



# World Church Relationships News Bulletin

July-August 2011

## Partner Church News

Psalm 22: 3-5 “Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.” (NRSV)

### The Methodist Church Kenya carries out relief work in east Africa

The Methodist Church in Britain is recommending a solidarity grant of £20,000 to the Methodist Church in Kenya, to help with relief work in light of the ongoing famine in east Africa. Kenya is one of the east African countries experiencing the worst drought in recent years, and the Kenyan government has declared the current famine a national disaster.

The Methodist Church in Kenya has requested funding to purchase and distribute food to areas most affected by the famine. The worst hit areas are mainly in northern Kenya, which has had little or no rainfall lately. This has resulted in massive crop failure, drying up of the few water sources and death of animals

which are the communities’ major source of income. “As one visits the drought stricken areas, they notice the few remaining animals which are extremely emaciated and unable to move, just on the brink of dying,” says partnerships coordinator for Africa, Dr Bunmi Olayisade.

Northern Kenya also borders Somalia, which has been without an effective government since 1991. In the recent weeks, increased fighting there has spilled over into Kenya. This has worsened the situation as residents are driven out of their homes by the Al-shabaab fighters. Many lives have been lost and livelihoods destroyed. High fuel prices have greatly affected the prices of food and other everyday items. Children in the affected areas do not attend school regularly; official reports indicate that children are dying of hunger. Families in the affected areas are feeding on wild roots and leaves – some of which later turn out to be poisonous. As a result, some people have died. There has also been an increase in water- and dust-borne infections such as diarrhoea, eye infections, and common colds.

“Over a million people now stand the risk of death if nothing is done to lessen the impact of this catastrophe,” says Bunmi. “It is necessary for stakeholders to put their efforts together to save lives and restore hope to the people in the affected areas. It will also be important for the government, NGOs and well-wishers to develop long term mechanisms that would include irrigation and other support to permanently save the people of northern Kenya from the continued ravages of hunger.”

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## Norway

Roy Crowder, Partnership Coordinator for Europe, has been in touch with the United Methodist Church in Norway, expressing our profound shock and deep sadness at the mass killings that took place in Oslo on 22 July. Here is part of the message Roy sent to Tove Odland of the Norwegian Board of Global Ministries:

*We pray for our friends in the United Methodist Church in Norway and for all those directly and indirectly affected by this merciless act. Indeed we hold all the people of Norway before our God of peace and love in the strong hope and conviction, through our faith in Jesus Christ, that hatred and violence will not prevail. I think particularly of the pastor’s daughter-in-law you mentioned who was injured in the bombing and of your son as he ministers to both the bereaved and surviving families through psychological treatment. May both of them*

*have special strength. Methodists who are linked to us through the Prayer Handbook, both in Britain and around the world, will hold you in special mind on the 26th day of the month, next week, when we always remember our partners in the Northern Europe Central Conference.*

In response, Vidar Sten Bjerkseth, the District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church in Norway, sent this letter to the Methodist Church in Britain:

*Dear friends,*

*Thank you for your letter, and for your condolences and prayers! We very much appreciate the support and greetings we get from Methodist leaders all over the world.*

*This tragedy is unbelievable, and we pray that our Lord will bless and comfort the survivors and those that have lost one of their loved ones.*

*I just got a mail telling that one former scout in one of our churches is hurt, and that another one is missing. I also know about the daughter-in-law to one of our pastors that have been injured, and have talked with the pastor this afternoon. He will himself be leading a memorial service tomorrow in Oslo together with Bishop Olsen.*

*Some of our churches have been open today, and I know that one of our pastors and one of our deacons are involved in counselling with the survivors and their parents. We have encouraged our churches to have a memorial service tomorrow.*

## Government of South Korea softens policy on humanitarian aid to North Korea

In June 2011, Alison Tomlin, then President of the Methodist Church in Britain, sent a public letter to President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea, urging him to allow aid to be sent directly from South Korea to North Korea to help mitigate the food crisis there (read this letter [here](#)). This led to discussions with embassy staff in London and questions being asked in Seoul. Our partner the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCKK) had been forced to send its last shipment of flour to North Korea via China working with our partner the Amity Foundation in Nanjing. It is with great joy that the Methodist Church in Britain has just received a report from NCKK that the South Korean government has softened its stance on food aid and is now willing to give permits to religious and other organisations for the direct transport of food aid, even though there will be no official government aid. Plans are in hand for a further delivery by NCKK and the World Mission Fund has donated £10,000 towards the costs.



