



**Worship for the
presidential theme
2020/2021**

The **Methodist Church** 
Global Resources

Welcome

Welcome to worship resources that take a global Church perspective of this year's presidential theme "**The best of all is, God is with us**".

There are two services, each with fresh and inspirational material from Methodists working around the globe.

Service 1

Service 1 should be led by a presbyter, deacon or local preacher, and can be adapted for all-age worship.

Service 2

Service 2 is a 'Local Arrangement' service, which can be led by a worship leader, steward or other church member.

The services can be used on any Sunday. We suggest church councils work with local preachers' meetings to agree a date for using them. The two services are different, so a congregation should be able to use both during the year.

Stay safe:

visit <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus/official-guidance/> to get the latest advice on running a service safely during the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are several short films that can be shown instead of, or to complement some of the written materials. There are also PowerPoint presentations of both services.

To access these, go to <https://www.methodist.org.uk/global-relationships/resources/>

May God bless us as we worship and grow, inspired by God's people across the world.

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Please note: These worship resources are for your church whether or not you make an offering to the World Mission Fund (WWF) on the Sunday you use them. We hope they will be a blessing to you.

President and Vice-President's Introduction

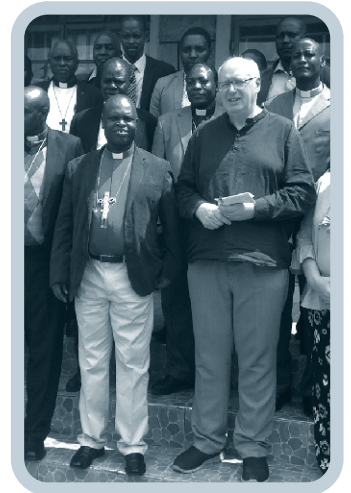
The presidential theme during this connexional year is taken from what are believed to be John Wesley's last words: **"The best of all is, God is with us"**.

President of the Conference the Revd Richard Teal writes:

Whilst in Kenya, the last words of John Wesley could not have been more apt. They are a vastly growing church taking inspiration from **"The best of all is, God is with us"**. They joyfully responded to these words every time I mentioned them with shouts of praise. The words are a beautiful fit for a growing church and will also inspire British Methodism to grow, because unless we know the true meaning of these words, we never will. They inspire confidence.

Rural Methodism, which is so close to my heart, often feels isolated and on the fringe of the Church. John Wesley's words again will inspire and encourage.

Also in the concerning times we now find ourselves in, both in our own country and in the world, there are no better words for the presidential and vice-presidential year. I think they were given providentially by the grace of God.



Vice-President Carolyn Lawrence writes:

Our theme this year is **"The best of all is, God is with us"** and we are focusing on growth, which includes personal growth, linked to the Methodist Way of Life, and church growth, as expressed in our Evangelism and Growth strategy. We want to encourage ordinary Methodists to know that growth is possible, both personally and as a Church. During my visit to Brazil, I had several insights into the huge growth of the Methodist Church there and I believe we have so much to learn from our world church partners. My inspiration for the year comes from Isaiah 43:18–19 as we think about how God makes things grow, even when the world looks bleak and dry, and how he brings streams forth in desert places.



Photo: TMCP

Therefore, we will rejoice in the good news that God is with us:

- in times of challenge
- in our growth as disciples of Jesus
- in our sharing the good news with others.

Service 1

Note to leader

This service should be led by a presbyter, deacon or local preacher. You may adapt it to suit your congregation. You can just feature some all-age elements, or make it completely all-age by using both all-age options and omitting the Philippians reading and sermon. There are two all-age talks/activities: 'Shade and Fresh Water' and 'Light of the World' and a choice of hymns to complement the themes. We also offer detailed sermon notes and suggestions for prayers (including prayer activities for young people). There is an accompanying PowerPoint that you can download [here](#).



Photo: All We Can

Call to worship

Suggested form of words:

The Lord says:

"I am about to do a new thing;
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:19)
Let us come to God in worship and
thanksgiving.

Opening hymn/song

Choose from:

- O Sing to the Lord (StF 42)
- As the deer pants for the water (StF 544)
- God is love: let heaven adore him (H&P 36)
- He's got the whole world (StF 536 or H&P 25)



Photo: TMCP

Prayers of praise and confession

(see Suggested Prayers, page 9)

All-Age option – 'Shade and Fresh Water'

Reading

Isaiah 43: 18–21

Discussion

See 'Shade and Fresh Water' in All-Age Materials (page 6)

Hymn

Choose from:

- Alleluia, alleluia (StF 295)
- Holy, holy, holy (StF 779)
- Sent by the Lord am I (StF 239)
- What a friend we have in Jesus (StF 531 or H&P 559)
- Lord your church (StF 410 or H&P 774)

All-Age option – 'Light of the World'

Reading

Matthew 5:14–16

Discussion/activities

See 'Light of the World' in All-Age Materials (page 7)

Hymn

Choose from:

This little light of mine (Hymnary.org)

Longing for light (StF 706)

Christ is the world's light (H&P 455)

Reading

Choose from:

Isaiah 43:18–21

Philippians 4:4–8

Matthew 5:14–16

Hymn

Choose from:

In the Lord I'll be ever thankful (StF 776)

Holy, holy, holy (StF 779)

What a friend we have in Jesus (StF 531 or H&P 559)

Sermon

See Sermon outline, with reflections and stories from Partner Churches (page 12).

Hymn

Choose from:

Sent by the Lord am I (StF 239)

Lord, your Church on earth is seeking (StF 410)

Offering

Suggested form of words

Dear loving God, with these gifts we offer our lives in the service of your kingdom in this place and in this world. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

See suggestions (page 9). They include making a prayer map and other activities for young people.

Hymn

Choose from:

The right hand of God is writing in our land (StF 715 or H&P 408)

Let us build a house where love can dwell (StF 409)

Blessing

Go out from this place and let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. And may the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

All-Age Materials



Photo: TMOP

Shade and Fresh Water

When Carolyn Lawrence, the Vice-President of the Methodist Conference visited Brazil she came across the Shade and Fresh Water project. You can read her account and use the questions below as a discussion point.

Sara, aged 14, and Leo, 10, help at a project called Shade and Fresh Water at their local Methodist church in Multirao, Brazil. Children who come can learn to play instruments and gradually become a part of the worship band in the church services. Sara and Leo play in the band. But there is more to do at than play instruments. There are lots of activities, including art and the children make friends, learn new skills and discover how much Jesus loves them.

