

# Methodist Mission and Ecumenical Newsletter

## May 2017

### Commemorating the Reformation

At 3 p.m. on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> June the Lutheran and Catholic Churches will gather to pray together in Commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation. The worship will take place at the Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Hill Street, Wellington. The President, Rev. Prince Devanandan, has been invited and will officially represent the Methodist Church. Others who live in the Wellington region would be welcome to attend the liturgy and afternoon tea.

### Operation Refugee

Last year Christian World Service ran a successful pilot of Operation Refugee. 72 people lived on the rations of a refugee for five days and raised \$42,000 for Syrian refugees. This was enough to buy food parcels for 566 families or cover the costs of free medical care for 1,600 people. The money was matched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade allowing us to double the amount sent to CWS partner the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees working with Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. It was a great achievement for a pilot effort and now CWS want to do even better. This year they are aiming to raise \$80,000 and hope to have at least 150 people doing the challenge. Methodist Mission and Ecumenical endorses this project which draws attention to the plight of so many refugees. We encourage parishes to advertise this initiative. The challenge is to live on the rations of a refugee for five days and/or to sponsor someone else to do it. For more information visit the Operation Refugee website at:

<http://www.cwsoperationrefugee.nz>

### Asia Mission Conference

This major conference with the theme "Journey Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light in Asia" will be held in Yangon, Myanmar from 11<sup>th</sup> till the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017. Associated with the conference will be a celebration of the Christian Conference of Asia's diamond jubilee. Expressions of interest in attending need to be sent to the acting director of Mission and Ecumenical by 31<sup>st</sup> May. The General Secretary of Christian Conference of Asia, Dr Mathews Chunakara writes, "We ardently pray and sincerely hope that this conference will facilitate deeper discussions, and will lead to greater dedication and to relevant and meaningful recapturing and re-articulation of our commitment to the mission, the act of Almighty God... We call upon all member churches, councils and all other

partners of the Christian Conference of Asia to observe Asia Sunday on 15 October in the most befitting way and to pray especially for the Christian Conference of Asia."

### Goldie College news

There is a real need for good teachers. They are in conversation with the Methodist Church of Fiji for biology, accounting and economics teachers. They ask if there might be a New Zealander who speaks English fluently who might consider spending some time at Goldie College teaching English. Please contact the acting director with any expressions of interest.

### Helena Goldie Hospital

A new infectious diseases ward is being constructed at Helena Goldie Hospital in the Solomon Islands. It is designed to receive patients who suffer from malaria and TB and is much needed. The British Methodist Church has contributed strongly toward the project. Walls are already in place. The Auckland Central Parish has decided to donate toward this project to mark their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### Sasamuqa Hospital news

We are happy to share the following letter which arrived in our office on the 6<sup>th</sup> April:

"Hi Terry,

Greetings from Sasamuqa Hospital. I have now been in Honiara for two weeks. Opening my email, I found the funds for the rail. My apology for my late reply. The rails have now arrived at Sasamuqa and will be installed in two weeks' time. Would you please convey our love and greetings to the members of the Methodist Church, administration staff, yourself and Rev. Prince. Staff, patients of Sasamuqa Hospital and the public at large will enjoy walking on the ramp, feeling secure because of the rails, thank you. With love and prayers to you all. Rev. Caleb Kotali."

### From Russia with Love

Jill Baker, Vice-President of the British Methodist Church 2017-18, writes in *World Church*:

In Russia Methodism is regarded as a sect. The Russian Orthodox Church is so dominant that it is the only understanding of 'church' that most people have. Any other form of religious devotion is regarded as suspect. This seems to impede the mission and undermine the confidence of individuals and of the church as a whole.

Despite this, Methodist youth work in Russia is growing – as evidenced by the Youth Forum that took

place from 31 January till 3 February. The Forum was held in Raivola, a holiday resort set in extensive snowy, forested growth. Young people attended from across the region – Russia, Ukraine, Kyrgystan, Kazakhstan, and for the first time, Estonia.

It was moving and symbolic to see Russian and Ukrainian young people leading worship and dancing together, given the current situation of war between the two nations. The youngest participant was Valeria who had travelled on her own from Komsomolsk-on-Amur – a distance of 9,000k across seven time zones.

The worship was outstanding. Three bands were gifted, energetic and devout leading the worship in a mature, sensitive and Spirit-filled way, with a great deal of prayer. Preaching was serious with moving testimonies. These few days and these young people have left an indelible mark on me and I feel proud to have been involved.

### Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

In New Zealand the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is held from Ascension to Pentecost, from the 29<sup>th</sup> May to the 8<sup>th</sup> June. It is a time when Christians are reminded of the abnormality of our divided life and Christ's prayer that the church be one. Parishes are encouraged to converse with parishes of other denominations and arrange joint prayer services. Resources are obtainable from a Google search. This year the theme is "Reconciliation – the Love of Christ Compels Us." (cf. 2 Corinthians 5: 14-20) It is appropriate that in this year when we commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation that the liturgy was prepared by an ecumenical group in Germany. The liturgy and associated material is published jointly by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches.

### Prayer for the unity of the church to serve the unity of creation, from the WCC Assembly, Busan 2013.

We turn to God, on whom we depend, and we pray:

O God of life,  
lead us to justice and peace,  
that suffering people may discover hope,  
the scarred world find healing,  
and divided churches become visibly one,  
through the one who prayed for us,  
and in whom we are one body,  
your Son, Jesus Christ,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit,  
is worthy to be praised, one God,  
now and forever. Amen

### Book Review

*Not Without My Neighbour* – Issues in Interfaith Relations by Wesley Ariarajah  
pub. World Council of Churches Geneva 1999, pp 130

Wesley Ariarajah is a prominent Sri Lankan Methodist theologian who was director of the World Council of Churches' dialogue programme. After teaching ecumenical theology at Drew University School of Theology, he has now retired to Switzerland.

What makes this book such an attractive introduction to a theology of interfaith relations is the way in which the author shares his own experience of living in multi-cultural and multi-faith Sri Lanka. He tells the story of his growing up in a community where his neighbours were devout Hindu. Children from the next door family would share in the Christian prayers when they were visiting Wesley's family, and "often, some of us from the Christian home would be at our neighbours' when they had their *pujas* (the Hindu prayers) and sang the *tevarams* (devotional songs) in the evenings." But the theology that Wesley was being taught in the Methodist Church saw Hinduism as inferior to Christianity and that there could be no way to salvation apart from Christ.

The book is one long meditation on the adequacy of this theological approach to other religions. Over the years the writer has immersed himself in the sacred texts of Hinduism and Buddhism and has become familiar with the worship and practice of these faiths. He is not romantic about other religions seeing in them both weaknesses and strengths. He has also come to respect the integrity of these paths and demonstrates a remarkable openness to them. Each chapter in the book addresses a sharp question that arises from engagement with other religious traditions: Are there limits to dialogue? Can we pray together? Have women been excluded? Does inter-religious marriage pose problems or offer promise? And can the tension between dialogue and mission be resolved?

Wesley Ariarajah shares his own experience of participating in dialogue with people of other faiths. He surveys theological developments within the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church regarding attitudes to what kind of relationships are possible. He outlines recent scholarly work in the field and introduces helpful categories in which to reformulate old questions. He challenges us to address deeply unsettling issues: "If God is absent in the life of our neighbour, what do we make of our belief that God loves all people ... If God is present, what is the relationship of our message to the religious life of our neighbours?" (p. 125)

MISSION AND ECUMENICAL BOARD

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**Methodist Mission and Ecumenical  
Annual Appeal 2016  
Kokeqolo Water Scheme Fund**

*Life giving water*

**The appeal is from United Church Assembly Office to develop a  
Reliable water supply for the village of Kokeqolo**

The people of Kokeqolo, the schools and the United Church of Solomon Islands assembly office are dependent on rain water. A recent survey of the area located a bore hole that was used by the American forces during the Second World War. The United Church has requested our help to use this source of water by building a water supply unit. The cost is NZ \$ 80,000. M&E committed to raise \$ 40,000 which is half of the total cost and asked UCSI to look for another donor to cover the other half.

The beneficiaries of this water supply will be

**Kokeqolo Primary School**



**Youth Centre**



**United Church Office**



Methodist Mission and Ecumenical appeals to all to contribute to the

**KOKEQOLO WATER SCHEME FUND  
To raise \$ 40,000 in 2017**

**... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. [Matt. 5:16]**

Mission is possible only with your participation and contribution to the fund.

Mission and Ecumenical Fund is registered with the **Charities Commission**.

**Registration Number CC51048**. Receipts will be issued for tax rebate on the donation.

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**ANNUAL APPEAL 2016 - KOKEQOLO WATER SCHEME FUND**

Please remember to send this cover slip for a receipt when you make a deposit.

<p>Please send your donations by cheque in favour of <b>Mission and Ecumenical Fund</b></p> <p>To Rev. Prince Devanandan Methodist Mission and Ecumenical Private Bag 11903 Ellerslie Auckland 1542</p>	<p>You could also make your donation directly into <b>BNZ Account No. 02-0800-0766004-03</b></p> <p>Amount: \$ _____</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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