

# METHODIST MISSION AND ECUMENICAL NEWSLETTER

## October 2020

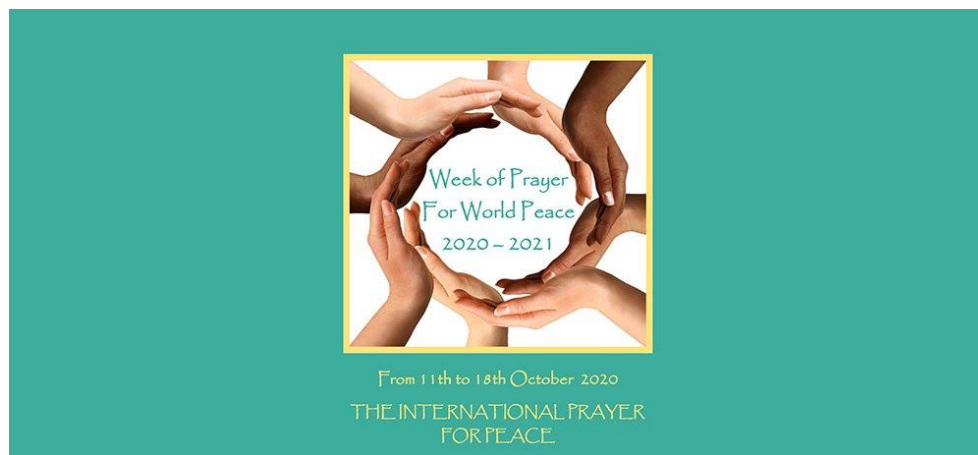
The church calendar for October presents bookends for an ecumenical and interfaith feast! World Communion Sunday, traditionally on the first Sunday, looks forward to the hope of all Christians being able to gather around a united sacrament of Holy Communion/Lord's Supper/Eucharist; but also laments the disunity we experience now.

Then on 31 October, or the Sunday nearest, is the opportunity to mark the Reformers of the Church (otherwise known as Reformation Sunday).

*Here we stand with those who reformed the church so long ago  
And with those who still are reforming the church today.  
Here we stand witnesses to your good news for all.  
Here we stand your servants, your followers, your children.*

*Ecclesia reformata sed semper reformanda  
- the church reformed, but always needing to be reformed.*

And then there is the Week of Prayer for World Peace – both an ecumenical and an interfaith opportunity to pray and meet together ...



### **WEEK OF PRAYER FOR WORLD PEACE**

The Week of Prayer for World Peace is an opportunity for people of all faiths to pray in their own gatherings or with people of other faiths for world peace. The Week will be observed around the world from 11 to 18 October 2020. A leaflet is produced with prayers, readings and affirmations from many faiths to use each day – for the New Zealand version, contact Paddy Payne (161 Seatoun Heights Road, Miramar, Wellington 6022 or email [WeekOfPrayer@outlook.com](mailto:WeekOfPrayer@outlook.com)). The theme of the leaflet is developed for worldwide distribution by the Week of Prayer for World Peace multi-faith committee based in Great Britain. Religious communities throughout New Zealand are encouraged to celebrate the week both in their observances and together with people of different faiths.

This is a wonderful way to develop or explore interfaith relationships in your locale. Look ecumenically to fellow church communities, and to other faith communities around you.

There are many ways to mark the week:

- One combined event could be organised to gather people in one location (maybe an outdoor space in a park).
- A series of events over the week, each hosted by a different faith community; which gives opportunities to visit other faith spaces; and experience joining in the prayers hosted by different faith traditions.
- Make a commitment with fellow churches and faith communities to include prayers for world peace in your own weekly worship.
- Create peace flags or banners to hang in your church or faith space.

Check out local interfaith networks for events already organised. If there aren't any in your area, start networking your own contacts – start small, because building interfaith relationships and trust takes time, so now is also a good time to sow the seeds for 2021! Contact the Director if you are interested in developing this for your area.

### **ECUMENICAL RESPONSES TO INJUSTICE AND CORRUPTION IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST COVID-19**

It should come as no surprise that the impact of Covid-19 has varied in different national contexts across the world. Churches have united to call out injustice and corruption in some government responses, putting populations at risk.