Amity worker checking the flour

The Amity Foundation report on the delivery of the first shipment of flour is very revealing of the terrible plight of the North Koreans at this time. It can be read [here](#). An Amity spokesperson said: "Through this

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project, around 31,400 people, mostly children, in North Korea could be able to obtain food and survive from the severe food shortage caused by the natural disasters last year.

*“The Amity Foundation was honoured to facilitate the humanitarian assistance to North Korea and bridge the hearts between the Korea Peninsula and China. Should there be any necessity Amity would like to provide further support to those in need.”*

## New Zealand earthquake update

So far the World Mission Fund has sent £35,000 to the appeal launched by the president of the Methodist Church in New Zealand. One of the trustees of the appeal fund is the Revd Norman West, a past president of the church and a friend of the Methodist Church in Britain since his participation in the Conference of 2005. Norman sends this update:

*While the earthquake seems months ago to those of us in the UK and has long since disappeared from our media reports, it is still early days in terms of what is happening to individuals, congregations and communities in Christchurch. There is still a zone in the centre of the city which continues to be a ‘no go’ area, patrolled to ensure that only approved people enter for approved work.*

*There are some areas in the city that remain without essential services. It is now winter in the Southern Hemisphere; the worst time to be without sewerage and having to use chemical portaloos in the street.*

*By the time demolition of destroyed and unsafe buildings is complete, around 10,000 homes will have disappeared, involving an emotional as well as a physical loss for many. It will mean years of temporary housing for some people as new homes are built. Those who have no insurance on their properties are facing a dreadful future.*

*Recently the Government announced which areas are definitely no longer suitable for housing. Much has been learnt through the earthquake about the nature of the land and some of it will clearly never be safe enough for modern housing standards. Other zones await determination about the future.*

*The Christchurch Synod has been given a grant from a NZ Methodist Trust to employ a person half-time for three years to gather data and work with parishes, partner churches and others consulting about the future. Parishes are keen for answers; it's not easy to worship in the bowling club buildings, a retirement home lounge or in another parish church at a less desirable time, but there will clearly be no quick-fix solutions. However, another gift from the same trust will help parishes strengthen their life, and some money will enable school children in the eastern suburbs to go on trips and social events.*

*Today I have been writing to all our parishes to urge them to be patient. It's not easy for them! We understand that. We cannot move ahead while the aftershocks continue nor without the data needed about the future of communities and the viability of parishes. In one sense the quakes have given us a window of opportunity. It's a hard one though.*

*Our Church appreciates the generous gift from our Methodists Church friends in Britain. We reported the gift in Touchstone - our Methodist NZ paper. Please pass on our thanks.*

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## Mission Partner News

### Rhoda Nixon in Zambia

Mission partner Rhoda Nixon writes about the compassionate ministry of the Orphan Committee in Choma Consistory, Zambia:

*As I sit on a wooden pole shaped bench outside a grass-roofed church 28kms from Choma town, chatting with some of the orphans and elderly grandmothers who are caring for them, I marvel at how some of these orphans manage to smile when you see how many of them are in need of clothes, shoes and a balanced diet. Many of our orphans look small for their age and this would suggest malnutrition. In this particular area there is very little English spoken even though the national language in Zambia is English. All children are supposed to be taught in English but this is not always the case especially in the rural places. Tonga is used in this particular area.*



*In the West we are so privileged to be able to go to school, have clothes and strong shoes, and always have enough food to eat. It is very unusual for*

*Children in the developed world not to have the opportunity of a good education. As an orphan committee we have been visiting many of our orphans throughout our Consistory (circuit). Our main purpose is to find out how these children are being cared for; their needs in terms of school requirements and the challenges and problems they are facing in their homes. Most of our orphans are a 'double' orphan, which means they have lost both parents.*

*In June we held a fund raising activity in order to generate some income to help us pay school fees and purchase shoes and school uniforms. Envelopes were given to church members to put money in and members were also encouraged to bring shoes or clothes or items we could give to our orphans. As we visit our orphans we ask them for their shoe sizes. I then go to the local market with some of the committee members and we spend a long time choosing good second hand shoes which cost on average £10. New shoes are just too expensive for us to buy. As we are supporting 150 orphans shoes have not been bought for a long time due to lack of funds. Shoes are a necessary purchase as we have discovered on our visitations that many of our children do not have shoes acceptable for school and one orphan was even sent home from school until she had the proper school shoes.*

## Chris and Věra Lacey

Mission Partners Chris and Věra Lacey arrived in Antigua two months ago. They are working at the Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Centre, providing IT and management support and training.

