



“Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”
Psalm 46 vs 10 (NRSV)

PARTNER CHURCHES AND ORGANISATIONS

Standing with those who suffer for their faith

Carolyn Lawrence represented the World Church Office at the launch of the World Watch List for 2019 in the Houses of Parliament. She writes about the work of the charity Open Doors and the support from MPs of all parties



Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP addressing the meeting

Photo: © OPENDOORS

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Can you imagine arriving at your church to find it has been closed down by the government? Or being denied a job or education because of your beliefs? Or being arrested for owning a Bible?

These injustices, and other more serious consequences, are a daily reality for over 245 million Christians around the world. They experience levels of persecution that are high and, in some cases, extreme.

Practical support for suffering Christians

The charity Open Doors works to support these suffering Christians in practical ways, by providing Bibles, giving emergency aid and offering trauma care. They also seek to raise awareness of their plight amongst

churches, parliamentarians and other influential people within the UK. In January, the Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP hosted a meeting in the Houses of Parliament on behalf of Open Doors. This was to launch the 2019 ‘World Watch List’.

Produced annually, this report outlines countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian, listing them in order of severity of persecution. Despite important Brexit discussions happening at the same time, over 100 parliamentarians attended to show their support for the work of Open Doors.

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PARTNER CHURCHES AND ORGANISATIONS

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Freedom to worship

Foreign secretary, the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, addressed the meeting saying that “freedom to worship is the litmus test of a free society.” He has commissioned a review into the plight of persecuted Christians around the world and how we in the UK can help. This will be an independent review led by the Bishop of Truro.

In response to this event, Christians were encouraged to write to their MPs to ask them to support the review. They were also encouraged to support the work

of Open Doors and other charities committed to helping millions of persecuted Christians worldwide. Such work involves offering practical care, legal advice, trauma care and training.

In addition, they were asked to pray for those around the world for whom following Jesus comes at great cost and requires immense courage.

Finally, they were reminded to be thankful for the freedom to worship in this country and to appreciate what that means for everyone. Find out more at www.opendoorsuk.org



Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt MP with Open Doors CEO Henrietta Blyth and Theresa Villiers MP

Photo: © OPENDOORS

People flee for their lives as volcano erupts

Our partners in the Methodist Church in Guatemala explain how money from the World Church Fund has been used to help

Red hot lava and ash burst out of Guatemala’s Fuego volcano last summer. It killed dozens of people and forced thousands to evacuate their homes and seek shelter.

This eruption has been classified as the largest of the Fuego volcano since it last happened in 1974. Several further eruptions occurred in the following months causing widespread panic and damage. It is estimated that more than 1.7 million people have been affected by the ash clouds following the initial outburst.

Demonstrating the love of Christ

Our partner church, the Evangelical National Primitive Methodist Church of Guatemala were able to demonstrate the love of Christ in the wake of this disaster. They provided economic, social and community support to many affected families.

A grant of £10,000 was sent by the Methodist World Church Fund to support the local church. This was used to buy essential supplies such as food, clothing, bedding, toys and toiletries for over 300 families left destitute by the disaster.



The church offering practical help to those in need

A call for an end to violence against women

A Global Consultation on gender equality was recently held in Kingston, Jamaica. This report is from Jemima Amanor, West Africa Area President for the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW)

The church needs to sit up and address gender-based violence in all its forms. This was a key message to emerge from the Global Consultation conference held in Jamaica in October 2018.

One way of raising awareness of this, participants heard, is to wear black on Thursdays. It's something that many women in the world already do. It allows them to show solidarity with their sisters who have suffered rape and aggression, while calling for an end to such injustices.

Building a just community

Overall, the objective for the conference was for participants to reflect on the achievements

and challenges in building a just community of women and men. At the same time, those taking part were keen to strengthen ecumenical collaboration.

After celebrating the gifts given to all by God, the delegates moved on to hear some of the stories of the struggles faced by women. They also reflected on the effects of racism, xenophobia and abuse.

Vibrant worship

Through vibrant worship at the event, people were attracted to the venue and many heard the word of God preached. As a result, several people were drawn to Christ.

Speakers included Alison Judd, the World President of the WFMUCW.

