is actually in the arena; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends the self in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who at worst, if s/he fails, at least fails while daring greatly ...” (Theodore Roosevelt’s speech, “Citizenship in a Republic”, delivered at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, on April 23, 1910)

Brown’s work is the result of a decade of “shame research”. Inspired by, amongst others, JK Rowling’s Harry Potter stories, Brown believes that “teaching shame” became fun when Potter learns that there is nothing wrong with being angry and having dark feelings. What mattered is not the feelings but coming to terms with them and acting on our beliefs. We need to be vulnerable enough to develop resilience to shame. Harris wants her kids to know “they’re enough” or “shame resilient” which are keys to being vulnerable since vulnerability and love are the truest marks of courage.

The Latin etymological root of “vulnerable” is *vulnarare* meaning “to wound”. From a range of concepts, however, one could argue that vulnerability stems from failure to acknowledge where we’re at risk of being tender or hurt. As

is true in behavioural science’s explanation under COVID 19, “... the illusion of invulnerability undermines the very response that would have supplied genuine protection.”

Chapter 6 bridges the “illusion of invulnerability” and “the disengagement divide”. “Mind The Gap” is a strategy for closing the gap between our current positions and closing the “disengagement divide”. We are not called to be perfect but to align values with action.

In Chapter 7, “Wholehearted Parenting: Daring to be the Adults we want our Children to Be”, Harris deals with parenting in a culture of “Never Enough”. She decries the age of “certainty” as “dangerous” because it “often breeds absolutes, intolerance and judgment ...” “If we want our children to love and accept who they are, our job is to love and accept who we are. We cannot use fear, shame, blame and judgment in our lives if we want to raise courageous children. Compassion and connection – the very things that give purpose and meaning to our lives – can only be learned if they are experienced. And our families are our first opportunities to experience these things.”

Daring Greatly is an excellent resource for small group study. It is also available on YouTube.

Story by Keith Vermeulen, Researcher for the WMC

CME General Conference Dates

On behalf of the College of Bishops of the C.M.E. Church,
Bishop Marvin Frank Thomas, Sr. AND THE Second Episcopal District
CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO

THE *39th Quadrennial Session* AND THE *40th Convening* OF THE
GENERAL CONFERENCE
JUNE 25, 2022 THROUGH JULY 01, 2022

General Conference Steering Committee Chair:
Clarice Y. Chaffman • Info@cmechurchgeneralconference.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
CMEChurchGeneralConference.com
#CMEGC22

THE CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD IN
Cincinnati
OHIO
"THE QUEEN CITY"

THE VENUE WILL BE THE
DUKE ENERGY CENTER

Who: The Second Episcopal District of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (comprising CME Churches and members in the states of Kentucky, Ohio, Central and Southern Indiana, and the Pittsburgh area)

What: The Second Episcopal District will host The 39th Quadrennial Session and The 40th General Conference in its 152nd year history. Five thousand plus (5,000+) CME members, families, friends, guests, and vendors will attend the Quadrennial Conference filled with meetings and worship services.

Where: Duke Energy Center, 525 Elm St, Cincinnati, OH 45202

Why: We invite you to partner with the local committee as we welcome visitors to our Cincinnati community.

Story and photo by CME Church Communications at <https://thecmechurch.org/>

Climate Justice For All

Climate Justice for All (CJ4A) is inviting the global Methodist family to take action for the planet together. This is in preparation to the UN's Climate Change Conference, COP26, in November in Glasgow.

In April, CJ4A released the first of its monthly short films and worship resources. April's content was based around Scotland and COP26, with the film explaining COP26 and sharing the story of Stirling Methodist Church in Scotland taking climate action. The worship resources were written by young people in Britain and include prayers, eco-reflections, discussion questions and more. CJ4A encourages communities to utilize these materials for Sunday worship, small groups, youth groups or in personal worship.

To check out April's content, please visit: <https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/april-resources/>

On Monday 10 May, CJ4A is releasing its second short film and worship resources, which will focus on the forced migration and rising sea levels in the Pacific.

