



## METHODIST MISSION AND ECUMENICAL NEWSLETTER - July 2022

### NEW OUTBOARD MOTOR DONATED FOR SASAMUNGA HOSPITAL

The current outboard motor for the Sasamunga Hospital boat is ageing, and has broken down in an emergency situation. It is repaired and functional, however the secretary of the Hospital, Rev Caleb Kotali, requested that Methodist Mission & Ecumenical fund a replacement to ensure the reliability of the running of the hospital boat.

Previously Caleb had requested assistance with the running of the hospital boat, in particular during the COVID pandemic and its use for taking medical teams to more remote locations during the vaccination programme. Funds were raised by MME in a 'mini appeal' of \$3,975, and a first tranche of fuel costs covered. Rather than seeking further fuel costs, a more urgent need has arisen for the motor.

The MME Board in its July meeting affirmed supporting this purchase, granting NZD10,000 to be funded through remaining donations received for Sasamunga and the interest earned on the Designated Funds held for such purposes.

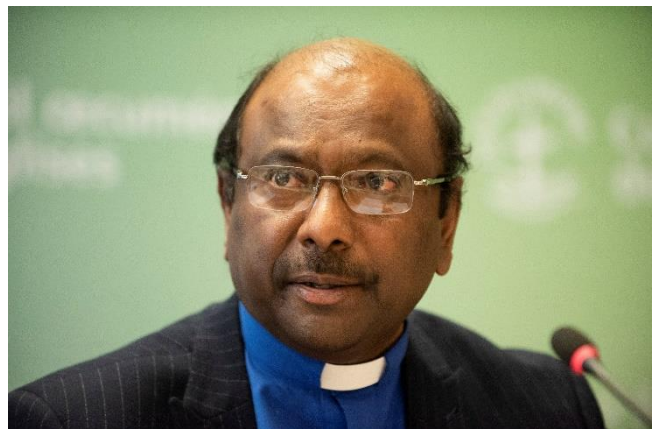
Meanwhile, the Solomon Islands government is progressing to reopen its borders, though Covid protocols for domestic and international travels will still apply.

Uniting Church in the Solomon Islands General Secretary, Brian Bird, notes, "Omicron is picking up in the country but with mild effects compared to delta variant. The ground situation is often tricky, as many people ignore wearing mask. As of 5th May, the average vaccination rate was 66% for at least 1 dose. There is still a long way to go. Part of the problem is people are also resisting injection."

### WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ELECTS NEW GENERAL SECRETARY

The Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay of South Africa was named as the ninth World Council of Churches (WCC) General Secretary Central Committee at its 17 June meeting. Pillay is a member of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa who is currently dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria. *(Photo - WCC)*

In a hybrid press conference at which he was asked about his vision of the WCC, when he



takes up his post, and other questions, he said, “Our task here is not to play church. Our task is actually to follow God’s command.”

“Important for me is the idea of justice and unity. I think unity is the task of the WCC—to continue to work at visible unity, and Christian unity is so important. And I will say it again, that a divided church presents a very weak and feeble and fragile witness to a very fragmented world.”

Dr. Pillay said that unity is important, as justice is important. “Some people tend to favour one over the other. I hold both in equal terms.” He said that the God of justice demands for us to care for the poor and the neglected....and to stand with the oppressed in their situations.

“And the WCC has done this in the past. Me coming from South Africa, it’s bigger than my personal experience of how the WCC played a very vital role in dismantling apartheid, in standing with Christians in solidarity,” explained Pillay. “So we will continue to do with other parts of the world as we stand with the oppressed.”

When Pillay studied at university in the 1980s, the institutions were segregated for undergraduates, and as an Indian South African, he attended the University of Durban Westville. Later, he got a PhD from Rhodes University, which had been for whites.

One journalist asked Pillay about Moscow’s Patriarch Kirill “supporting Russia’s brutal war of aggression” in Ukraine and if it could result in the Russian Orthodox Church being suspended from the WCC. “The WCC would advocate dialogue, conversations, bringing people across the table and asking, what is it that prompts and inspires as well?” said Pillay. “We need the Patriarch; we need the Russian Orthodox Church with us in these conversations; we can’t have them without them. So, suspension is not on the cards at the moment, especially if we advocated things like dialogue.”

Pillay said that is the way to get a “deeper understanding and appreciation of the issues and be able to make more calculated decisions based on incisive wisdom.”

Pillay was asked about his origins in South Africa and said he was born and bred as a South African Indian - of Indian descent, “but I have had no connections whatsoever with India; my great-great grandfather, probably five generations ago, came to South Africa. have visited India many times; I’ve tried to look at some of these connections. But for myself, I’m really of South African descent, as an Indian.”

Asked about the South Africa of Desmond Tutu and Gandhi, Pillay said one of the things about South Africa specifically that kept them sane in the midst of the insanity of apartheid “was our spirituality.”

“In those dark days of apartheid, I would go into the (black) townships, and I would be so deeply inspired, and yet even sometimes troubled by the fact that I would see people laughing and praying and rejoicing and dancing on the streets. And I would ask myself, how in the world can you do this in the midst of suffering? And then I realized very quickly the spirituality in that suffering.”

Pillay believes that growing up during a period of conflict and suffering in South Africa will stand him in good stead when he takes up his position as the head of the ecumenical body in January as a leader who believes in dialogue.

## **WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES STATEMENT ON THE HOLY LAND**

In a public statement focused on the Holy Land, the WCC central committee expressed “deep solidarity with the member churches and Christians of the region in their life and work, keeping the Christian faith and witness in the Holy Land alive and vibrant, as well as with all people in the region.”

The governing body also urged “all member churches and ecumenical partners, members of Jewish and Muslim communities, and all people of good will, to support the member churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land as essential components of the diverse multi-religious and multicultural nature of society in the region, including the Christian presence in the region.”

The central committee welcomed the WCC’s continuing relationships with the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations and the World Jewish Congress, and the opportunities which they provide for dialogue on these issues.

The statement “the government and authorities of Israel to ensure equal human rights for all people living under their responsibility, and to ensure accountability for attacks and violations against Palestinians, against the holy places, churches, Christian communities, Muslims and other groups, and to ensure free access to places of worship and holy sites.”

The central committee also appealed “to all members of the international community and all WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to stand up for international law and to speak out against the looming evictions in Masafer Yatta and other threatened displacements of Palestinian communities in the occupied territories.”

The statement concludes by reiterating “the WCC’s constant call for an end to the occupation, and for equal human rights for all in the region.”

The full statement can be found here: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-central-committee-statement-on-threats-to-a-just-peace-in-israel-and-palestine-and-to-the-christian-presence-in-the-holy-land>

### **MISSION AND ECUMENICAL BOARD**

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