At the end of the conference a symbolic ritual of healing and transformation was carried out. This involved the repairing of a broken basket to represent the healing of a broken woman.

Participants then shared a vision of unity and equality as they sang and danced to the glory of the Lord.



Baskets representing the lives of women affected by violence



Volunteer mission in Argentina

Tiana Dinard-Samuel continues to adapt to life in Buenos Aires

I've been in Buenos Aires for about two months. It feels simultaneously like I've just got here and like I've been here for ages.

In terms of day-to-day life I've gotten used to things like taking the public transport into work every day, sending professional emails from the office and dressing for warmer weather in January. At the same time, I still don't feel quite at home – I guess there are still some challenges.

For example, I don't get to interact with many people of my age, so I haven't really been able to make friends. However, I have signed up for Bumble BFF and last weekend met up with an American girl who was very nice. Hopefully we will try out a church together next week.

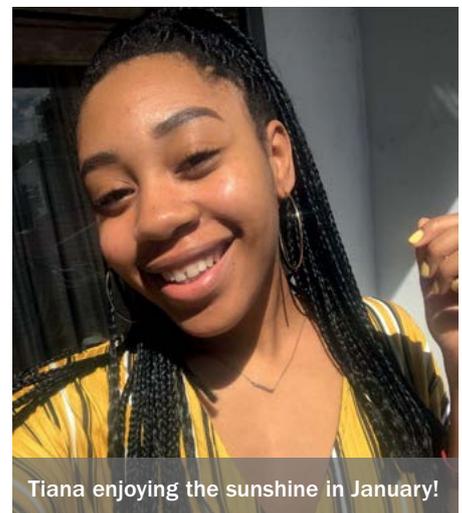
Worshipping to modern songs

Aside from the Methodist Church, I have visited a couple of other

more contemporary services in my search for young people. It's been fun worshipping to modern songs I already know in English. Also interesting has been the work at CREAS (the Regional Ecumenical Centre for Advice and Services). At the beginning of January, we had our planning meeting for the year. It was great to learn about what they've achieved and what we hope to do in the coming months.

In terms of my role here, I feel I'm getting a bit more into my stride. I can see actual progress being made, so I'm looking forward to things moving a little faster. We shall just have to wait and see what the next two months bring.

Planning meeting at CREAS



Tiana enjoying the sunshine in January!



Photo: © Getty Images

Painting a picture of the streets of Lahore

Rachel Ullmer, Educational Mission Partner in Pakistan, writes about walking near her home in Pakistan

I come out of my house, clearing the remains of a rice meal away from my front door with my foot. I say “Salam” – meaning “peace”, but also “hello” – to the Christian street cleaner. Then I jump over a pool of water that has gathered in the road by the drain cover.

Sadly my shalwar, a traditional Pakistani outfit, is now sprayed in oily water. A motorcycle mechanic nods to me and I point to the oily gunge. He quickly gets it swept up by his boy.

An Albatrak rubbish truck, run by a Turkish street cleaning company, drives past. The men call out “Salam” to me. To call out on the street in Pakistan is generally frowned upon, but as a foreigner and a Christian it’s allowed. As it happens, the men are also Christians.

Almost knocked out by a cricket ball

As I continue along the street, walking under numerous tangles of electrical and other wires, I almost get knocked out by a cricket ball. I return the ball to its small owner and then see a motorcycle speeding down the narrow gali, hooting loudly. It nearly crashes into a vegetable trolley.

There then ensues a fight between the motorcyclist and the “sabziwala” or vegetable seller, which others join in. I quickly make an exit down another gali. There are wonderful smells coming from the tandoors and outside stoves cooking paratas and dal for breakfast, known as “nashta”.

It’s now about 10am and people are just emerging to open their shops. I order tea from a chaiwala. He refuses payment and asks where I’m from. I gather up my best Urdu and have a short conversation with him.



Delicious smells of cooking

Next I go to the bazaar for my fruit and vegetables. I always feel hungry in the bazaar because of the delicious smells of cooking. I’m well known to the fruit and vegetable men, choosing what I need and asking the price. Unlike some people, I do not barter or speak rudely.

