



# World Church Relationships News Bulletin

May 2011

## Mission partner news

Romans 8:38-39 *"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (NRSV)

### The Methodist Church, The Gambia elects new female Bishop

In her latest newsletter, mission partner Ruth Wilson reports on the election of the new Bishop of the Methodist Church, The Gambia:

*In February of this year at Conference Rev Hannah Faal Heim was designated as the future Bishop of the Methodist Church, The Gambia (from February 2012). She is the first Gambian to lead the Church since it became autonomous in 2009 and as far as I am aware she is the first female in West Africa to become Bishop. Please pray for Rev Heim as she takes on this new role and for the church as it moves forward under her leadership and faces the challenges of being autonomous. May the Lord lead, guide, and provide wisdom for the church during the challenging times ahead".*

Click [here](#) to read the full newsletter.

## Grenada

Here's a report from Andy Dye, our mission partner in Grenada:

*The first week of April was the last week of our very long school term. There are no half terms here in Grenada, so with the late Easter it stretched out to 14 weeks in a row. Many of the teachers at Wesley Collage were very ready for the holiday and yet many also provided extra classes over the two week Easter break!*



*Some classes also spent extra time in school to paint and decorate their class rooms as part of the 'operation transformation' to improve the school environment. This has been a project which has been running since the start of the school year. It has involved students and teachers in taking ownership of their classroom by raising funds and decorating their space. It is hoped that in doing this classes build team spirit, learn to care for their environment and create clean and encouraging surroundings.*

*Just before the break the science staff spent a little time planning for the upcoming science fair. This will involve students in researching, creating and experimenting ready to present their work at the school science fair in June.*

A solar oven at work

*The current ideas range from building microwave receivers to studying the decomposition of different fruits. Many of the ideas focus on using the natural resources of the Caribbean. My current favourite is the plan to*

*construct a solar oven/steam turbine from an upturned umbrella. The sun strength between 12 and 2pm here is powerful and it is easy to get sun burn very quickly. There is a lot of use of solar heaters on roofs but the only solar oven I have seen on the island so far is one which is used by the Grenada Chocolate Company. I will give you an update on the scientific progress of the students in June.*

## 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](mailto: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.

## News from Overseas Partner Churches and Organisations

### Myanmar

Following the earthquake in north-east Myanmar on 24 March which left over 100 people dead, the MCB has given a grant of **£5,000 from the World Mission Fund** to the Methodist Church Upper Myanmar (MCUM) towards relief work.

The earthquake, which had a magnitude of 7.0, caused casualties and losses in Tachilek, Tahlay and several villages. According to reports, a total of 224 houses, 11 religious buildings and 9 departmental buildings collapsed in Tachilek, Tahlay, Naywng Village, Monglin Village, Mongkoe Village tract, and Kyakuni Village. Roads and bridges were also damaged.

The MCUM wishes to send and provide necessary assistance to the victims of earthquake-hit areas. There are many Christians among the victims. Victims need clothes, foodstuffs, bags of rice and medicine. The MCUM's Conference Office will organise relief teams and provide necessary assistance to the victims.

The President of the MCUM also requested that we all remember the earthquake victims in our prayers.

### The Korean Methodist Church visits the MCB

On 20 May, representatives of the MCB met with the Acting General Secretary of the Mission board of the Korean Methodist Church (KMC) and Revd Susan Nam, who is responsible for the KMC overseas personnel and ecumenical relationships. Korean ministers of KMC working in Britain were especially invited to the meeting, from as far afield as York and Exeter. Several of them were not known to MCB and so the meeting was keen to hear of their ministry in the UK.



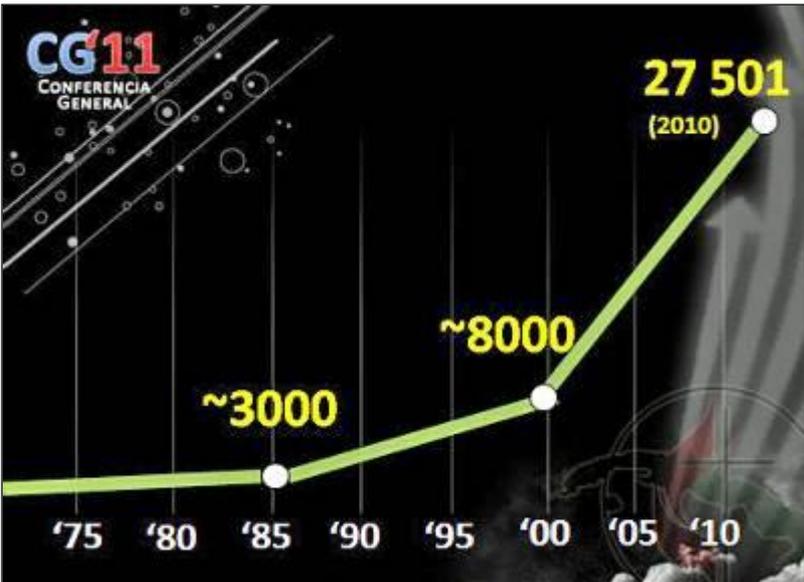
For more information please contact Steve Pearce, Partnership Coordinator for Asia-Pacific, at [wcr.asiapacific@metho.org.uk](mailto:wcr.asiapacific@metho.org.uk)

The meeting explored the ways in which KMC ministers might cooperate more closely with MCB at a local level in order to better serve the needs of local people and more effectively partake in God’s mission together.

