



World Church Relationships News Bulletin

November 2011

Partner Churches

1 Peter 4: 14-16: "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief-maker. Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name." (NRSV).

Pakistan

Here is a message from Steve Pearce, World Church Partnerships Coordinator for Asia & the Pacific, who recently in Pakistan:

I am writing this in Peshawar, having arrived by road from Lahore in the middle of last night, and am now listening to the sounds of children working and playing in the school next door and to air force planes and helicopters roaring overhead every half hour or so.

Pakistan is full of people ready to welcome the visitor with a smile, some questions and ready explanations. It is also a place where a cathedral dedication service merited a dozen armed policemen to supplement the armed guards who already protect the diocesan compound 24/7.

Time and again our discussions, both formal and informal, returned to the Blasphemy Laws. The Indian constitution, drafted by the British in the 19th century, contained a law against blasphemy and this continued when Pakistan was formed in 1947. In the 1970s two clauses were added which gave protection only to Islam, one about the Prophet and one about the Qur'an. In recent years, as the climate of hatred towards the West (and therefore to Christianity) has grown, the number of accusations under these clauses has increased. Most of the accusations are malicious, arising out of revenge, envy or hatred. It is easy to make an accusation, and since the offence was blasphemy you don't have to repeat what was said, as to do so would be to commit the offence yourself. The results are horrific. Often mobs are motivated to sit in the court and pressure the judge to convict; in one case the accused were shot in the court building even before any conviction. Once you are accused, you have to leave your home and go into hiding. One of our partners, CLAAS, runs a safe house, offers legal support and visits prisoners. I visited their office and heard their stories. I was proud that the World Mission Fund, through your support, is able to be part of this work and took the liberty of promising your prayers.



The level of hatred involved in these and other types of individual and structural behaviour against religious minorities is the activity of a small number of people and organizations, but is having profound effects on



A staff member in the legal section and some of the files at CLAAS. Each file represents a person accused of blasphemy and whose life, and that of their family, is therefore ruined.

people's lives and some leaders are talking about the survival of the Church in Pakistan, and even about Pakistan as a failed state.

Of the 190m people in Pakistan, about 3% belong to religious minorities. Of those, half are Christian – equal numbers of Catholic and Protestant. The foreign Christian missionaries (known here as 'dollar missions') are increasing the number of denominations, but seem only to be spreading the same numbers more thinly. Clearly evangelistic activity among the Muslim majority is not tolerated but is often focused in Hindu areas.

Our partner, the Church of Pakistan, was formed in 1970 when Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian traditions united. The Moderator is one of the eight bishops and he, Reverend Sammy Azariah, is Bishop of Raiwind, which is part of Lahore and formerly an area of Methodist missionary activity. The new Cathedral dedicated last Sunday was on the site of the former Central Methodist Church. The General Secretary of the World Council of Churches was present for this and for the Mission Conference which followed, as was I and representatives of nine other European partners.

Four of the eight bishops are new – one of several real signs of hope. One of them is the Revd Kaleem John – until recently a minister in the British Connexion, serving in the London District. He will be consecrated and made Bishop of Hyderabad on 23 October. I have promised him our prayers and partnership. Enabling the Church of Pakistan to survive and develop must be a priority for us. The Church is seeking prayer and partnership from circuits and districts in Britain. Please contact me for a link or for more information.

Read more about Steve's visit to Pakistan on the World Church blog by clicking on this image or going to <http://worldchurch.posterous.com/>

For more information please contact Steve Pearce, Partnership Coordinator for Asia-Pacific, at wcr.asiapacific@methodistchurch.org.uk



Central America Flooding

The Methodist Church in Britain has sent £15,000 through the World Mission Fund to our partner churches in Central America to support them in bringing relief to the tens of thousands of people affected by recent flooding in the area. According to UN reports, over 100,000 people have been affected by an abnormally long period of constant tropical rains in Central America. Countries from Mexico to Panama have been affected. The Methodist Church in Britain is in partnership with churches in the region and has been in contact with them. They have started to help people whose homes and livelihoods have been affected.

The President of the Methodist Church in El Salvador, Juan de Dios Peña writes: *“The rivers have grown; the mountains have collapsed; the lakes are flooded; many homes are underwater... Please keep us in your prayers.”*

Ahuachapan, where the church’s headquarters are located, is one of the worst affected places. The Revd Peña continues: *“Some of the animals in the area of in Ahuachapán are floating in the water... after days of rain several houses fell down completely today.”*

From Guatemala, the partner Church writes: *“Thanks be to God we are well although the rain is not due to stop until next Thursday... We trust that God will continue to protect us. I want to let you know that members of the church are out in the affected areas helping to organize help and support... Many thanks for your prayers.”*



Americas and Caribbean Partnership Coordinator, Revd Tom Quenet, said: *“We have been in very regular contact with the worst affected churches in the region and have already sent them money to buy medicines, food and household items that people need. A further assessment is being made and we hope to hear more news soon.”*

The Methodist Church’s Companion for Guatemala, the Revd Conrad Hicks, is scheduled to visit Guatemala in early November and will work with the church to prepare any further response needed from the World Mission Fund.