In Brazil, many families move to the cities to find work; and many parents work long hours to make enough money to look after their children. The children are often left alone at home and some get involved in crime and drugs.

The Methodist Church in Brazil created the Shade and Fresh Water project to be a safe place for children to make good friends and good choices, rather than hanging about on the streets. It helps thousands of children across the country.

At Sara and Leo's church in Multirao, 70 or 80 young people can turn up at Shade and Fresh Water, which meets three times a week. As well as music and art, the young people receive advice about drugs and health issues. They also get help to learn to read, and they learn about Jesus.

One boy turned up at Shade and Fresh Water four years ago under the influence of drugs. Now, because of the love and help he found there, he has stopped taking drugs and has brought along his three brothers.

Discussion points



1. Sometimes it can be very hot in Brazil. The name Shade and Fresh Water is based on a popular Brazilian expression. If you were outside on a hot day, what would shade and water mean to you?
2. Why do you think the Methodist Church in Brazil chose that name?
3. What is happening in your church (the congregation where you are today) that you would like to bring your friends to?
4. What would be 'shade and fresh water' for you and your friends in this place?
5. What can we do as a church to welcome people in our community?

Light of the World

This all-age address comes from Daniel and Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman, who are mission partners in Italy. You will need a desk lamp and an extension lead to plug it in.



Photo: Getty Images

Ask the following questions and let the young people answer.

- What is this?
- What happens if I plug it in?
- What do we use lamps for?
- Is the light useful if we don't plug it in?

In our Bible reading today we are being asked to imagine that we are lamps, like this one, for God. When plugged in, lamps bring light, helping people find their way. But, when they are not plugged in, or when the light is covered, they are no help. The same is true for us. We are called to shine for God in the world. If we are plugged in to God's love and power, we can bring light for others. But, if we don't stay connected to God, the source of our light, then we can't help others. That's very sad because we all have special gifts that can help others. So, don't forget to plug in to God. Stay connected and let your light – your gifts – shine bright.

How do we stay plugged in to God? Prayer is one of God's gifts. We can use it to stay connected and also discover how best to share the love and light of the good news with others.

Activities

Sharing the light of Christ – option 1

Invite about eight volunteers to stand in a row facing the congregation. In the middle of the row you need a volunteer you have primed about the activity.

They will need lights they can switch on: LED tealights, torches, candles or mobile phone torches. *(If using candles or other naked flames, please do a risk assessment first.)*

Touch the 'candle' of the first person in the row with your lighted 'candle', saying, "I share with you the light of Christ." They do the same to the 'candle' of their neighbour, saying the same words, and so on along the line. When the 'primed' volunteer has their candle lit, they say they refuse to pass it on and return to their seat.

This activity makes the point that the good news of Jesus' love will not be passed on if we do not share that love – in what we say and do with others.

In our service today, we will hear and learn from Christians across the world who are sharing the good news of God's love with others.

Activities

Sharing the light of Christ – option 2

The congregation will need lights they can switch on: LED tealights, torches, candles or mobile phone torches. *(If using candles or other naked flames, please do a risk assessment first.)*

This activity works best in a darkened church.

Ask the congregation to imagine a person lighting the next person's 'candle'. They turn to their neighbour and light theirs. It goes on, one person at a time lighting the next person's 'candle'. How long might it take to light the whole church? (A long time and I want my lunch!)

What will happen, though, if someone lights the 'candle' of all the people sitting nearby and then they pass on the light? Will the whole congregation light up much faster? You can try this out. Light the 'candle' of a young person (with adult help if a child), saying, "I share with you the light of Christ." Invite them to use their lit candle to light the candle of all their neighbours, saying the same words, and watch as everyone's lights get switched on throughout the church.

How quickly did the whole place get lit up? (Hopefully it took less than a minute.)

Make the point that the good news of Jesus's love is passed on and grows quickly as we simply share it with people around us. We, who have received the beautiful good news and know our lives lit up by God's love, can share that love – in what we say and do with others.

In our service today, we will hear and learn from Christians across the world who are sharing the good news of God's love with others.



Photo: Getty Images

Suggested Prayers

Prayers of praise and confession

Dear God, we are glad to be in your presence, singing your praises, joining our voices with the saints and angels in heaven and with your people across the world.

You are a God of immeasurable love. You made us in love. You delight in us and we delight in you.

Our hearts sing a beautiful song when we think about Jesus. In him, we see you: your grace, your welcome, your everlasting commitment to us. In Jesus, we know that you are with us always.

We thirst for love and we find our thirst quenched in you; and we worship you.

We are sorry for the times when we have been slow to praise you, and trust you, and speak of you to others. For all the times we have let you down and not put you first, we are sorry.

[You may want a brief moment of silence here]

We thank you that Jesus is risen and stands before us this day, saying to each of our hearts: “Your sin is forgiven; go in peace”.

So may we leave this place filled with your peace, your spirit and your joy. In Jesus’ name, **Amen.**



Prayers of intercession

Note to leader

You could say these prayers and/or use the ‘Prayer map’ activity (below). The text in italics is optional – suggestions that may be included or omitted.

In our prayers of intercession today, we call to mind the parting words of St Paul in his letter to the Philippians: “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

Let us pray

Lord God, we pray for your Church and for Christians throughout the world.

We give thanks for the story we have heard today, and ask for your blessing on *[Sara and Leo, Daniel and Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman, Richard Teal and Upolu Luma Vaai – choose the name of the person(s) mentioned in your service and include here any other appropriate petitions.]*

Strengthen *[them and]* all your people, so that we may faithfully share the truth of your gospel message, and unite us as Christ’s body, we pray, so that we may love and honour one another.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, we pray for the peoples of the world and the leaders of the nations. We pray particularly for *[insert the names of those mentioned in the service such as the people of Brazil and the Shade and Fresh Water community; the people of Brazil/Italy and other nations impacted by the coronavirus; the people of Israel/Palestine, for Clemence and Boolos, for Angleena, and for all who have power and influence in that region. Include any other appropriate petitions.]*

Direct [*them and*] all your people in the ways of justice and peace, raising up leaders who are pure of heart.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, we pray for our local church and community. [*Include here any appropriate petitions.*] Inspire us to be a light in [*name of your neighbourhood*], sharing the joy and pleasure of the gospel with others, and working for your kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, we remember with love, all those who have died. [*Include here any appropriate specific remembrances.*] We give thanks that they have been gathered into your eternal kingdom by your son Jesus, who is excellent and most worthy of praise. And we pray that you keep our hearts and minds turned towards him, until we too can share in that everlasting joy. Through Christ our Lord, **Amen.**

Interactive Intercessions

Note to leader

Prepare a world map beforehand (the bigger the better, and hand drawn is fine) and place it on a poster board or a table. Get some sticky dots or stars to place on the map. For a large congregation you might want more than one map 'station'.