Please be sure to check out our resources page on Monday 10th for the May content: <https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/resources/>

Check out our social media platforms:

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/climatejustice4all/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CJ4All>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ClimateJust4All>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-g1kqmLvWxwVP3HEiUwqS8Q>

Story by a CJ4A volunteer, Mollie Pugmire

Church of the Nazarene officially enters Luxembourg

The Church of the Nazarene officially recognized Luxembourg as its 164th world area during the 97th Session of the General Board held virtually in February.

“It is with great excitement that we announce the entering of the Church of the Nazarene into Luxembourg,” said General Superintendent David Graves. “Through the ministry of the Church in other countries, a foundation was laid for the beginning of the Church of the Nazarene in Luxembourg. Through the leadership of devoted Nazarene laity, the door has been opened for the expansion of the holiness message in our 164th global area. We praise God for what He is doing and will do in this country.”

Eurasia Region Director Jim Ritchie added that he was thrilled to officially welcome the church in Luxembourg to the Eurasia region.

“The church in Luxembourg has been faithfully ministering and growing for a number of years and I congratulate them on reaching this historic moment,” Ritchie said. “I believe there is so much to come for them and I will support them all the way as they grow in Christ and in missional influence in their nation.”

Luxembourg is a small country nestled between France, Germany, and Belgium. Its population is just over 600,000, and nearly 50 percent of its residents are foreign nationals. Luxembourg has three official languages: French, German, and Luxembourgish.

The Church of the Nazarene’s work in Luxembourg began in 2017 through Antonio Cardoso, who emigrated from Cabo Verde to Luxembourg to work as a software developer. Cardoso was a member of the Church of the Nazarene in Cabo Verde, and he knew many people in Luxembourg with Nazarene connections.

He began to pray about starting a church. Following God’s leading, he contacted fellow Nazarenes, and in September of 2017, Cardoso held the first meeting in his apartment. The group eventually expanded and moved into the chapel in their hometown of Bettembourg.

All 17 people in the group come from Cabo Verde, the home nation of General Superintendent Eugénio Duarte. A few months after Cardoso’s group began to meet, the members were invited to the German District Assembly where Duarte was presiding as jurisdictional general superintendent. They met with him and shared a report about how their ministry had been growing.

“He told us to pray and encouraged us to keep going,” Cardoso said. “We spent three and a half years to conclude the process of planting a church. It was hard, but we were patient.”

Cardoso and the members in Luxembourg are focused on finding the right way to reach their neighbors. Even though Luxembourg is predominately a Christian nation, it has a large population that does not identify with any religion.

“Luxembourg is one of the richest countries in the world,” Cardoso said. “People have their material needs [met] and they are satisfied. While this is present in a lot of developed countries, we still feel people are desperate for more, and they need God in their lives. The challenge is to find the best way to share the gospel with them.

“We are doing research, studying statistics, praying, thinking, and try to find the best approach to reach people here. The idea is to improve our methodologies in order to achieve our goals. No one has the key, and we should ask God and use our creativity to find it.”

Those goals, according to Cardoso, are to bring people to Christ while being a positive influence to society.

“We would like to become a part of the solution in this country, adding value to society,” Cardoso said. “Luxembourg has people from more than 170 nationalities. We would like to have a church with people from everywhere. Just as Paul aspired to make the gospel available to the Gentiles, we will try to do the same.”

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



Story and photo by Daniel Sperry for Nazarene News

Members of the first Nazarene congregation in Luxembourg

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/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/YYA-Application-Form.pdf>

Photo by The World Methodist Council



Celebrating and empowering women in Congo

United Methodists in the East Congo Episcopal Area are recognizing the efforts of women and girls and empowering them to shape a better future.

Marie Claire Manafundu, program officer of the Maternal and Child Health Program in eastern Congo and wife of Bishop Gabriel Yemba Unda, applauded the clergy spouses and other United Methodist women in Goma, Beni and Kisangani, who are learning new trades to support their families.

“I encourage the women who have given themselves for their self-care,” she said, “despite COVID-19 and lack of peace in some places.”

Manafundu initiated training for United Methodist women to pursue microcredit opportunities.

Ivone Zacky, president of United Methodist Women in Goma, said that more than 30 women in the North Kivu capital received \$100 each from the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries to launch various income-enhancing efforts such as selling fish and domestic or forest charcoal for cooking, and starting other small businesses. Four women multiplied their initial \$100 to \$500, she said. “Today I am able to feed my family, and I have over \$500,” said Marie Sumbu, a widow.