I am now quite tired and walk back to my house with heavy bags, narrowly missing taking a trip on a stray piece of marble. Entering my house, I sit down and have some tea before preparing my lessons.

“Behold, I make all things new”

News from Sheila Norris in Nagasaki, Japan at the beginning of the new year

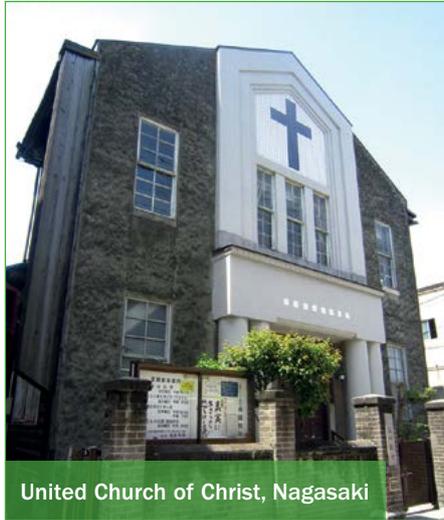
Protestant churches here in Nagasaki started the year with joint worship at the United Church of Christ in Japan Nagasaki Church on 1 January.

Our preacher reminded us that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. He suggested that we tend to forget this in our busy everyday lives. It's important therefore to attend worship every Sunday and be reminded and renewed. With this in mind we worshipped together in the hope of being encouraged to serve faithfully during 2019.

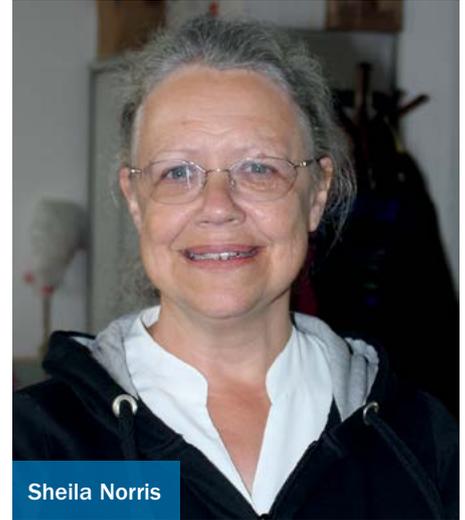
Emperor to retire

In Japan, the change of the calendar year has seen a focus on doing things for the last time in “Heisei”.

That's the name of the era of the current emperor who will retire at the end of April.



United Church of Christ, Nagasaki



Sheila Norris

We await the announcement of the name of the next era, when the new emperor takes over. Many people hope that this year will be calmer and more “average” than last year.

In 2018 there were four major natural disasters in Japan. Earthquakes and typhoons resulted in loss of life and extensive damage, especially because of flooding. Recovery

was not helped by a long summer which saw prolonged periods of record high temperatures.

Starting the new year with hope

Here in Kwassui Women's University in Nagasaki there are many problems. But we start the new year with hope. We are encouraged that a colleague who has participated in church life for many years was moved to be baptised this past Christmas.

Outdoor swimming in November

Our Mission Partner, Anne Baldwin, sends news from Sri Lanka

I find it hard to believe that it is November as it is still so hot here. I continue to enjoy swimming in an outdoor pool and never need to wear a jacket. Life at the college continues apace. We now have an Acting Principal, the Bishop of Kurunegela, while a new principal is chosen.

Community life brings a variety of tasks including maintaining the environment. Here students are

repainting the numbers on the coconut trees for audit purposes. Recently, 1,000 coconuts were collected and sold, which is useful income for the college.

The chapel is central to our life here, and there are three services daily for the community. Thank you for keeping in touch and for all your prayers, messages and letters.

New team members

Introducing Barry Sloan, our new European Partnership Coordinator and Julia Edwards who will be our Partnership Coordinator in the Pacific region



The Revd Dr Barry Sloan is a native of Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland. He is married to Gillian and they have two adult children. Barry studied theology in London, Belfast and Washington D.C.

An ordained elder of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Barry has served over 20 years as a Mission Partner in the United Methodist Church in Germany. Since 2012 he has been working at national level with the UMC in Germany, as Director of Evangelism and Theological Director of Tent Ministries.

