



World Church Relationships News Bulletin

April 2011

Proverbs 21:3 *“To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice”* (NRSV)

Emergency Appeals

Japan continues to feel aftershocks and over £30,000 raised through the World Mission Fund for the Japan Appeal

Steven Cutting, Ecumenical Relations Officer for the Asian Rural Institute has sent us his latest newsletter on the current situation in Japan:

“It has been over one month since the Earthquake and Tsunami. On April 11, exactly one month after the quake, we had the pleasant experience of getting one of the biggest aftershocks, over 7 on the Richter scale. Only a few books and things fell down, but the tension, the almost imperceptible tightness that had kept us all on edge, but was slowly dissipating, that same feeling came back instantly. These aftershocks, both big and small, continue daily. Last night there were at least four. Each time you feel the tremor start, you wonder if this one will evolve into another huge quake or not. And sometimes you realize that there was actually no shaking

[Download Steven’s full newsletter here.](#)

As we continue to pray for the people of Japan, the total raised through the **World Mission Fund** for the Japan Appeal is **£33,800**. The Japan Appeal is still receiving donations, so if you would like to make a donation please send your cheque made payable to the World Mission Fund, to Steve Pearce, Japan Appeal, World Church Relationships, Methodist Church House, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR. Please mark the back of your cheque ‘Japan’. If you are a taxpayer you might care to Gift Aid your donation, which allows us to reclaim the tax you have already paid. Just include a completed [Gift Aid form](#) with your donation.

News from Overseas Scholarship Students

Many hear the Gospel in Malaysia

Simon Van Lal Chhuanga is a minister from the Methodist Church of Upper Myanmar and has a scholarship from the Methodist Church in Britain to study in Malaysia. The scholarship programme (SALT-Scholarship and Leadership Training Programme), which is funded by the World Mission Fund, always involves a student moving from one culture to another. The benefits of this are many – for the student, their home church and the receiving country.

During the week, Simon studies for his Masters in Divinity, writing a thesis/research paper on ‘The Life and Works of Adoniram Judson and the Impact on Christianity in Myanmar’. At the weekend he exercises a different ministry. He writes: *“Because of the political situation in Myanmar, thousands and thousands of*

people came to work in Malaysia. Every weekend I go and find this people ... so we can present Christ. Yesterday, we just baptized two people: one convert from a Theravada Buddhist background, the other from a Christian background. The same weekend saw the dedication of a new-born baby of one of the members of the Myanmar congregation."

Mission Partner News

'Messy Church' in Grenada

In his latest newsletter, mission partner Andy Dye shares what happened when he introduced Grenadians to the concept of 'Messy Church' recently:

"You may have heard or taken part in 'messy church' events in the UK. They are generally whole family days, with activities, food, songs and a message. So when I was asked to speak to the St Georges Church Women's league about mission in Britain, 'messy church' was one of the things I talked about. This seemed to strike a chord with members of the group and so they held their own 'messy church' event this month.

The first 'messy church' in Grenada was helped by the 'messy' people from Truro Methodist Church, but importantly the St Georges Women's league did it their way. For instance it was not called 'messy' or 'church', but 'Creative Fellowship'. About 40 children and adults came along, for games, crafts, songs and food. Feedback was very positive and it is hoped to run something every month or two."

Read Andy's entire newsletter [here](#).

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.

News from Overseas Partner Churches and Organisations

Christian Action Hong Kong: helping communities a year on from the China Earthquake

Here's an excerpt from a recent blog post by Siew Mei, Executive Director of Christian Action Hong Kong.

"As we continue to see scenes of the terrible tragedy in Japan, I'm reminded that it will be a year on April 14th since the catastrophic earthquake took thousands of lives and destroyed much of the infrastructure in

Yushu County on the Tibetan Plateau.

We are always concerned about the ongoing welfare of the people after a disaster, so CA's Programme Officer and two local staff went back to visit some of the most remote and forgotten communities that we had helped before. Aid didn't stretch that far after the earthquake, so we wanted to make sure that these people are still cared for, and also to assess the quality of the donated aid items after months of hard use.

We were surprised by their reaction to our help.

Wherever we distributed donated goods, we ensured that beneficiaries understood that these were donated by a Christian organization and that we help people regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity, in order to demonstrate the love of Jesus.

