



World Church Relationships News Bulletin

April 2012

Partner Churches and Organisations

Psalm 40:1-2, "I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure." (NRSV)

Japan

Here are some excerpts from a reflection written by Ecumenical Relations Officer Steven Cutting, to mark the first anniversary of the Japan earthquake:

Last year about half of the coastal town of Ishinomaki was taken by the sea, together with over 3,000 of its residents. This week the Ishinomaki High School baseball team, most of whom lost family members in the tsunami, is practicing to participate in a spring invitational high school baseball tournament in Osaka.

Further south sits the pretty little town of Namie; quiet, pristine. But you won't find a single soul there. Since it rests just inside the 20 km (12 mile) exclusion zone of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant all residents have heeded the order to evacuate. Its town hall operates in makeshift offices in nearby Nihonmatsu, where its officials continue to issue birth certificates and keep track of its 21,000 inhabitants who now live scattered across 44 of Japan's 47 prefectures. They are all wondering when or if they can go back home.

These two cities starkly represent a vast difference in the nature of the disasters that struck Northeastern Japan just over a year ago. While the earthquake and tsunami were devastating, they are over; and communities have spent the last year pulling together to clean up and rebuild their towns and their lives.

In about two weeks our participants will start arriving for the 2012 training program. We are expecting 30 people from 17 different countries. Barring any more major calamities, the program is due to start on time on 2 April. This is a day we have been working for and waiting for, for a long time – to welcome our new participants onto our own campus and get back to our 'normal' training program.

Of course, not everything is ready. ... But despite the ongoing rebuilding, we are ready. We have a place for our participants to cook and eat, have classes and lectures, sleep, and raise our crops and livestock. But more importantly, we are ready to build our next new community. We are ready to work together, to share together, and to live together.



Students at ARI helping to move the office out from the damaged main building in 2011

Sri Lanka

A grant of £50,000 from the World Mission Fund has been made to the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka to help with the restoration of a farming project that was one of the casualties of Sri Lanka's civil war.

Navajeevanam ("New Life") is situated in the Northern district of Mullaitivu and was established in the 1950s by a Methodist missionary with the main purpose of supporting children with special needs. It also provided a space for unemployed local young people to develop skills in agriculture, animal husbandry and engineering. It gradually became a centre of community life in the region and earned the respect of people of the neighbouring villages as it continued to make positive contributions to the economic potential of the locals.

Sadly, the whole facility was gradually destroyed over the course of the armed conflict, which went on for over two decades. Navajeevanam was totally abandoned by May 2009, when this particular location became the front line.

Today, a few damaged pillars are all that remain of Navajeevanam. But as people have started to return to their old homes in the Northern districts, reconstruction and rehabilitation activities have become urgent priorities. The MCSL decided at its annual conference last year to re-establish the farm with the purpose of providing supporting services and the necessary support infrastructure essential to improve the income of the war-affected people as well as to support children in dire need.

"Many communities in the North and East of Sri Lanka are devastated after the conflict and not a priority for the government," says Steve Pearce. "New initiatives are difficult but the Church is very well placed to resume community development work if it can raise the resources. It is an additional satisfaction that this project was started by a Methodist missionary many years ago and that the eventual manager is currently benefitting from one of our scholarships. The money raised by British Methodists is achieving a great deal through our partnership with the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka; please continue to support the World Mission Fund!"

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

Argentina

The Methodist Church in Britain's World Mission Fund has given a grant of £1,000 to the Latin America Council of Churches (CLAI) for support in publishing a book on the life and ministry of one of Argentina's most prominent Church leaders – the retired bishop Federico Pagura.



Photo courtesy of the World Council of Churches

The former bishop, who is currently in his nineties, helped steer the church in Argentina through a most difficult period of its history. During decades of dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s, the Methodist Church in Argentina was a key player in keeping democracy alive in the country. Using its international contacts, the Church was able to speak out against the dictatorship, its abuse of human rights and its crimes against humanity.