The women of Majengo and Uvira make pastries and soap and provide literacy training, teaching more than 100 women how to read and write.

Mbilizi Bonane, the UMW president in Bukavu, noted that women in Bukavu, Mwenga and Fizi raise vegetables, beans and cassava to feed their families

Batale Esele, a pastor’s wife from Kisangani, said she bought flour with the seed money and was able to make bread to sell. With the income she has earned, she has been able to pay some of her children’s school fees.

Therese Litalima, also a clergy spouse, bought rolls of thread to make bags to sell. “The money has helped my family a lot and we pray for more donations in the future,” she said.

During March, a month dedicated to women, United Methodists in Congo celebrated in various ways. In Beni, United Methodist women devoted March 8, International Women’s Day, to meditation and prayer while asking the authorities to restore peace in the region. Justine Tshongo, a United Methodist Women leader in Beni, said an ongoing concern for women in the region is rape.

Beatrice Anunga, women’s coordinator in Kivu, organized an event in Goma to urge women to denounce violations of women’s rights. “If we are silent,” she said, “men take the opportunity to violate our rights.” Stressing the importance of women’s empowerment, Bishop Unda said, “I continue to advocate for women to be independent and for these rights to be respected.”

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

Story by The UM News Service



Omoyi Wandjaka teaches United Methodist women in Kivu, Congo, how to make bread to generate income for their families. Photo by Philippe Kituka Lolonga, UM News.

Nazarenes respond to volcanic eruption in Saint Vincent



Ash covers St. Vincent after the explosive eruption of the La Soufriere Volcano.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines experienced an explosive eruption on the morning of 9 April 2021 at the La Soufriere Volcano in the north of the main island.

Ash plumes were sent miles into the air, and since then, ash fall has been constant, severe, and overwhelming. One person died from suffocation in Georgetown, and a church in Owia and several houses have collapsed under the weight of the ash.

People who had remained in the red hazard zone after the initial evacuation order by Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves on 8 April were asked to evacuate immediately following the explosive eruption on the 9th. The islands of Saint Lucia, Grenada, and Barbados have already indicated their willingness to accommodate up to 20,000 evacuees should the crisis intensify.

On 10 April, additional explosions continued throughout the day, which further increased ash venting and resulted in a thick blanket of ash covering the entire mainland of Saint Vincent. Some of this ash was disbursed to the neighboring islands, particularly Saint Lucia and Barbados.

Scientists believe that the La Soufriere volcano is very likely only just getting started. They have indicated that the data points to the very real possibility that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will experience further seismic unrest over the course of the next few days and weeks.

Nazarene Compassionate Ministries on the Caribbean Field has been responding to the disaster from the onset.

Emergency supplies of food, water, care packets, and other items have been steadily distributed to shelters thus far. Response efforts will be upscaled over the coming days as funds received from the regional NCM Office will be used to increase the emergency supplies and to bring much-needed relief to evacuees.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is also home to NCM Caribbean Field Coordinators Kelron and Ro-Anne Harry.

“We are trying to do what’s necessary and bring hope,” Kelron told Christianity Today. “We want to do that by sharing the gospel, but we also hope they see it in us as we extend a hand of compassion to them.”

Kelron told Christianity Today he has seen God’s grace through so many people as they stepped up and helped one another.

“I’m seeing the goodness of people coming out,” Kelron said. “Many persons who are searching, who are looking for hope, they’ll see it too. Despite the volcano, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, God is still at work.”

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continue to grapple with the ongoing challenges of the economic downturn and the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to the expected protracted eruption of the La Soufriere Volcano.

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

Photo and story by Church of the Nazarene Mesoamerica Region

Museum readies for move to Bridwell Library



Terry Bevill, President of the Board of Directors for the Friends of the Museum speaking on the transfer of the Museum archives.



Anthony Elia, Bridwell Library; Jackie Bolden, World Methodist Council; Dean Craig Hill, Perkins School of Theology pose with John Wesley preaching from the steps of a market cross.



Jackie Bolden hands Wesley's death mask to Anthony Elia and Dean Craig Hill.

Photo credits: Perkins School of Theology/ R. Higgs



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, May 28** at communications@worldmethodistcouncil.org if you would like your story to be included in the June 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

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