Click [here](#) for more stories from our partners in Asia-Pacific region

**Cuba**

The Revd Tom Quenet, Partnership Coordinator for Latin America & the Caribbean, recently paid a visit to the Methodist Church in Cuba. The Church has witnessed phenomenal growth in recent years (see chart), and Tom’s aim was to find out what was behind this growth.



Charting the Cuban Church's recent growth rate

*“I travelled a distance of nearly 700 miles; from Santiago de Cuba in the east to Havana in the west,” Tom said. “As I travelled, I would ask pastors and church members, both young and old, why they thought the church was growing. I noticed that the initial response was to look back at me with a sense of incredulity. A look that suggested, ‘What a strange question to ask’. A look that assumed that the*

*most natural state for a church was to grow, thrive and multiply itself.”*

While in Cuba, Tom attended the Methodist Church in Cuba’s Conference – which, he says, was very different from other conferences he had attended before. He recalls: *“There was the election of the Bishop (Ricardo Pereira) that took up a few hours; his report to the Conference and the reports of the various*

*'Commissions' of the Church. There was also the presentation of statistical returns that took up a little more time and confirmed that of the 30,165 members, 29,793 were tithing. In total, business occupied about 20% of the time, the rest of the time together was spent in celebration, bible study, prayer and the fellowship of sharing with one another.*

*"After I had asked the question a number of times about why people thought the church was growing, I realised that the answers could be summed up in one reply that I had received from the Superintendent in Guantanamo: 'We celebrate a lot, we praise a lot, we rejoice and pray a lot, we study a lot and we give everything we can to the Glory of God. I think this is why we are growing.'*

*"As I talked to the members of the Methodist Church in Cuba during the Conference it was clear that they not only did this, but that their worship has a strong liturgical base and that their numerical growth is bound to their care, love and service of their neighbour."*

## Ivory Coast

On 21 May, Alassane Ouattara was inaugurated as president of the Ivory Coast. Although Mr Quattara was acknowledged as the country's rightful leader, the nation has been left shattered, and the people broken.



President Alassane Ouattara of Cote d'Ivoire at his swearing-in ceremony

*"There is a long list of political, military, economic and social obstacles to surmount," says Bunmi Olayisade, partnership coordinator for Africa. "Most important of all is the beginning of a reconciliation process of a profoundly divided people.*



A street in the Ivory Coast

*"As Ivoirians address pervading social and political issues, we pray they learn from past mistakes and seek to move on for the healing of its country. Sure, easier said than done, however as Christians we shall continue to pray for the wholeness of the Ivory Coast and that the spirit of forgiveness prevails as leaders confront difficult matters. Above all, may African politics mature to such a time when leaders resolve conflicts through dialogue only avoiding the destruction of lives and property."*

The Methodist Church in Britain is sending a solidarity grant of **£10,000 from the World Mission Fund** as a love offering towards the recovery of the United Methodist Church in Cote d'Ivoire (EMUCI) at this difficult time. Below is part of a letter we recently received from Reverend Michel Lobo on behalf of the EMUCI:

*"Our country, Côte d'Ivoire, is going through one of its darkest moments in history. Parish worship is slowly resuming.*

*As with many of the inhabitants of our country, several of our members have suffered bodily, material, and financial damage during these sad events. There have also been deaths, but at the moment it is difficult for us to know the exact number of people from within our membership that we have lost.*

*One of our pastors was beaten to a pulp with a machete, but is slowly recovering from his injuries. Our largest establishment for girls called 'Anyama Girls Boarding School' was completely ransacked, as were the other Church buildings where every IT room was ransacked and the cars taken.*

*We will give you more details once we have assessed the current situation. Thank you for holding us in prayer and may the Lord hear your prayers."*

## Sierra Leone

On 27 April, Sierra Leone celebrated 50 years of independence. The Methodist Church in Sierra Leone was part of 'the Body of Christ', an ecumenical body established by the Sierra Leone Council of Churches, which organised a series of events to mark the occasion.