The grant is a contribution towards the total cost of publishing a book that will record the life and ministry of Bishop Pagura. It will preserve an archive of this vital ministry which was so important for the Methodist Church in Argentina, the MC regionally and throughout the world.

The grant also has the blessing of Methodist Heritage. *"Encouraging the integration of heritage into the wider life of the Church is one of six objectives in the Methodist Heritage Committee's Three-year Development Strategy,"* Heritage Officer Jo Hibbard said. *"The Methodist Church in Britain has a significant archive of its relationship with mission partners (primarily deposited with the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London), and there is a considerable amount of*

long-standing and on-going research into our missionary history.

However, we are beginning to see increasing interest in Partner Churches exploring their history, making connections to the roots of their heritage, locally and in Britain, and recording their stories. It is good practice to determine the future of the personal archive of a significant person while they are alive and hugely valuable to have that person help to set down the significant events of their life while they are vital and able.

Methodist Heritage is seeking to help Methodists conserve their heritage; to engage with their history; to understand how it has shaped their identity and how it caused them to have influence on society, and how it can continue to have value to contemporary mission: this archive and biography project seeks to achieve just such aims, but for the Church in Argentina. If heritage has mission potential for the Methodist Church in Britain, it can have similar value elsewhere in the world too."

El Salvador and Nicaragua



At the beginning of March, the Reverend David Haslam, Chair of the General Grants Stream, and Tom Quenet travelled to Central America to visit the Evangelical Methodist Churches in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and participated in a very special event: the ordinations of the first Methodist Ministers in El Salvador. The Revd Juan de Dios Peña, head of the Methodist Church in El Salvador, and Marta Landaverde were ordained by Bishop Mike Watson of the United Methodist Church.

David Haslam reports: *"We were there to observe, encourage, learn and ordain. We heard of arguments, power struggles, house congregations, miracle claims,*

buildings started in faith and sacrificial service. The Holy Spirit was frequently called upon, and cited, as a powerful presence.

For these young churches worship and service go hand in hand. There are family Bible studies, children's feeding programmes, a music group of former addicts, sewing and cooking projects, and supplementary schooling. There are baptisms, even (irregularly) re-baptisms, young people's drama groups, flood relief work and English teaching. In short, Methodist church communities are deeply engaged in God's mission in Central America."



Please contact Tom Quenet to find out more about how we are currently helping our partners in El Salvador and Nicaragua through the World Mission Fund: quenett@methodistchurch.org.uk

Ghana

In February Jill Baker, president of Methodist Women in Britain, paid a visit to the Methodist Church in Ghana. Here are a few highlights from her trip:

Tuesday 21 February: *The six of us met at Methodist headquarters ... From there to Parliament House, where we were due to meet with the speaker. However, she was in session in the House, so we were welcomed and entertained by the second*

deputy speaker, Hon Prof Mike Oquaye, who described himself as an advocate for women's rights. An interesting discussion ensued over refreshments.

Wednesday 22 February: The roadshow proper began as the six of us travelled by connexional bus to Accra Wesley Girls' High School to visit the Hope for Teens project. About 50 women greeted us there, singing and praying and we introduced ourselves/addressed them, before meeting several of the young women who are assisted by the project to learn skills (mainly in catering, dressmaking and jewellery making) which equip them for future life and give them some hope of being able to provide for themselves and their future families. These are girls who would otherwise have slipped through the net and it is a worthwhile and well-run project. We also spent a short time with the head teacher of Wesley Girls High School, but were unable, because of time, to meet the students.