People from Partner theological training institution CEDEPCA have been to the worst affected areas and sent pictures of the damage and rescuers’ attempts to dig people out of homes overwhelmed by landslides.

Cote d’Ivoire

In response to the recent civil war in Côte d’Ivoire, The Methodist Church in Britain’s World Mission Fund (WMF) sent the *Eglise Méthodiste Unie de Côte d’Ivoire* a solidarity grant of £10,000 from the World Mission Fund.

Part of the grant is being used to support the youth department, the *Riviera Palmeraie* Methodist Church community and church members who lost possessions and homes during the fighting. Some of it will go towards supporting the Blue Cross – the only drug and alcohol abuse support centre in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Some of the grant is also being used to repair church ministries and premises that have been damaged, such as the Evangelism Cell Group ministry, and Methodist schools such as the Anyama Boarding School for Girls, which served as a base for soldiers during the fighting. The overall damage is estimated at more than 237,000,000 CFA (approximately



Map from <http://stats.emu-ci.org/>

£310,000). Pupils from the school have been temporarily relocated to Methodist establishments in the village of Abdijan.

The Revd Michael Lobo, Secretary of Conference responsible for International Relationships, thanked Methodists in the UK for the grant. He said, "We would like to request that you pass on our sincere thanks to all the donors who have demonstrated their generous love towards us. Please reassure them of our prayers and may our Lord richly bless them and their families."

For more information please contact **Bunmi Olayisade**, Partnership Coordinator for Africa, at wcr.africa@methodistchurch.org.uk

Hong Kong

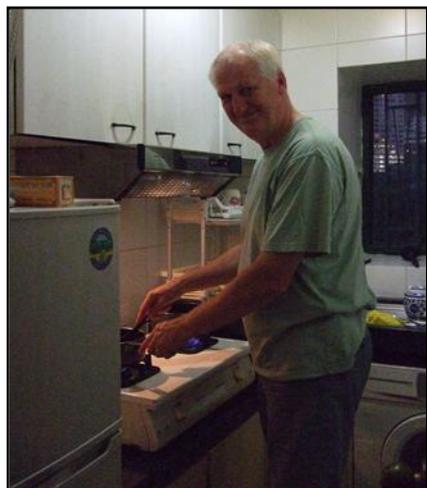
Howard Mellor recently moved to Hong Kong, where he is now serving as a minister with permission to reside abroad. He sent this update:



It hardly seems possible but we have been here for over one month already. We have come to be part of the Methodist International Church in Wan Chai, Hong Kong which has seven congregations located in four places. The welcome is warm as the weather which has been about 30 for most of the time; often humid and draining but also exhilarating and exciting. Our flat is in the middle of all those towering blocks.

The church services are packed to capacity with three main services and four others in smaller places. We have also started a discipleship programme called Stepforward and are trailing some new material written this summer called Compass. It is great to be working with people who are so very eager to work at new things.

The main services are exciting with packed congregations. We have a really good worship band at the 9.30 service and organist/pianist and 'up for it choir' at 11.15. I also get to preach fairly regularly (in English) to the Filipino congregations who worship in Tagalog as well. The Filipino ministry is really significant led by the Revd Jesus de Los Santos (we call him Jess), and caters of hundreds of migrant domestic workers who come to the church for worship, bible study, craft and cooking classes as well and fellowship, food and frankly they have a party each Sunday which is their one day off. The church has an excellent administrator and also an associate minister called Marybeth from the USA. It is a great team and we are planning all kinds of things to deepen discipleship and build community.



We have visited parts of Hong Kong doing our tourist bit. The Lin Po Monastery on Lantau Island with the Big Buddha on the hill. A huge bronze image which can be seen for miles around.

Our flat is in Wan Chai and on the 16th floor. It is well appointed but small

and would fit neatly inside the Principal's study at Cliff College. The most curious thing is the two burner stove, no oven, so we are very grateful to the insightful person who bought us '100 things to cook in a wok'.

We have an interesting website and you can even get to hear my sermons – guaranteed to cure insomnia!
www.hk-mic.org

Peru/Puerto Rico

The Methodist Church in Britain has agreed a grant of US\$ 6,000 (approximately £4,000) from the World Mission Fund to the Methodist Church in Puerto Rico. This is to cover part of the travel costs involved in putting on an evangelism training event for the Methodist Church Peru.