In January 2019 Barry took on a new role as Europe Relationship Coordinator for the Methodist Church in Britain. He will continue his duties with the UMC in Germany, but in a reduced capacity. Barry lives in Chemnitz, eastern Germany, with Gillian who is also a Mission Partner. Together they help to lead INSPIRE, an ecumenical Fresh Expression of Church.

In his spare time Barry is a Liverpool Football Club fan, an author, a singer-songwriter and a storyteller.



Julia Edwards is a Mission Partner with the Methodist Church in Britain and has been based in the Pacific since 2010. For much of the time, she worked at the regional ecumenical organisation, the Pacific Conference of Churches, in the programme area of Stewardship. Her work involved helping church leaders to learn to be good stewards of God's creation.

A particular focus of her activities at the Pacific Conference of Churches has been advocacy on behalf of communities impacted by climate change. Her efforts have been particularly focused on those communities threatened with relocation.

Julia has also been involved with the UN Women Markets for Change project. Her responsibilities have included assessing the resilience of markets and market vendors to disasters and climate change in Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Most recently, she was based at the United Church in Papua New Guinea, assisting colleagues at the Disaster Risk Reduction desk.

Julia returns to that role at the United Church in Papua New Guinea, while undertaking the coordination of Methodist Church partners in the Pacific. She will be based in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

Church twinning

A growing number of churches and circuits are building twinning links with Methodist Partner Churches around the world. Their aim is to share and learn in mission, understanding, culture and worship across Methodist communities – together.

Are you interested in developing a twinning link with a church or circuit in another country? If so, take a look at our new guidelines document on our website. It's been specially designed to support you in thinking through, developing and establishing a link that is mutually beneficial.

If you already have a twinning link, it would be great to hear how things are going. Tell us what has been shared and learnt in your efforts to understand and strengthen God's mission around the world.

Our new guidelines could help you on your journey, both in developing a new link but also perhaps in invigorating an established one. Learn more now by downloading our twinning guidelines www.methodist.org.uk/media/8088/church-twinning-guidelinesdocx.pdf.

You can also get in touch with the World Church Relationship team by emailing us at: wcr.admin@methodistchurch.org.uk

Ministerial EXCHANGE

We have received a letter from a minister in Canada asking if any UK minister would be interested in an informal short-term exchange. If you are a Methodist minister and would like to take part in this, let us know and we'll put you in contact with him.

Get in touch with us by emailing: wcr.admin@methodistchurch.org.uk

Would you like a speaker for a World Church event or service?



If you would like to invite a speaker to your event, please get in touch with Carolyn Lawrence at World Church Relationships.

You can email her at: lawrencec@methodistchurch.org.uk



MWM World Mission Conference

31 May – 2 June 2019

Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire

CHINA'S MISSION TO THE WORLD

For more information and booking details:

Email: bookings@mwm.org.uk

Website: www.mwm.org.uk

A pilgrimage to India: Christian witness as a minority witness

And finally, a reminder of a planned pilgrimage to India to explore Christian witness in Punjab. It's taking place from 29 March to 11 April 2019 and led by the Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal, in partnership with the Methodist Church.

Participants will engage in conversation with members of the Church of North India in Delhi and in the Diocese of Amritsar. It will be an opportunity for them to find out about the challenges of Christian witness in a multi-faith context.

They will also visit the village of Sadhu Sundar Singh and spend time in a retreat centre in the



India group from 2017

foothills of the Himalayas. Among the landmarks they will see will be the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

For more information:
Telephone: **+44 (0)20 8901 7630**
Email: **enquiries@soulofindia.com**
Website: **www.soulofindia.com**



Photo: © Getty Images



PRAYER POINTS

Pray for our sisters and brothers who are persecuted for their faith around the world and for those who seek to help them.

Pray for Rachel working in Pakistan – for wisdom as she trains Bible teachers and prepares her work.

Pray for Sheila and the people of Japan at this time of change.

Pray for Tiana continuing to settle into her work in Buenos Aires.

Pray for women who suffer gender-based violence and those who seek to help them and combat injustice.

Pray for those affected by the volcano in Guatemala as they seek to rebuild their lives.