Friday 24 February: Back on the road first thing to return to Cape Coast. As our time there had been short on Wednesday, the plan was to visit the castle before heading inland to Kumasi. This was undoubtedly the hardest time for me; I had not given sufficient forethought to this visit to have realised in advance that the history of the building would be the story of slavery. As the only white person in our tour I felt increasingly wretched as our guide led us from one dark hovel to another, describing how many men or women would have been kept there and in what conditions, before passing through, as we then did, the "gate of no return" which led onto the beach and so to the slave ships. For us, of course, there was a return and the sensitive and gracious guide used this to suggest that slavery is something from which humanity has to return, wiser and determined never to commit such a "blunder" (his word) again. By now I was in tears and could only say "sorry" and then be further moved by the love, forgiveness and grace of these African women. I suppose I would have said that I had confronted and dealt with my response to the legacy of slavery during our eight years as mission partners in the Caribbean, but the African experience completed the triangle of terror and torture.



The only Akan word I confidently picked up in the week was "Akwaaba" – which, meaning "Welcome", captures the essence of my visit. Everywhere I went I was made so very welcome: by women, by men, by children, by clergy, by lay office-holders and by bishops. This is indicative of the high regard in which the British Methodist Church is held in Ghana.

You can read about Jill's visit to the Methodist Church Ghana on her [blog](#):

Kenya

The Revd Dr Johnson Mbillah, general adviser of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), was recently a guest on the BBC World Service's *Heart and Soul* programme, discussing Christian-Muslim relations in East Africa and Sudan.

The interview took place at the BBC's Nairobi studio on 5 March and was broadcast on 17 March. The Revd Dr Mbillah spoke about PROCMURA's programmes in South Sudan on peace and reconciliation, the issue of HIV/AIDS and the broader cooperation between Christians and Muslims in the East African region and indeed the rest of the African continent.

PROCMURA is a Pan African Christian organisation dedicated to Christian constructive engagement with Muslims in witness, mutual tolerance and collaboration towards peace and peaceful co-existence for the holistic development of the human family. It was founded in 1959 and is established in 20 African countries. PROCMURA has also just been awarded a grant of £10,000 from the World Mission Fund towards expanding its head office, which is based in the Westlands area of Nairobi.

You can read more about the work of PROCMURA on its website www.procmura-prica.org/en/ or contact Olubunmi Olayisade, partnership coordinator for Africa on olayisadeo@methodistchurch.org.uk



National in Mission Appointments

Serbia

The Revd Novica Branov is a National in Mission Appointments (NMA) post holder responsible for community development in Sid, Serbia for the Central and Southern European Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The NMA programme, funded by the World Mission Fund, has been supporting her post for the last five years. She plays a key role in helping her church reach out to local youth and children with the gospel, and as a result of her work the church has established a youth group that meets every other weekend to study the Bible together, sing and share in fellowship. When reporting on her work, Novica said that among the highlights in the last year was the children and youth Christmas play, which allowed the church to reach out to about 40 children and teenagers and their parents with the gospel.



However, in such a culturally diverse context, her work has its challenges. *'The biggest challenge is the local church's integration in the local community. This is quite a problem, resulting from our past: The city of Sid suffered a lot during the wars and, because it is located next to the borders it has a lot of refugees. The society is very nationalistic and shaped by the Orthodox Church. Only Orthodox Serbs are fully accepted; other churches are seen as 'sects'.*



But there are good signs of churches working together in Sid, such as the church's Christmas play being performed in Lutheran and Baptist Churches.

Nationals in Mission Appointments (NMAs): These appointments encourage and support local people overseas in key mission projects in their home churches. Salaries are paid by the Fund for World Mission and enable new work to be developed.

For more information please contact Roy Crowder,
Partnership Coordinator for Europe, at
wcr.europe@methodistchurch.org.uk

Mission Partner News

Pacific Council of Churches in Fiji

This spring, a special themed edition of *Mission Matters* focuses on the work being done by Methodists in various parts of the world to tackle the effects of climate change.

Julia Edwards, a mission partner working with the Pacific Council of Churches, worked on the magazine as guest editor. And the PCC has just been awarded a grant by the World Mission Fund for £5,100 to fund some research on climate change resettlement that Julia is doing on their behalf.