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Our staff members found that recipients are hugely impacted by the fact that they are being assisted by someone from another religion. Because these people live so far from everything and receive little or no support from any source, they were quite overwhelmed when they first received the support we gave them. But what was more overwhelming to them was the fact that we returned a year later to check on their welfare, and thus show that we really care about them.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan didn't just give money to the inn-keeper to look after the wounded stranger, he also said, "When I return..." (Luke 10:29-37) We believe we too must return and check on those who have been 'wounded' in some way, like the earthquake victims."

Read Siew Mei's weekly blog [here](#).

The Methodist World Mission Fund: supporting education in Haiti

A print shop in Haiti is to be kitted out with new equipment, thanks to grants from the United Church of Canada and the Methodist Church in Britain.

The Methodist Church in Britain and the United Church of Canada are both giving \$50,000 (£30,000) towards the purchase of a second-hand Heidelberg two-colour printer, to replace one that had become damaged following the 2010 earthquake.

The *Eglise Methodiste d' Haiti* (EMH) ran the print shop in its Frères Campus for many years. It produced curriculum material for the EMH's 100 schools, as well as other administrative printed resources, and was one of the ways in which the EMH received an income in order to maintain its long term mission.

The damage to its printing machine was the consequence of refugees from nearby homes that had been destroyed moving into the school campus, pitching tents, being housed in undamaged buildings and the consequential use of an educational campus being transformed into a refugee camp for displaced people. Toilets blocks, classrooms, staff homes, perimeter boundaries and business within the campus were also damaged.

“When I visited the print shop in November 2010, work constantly had to be stopped and paper was being spoiled by the breakdown of the machine for which the earthquake had been one shock to much,” said Tom Quenet, Partnership Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean.

“These grants will make the EMH more efficient and make more secure the employment it offers to the present 20 people that work at the shop. This is part of the ‘building back better’ response to the disaster; it will enable the EMH to produce, more, cheaper and better quality educational materials that will not only make its products to its own student better but enable the EMH to offer more and better printing services to the Haitian educational and church communities.”

The All African Council of Churches and the Methodist Church in Benin help Ogoni refugees improve their quality of life

The Methodist Church in Britain has approved a grant of £10,000 from the **World Mission Fund** to the All African Conference of Churches (AACC) and the Methodist Church in Benin (EPMB), towards their work improving the quality of life of Ogoni refugees in the Benin Republic.

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The Ogoni people come from the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. In the 1990s, they protested against environmental and economic injustices under the military regime. Many fled to Benin following the execution of Ogoni leader Ken Saro Wiwa in 1995. The authorities in Benin (in response to the demands of its political and economic relationship with Nigeria) refuse to recognise the Ogonis as refugees. An estimated 200 Ogoni people live in a compound belonging to EPMB.

Vivi Akakpo, the AACC’s women & migration programme officer, will be responsible for managing the project and updating AACC and MCB of the progress. In addition, the Methodist Church of Nigeria has agreed to send a social worker to Benin, to interact with Ogoni refugees.

“The grant from MCB should be a catalyst to self-sustenance and help improve living standards among the Ogonis living in Benin Republic,” said Bunmi Olayisade, Partnerships Coordinator for Africa. “The Ogonis are very hardworking people and wish to support themselves despite these challenges.”

Diary of the World Church Relationships Team Leader in The Gambia.

In February, Mike King attended the Conference of the Methodist Church The Gambia (TMCTG). Here are a few extracts from the diary he kept during the trip:

Feb 15: *On arrival I was met by Olu Roberts (Financial Controller) and taken to my hotel in Banjul. Within the hour Rev Dr Peter Stephens, the Bishop of TMCTG, met with me to outline my programme for the next few days, which helpfully included three evening arrangements to enable me to get a cross-section of opinions re what has happened since autonomy. I was soon on my way to a house in Bakau to a conversation with the Laymen’s Association of TMCTG, followed by a splendid meal.*

Feb 16: The morning was spent in the Ministerial session of Conference, and it was good to meet up with recent SALT scholars in UK: Lucy Sarfo, Bannie Manga, Shaka Ashcroft et al; Rodney Prom and Gabrielle Allen who I had visited in Accra when they were training there; as well as 'old' friends of MCB's Conference, Matilda Savage-Mendy and Bankole Coker.

Feb 17: Representative Conference started at 9.30, before which I had a brief conversation with Ruth Wilson who, by all accounts, is both fulfilled and appreciated. It was a long day. In the evening I was taken to Gabrielle Allen's home near Bakau and shared a delightful supper as well as being fully embraced into family life. This was a privilege.