The Methodist Church Puerto Rico has grown by at least 5% every year in the past 5 years. The Methodist Church in Peru has struggled to grow numerically but has a long established ministry of providing schools. Five tutors in Puerto Rico will travel to Peru and in the course of a week hold teaching seminars in the newly established John Wesley theological seminary. The tutors will also travel to various parts of the country where cost of transport to the capital would make it difficult for people to attend. International partners will provide air fares for the tutors, and the Methodist Church Peru will provide accommodation and transport within the country.



The Revd Tom Quenet, Partnerships Coordinator for Latin America & the Caribbean, said: *“Having recently established a Methodist seminary in Lima to train its pastors, the Methodist Church Peru will have better trained pastors. The Methodist Church Puerto Rico’s teachers have many years of successfully preparing qualified ministers, pastors and church members.*

For more information please contact Thomas Quenet, Partnership Coordinator for the Americas and the Caribbean, at quenett@methodistchurch.org.uk

“On the other hand, the pastors in Peru will be able to give the Methodists of Puerto Rico living testimony of faith in action; faith in the face of racism and discrimination against indigenous people; faith in overcoming physical obstacles – crossing the valleys of the Andes, living with the consequences of violence by paramilitary and government forces, and resisting the ‘Shining Path’ guerrillas. In short, this is an example of better regional partnership and a good use of resources.”

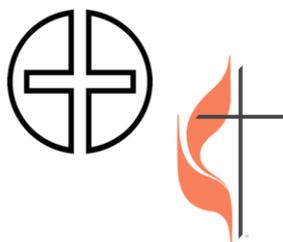
New Church Development in Albania

The Methodist Church in Albania, as part of the United Methodist Church Central and Southern Europe, has been granted €8,000 from the Fund for Mission in Europe towards a project of new church development.

The Methodist Church in Britain (MCB)’s World Mission Fund makes a yearly contribution to the Fund for Mission in Europe, a fund that is overseen by the European Methodist Council, of which the MCB is a member. The priorities of this fund are to support church mission that works towards sustainability, education and leadership training, being a learning church in terms of exchanging ideas, personnel, diaconal work, new mission activities and migrant congregations.

With these funds, the Methodist Church in Albania aims to strengthen existing

Click [here](#) for more information on the United Methodist Church in Albania.



Methodist work in the country and to plant new churches in cities such as Tirana, Pogradec and Elbasan (click here for [googlemaps](#)). The Church also aims to translate Methodist material and resources into Albanian, in order to strengthen the Methodist presence and learning in these churches.

Superintendent Wilfried Nausner reported that some of last year's highlights of the church's work that had been supported by the Fund for Mission in Europe included more than 20 people of all ages being baptised, churches becoming a place of welcome to new people, and social action becoming an important part of the church's Christian faith. The year 2011 saw the organising of a successful women's project, a summer camp for families and a seminar for lay workers and leaders.

Revd Nausner added, *'Easter Sunday was a special day in the life of the Methodist Church in Tirana-after completing the introductory course, four adults and two children were baptised and accepted into the congregation and into membership of the UMC. Warm applause from the many people gathered in the church greeted each new member-and a few tears from the youngest. Her parents spoke the baptismal vows. These were the first baptisms in Tirana, which is a young church in both senses of the word: the average age of those attending is under 30. A second group of young people was baptised and admitted into membership on 19 June.'*

For more information
please contact Roy
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at
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World Church Blog:

<http://worldchurch.posterous.com/>

Follow the Partnership Coordinators and others from the World Church Relationships Office as they blog their way around world visiting partner churches and organizations. Visits in November include Ecuador, Hong Kong, Japan, Central America, Cuba and Antigua and possibly others.



Mission Partner News

Why not invite a Mission Partner to speak at your church?

Click [here](#) for a list of Mission Partners who are expected home on leave in 2011. If you would like to invite anyone on this list to speak at your church, please contact Jan Deakin at deakinj@methodistchurch.org.uk and at Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5 JR, Tel: 020 7467 5109.

Mission partners often have PowerPoint presentations, music and stories to share that lend themselves to a wide range of events such as coffee mornings, international evenings or after Sunday lunch meetings as well as informal small groups and midweek meetings. Lay mission partners are happy to be interviewed during a service if they cannot preach.

Grenada

From Andy Dye:

"One of the things that I really enjoy is going to different churches and leading services. It's a wonderful privilege to share with different congregations and experience their support and kindness. I am part of the group of local preachers here, quite a few are young and in the middle of their local preacher training. The system of training here is based on exams that the preachers on trial have to pass. The quality of the local preachers on trial is very good in Grenada, so much so that one of our local preachers, Ria Delves, gained the highest grade in the whole of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA) for her worship



Wesley College Junior Football team, first game of the season, won 3-0!

and preaching exam. Local preachers form a backbone of regular Sunday worship around the world in Methodist circles, and it's good to be part of a committed team.