Photo: Getty Images

Let us pray. We come to our time of prayer for the world, the nation and ourselves.

To pray for the world I am going to ask you to think of an area of the world where there is need. Hold that place or country in your mind before God as you place a sticker on the map as a symbol of your prayer. [*This might take few minutes.*] As the last person sits say the following words:

Almighty creator God, we pray for all the places we have held before you. Bless the work of the Church in those places, sharing your love and light so that the world may be transformed.

Let us pray for our nation.

Ask people to hold out their hands as we pray for Britain.

Wonderful loving God, we thank you for what we have learnt today from sisters and brothers around the world. Help us also to follow their example in sharing your love in this nation. We bring to mind places and people across this nation who need to know your love. Transform us and help us to be the hands and feet of Jesus who will share your light.

Let us pray for ourselves.

Ask people to hold their hands to their chest.

Ever close and intimate God, we come needing to know your love. We reflect deeply on the messages from around the world. Comfort us where there is pain. Challenge us where we need to serve you. From the youngest to the oldest, may we see your light and be your light. Help us to share your love with gentle confidence in Jesus, so that we may all experience your growth. In the name of Jesus, **Amen.**

Intercession prayer activities

Note to leader

If you are running an all-age service, you may want to use some of these ideas from Daniel and Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman, who are mission partners in Italy.

Prayer chain

In Daniel and Grace's church in Milan, each child and adult wrote on a strip of paper the name of someone or a situation they wanted to pray for. They joined all the strips together to create a paper prayer chain and prayed together for all the situations and people listed on the strips of paper.

Prayer pictures

Daniel and Grace asked a group of youngsters from Africa, Asia and Europe how they could use art as a way of expressing their desire to share God's light and love in our world. The young people chose to create pictures of their prayers.

Palm prayers

In Rome, a group of children explored talking to God about their daily lives and concerns through 'palm prayers'. They traced around their hands on a piece of paper and cut them out. On one side they wrote down things to thank God for and listed them on the fingers, and on the other side they wrote down concerns of our world for which they felt God's light was needed.



Sermon Outline

Note to preacher: Below is material for a three-point sermon. Choose what suits you. For each point there is a brief comment on the Bible passage; two stories or reflections from overseas partners; and a few pointers to consider.

Point 1: God is with us in times of challenge

Our reading from Philippians 4:4–8 was offering a word of hope and comfort. Taken out of context, it could appear trite, but we recall these words were written by St Paul while he was imprisoned (1:12–14). Paul was able to face what would have been dishonourable and shameful with joy, because, in Christ, he has a set of values different from those of society. Whether he lived or died, he had confidence in his relationship with God in Christ (1:20). Paul does not advocate finding peace by simply removing worry, but by actively embracing joy (in each other and in Christ: 1:3–4; 2:17; 4:1); by intentionally thanking God when praying (4:6); by meditating on what is lovely and just (4:8); and by advocating a life characterised by gracious acts of kindness to others (4:5; 4:14). This reflects the teaching of Christ about anxiety: it is diminished by the deliberate commitment to a life serving God’s kingdom and its values of holy justice (Matthew 6:25–33). Paul, imprisoned, uses the Greek word *phroureo* (‘guard’) to speak of how God’s peace will guard/keep our hearts in Christ. Being in Christ speaks of his surrounding love, which we as individuals experience in fellowship with other Christians (4:2; 4:4). Paul knew Jesus was close by, even in prison (4:5; cf Psalm 145:18).

Reflection by Deacon Angleena Keizer

“I serve in the Holy Land as a mission partner. It’s a place of diversity, where Muslims, Christians and Jews all live, and I have the privilege of listening to people of all faiths. Palestinians live

under occupation, facing many daily difficulties, injustices and mistreatment and they do not have the same rights as other citizens. I visit

Clemence (right) in her home weekly for Arabic lessons. Over time I have heard her story,

of being forced to leave her home in Jaffa in

1948 and becoming a refugee in Jordan. After marrying, she returned to Palestine, living in Bethlehem. Part of her land was forcibly taken and an imposing separation wall and checkpoint was built upon it. Clemence faces that wall daily. She inspires me as a woman of God,

as she is always speaking about her love for the Lord and scripture and drawing strength from the Holy Spirit. Her vocabulary always expresses her living relationship with God, her trust and hope in him that enables her to scale any wall in life and overcome her fears.



“**Boolos** is a 21-year-old Christian living under siege in Gaza. He has grown up with constant bombardments, seeing people killed and injured. He studied in Italy for six months, and unlike many who don’t return, he came home to continue his studies in dentistry. Boolos’ faith enables him to receive comfort, hope and love during great challenges.



“The Covid-19 pandemic is an added source of fear and difficulty for Clemence, Boolos and other Palestinians. Without sufficient medical resources, it would be a catastrophe if coronavirus spreads within the occupied territories. The people of Gaza released a moving video during the onset of the virus, saying perhaps the world will now understand the restrictions and lack of freedom they face daily in lockdown. Both expressed that, best of all, they knew the reality that God is with them in all circumstances and such reality gives them hope.”

You can find the clips showing interviews of Clemence and Boolos [here](#).

Reflection by Upolu Lumā Vaai, Principal of the Pacific Theological College in Fiji



“The Pacific Theological College in Fiji has five major denominations: Methodist, Anglican, Congregational, Presbyterian/Reformed, and Lutheran. The challenge is how to grow as a Methodist and advocate for justice within such a diverse ecumenical setting. When we Methodists declare that ‘The best of all is, God is with us’, what does that mean to people struggling under colonial economic development models that extract the few resources islanders depend on? What does the

phrase ‘God is with us’ mean to those in the islands of Tuvalu and Kiribati who ‘walk on water’ every day as their lands are sinking and sea-levels rise? Whose churches can continue to preach a ‘Rainbow covenant theology’ that promises a world without sinking and a life without a flood? What is so ‘best of all’ about God for women and children experiencing multiple forms of violence daily? (In most Pacific countries as much as 85% of violence is committed by men.) How do we say ‘God is with us’ without implying God is not with other people, such as those in Fiji with non-Christian faiths? How do people of West Papua, the Kanak people in New Caledonia, the Maohi in Tahiti, and the people of Guam make sense of the ‘God is with us’ affirmation in the context of human rights’ violation and colonial rule in their countries?

