



## METHODIST MISSION AND ECUMENICAL NEWSLETTER - March 2021

*In this Season of Lent, the theme of this month's newsletter is of prayer and care towards fellow humanity across our traditions and respective faiths.*

### **WORLDWIDE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR COVID-19 – March 22 – 27**

March 11, 2021 will mark one year since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus COVID 19 a global pandemic. Over the past year, according to the WHO data, there have been over 99 million cases with over 2 million deaths. The suffering of the peoples and nations of the world has been unprecedented. Because of this pandemic, countries have had to grapple with resulting crises which have impacted all areas of our human condition: mental, physical, economical, spiritual, and environmental.

At this one-year milestone is an opportune time, the World Council of Churches (WCC) is calling for a Week of Prayer for COVID 19 Pandemic from March 22 – 27, 2021. Working in collaboration, this week of prayer can galvanize mutual solidarity and support as we affirm our common human fragility which this pandemic has exposed.

This period of prayer will serve as a concentrated time in which the world is being invited to focus on praying for specific concerns. These would include: Lament and Grief (remembering the lives lost); Hurting and Suffering Communities; Leaders (governments and non-governmental); Healing (including for health care and all front-line workers); Protection and Vaccination (research, supplies, distribution); and Hope (for the vulnerable and marginalised, and for compassion).

The World Methodist Council is joining other world communions in encouraging this observance. A global worship service by the WCC and all Regional Ecumenical Organisations on 26/27 March 2021, is being held to commemorate all the lives claimed by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The prayer service will be live-streamed. More information will be announced in due course.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-to-observe-week-of-prayer-one-year-into-covid-19-pandemic>

*Please contact the M&E Acting Director for a copy of the advance liturgical material.*



## **ECUMENICAL CONCERNS AND PRAYERS FOR MYANMAR / BURMA**

### **A joint press release from the World Council of Churches and the Christian Conference of Asia**

The World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) General Secretaries have condemned the deteriorating law and order situation and violence in Myanmar, especially the killings of people by Myanmar security forces during protests against the military coup.



Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, Interim General Secretary of the WCC, and Dr Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of the CCA, in a joint statement expressed great distress and concern over the continued lethal actions against the people by the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw), which overthrew its democratically-elected government on 1 February 2021.

The leaders of the global ecumenical bodies stated that the democratically elected civilian government reflects the aspiration of the people. The will of the people and the outcome of the elections have to be respected and democratic processes must be restored in Myanmar.

“As we believe that the rule of law and democracy must be the cardinal parameters for ensuring peace with justice, we firmly denounce the military coup which has now returned full power to the generals,” added Rev. Dr Sauca and Dr Chunakara in their joint statement on behalf of the international ecumenical organisations.

According to media reports, since the military coup took place on 1 February, a number of people have been shot dead during clashes at protests in different parts of the country, and hundreds wounded.

The global ecumenical leaders urged the military leaders of Myanmar to refrain from repressive actions against civilians; respect human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law; and pursue dialogue with the democratically elected representatives of the people of Myanmar.

The military justified the coup saying its complaints of voter fraud in the elections of 8 November 2020 had been ignored. Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) won the election by a landslide, earning a second five-year term, and the Election Commission confirmed that the election was fair.

“In this Lenten season, the WCC and CCA uphold and affirm the sanctity of life and the dignity of all,” concluded the joint statement.

The full text is available at:

<https://www.cca.org.hk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Joint-CCA-and-WCC-Statement-Myanmar.pdf>

### **And a pastoral letter from the World Methodist Council**

Rev Dr J C Park, President of the World Methodist Council, has issued a pastoral letter to the Methodist churches in Myanmar, and calling the wider Methodist/Wesleyan family to hold these churches and the people of Myanmar in prayer.

“We hold the Methodist churches of Myanmar in prayer as you do prophetic witnesses and provide comfort to your people in this anxious and uncertain time. And we want to assure you that we stand in solidarity with the patriotic and courageous people of Myanmar struggling and suffering for the cause of justice, truth, freedom, and peace. May God create a new thing in Myanmar!”