I was encouraged by a great deal in this emerging autonomous Church. Clearly lay and ordained people feel committed to TMCTG, want the Church to grow, and realise that more financial realism is required. What is also evident is the quality and training of people involved in TMCTG, lay and ordained. There was an expression of commitment to proper resourcing, staff as well as money, into the areas of mission and evangelism, and this should move the Church into a vibrant and exciting new chapter. Given the evident support for a Gambian Bishop in twelve months time, there is much to be hopeful about.

Read the rest of Mike's diary [here](#).

Italy receives an influx of refugees from Libya and Tunisia

The Methodist Church in Italy is looking for ways in which it can offer support to an influx of refugees from Libya and Tunisia – the knock-on effect of the recent political unrest there and in other Arab countries.

"The situation in Italy is really dramatic," says Deaconess Alessandra Trotta, President of the Methodist Church in Italy. "The war is in front of us and every day thousands of people arrive – or try to arrive – in Sicily via the Mediterranean Sea from Libya or Tunisia, in terrible condition. A lot of people die."

On 6 April, some 250 people from Eritrea and Somalia drowned when a boat from Libya capsized off the south Italian island of Lampedusa. The Italian Coastguard arrived for help, but only about 50 people were saved.

"Our little churches are trying to understand how we can help," says Alessandra. "Our guest houses and centres for camps can probably offer hospitality for some emergencies, but it is difficult without general coordination!"

"We have formally asked all our churches and social ministries to communicate their availability for offering hospitality, so that we can coordinate a general offer to the State and the Regions, and prepare ourselves to organise whatever is necessary."

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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.

Mark 16: 15 “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation” (NRSV)

The world is coming to us!

Jesus Christ has given each one of us a challenge: to take his gospel of salvation, faith, hope and love into the whole world. We are all aware that this is no easy task! Some of us may not find it easy to speak to others of the love of Christ and to demonstrate our faith. We may not be sure about how to share our faith and convictions with those of other faiths and none, or even with those from other nations. As we read newsletters such as the World Church Relationships News Bulletin, we might even feel far removed from the work of the world church, as we try and deal with our own daily grind. Going into the world to share the love of Christ with others might be the furthest thing from our minds!

But what if the world came to the UK, for a moment in time, for a reason of global significance-would we feel more at ease as a Church to share together this moment of global significance with others, and through this, share our faith? The Methodist Church’s answer to this is a resounding ‘yes’!

The Methodist Church in Britain is meeting the opportunity of the world coming to the UK head-on by engaging with the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games through *More than Gold*, a temporary organisation established by the major denominations to help churches make the most of this moment. Together we see the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics as an incredible, once in a lifetime gospel opportunity, and Methodists around the UK are already mobilizing their local churches, Circuits and Districts to see how they can work with *More Than Gold* in reaching out to the nations before, during and after the games.

To learn more about what the Methodist Church is already doing in preparation for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and to see what you can do, please [sign up](#) to the Methodist Church’s official 2012 Games newsletter.

It is good to thank the God for the work of the world church, but let us now ask God how we can welcome the world to the UK and be witnesses of the love of Christ to the whole of creation!

Prayer Points

- ⊗ Japan: Pray that all those affected by the earthquake and the nuclear disaster will continue receiving the support they need. Pray for the United Church of Christ in Japan and ARI as they continue to meet people's needs and show the love of Christ to many.
- ⊗ Pray for all Scholarship Students sponsored by the Methodist Church in Britain, that their studies will edify and bless their Churches when they return home.
- ⊗ Pray for all Mission Partners, in particular for Andy Dye as he continues to fulfil his calling overseas.
- ⊗ Pray that God will continue giving Christian Action in Hong Kong the means by which they can carry on caring for those in need after the 2010 earthquake in China.
- ⊗ Pray for continuing reconstruction work in Haiti. Pray in particular for the print shop that will support education there as well as generate income for the Methodist Church in Haiti.
- ⊗ Pray for the plight of Ogoni refugees and for the social worker that will be working alongside them to help improve their quality of life.
- ⊗ Pray that the Lord will continue to guide the Methodist Church The Gambia in this new season of autonomy.
- ⊗ Pray for the Methodist Church in Italy as it seeks to help refugees from Libya and Tunisia. Pray that God will give the Church and the Italian government the wisdom they need to care for the refugees.
- ⊗ Pray that God will help Methodists around the UK to engage with the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and share their faith with all those involved in this incredible event.