



World Church News

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“But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.”
Revelation 12:11a
(NRSV)

PARTNER CHURCHES AND ORGANISATIONS



IMC hosts a mass baptism service in Holguin

From glory to glory

In Cuba, people learn from an early age not to believe in God. Marxism-Leninism and other philosophies that deny the existence of God are taught in schools, and idolatry, witchcraft and magic are promoted as ‘culture’, stimulating an environment adverse to Christianity. Despite this, la Iglesia Metodista en Cuba (IMC – the Methodist Church in Cuba) has been growing at a rate of around 10% a year since 1999.

The Church has 416 churches, 930 missions (churches in training) and more than 1,000 cell groups (small congregations that meet in houses). “It started with a cell group that met in the house of a church member,” says Bishop Ricardo Pereira Díaz, President of IMC. “The National Church trains lay leaders to evangelise and establish these cells. When a cell group grows to more than 20 people, it is converted into a mission and the

lay leader becomes a missionary. A mission has the structure of a church, but doesn’t have the required number of baptized ministers, which is 35-40. Once a mission reaches this number, we search for a house that can be converted into a church. That is how a new church is born. The missionary then becomes a probationary pastor.”

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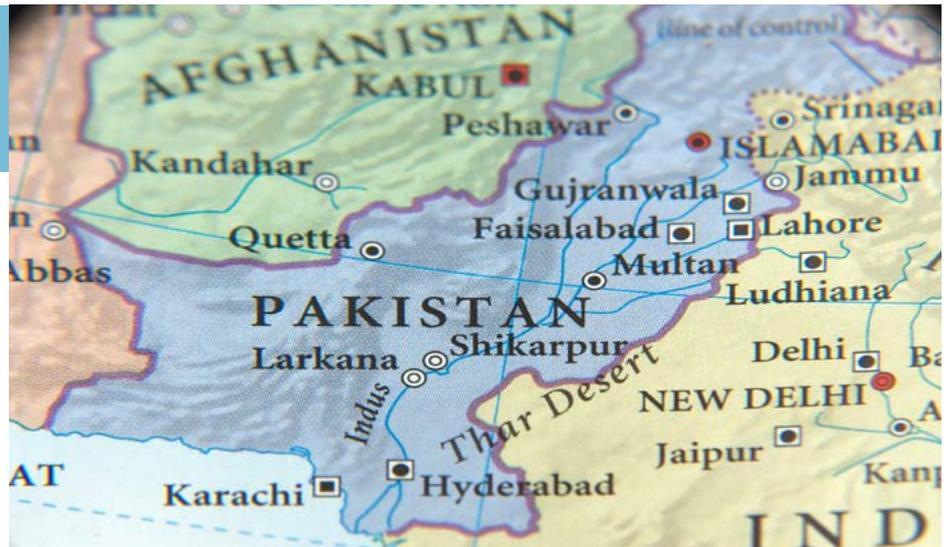
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Seeking justice in Pakistan

Being a Christian in Pakistan often means having to face and overcome many challenges daily. Today, religious minorities struggle for survival in Pakistan in the face of mob and suicide bomb attacks on their places of worship and residential areas. Their daughters are at risk of abduction and being forcibly converted to Islam and forced into marriage.

Just a week before Christmas last year, terrorists attacked Bethel Memorial Church in Quetta, killing nine people and wounding more than 50 others. In his message to the Christian community, the Rt Revd Humphrey S Peter, Moderator of the Church of Pakistan, strongly condemned the attack on the church and advised Pakistani Christians to stay united and strong in faith during this time of crisis.

As well as being vulnerable to terrorist attacks, Christians in



Pakistan are also susceptible to accusations under the blasphemy laws, which carry a potential death sentence for anyone who insults Islam. The law is often abused, used to discriminate against minorities or to settle personal disputes. Our partner organisation the Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS), was established in 1992 to address the issues faced by disadvantaged and marginalised religious minorities living in Pakistan. CLAAS's work is facilitated thanks to an annual grant of £ 19,000 from the World

Mission Fund.

Over the past five years, CLAAS has been handling the case of Zafar Bhatti, who was falsely accused of blasphemy in 2012. During his trial, the prosecution failed to prove the allegations that had been made against him. On 24 April 2017, after hearing the lengthy arguments from the CLAAS lawyer, the court decided that there was no direct evidence against Zafar – but then sentenced him to life imprisonment. If there is no evidence against him, then why the life sentence? CLAAS continues to fight Zafar's case.

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From glory to glory

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One of the biggest challenges the Church faces is getting into areas of the country where the gospel of Jesus Christ is not present. Churches have been encouraged to adopt the remote places where

there are no churches. A lot of evangelism and discipleship work has been done in these areas. The result of all this was a mass baptism that took place in Holguin, uniting four districts (North Holguin, Central Holguin,

Las Tunas and Sierra Maestra). In total, around 1000 people were baptized. "This glorious event was a record in the history of the Methodist Church in Cuba since its foundation," Bishop Diaz said.

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Reaching out to farmers in Uganda

Uganda was badly affected by drought this past year. The World Mission Fund sent the Methodist Church in Uganda (MCU) an Emergency Grant of £10,000 towards helping drought victims get back on their feet.

Andrew Mulwany (pictured) is a programme officer for MCU. Andrew currently works with 40 farmers who benefited from that grant: 20 in Kamuli District and another 20 in Buyende District. Methodist churches have been entry points for reaching out to both communities, and some of the farmers who received help are church members.

In Buyende, MCU owns and manages a demonstration farm

where local farmers receive training in crop husbandry, livestock, and composting, pre-harvest and post-harvest management. Andrew oversees training to improve their agricultural practices. He regularly visits the farmers, meets with church and community leaders and liaises with agriculture extension workers. According to Andrew, this initiative has had a positive effect on the Methodist churches in terms of building relationships with the community.

Below, left: Andrew Mulwany (left)

Below, right: Andrew inspecting the pigs being raised on the MCU's farm



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DONATE TO THE WORLD MISSION FUND

All the Partner Churches, partner organisations, NMA postholders, scholarship students and mission partners that you regularly read about in *World Church News* are supported by the Methodist Church World Mission Fund, through the sharing of both resources and personnel.

You can donate online by going to www.justgiving.com/mcfworldmission/donate. Alternately, 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”.



Kibogora Methodist Hospital is a 269-bed hospital on the shores of Lake Kivu, Rwanda. It serves a population of about 250,000 people and is a referral point for 12 health centres. Thanks to support from the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District, the hospital now has a new paediatric ward, a pharmacy and an isolation unit.

PRAYER



God of the broken, the weary, the challenged, the survivors and the overcomers, we bring before you all the people, countries and situations we have read about in this newsletter. We bring before you those whose names have been maligned because they trust in your great name. Those whose spirit has been broken because they chose to receive your Holy Spirit. Those who overcome daily thanks to the power of your resurrecting Spirit, and those who can boldly declare in the face of trials, “Because you live, I can face tomorrow; yes, life is worth living because you live Lord Jesus.” **Amen.**