“As a Pacific Methodist, I teach my children that Methodism grew out of the drive for a grassroots movement for holiness understood through the practice of social justice.

“The ‘best of God’ is particularly revealed in conflict situations. God is in deep solidarity with the struggles of marginalised communities, abused and oppressed individuals, the neglected poor, and the violated natural world. The ‘best of us’ is disclosed when we recognise the best of God in our moments of struggle.

True discipleship is realised when we admit that we are not the only ones in the world. God is not just ‘for us’, nor good only to those who are Christians or Methodists. We cannot realise ‘God is with us’ until we recognise God in the faces of other people who are not like us. The grace of God is fluid, or according to Wesley, will always freely flow, even without us.

“The affirmation ‘with us’ should not be limited to humans. We should take it to mean all of life. Wesley introduced a kind of holiness that requires an ‘all-ness’ mind-set to life.

“The affirmation ‘God is with us’ is an assurance of ‘a discipleship of presence’ for others. It brings responsibility for advocating justice for those affected by political, economic, social and religious forces.”



Points to consider



What is your context? Consider challenges people face today as you reflect on Paul’s words to the Philippians.

Reflect on the words of Clemence who spoke of how she trusts and loves the Lord, but also admits to being scared as she faces both the Covid-19 pandemic and the occupation of her land as a Palestinian. She draws strength from knowing God is with us in the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost. Reflect also on the words of Boolos, from Gaza, that our comfort, hope and reality are that God is with us in challenging times.

How can we express the Christian message of hope without sounding trite or exclusive in the light of grave human suffering in a world where not all are Christians? Reflect on the affirmation of Upolu Lumā Vaai that we meet God in our solidarity with the marginalised, all nations and individuals, and all of creation.

Point 2: God is with us in our growth as disciples of Jesus

Our reading from Isaiah 43: 18–21 was written around 540 BCE. It records the words of the prophet known as Second Isaiah, to whom is attributed chapters 44–55 of the book of Isaiah. The passage is addressed to the Jewish people who have been in exile in Babylon since the Fall of Jerusalem in 587/586 BCE. The prophet has a message of amazing joy and hope for them: the mighty Babylonian empire will fall (47:1); they will be set free from captivity (43:1; 43:14); they will be allowed home, where the walls of Jerusalem, destroyed in its defeat by Babylon, will be rebuilt (44:28). But the journey home means a lengthy journey through the wilderness (40:3). The prophet encourages the Jewish people by inviting them to both look back to when God led their ancestors after liberating them from slavery with the Egyptian host on their tail (43:16–17; cf Exodus 14:21–31). He also helps them look forwards (the message of history should inspire a walk with God into a new future: 43:18–19). The prophet’s call is to trust God to give the drink needed in the wilderness journey (43:19–20) as God gave drink to their ancestors in the desert (41:18; cf Exodus 17:1–7). Even the wild beasts know to trust God to provide and creation rejoices as God redeems God’s people (43:20; cf. 42:10–12; 55:12–13).

A reflection by the Revd Barry Sloan: communion with Frankie

The Revd Barry Sloan and his wife, Gillian, are mission partners in the United Methodist Church in Germany. They are part of the team that launched INSPIRE, a fresh expression of church in the East German city Chemnitz, which was known as Karl-Marx-Stadt.

Barry has permission to share the story of his first communion with Frankie.



“Most of our regulars at INSPIRE events are atheist, a legacy of the Communist regime. Although our friends at INSPIRE have no interest in religion, many are interested in spiritual things. Some are searching for meaning and purpose, and we are often asked about our Christian faith. Our challenge is to find relevant and respectful ways to engage with our friends and neighbours, and share our faith without treating them as objects of mission. One such way has been to introduce Holy Communion at our café events. People can come to the bar and ask for Holy Communion. There, right in the midst of everyday life, in a very untypical sacred space, people have the opportunity to meet God and receive his blessing of grace.

“Frankie was the very first person to receive Holy Communion in INSPIRE. He is one of our regulars. He has additional learning needs and a speech impairment, but his infectious smile and warm heart are the most remarkable things about him. On the first night that I was



introducing Holy Communion to INSPIRE, I met Frankie. I told him what I intended to do. He looked at me with a huge grin, “Are you a pastor?” he asked.

“Yes, Frankie, I am.’ His grin became even wider. We went to the bar where I had the wafers and juice for communion. I was intending to serve Frankie. But he picked up a wafer and offered it to me with the words known by Christians all over the world, ‘Für dich gebrochen’ (Broken for you). It turns out, Frankie went to church as a child.

“I had been so worried and anxious about introducing Holy Communion to INSPIRE. Would it be ‘tolerated’ by our regulars? Was it too much, too soon? But God sent Frankie to bless me, right at the start of the evening. As the pastor, I thought I would be the one serving but I was wrong. God was in Frankie, a man with a speech impairment. He was a means of grace. To me.”

You can find the clip showing INSPIRE and telling Frankie’s story [here](#).

A reflection: growing as disciples in the Methodist Church Kenya

The President of our Conference, the Revd Richard Teal, visited Kenya, where the Methodist Church has grown in four years from 300,000 to 900,000 members. He met the Revd Nicholas Nteere whose church has grown from 300 to 1,300 members. The All Saints Methodist Church is based at Meru, a town in a rural setting over 270 km from Nairobi, Kenya’s capital. When asked the key to growth, Nicholas Nteere spoke of the church’s cell groups, which help people study the Bible, grow as disciples and develop in their prayer lives. Richard saw the link to our historic roots as Methodists. The early Methodists had their societies, class meetings and bands, which had a great influence in assisting Methodism to grow both in numbers and depth. The Methodist Church in Kenya realises the importance of those early roots of the Church and has implemented them in a modern way in a new context. The result is growth in numbers and depth.