I take some Religious education classes in Wesley College and also in the Grenada Boys Secondary School (GBSS). As part of these sessions this year I decided to start the year with the simple statement: What questions do you have? The different questions I have received I think are a fascinating insight in to what teenagers think about faith, but also a reflection of the spirituality and religious influences on Grenadians. Here is just a small (!) selection:

"How old is Jesus? Which religion is right? Is there a hell? Is the devil God's first son? Where is heaven? If God loves us, why do we continue to hurt him by sinning every day? Is God black or white? I know the Devil is real but I am not sure that God is real; I can't see him, I can't hear him and I can't touch him, explain that? Does God forgive you even if you know what you are doing is wrong? Why don't some people believe in God? Who wrote the bible? How do we know the bible is true? How do we ask God for things? Where do demons come from? Why did God make Hell? How do we know that which day is the real day that Jesus (God) rested? Why do Methodists eat pig and drink caffeine when the bible also states that it's unclean? Why are there different religions?"

I don't know, but I think the type of questions from a class of teenagers in the UK would be quite different. They look quite hard so please, please, please feel free to write your answers on a postcard and send them to me!"

Zimbabwe

Earlier this year, Shelley Cooling went to Zimbabwe to start a placement as a new mission partner, working at the Matthew Rusike Children's Home in Harare. The home (which was founded in 1950 and is managed by the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe) is a safe haven for some 143 homeless, orphaned, displaced, abandoned and deprived children.

Shelley is settling into her role and learning the Zimbabwean way of doing things. She has been having daily



Shona classes with one of the teachers in the home. On the job, she has been busy building relationships with staff and children at the home, as well as hosting and meeting guests from overseas. She is also preparing to make changes to the home's Early Childhood Development classroom, sorting and cleaning resources, identifying resources that are required, creating areas of learning in the classroom and sharing ideas with staff.

Recently, Shelley acquired a new housemate: a pet dog who goes by the

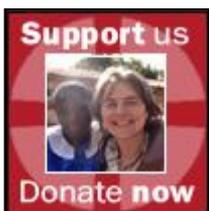
rather unusual name of Baboon. *"He was a gift from Astonishment Mapurisa, who's the national director of MRCH,"* She explains. *"Astonishment's children named him Baboon because they thought he looked like one! He's currently learning how to live a cross-cultural lifestyle. He is definitely an African dog, enjoying his freedom during the daytime and scavenging around the grounds. But in the evening he is indoors and learning that night-time is for sleeping! He is adorable and has already become a well-known character on campus. Life with a dog is now complete!"*



COULD GOD BE CALLING YOU TO BECOME A MISSION PARTNER?

Please click [here](#) for more information on how you could become one.

How you can donate to the World Mission Fund



The Methodist Church **World Mission Fund** exists to support the work of the British Methodist Church with its partner churches and organisations overseas, through the sharing of both resources and personnel. You can donate online [here](#) or send a cheque to: **The Methodist Church World Mission Fund, Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR.** Please make cheques payable to 'Methodist Church World Mission Fund'. Click here for more information on the [work that the World Mission Fund supports](#) through the Methodist Church's partner churches and ecumenical organisations.

Prayer Points

- ⊗ Pray for the Church of Pakistan, its Moderator and the seven other Bishops of the Church. Pray also for CLAAS as they seek to support those accused of blasphemy.
- ⊗ Pray for Howard Mellor as he continues serving the Methodist Church in Hong Kong. Give thanks that he is adjusting well to life in a new country and to a new church.
- ⊗ Continue to pray for those affected by flooding in Central America. Pray for the leaders of our partner churches in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, that God may grant them wisdom in bringing relief to those most in need.
- ⊗ Thank God for the work of the *Eglise Méthodiste Unie de Côte d'Ivoire* as it continues to help rebuild the lives of its members and its community after the civil war.
- ⊗ Pray for the evangelism training event in Peru. Pray that this cross-cultural exchange will enrich the learning and lives of those who attend the course and those who lead the training.
- ⊗ Pray for the work of the United Methodist Church in Albania, as it continues developing churches there and successfully plants new ones as people in the area come to faith.
- ⊗ Pray for Andy Dye as he continues to work alongside young Grenadians in Religious Education classes in Wesley College and at the Grenada Boys Secondary School.
- ⊗ Pray for Shelly Cooling as she becomes accustomed to life in Zimbabwe and to her new role at the Matthew Rusike Children's Home.