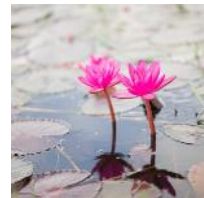
Coinciding with International Women’s Day, JC Park comments, “The Spirit of God must have been outpouring into the people of Myanmar, especially the young women among them. In Myanmar’s protests, young women are on the front lines, rebuking the generals of Tadmaw, the Myanmar military, who reimposed a patriarchal dictatorship that has suppressed women for half a century and ousted a female civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.”

The full text is available at:

<https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Pastoral-Letter-re-Crisis-in-Myanmar-from-Rev.-Dr.-JC-Park.pdf>

### **A solidarity prayer offered by the National Council of Churches in Australia:**

Gracious God,  
Your compassion for us draws forth our compassion for one another.  
Our compassionate hearts encompass now the people of Myanmar.  
We pray there is no further unnecessary suffering.  
We pray for those already grieving.  
We pray for the healing of those who are wounded.  
We pray for wise national and international leadership so that this crisis does not deteriorate further.  
We pray for the peacemakers that their work can flourish.  
We pray for those in military leadership, including General Min Aung Hlaing and those of the elected government, including Aung San Suu Kyi. May there yet be a break-through to a new beginning amongst those who love their nation.  
We pray for the diaspora community of Myanmar and for ourselves as people enriched by their contribution to our own country.  
Guide us, we pray, in your compassion, as to how we might best assist in these days ahead.  
This prayer and much that is in our hearts, we gather and pray in Jesus Holy Name.  
Amen.



### **51 MINUTES OF KINDNESS – anniversary of the 15 March Mosque attacks**

As 15 March approaches, a digital campaign is encouraging people to spend 51 minutes doing something kind in honour of those we lost.

*51 Minutes of Kindness* is an initiative to honour and remember the 51 victims of the 2019 Christchurch terror attacks. The digitally-led campaign is brought to you by Khadija Leadership Network, Ou Matou Reo, New Zealand Muslim Association and the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand. The Muslim-led organisations working with Studio Perky, who are supporting this campaign with their creative design expertise.

Two years since the devastating loss of lives due to hatred towards Muslims, the wider Muslim community wanted to remember the victims, the survivors and their families by continuing to persevere in building a more inclusive society for us all. The whakataukī,

“he aroha whakatō, he aroha puta mai” (if kindness is sown, then kindness will be received) best describes the spirit of this initiative.

The digital campaign encourages you to spend 51 minutes doing something kind in honour of those we lost. By joining the online handles on Facebook or Instagram you can be inspired by suggestions to share a moment of kindness with those around you. The campaign is now live, and all New Zealanders are invited to share their act of kindness with us during 14th – 20th of March 2021 using the #51MinutesAotearoa.

The Quran reminds us that good and evil are not alike, and when faced with evil we should repel it with good. And as Martin Luther King Jr famously said, hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.

*51 Minutes of Kindness* is an opportunity for you to spend a moment in time adding your drop of kindness into an ocean.

Facebook: @51minutesofkindness

Instagram: @51\_minutes\_of\_kindness

For information on the initiative email:

[contact@khadijaleadershipnetwork.org](mailto:contact@khadijaleadershipnetwork.org)

For more information on Interfaith NZ:

<http://www.interfaith.org.nz/>



### **WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY – 16 to 23 May**

The southern hemisphere observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is coming up. If you are planning ahead for local ecumenical services, or looking to incorporate the theme into your Sunday parish worship, the international resources are available online, and the New Zealand variations available soon.

The 2021 resources were prepared by the Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland, who chose the theme “Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit” (cf. Jn 15:5-9). It expresses their community’s vocation to prayer, reconciliation and unity in the church and the human family.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/events/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity>

### **NATIONAL DIALOGUE FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY – annual forum *postponed***

The 2021 Annual Forum for the National Dialogue for Christian Unity has been postponed, with the *new date Wednesday 18 May 2021* at the Loaves and Fishes Hall, Wellington Cathedral of St Paul, Hill Street, Wellington from 10.30 a.m. till 3.30 p.m.

#### **MISSION AND ECUMENICAL BOARD**

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