Richard also met the Revd Dennis Muriungi from the children and young people’s department in the Methodist Church in Kenya, who said that having Bible study materials has helped people grow and with a combination of Bible study and social events, people feel church is a family where they are at home.

Richard found that poverty, vulnerability and scarcity are facts of life for many people in the Methodist Church of Kenya and yet their joy in the gospel was contagious. Faces shone with their love of the Lord. It is a strong and very deep faith that motivates every part of their being and lives.

Points to consider



Points to consider

Consider your context. Think also about what the Isaiah passage says about God, about trusting in God's provision, and about God being with us.

Reflect on Jesus's promises of offering living water (John 4:7–15 and 7:37–39).

What can Frankie's story from INSPIRE teach us about worship, about learning and caring, about service and evangelism? How can we receive as well as give?

How can we learn from the commitment of Methodists in Kenya to attend small discipleship groups?

Think about how the congregation you are leading today can find opportunities for discipleship growth and social activities. Where can you find spiritual water? How can our faces shine with the love of the Lord? Can you invite them to consider developing something new to enable spiritual growth and mutual support and care?

Please view the Methodist Way of Life materials <https://www.methodist.org.uk/mwol/> and consider how you might refer to them.

Point 3: God is with us in our sharing the good news with others

The reading from Matthew 5:14–16 is a call to missional activity in service of heaven/God (5:16) rather than ideologies that are oppressive and abusive. Mission is to be inclusive. Mission to the 'world' (5:14; 28:16–20) for Jesus's first hearers meant mission beyond those traditionally seen as God's people, including the Gentiles (Acts 10:1–48) and eunuchs (Acts 8:26–40). Note: Ethiopia in Greek culture was at that time viewed as the 'end of the earth' (cf Acts 1:8).

In a house in Jesus' time, the oil-burning lamp would have been an important source of light (5:15). In John 8:12, using the name of God, Jesus said, 'I AM the light of the world'; here, his disciples are the light of the world. We can only be light if we are Christ-like. The Greek adjective used in this passage for 'good' (5:16) is *Kalos*, which means, 'beautiful, excellent, good'; it is the word we get 'calligraphy' from. Without good works, our words about God are empty; without words about God, how can our good works glorify God (5:16) rather than ourselves? The reference to a city built on a hill (5:14) may be a reference to Isaiah 2:2.

Reflection on sharing the good news in Kenya

In Kenya, the Methodist Church has grown in four years from 300,000 to 900,000 members. The President of the Conference, the Revd Richard Teal, met the Revd Dennis Muriungi who said the Church is growing because it is embracing modern ways of worship. Methodism was beginning to decline in Kenya, but in four years the Church has redirected itself. The results are staggering. Dennis said: "Mission is at the top of every agenda not at the bottom, only to be talked about if time allowed."

People are returning and new disciples are being made in large numbers because it is seen as a Church with mission at its heart. Worship has changed considerably. It gathers people together in celebration that is participatory and inclusive. Young people participate in various ways including drama and singing and have a special place in the heart of the Church. The worship also is truly Kenyan, which is also a factor in attracting new people of all ages and is a joy to experience.

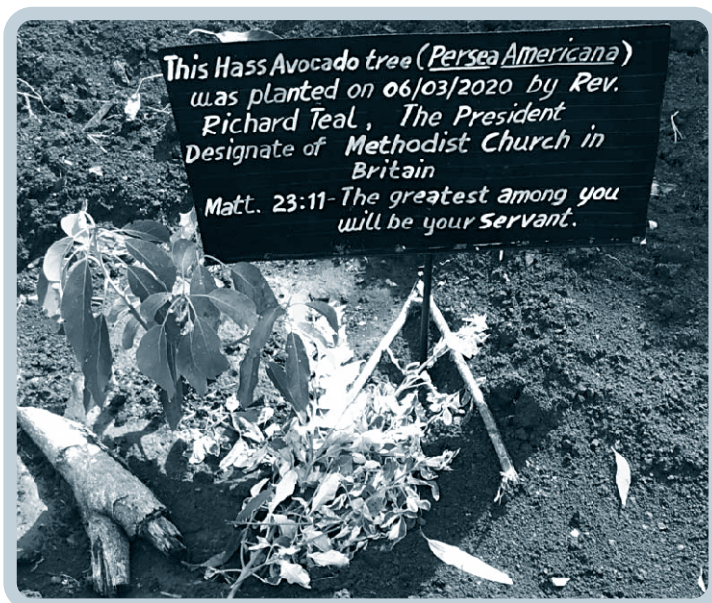


The Methodist Church has also shaken off the traditions of the past and become much more culturally relevant in its mission and outreach. An example is welcoming thousands of Masai people. Church growth among the Masai had been amazing and includes a new church and school. This mission initiative in Kenya was sponsored by the Methodist Churches of Korea and Great Britain.

Whilst in Kenya, Richard visited the Biointensive Agricultural Centre, which trains Methodists in climate-smart techniques to withstand droughts, floods, and pests such as locusts. It also promotes good food security and supports the creation of agribusiness in rural areas to support rural churches. Richard was asked to plant

seedlings wherever he went.

This one is very special. It is an old seedling with a new seedling grafted into it and was prepared on purpose as a metaphor, for the Methodist Church in Kenya with the new church developing from the old one.



A reflection on reclaiming evangelism

The Revd Barry Sloan and his wife, Gillian, are mission partners serving in the United Methodist Church (UMC) in Germany. They are both part of the team that launched INSPIRE, a fresh expression of church in the city of Chemnitz, previously known as Karl-Marx-Stadt, in East Germany. Barry is also Director of Evangelism for the UMC in Germany. He shares his thoughts about reclaiming evangelism.



“One of the terrible maladies of the Church today is the reluctance of many members to engage in evangelism. I don’t blame them, seriously, I don’t. And I say this as the Director of Evangelism for the United Methodist Church in Germany!

“If you think evangelism is about cajoling people to become Christians, or seeing people as ‘mission objects’, and entering into strategic friendships in order to share your faith with them, then I don’t blame you for not wanting to get involved in it. And if you think of ‘evangelism’ as moralistic pontificating to others who have gone astray, then I totally understand and respect your decision to avoid it at all costs.

“But we have misunderstood what evangelism really means. It has nothing whatsoever to do with putting people under pressure, scaring them so that they make a decision for Christ. It is not about selling a product or an idea to people, or saving the Church’s dwindling congregations.