**Sierra Leoneans celebrating Independence Day at the National Stadium in Freetown**

*"Churches joined in the celebrations in several ways," says the Revd Arnold Temple, President of MCSL. "On Independence Day, several of our churches had communion and thanksgiving services. People went in their green, white and blue colours to give thanks to God for Sierra Leone. Then on the Sunday following the Independence Day, there were thanksgiving services in*

*all our churches. Prayers were offered for the future wellbeing of the state."*

*"On Independence Day, we met in a church that was full and heaving with people, celebrating in a rather 'carnival' atmosphere," says Peter Clark, one of MCB's mission partners in Sierra Leone. "People were dressed for a celebration, and breakfast followed. That service was the highlight of the celebrations for me. It was very meaningful.*

*"What is interesting is the timing – not only of the celebrations, but the fact that it came immediately after Easter. That, in many ways, provided an interesting dual phenomenon for the churches. They'd engaged in Holy Week and then immediately after that they were thrust into celebrating the Jubilee anniversary of independence! And those two things have worked together – certainly in the churches I've been involved with in the last two weeks. There's been a very strong recognition that the two are linked – theologically, religiously and spiritually."*

**For more information please contact Bunmi Olayisade, Partnership Coordinator for Africa, at [wcr.africa@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:wcr.africa@methodistchurch.org.uk)**

**Click [here](#) for more stories from Africa**

## Italy

As unrest continues in some north African countries, the Methodist Church in Florence is stepping up its efforts to offer support to incoming refugees from the region.

The Revd Alison Walker, a mission partner working with the Methodist congregation in Florence, spoke about the help the Church is offering migrants during a recent visit to Methodist Church House in London. This ministry to migrants has been going on for some time, but is sharply highlighted at the moment as the Church seeks to respond to the tragic events forcing refugees from North Africa to seek sanctuary in Italy. The Methodist and Waldensian Church is standing firmly against the hostility to migrants and refugees in Italian politics.

*Alison said: "The first January that I was present in Florence, a camp for Roma people was dismantled leaving 70 people homeless in the middle of a very cold winter – including two newborn children and several elderly and sick. And so the Waldensian Church – our partner church in Italy – opened their doors for a week and had 70 people sleeping on the floor. And then the Methodist Church hosted the families with the two newborn babies and a few other people; that went on for nearly four weeks, sleeping on put-up beds in our church rooms.*

*"After that, we became aware that there was a need to try and help not only this group, but other groups as well; to help them integrate more, help them to access services – in particular education. The Italian Methodist Church as a whole has a very good track record of working with incoming communities; lots of the other Methodist Churches in other Italian cities have either an integrated church service, or have services in different languages."*

Alison's church recently opened a sportello: an open-door information service to migrants in Florence. Alison is also developing bi- and multi-lingual worship in the church's main worship service. The MCB has just awarded the Florence Church a grant of £1,215 towards the purchase of computer equipment to support this ministry.

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## Spain

Ricardo Moraleja is Coordinating Officer for the National Youth Department for the Evangelical Spanish Church – a National in Mission Appointment from MCB. He sends us this story from a youth project he has been involved with:

*On the very first day of the 'Sacred Octagon' programme, young people from different churches in the Madrid-Extremadura Circuit met together. The majority of them had known each other from when they were small. Some had prepared for confirmation together and almost all had performed in plays in their respective churches. Despite this they were not good friends and worse still, they did not know how to show respect for one another. During their first meeting, we realized there were grudges and rivalries between them. It was not long before their conversations became tainted by insults. To deal with this situation, the youth group leaders began to teach them about respect, the dignity of a person, forgiveness and friendship. It was not easy, but as the programme continued these young people began to be more friendly and respectful towards one another.*

*The theme of prayer was dealt with almost at the end of the first stage of the programme, and as expected, not a single young person dared to pray out loud (I don't think they even did it in private at the time). At the second stage of the 'Sacred Octagon' programme we continued with the tradition of finishing each session with a prayer. The young people still didn't pray out loud. One day however, one of the boys arrived looking very sad, and did not participate in the discussions. At the end, after giving heard about Jacob and his struggle at Jabokk (Genesis 32), the boy willingly shared what he was going through: his parents were separating and he was very upset by the situation. What was surprising that day was that as we closed the session with a prayer, some young people expressed their desire to pray for this boy. Months later, this same boy did his confirmation and requested that the scripture for the preaching be that of the story of Jacob at Jabokk.*



The youth group from the Madrid-Extremadura Circuit participating in a worship service

## 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

Please pray for...

- ⊗ Bishop Hannah Faal Heimas she becomes the first Gambian and female elected Bishop since the Church's autonomy in 2009
- ⊗ the principal, teachers and students of Wesley College in Grenada, especially those students facing exams soon
- ⊗ The Church in Myanmar and the work it is doing in providing emergency relief to people affected by the earthquake
- ⊗ the developing relationship between MCB and the Korean Methodist Church, especially in regards to Korean ministers in the UK.
- ⊗ the Methodist Church in Cuba's continued growth
- ⊗ an end to the unrest in the Ivory Coast, and for the Church there
- ⊗ the MCSL and for Sierra Leone as a nation on its 50th anniversary of independence
- ⊗ Alison Walker and the church in Florence, as the church opens its doors to those seeking sanctuary in Italy
- ⊗ and for the young people of the Madrid-Extremadura Circuit, as they continue to grow in their knowledge of God and love for each other.