Zimbabwe ... a pastoral letter speaking to concerns raised by local church leaders was prepared by the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the World Methodist Council. “The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the economic challenges and seriously affected the already fragile public health and education systems. We believe that the God of life calls us into action for justice for the oppressed. We pledge our solidarity with you as we lift up your cries for justice, dignity, and protection of their human rights. We shall continue to advocate together with our member churches for this cause.” See a copy of the letter on the web: <https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/2020/08/17/zimbabwe-pastoral-letter/>

South Africa ... the South African Council of Churches (SACC) national church leaders stood in silent prayer to declare that “corruption is not our heritage” in all its provinces on 15 September, as part of a nation-wide campaign against COVID-19 corruption. Calling it a “performance of silence”, SACC General Secretary Bishop Malusi Mpumwana said in a media statement that it was because “the churches are speechless at this level of revolting fraud.” See more on the web: <https://www.cwmission.org/south-african-church-leaders-hold-countrywide-silent-prayers-against-corruption/>

### **CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA – ZOOM CONSULTATION ON HIV-AIDS AND HUMAN SEXUALITY**

The consultation was held from 2 to 4 September 2020 and attended by about forty registered participants across Asia, including Rev Tony Franklin-Ross from MCNZ. The facilitators of the consultation included representatives from UNAIDS, faith-based organisations, and civil society organisations dealing with HIV and AIDS advocacy.

Presenter Ms Sacaliuc addressed an ‘elephant in the room’ while discussing the HIV response, namely, gender-based violence (GBV). “GBV is an extreme manifestation of

gender inequality and encompasses physical, sexual, economic, structural, and emotional violence. Marginalised groups among key populations experience the highest rates of GBV and are also more susceptible to acquiring HIV. GBV undermines the HIV response.”

Recommendations arising from the participants included:

- Sensitising leaders and lay members towards the issues of HIV and AIDS, human sexuality, and gender diversity;
- Developing theological curriculum for seminaries and lay groups to share contextual Bible studies and relevant literature on HIV and AIDS, human sexuality, and gender diversity, and also enabling theologians and practitioners to raise a clear Asian voice;
- Addressing and including sexuality and gender justice in conversations in the ministries of the church— specifically women, men, youth, children, and senior citizens;
- Revisiting the liturgical language to ensure it is inclusive;
- Enabling member churches and councils to develop policies and guidelines on gender diversity, sexuality, and reproduction health and rights;
- Holding interfaith dialogues within larger society for an effective and holistic response.

For further information, a press release from the consultation can be found on: <https://www.cca.org.hk/news-and-events/asian-churches-called-to-be-more-relevant-in-addressing-vulnerabilities-of-people-living-with-hiv-and-aids/>

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## **NEW INTERIM DIRECTOR – METHODIST MISSION AND ECUMENICAL**

Following a short-term supply by Rev Dr Terry Wall for July-September 2020, the Mission and Ecumenical Board has affirmed Rev Tony Franklin-Ross as the acting Director as of 1 October 2020. This will be an interim appointment, while Methodist “4+4” process is followed to consider the role and function of a new permanent appointment.

Tony is currently sharing this role (2/3<sup>rd</sup> time) with that of Synod Co-Superintendent of the Lower North Island Methodist Synod (1/3<sup>rd</sup> time) until 31 January 2021; and from 1 February becomes 3/4 time Director M&E.

Tony’s experiences of ecumenical work includes being Methodist Co-Chair of the Anglican-Methodist Bilateral Dialogue, a member of the Methodist-Roman Catholic Bilateral Dialogue, convenor of the Anglican-Methodist-Roman Catholic Trilateral Dialogue on the Diaconate, member of MCNZ’s Faith & Order Committee, and tutor of various ecumenical courses. He helped instigate the Hawkes Bay Interfaith Network. Ecumenical and interfaith post-graduate studies have included at the World Council of Churches Bossey Institute (Geneva), and a US State Department programme at the University of California (Santa Barbara). Tony also serves the ecumenical leadership of the World Methodist Council as its Chairperson of the Ecumenical Relationships Committee; forming an ‘ecumenical officer’ team with the WMC Geneva Secretary and the Director of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome.

### **MISSION AND ECUMENICAL BOARD**

**Methodist Church of New Zealand**

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