“*Evangel* is the Greek word for ‘good news’ and evangelism is, literally, good news! The mission of the church of Christ is to share the amazingly good news of God’s love for his creation. God loves us immeasurably and wants to do life with us. He created us in his own image – you are wonderfully made – and he calls us to reflect his image to the world in words and deeds.

“Our world desperately needs to hear and experience this good news. Our friends and neighbours, work colleagues and family members, and yes, even we ourselves need to hear and experience the good news. It is a life-changing narrative that liberates, heals, and enables us to live life fully. That is why everything we do in our churches should have evangelism at its centre. It should not be something for a few freaks in the congregation who tick that way. It should be the DNA of every Christian and every congregation. The property committee should remember that is a board of evangelism. The finance committee should think like an evangelism committee. The choir. The preacher. The whole church! We are all about good news!”

Points to consider



Points to consider

The Methodist Church in Kenya experienced growth after recognising that its worship no longer suited its context. Is worship and witness in your church sensitive to the culture of Britain in 2021?

How can we enable young people in Britain to be true participants in a worship that speaks to their experience?

Reflect on the grafted seedling metaphor from the Methodist Church Kenya. In Romans 11:17–24, St Paul uses the image of grafting to speak of God's love and welcome for God's historic people, the Jews, and for the Gentiles who are coming to God, through Christ, with very different cultural assumptions. Are we just asking newcomers to join and support what we do, or are we able to develop new work alongside what we do to touch new people within the transforming gospel of Jesus?

How does Barry's description of evangelism encourage and challenge you? What makes appropriate and inappropriate evangelism? How can we experience/remember that God is with us as we share our faith? How can we, like Jesus, be the light of the world and draw others to him?

In the Methodist Church in Britain, *New Places for New People* are projects to start, build and reproduce new Christian communities among unaffiliated people. They include church plants, pioneering communities of faith, fresh expressions, missional communities, and other new faith communities in rural, estate, inner city, suburban and village settings. *New Places for New People* are the most effective means of connecting with people new to Christian exploration and community. To know more, visit: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/evangelism>

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Service 2: A Local Arrangement Service

Note to leader

This can be led by a worship leader, steward or other church member. Please read it through before giving the service, as some elements are optional. The accompanying Powerpoint can be downloaded here <https://www.methodist.org.uk/global-relationships/resources/>.

Welcome and call to worship

Welcome to worship today. We will be thinking about this year's presidential theme, 'The best of all is, God is with us', from a global perspective.

In Philippians 4 verse 4 it says: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice."

Hymn

We sing together hymn 20 from *Singing the Faith*, 'Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here'. Or hymn number 17 from *Hymns and Psalms*, 'Sing to the Lord, a joyful song'.

Prayer of praise and confession

Let us pray:

Dear loving God, we praise you for your love. In love you made this beautiful world. You made us and have blessed us with life. When we made wrong choices, you did not abandon us, but you called out to your people and you sent Jesus to bring us home. In Jesus we know that you are always with us. We are sorry for the wrong choices we have made: for the wrong decisions we took in our lives and for the times when we turned from you. We thank you that you will never leave us or forsake us, that you forgive us and that in Jesus we are with you forever. In his holy name we pray. **Amen.**

First (all-age) address

[You can omit this if no children present, or keep it, substituting 'parents' for 'mummy and daddy' in the first sentence.]



Joelle and Janelle Tettey were born in London, UK, but now live in Togo, where their mummy and daddy are mission partners. Joelle is 14 years old and Janelle is ten. They both attend school in Lome, Togo. Just like here, their lives in Togo changed a lot when the Covid-19 pandemic broke out.

I am now going to read a prayer that Joelle and Janelle wrote and sent for us today.

God you never left

Dear God in heaven, we are thankful you have looked after us during this pandemic, when we stopped going to school because our parents and teachers were afraid we would catch the virus.

When our friends stayed home and we were not allowed to visit each other, you, our God,

never left us. We washed our hands regularly; we wore masks for protection – masks mummy made with her own hands. We know Jesus helped her with her handiwork. These practices helped to keep us healthy, because you, our God, never left us.

We stayed at home and did our classes online, we baked and cooked, we played games with our friends online, we had funny conversations with our little cousins and Grandma on Zoom. We continued to stay away from our friends to be safe. But you, our God, never left us.

Lord we saw your beauty and goodness when we watched the birds, and when we went for



walks. All during the day, you were with us. When we went to bed, you were with us. We were not afraid because you never left us.

Thank you God for never leaving us; thank you God for never forsaking us. **Amen.**

Hymn

We sing together hymn number 77 from *Singing the Faith*, 'Give thanks to the Lord' or number 566 from *Hymns and Psalms*, 'Now thank we all our God'.

If there is a Junior Church, dismiss them with these words:

Let us pray: Dear God, as we learn about you in different parts of this building, may we always know you, and trust in your love. In the name of Jesus, **Amen.**

Reading

We shall now have a reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans Chapter 8, verses 31 to 39.

First testimony

The presidential theme this year is, "The best of all is, God is with us". I will now read a testimony by Asela Tuisawau, who is a student of the Pacific Theological College in Fiji.

To say that we are living in unprecedented times is an understatement. There have been so many 'firsts' due to the outbreak of Covid-19: including lockdowns; working from home and online schooling for an extended period. New regulations and related practices have become almost mandatory such as regular sanitizing, disinfecting, wearing of masks, and so on.

As an applied linguist in a country where English is a second language for most speakers, I'm interested in language 'firsts' during Covid-19. An explosion of new words and phrases has suddenly become part of our everyday vocabulary. They include 'physical and social distancing', 'self-isolation', 'self-quarantine', and 'shielding'. Neologisms are also developing faster than ever with coined words such as 'coviots' (those who ignore public health advice), 'covexit' (the strategy for exiting lockdown), and 'coveideo party'(online parties via Zoom or Skype).

From this chaos, so many questions have surfaced, such as where is God and is the world ever going back to “normal”? Is God punishing us or teaching us some lessons? Is Covid-19 an act of God? Some governments say it is. My home country Fiji, for instance, recently passed a bill declaring Covid-19 to be an act of God, which allows employers to let go of their workers if there is no more work for them. If it is a natural catastrophe, like an earthquake or a tidal wave, isn't the legal term *force majeure* more precise and accurate to refer to its repercussions? When will there be a vaccine? Was Covid-19 manufactured to control the world's population? The questions are endless.