“Our first day at work at the Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Centre was perhaps the most confused and manic day of my life,” says Chris. “We’d had almost three weeks of sorting things out at home before starting work; and on that Monday morning moved from the relative calm and quiet of our newly organised home, to complete mayhem.

“Two new cohorts of students were starting at the Centre (one studying Office Administration, the other Graphic Design), and at the same time two outgoing cohorts were presenting their company business plans to everyone - the culmination of their Business Studies module over the past 12 weeks. There were students everywhere... sitting or standing in every possible spare space in the building. Once things settled down, though, and the new inductions began, it was interesting to see



the differences in the two sets of students - the new ones, shy and reserved; and those who had completed their 12 weeks of training, full of confidence and abilities to express their business ideas and take questions.”

Věra, meanwhile, has also been working with a HIV project. “Our director had a visit from another non-profit colleague, who heads and HIV network NGO in Antigua,” she explains. “After being present at the meeting, I wanted to look up the country’s HIV stats and to my surprise found there are not any anywhere except for 65 new reported cases of HIV infection last year. Our guess is that Antigua is not that different from the rest of the Caribbean that has the second highest rate of HIV infection in the world after sub-Saharan Africa. Digging deeper into any kind of statistics in my effort to understand the problem of HIV in Antigua caused me to discover that deaths from HIV-related causes are among the eight leading causes of deaths in the age group 20-59.

“The HIV network brought up the idea of setting up HIV-infected people in farming businesses. The idea reflects the sad situation when HIV people get fired from their jobs after disclosing their status and are left with no means of supporting themselves. This is particularly hard on them since regular income can buy them healthy food which is even more important for them than for the rest of us since it can offset and postpone any health complications arising from their HIV status. The farming idea is therefore a great answer to their nutritional needs as well as helping them to secure extra income from selling surpluses. One of my jobs is now trying to find somebody who thinks along the same lines or convince somebody that the project idea is worth spending money on.”

**For more information please contact Thomas Quenet, Partnership Coordinator for the Americas and the Caribbean, at [quenett@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:quenett@methodistchurch.org.uk)**

## 2011 Pre-Conference Consultation

Mission partners and representatives from all the World Church regions were amongst the 43 people who gathered in Southport for a consultation ahead of this year’s annual Methodist Conference.

High on the agenda for this consultation was the response to the All Partners Consultation (APC) which took place in London a year ago. The Methodist Conference appointed a working group to look into the APC’s findings in detail.

“The challenge from the APC report was to follow up the opportunities of the possibilities that came out of it,” said Dr Daleep Mukarji, chair of the working group. “But we couldn’t have our discussions in isolation of what



other churches were talking about, and what they were sharing with us. “Our hope is that by this listening process, we will produce a mission statement, with a vision component and some understanding of mission, - and more importantly, will develop models of working together which will update the nature of the Methodist Missionary Society. But if we want partnership with churches overseas – and if we want to have equal

relationships – it won't happen with Britain leading. And so we're looking to the World Methodist Conference, and the World Methodist Council, to provide that overall coordination and cooperation.

“For us, mission is about justice. It's about an inclusive world; it's about dealing with a broken society; it's also dealing with healing and reconciliation, and it's about making disciples of Christ who will then themselves be equipped and challenged to build a world in the perspective of the kingdom of God. And that's what I think this process is about.”

## 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 the Methodist Church in Kenya as it carries out relief work in east Africa. Please that God will answer the cries of those suffering from hunger and disease.
- ⊗ Pray for Norway as it continues to mourn for the people whose lives have been cut short. Pray that the United Methodist Church in Norway can be a source of comfort and hope to the nation.
- ⊗ Please thank God for the work of the National Council of Churches in Korea and the Amity Foundation. Please continue to pray that help will continue to reach North Korea and that Korean politicians will do all in their power to help the most vulnerable.
- ⊗ Please continue to pray for the reconstruction work in New Zealand, in particular the city of Christchurch. Pray especially for those who may feel their futures look bleak after the earthquake, that they may receive God's hope and peace during this time.
- ⊗ Please pray for the work of the Orphans Committee and Chodort Training Centre both of which are part of the ministry of The United Church of Zambia.
- ⊗ The physical state and resources of the GARD Centre in Antigua, as staff there try to work with facilities that frequently fail.
- ⊗ Thank God for a fruitful Pre-Conference Consultation in London with overseas partners. Please pray for the ongoing work of the Methodist Missionary Society working group.