Steve Pearce, partnerships coordinator for Asia & the Pacific, said: "Julia's work and presence in the Pacific is bringing home to us the fact that climate change is forcing people to leave their homes already. Her work on understanding the implications of such migrations should add impetus to the way we are rethinking our use of resources both individually and as a Church."

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

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.

Click for a list of mission partners who are expected home on leave in 2012. 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.

COULD GOD BE CALLING YOU TO BECOME A MISSION PARTNER?

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

Events in the UK



ST THOMAS UNITY LECTURE 2012

Bishop A J Appasamy and Comparative Theology in India Today

Lecturer: Brian Dunn MSt (Religious Studies) Oxon



WEDNESDAY MAY 30 at 2 pm

at Heythrop College, Loyola Hall, Kensington Square, London W8 5HN

Brian Dunn is a doctoral candidate in comparative theology at Regent's Park College, Oxford. He has considerable international experience, having lived in India, Zambia, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. In North India he taught at an international school in the foothills of the Himalayas. His research considers the interaction between Christianity and the philosophical and religious plurality of the ancient Near East. His present focus is on the life and writings of the South Indian Christian theologian, Bishop Ayadurai Jesusdasan Appasamy. This lecture raises the question of the importance and relevance of the experience of Church unity in India to the search for unity amongst the Churches in Britain today.

ADMISSION FREE

ALL WELCOME

Resources

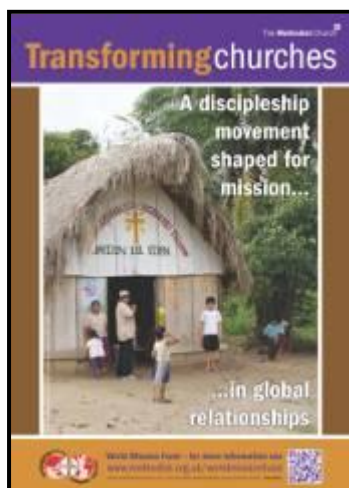
World Church Blog

Don't forget to regularly check the [world church blog](http://worldchurchblog.org) for updates on visits to Partner Churches and more! Recent visits include the Revd Gareth Hill, manager of the Mission and Advocacy Cluster in the Connexional Team and his visit to the Church of Bangladesh.



World Mission Fund Posters

Are you organising a World Church Sunday or fundraising event for the World Mission Fund? These World Mission Fund posters are available to order from the World Church Relationships Office if you write to wcr.admin@methodistchurch.org.uk or call our office on 0207 467 3795. They can also be ordered from Methodist Publishing in Peterborough for free, plus postage and package (£2.50). Click here to go to their [webpage](http://www.methodistchurch.org.uk/worldmissionfund) to place an order.



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

- ⊗ Continue to pray for Japan and our partners there, ARI and the United Church of Christ in Japan, as they seek to continue the process of rebuilding and supporting affected communities.
- ⊗ Pray for the reconstruction of the Navajeevanam farming project, that God will use it to help rehabilitate communities affected by the civil war and help people reconstruct their lives.
- ⊗ Thank God for the life of Federico Pagura and for the contribution of the Methodist Church in Argentina during the dictatorship.
- ⊗ Thank God for the emerging Methodist churches in El Salvador and Nicaragua, that God will strengthen them and continue to guide them.
- ⊗ Thank God for the Methodist Church in Ghana and for our partnership with them. Thank God for the Church's work with women and girls.
- ⊗ Pray that God will continue to use the work of PROCMURA to foster peace in Africa between Muslims and Christians.
- ⊗ Thank God for National in Mission Appointments postholders like Novica Branov. Pray particularly for Novica as she supports her church in their outreach to local youth and children.
- ⊗ Pray for Julia Edwards' research for the Pacific Council of Churches on climate change resettlement. Pray that her work will help shape Pacific Churches' response to climate change.