As the debates continue in government and medical circles, in the media and in churches and families, my hope is that we can all use this isolation period to be still and know that God is *still* in control. *The best of all is, God is with us*, and if God is *for* us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31) Perhaps this new normal is just what we all need to help us ‘...not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old’ (Isaiah 43:18). To rest on God's promises: “Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness, And rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:19).

Lastly, these times of challenge have taught me to value my family, friends and colleagues more than ever before. I need to rethink the future and my children and grandchildren's education. The importance of teaching my children life-skills such as vegetable gardening and cooking has never been more crucial. We now spend more quality time sharing God's word as a family and instilling in each other the importance of values such as being ‘...doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves’ (James 1:22). Challenges will come our way: ‘the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever’ (Isaiah 40:8).

Glory be to God, for *the best of all is, God is with us*.

Note to leader

You might also invite someone in advance to give a testimony of when they have known God with them in a difficult time. You can find guidance on offering a testimony here: <https://thestoryproject.org.uk/resources>. Please give this to the person in good time so that they can prepare.

Hymn

We sing together hymn number 706 from *Singing the Faith*, ‘Longing For light, we wait In darkness’ or hymn number 685 from *Hymns and Psalms*, ‘O love that wilt not let me go’.

Reading

We shall now have a reading from the gospel according to St Mark chapter 4, verses 1 to 9.

Second testimony

I will now read a testimony from the Methodist Church in Bremerhaven, Germany.

Every year two million cars, manufactured in Germany, are loaded onto container ships at the small town of Bremerhaven and exported all around the world. Rows of cranes stretch for about three miles along the sea front – each one loading and unloading containers from ships that are so large they can only be serviced in this way.

When Pastor Christhard Elle was appointed to the United Methodist Church in Bremerhaven, the congregation had dwindled in numbers. People were talking about closing the church, and joining with another local congregation. The challenges were numerous and great. In the last ten years Pastor Elle, along with his leaders and co-workers in the congregation, has been able to find creative ways of reversing the downward trend. He helped the congregation to redirect their focus towards their neighbourhood, their town. The congregation made the bold decision to conduct their worship services, once a month, in the open air at various locations around the town – at the harbour, the Christmas markets, the swimming pool, the town hall, even at the local cemetery on Remembrance day when many Germans visit to put flowers on the graves of their loved ones.



New people started attending the services, including those in the old church building. It became clear that they would not be closing this church and amalgamating it with another congregation, but that they needed to carry out renovation work on the building to make it fit for purpose. One expensive alteration was the installation of a chair lift to help older visitors and those with disabilities enter the church. Most of the congregation were unemployed or retired and it was difficult to see how they would raise the money. But this small, faithful congregation prayed. And believed. And continued to give themselves in the service of their neighbour. And God did not disappoint them. It was a success: now older and less able-bodied visitors to Bremerhaven UMC can use the lift to access the church sanctuary.

Bremerhaven – both the town and the local Methodist church – has faced many challenges. Thanks to hard work, a love of their neighbours, and the creative spirit of God, it has used those challenges for good.

Note to Leader

You could show a film clip about Bremerhaven [here](#).

You might also invite someone in advance to give a testimony of when they have known God with them in a challenge. You can find guidance on offering a testimony here: <https://thestoryproject.org.uk/resources>. Please give this to the person in good time so that they can prepare.

Hymn

We sing together hymn number 409 from *Singing the Faith*, 'Let us build a house where love can dwell' or hymn number 774 from *Hymns and Psalms*, 'Lord, thy church on earth is seeking'.

Offering

Introduce with the words: "Your gifts for the work of God will now be gratefully received."

Receive the offering with this prayer:

Dear God, ever present with us, we offer you these gifts in the building up of your church and in the service of your kingdom of justice, hope and love here and throughout your world. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**

Prayers of intercession and the Lord's Prayer

Prayers of intercession

Introduce by saying:

In our prayers of intercessions, when I say, 'The Lord hears our prayer', would you please respond by saying, 'Thanks be to God'. The Lord hears our prayer [**Thanks be to God**].

Dear God

We thank you for being faithful and always with us. We thank you that Jesus, risen from death, is at your right hand, praying with us and for us now. In his name, we pray for the Church, throughout the world. On this day we pray with thanksgiving for our partner churches in Togo, Fiji and Germany. We pray for the Church where it is persecuted; and we also pray for this church and all its members. May we know you are with us and may we be inspired by our Christian sisters and brothers across this world and be open always to your Holy Spirit.

The Lord hears our prayer [**Thanks be to God**].

We pray for your world, made in beauty, spoilt by sin. Where there is war, we pray for peace; where there is oppression or inequality, we pray for your justice; where there is sickness or disaster, we pray for healing and hope.

The Lord hears our prayer [**Thanks be to God**].

We pray for our own nation. We pray for the government, for the opposition, for the trade unions. We pray for all with authority and influence, that they may use their power to help the poorest and most marginalised among us.

The Lord hears our prayer [**Thanks be to God**].

We pray for all in any kind of need. In a moment of quiet, we remember names in our hearts before you

Note to Leader: allow a moment of silence.

Where there is sickness, bring healing; where there is despair, bring hope; where there is grief, bring peace; and where one is dying, may they be carried into your eternal presence.

The Lord hears our prayer [**Thanks be to God**].

We pray for ourselves: that your will, and not ours may be done in our lives.

These prayers we offer in the name of Jesus, who taught us when praying to say:

The Lord's Prayer

Note to leader: use the version your church is familiar with

Hymn

We sing together hymn number 715 from *Singing the Faith*/ hymn number 408 from *Hymns and Psalms*, 'The right hand of God is writing in our land'.

Benediction

We say together:

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. **Amen.**

Global Relationships and the World Mission Fund

The Global Relationships team works with Partner Churches and organisations across the world. You can learn more about The World Mission Fund by clicking [here](#)

Methodists have always shared God's love and their faith with those they meet and work alongside across the world. Today the Methodist Church in Britain continues to engage in the global mission movement in partnership with, and at the request of Partner Churches in other countries.

There are many opportunities to get involved in global ministry, including in Britain:

- **Mission partners** usually live in another part of the world for at least three years, working with a partner church or organisation.
 - **Encounter together** is a group visit programme that enables groups to learn more about faith and life in another place.
 - **Encounter worldwide** allows individuals to spend 3–12 months as a volunteer, living and working with a Partner Church or organisation. There are bursaries for Methodists aged 18–25.
-
- Are you, or do you know a minister who can spend a minimum of a month of their sabbatical with a Partner Church or organisation?
 - Do you, or someone you know have a specialist skill you could offer to a Partner Church or organisation through a short-term voluntary placement?
 - Is your circuit or district interested in receiving an evangelist to work with you for three years from a Partner Church?
 - Is your circuit or district interested in receiving a Global Mission Fellow in a church-based community project for two years from a Partner Church?
 - Is your church, circuit or district interested in setting up a twinning link with a Partner Church?
 - Would you like a member of the Global Relationships team or a mission partner on furlough or a recently returned volunteer to speak at your church, circuit, synod or Zoom call?

For more information visit [Overseas Opportunities](#) or read about ongoing projects and news at [Global Relationships](#).

Questions? Please email the Global Relationships team at gr.admin@methodistchurch.org.uk

How World Mission Fund supports Partner Churches

Your ongoing generosity to the WMF helps us support partner churches as they join in God's mission in their location. Here are a few examples of how your gifts were used last year in different places.

Colombia

The WMF supports the Ecumenical Social Centre for Communications in Latin America (CEPALC), based in Colombia. Carlos Daniel Silva Quecán works with Colombian children from different ethnic groups, including Afro-Colombians and Indigenous Colombians. He helps them learn about building peaceful communities, about their rights as children living in Colombian society and how to use media to have a voice.



Haiti

The WMF supported the Haiti District of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americas (MCCA) with a general (solidarity) grant for preventative healthcare activities in five Methodist clinics. The clinics teach local communities how to protect themselves from Covid-19 and give PPE and cleaning products to vulnerable communities.

Latvia

The WMF supports the Hope Centre, which provides a refuge to young single mothers and mothers-to-be. It is a place, where they can live until their child is born and they have gained enough experience and knowledge to live independently. The Centre provides learning opportunities and counselling and mentoring. They particularly encourage women to finish their education or to attend a professional training school, so they have the self-esteem and knowledge to raise their children independently, and are able to support themselves financially.



Cameroon

The WMF supports the work of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Christina, a banking and finance graduate, was appointed in 2016. She developed the asset management policy and designed the PCC asset manual, which offers guidelines on implementing standard procedures. She updates the PCC asset register and ensures it is reflected in the PCC's annual audited reports. Christina has identified lapses with the use of a more modern software. Christina loves her job and loves the opportunity to serve under the NMA grant scheme.



Asset manager Christina Ochonou (right) with the MCB partnership co-ordinator for Africa, Olubunmi Olayisade.



Bangladesh

Bangladesh is densely populated and home to some of the world's poorest. It has 165 million people, who are mostly Muslim. The number of people infected with the coronavirus has increased very rapidly and government services are severely limited. The WMF made two grants this year, one of £25,000 to the Church of Bangladesh for its 30,000 members and one of £20,000 to its social development organisation 'Shalom' which reaches 120,000 of the most vulnerable people in all faith communities. These include day labourers, restaurant workers, transport workers, old and destitute women, people with disabilities, and others who are unable to work due to pandemic restrictions. The help offered included emergency food packages as well as medicine and masks.

Japan

The Asian Rural Institute is a training centre for rural community leaders, set in a six-hectare farm in Northern Japan. WMF scholarship grants last year enabled three people from African and Asian Partner Churches to take advantage of its annual course. It seemed particularly pertinent to what is going on in the world economically this year.

The Institute runs a Rural Leaders' Training Programme, which focuses on servant leadership, community building and sustainable agriculture. Its aim is to nurture and train grassroots leaders to be more effective in their



communities as they work to serve the poor, the hungry and the marginalised. The training is community-based and practical. At its heart is the philosophy 'Foodlife', which values the deep connections that exist between food and life.

The mission of the Asian Rural Institute is "to build an environmentally, healthy, just and peaceful world in which each person can live to his or her fullest potential". It's a mission the world needs now more than ever. One of the students we were able to support said in her final report, "Whatever we do in this life as servant leaders, we need to keep these three in mind: love for God, love for our neighbour and love for the soil. When these become part of our lives, we shall impact the world positively making it a safe place for everyone to enjoy".

Junior Mission for All (JMA)

This was created so that children would be able to learn about and support the mission of the Church in a fun, creative and engaging way. It is also about sharing the insights of God's people all over the world with children in our churches.

JMA is part of the Methodist Church's mission programme. Children and young people raise funds for JMA to support the Methodist Church's World Mission Fund and Mission in Britain Fund.

Last year, JMA collectors raised well over £97,000. Of this, 80% went to the World Mission Fund to help 100+ Partner Churches and organisations in Africa, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. The other 20% supported Methodist mission projects across the UK. For more information, click [here](#)

Easter Offering

Each year, the Methodist Church holds an Easter Offering dedication service. This tradition dates back to 1883, when women in Manchester collected £32 for missionary work overseas from 'Christmas pennies' at family gatherings on Christmas Day. In March 1884, the London Districts distributed Easter envelopes and collecting bags asking for a penny a head, and collected around £100. In 1900, Women's Work raised £1,655 for the work of overseas missions.

Since then, each successive Methodist women's movement has encouraged donations in support of God's mission. Recently, Methodist Women in Britain (supported by the Global Relationships team) have produced an annual service of dedication, often used widely around the Connexion as a circuit service.

All the money raised through the Easter Offering goes to the World Mission Fund of the Methodist Church in Britain for work in our 100+ Partner Churches around the world. This money is used by overseas partners to fund such work as: enabling young women in north India to undertake nurse and midwifery training; supporting Brazilian women to work in their churches with vulnerable women and children; developing women's leadership roles and integrating culture and art into worship across Brazil.

In 2019, collections from Easter Offering services raised over £370,000, thanks to the generosity of Methodist men, women and children.

We thank Methodist Women in Britain for running this appeal, and you for making a difference by contributing to God's mission in this way.



How to Give

If as an individual or as a church you would like to support the World Mission Fund, you can give online [here](#).

You can also send a cheque (made payable to 'Methodist Church World Mission Fund') to:

Methodist Church World Mission Fund
Methodist Church House
25 Marylebone Road
London NW1 5JR

Thank you very much – your generosity is greatly appreciated.