

Methodist Mission and Ecumenical Newsletter

April 2017

Churches' Commitments to Children

A recent letter from the World Council of Churches' general secretary the Rev. Dr Olav Fyske Tveit calls all member churches to place the wellbeing of children as a pastoral priority. They recognise that many member churches already have impressive programmes to serve children, and see this initiative as supporting and encouraging that. The general secretary writes, "As Christians we want to show the care of our loving God to our children and to all children, protecting them and providing them with what they need for care and safety. We now want to give this sacred task a stronger focus in our work as the World Council of Churches." This initiative comes as part of a long process of consultation and has its inspiration in a message formulated at the 10th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Busan, Korea, in November 2013. It was resolved there to address the needs of children as an integral part of the ecumenical commitment to the pilgrimage of justice and peace. Recognising that many children around the world lack the basic necessities of life, and are threatened by poverty, violence and neglect, the World Council of Churches is collaborating with UNICEF in this programme to receive expert advice.

The commitments that churches are encouraged to adopt are the following:

- Promote child protection through church communities.
- Promote meaningful participation in the churches and communities by children and adolescents
- Address critical issues for children in our time, e.g. to raise church voices for intergenerational climate justice, supporting initiatives for and with children and youth.

Accompanying the letter from the general secretary is an attractive and well produced booklet to guide engagement with the programme. There are biblical and theological foundations together with resources to draw on the rich spiritual traditions of the Christian churches.

Clearly our Methodist decade pastoral priority of *Let the Children Live* will relate positively to this new World Council of Churches project. The study guide will contribute strongly to our work in this field and may suggest avenues that could well be explored. Go to www.oikoumene.org/resources-children for downloadable material that supports this initiative. The study includes an interesting section which asks whether a rights based approach to the wellbeing of children and youth is consistent with our theology.

Support persecuted Coptic Christians

The Coptic Church of Egypt traces its life back to St. Mark the evangelist. It makes up some 11% of the population of Egypt and is the largest church in the region. Recent reports coming out of Egypt indicate that the church is enduring a continuing pattern of persecution. Since the fall of Mubarak in 2011 attacks on Christians and their churches have increased. On New Year's Day of that year the Church of St. Mark and St. Peter in Alexandria was bombed killing 23 people. Ten months later when a church was being demolished security forces opened fire on Christians protesting at the site and 28 died. On 12 December 2016 Cairo's Coptic St. Mark's Cathedral complex, home to the Coptic Pope, was attacked. The assault came in a chapel while worshippers were attending Mass at least 25 being killed and around 50 being injured.

On the 22nd February 2017 the Christchurch *Press* reported that Islamic State in Egypt had produced a 20 minute video in which they threaten to carry out further attacks on Christians. Jihadists promised to "liberate" Cairo targeting Pope Tawadrous III and wealthy Christian businessmen. The group claimed responsibility for the December attack on the chapel at St. Mark's Cathedral. *The Press* also commented that in the previous week a teacher had been shot on his way to school and that a Christian veterinary surgeon had been shot in the coastal city of al-Arish. The archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope have expressed concern that the vulnerability of Christians is being ignored by the state. Relations with the Vatican were cut off when Pope Benedict XVI demanded greater protection for Christians after the New Year's Day bombing of the church in Alexandria.

In a recent development the Vatican has said that the Pope is considering a visit to Egypt which may take place around the 20-21 May. It is possible that Pope Francis will visit Cairo's Al-Azher, the leading centre of learning for Sunni Islam. It is reported that Pope Francis is concerned to renew a long-standing Vatican relationship with the centre.

When our brothers and sisters in Christ have been threatened by extremist elements, they have not always felt alone. There have been instances when young Islamic men have surrounded churches and expressed their support and solidarity with the believers. We can increase our awareness of the situations that Christians find themselves in and of those who have become martyrs for their faith. We can pray for those who are persecuted at this time, especially remembering the church in Egypt.

Asia Mission Conference

This major conference with the theme "Journey Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light in Asia" will be held in Yongon, Myanmar from 11th till the 17th 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 30th April.

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 expressions of interest.

Commemorating the Reformation

The document *From Conflict to Communion*, which provides guidance for commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, is jointly produced by the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. It concludes by identifying five imperatives for the future:

- Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.
- Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith.
- Catholics and Lutherans should again call themselves to seek visible unity, to elaborate together what this means in concrete steps, and to strive repeatedly toward this goal.
- Lutherans and Catholics should jointly rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time.
- Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God and service to the world.

Methodists and those in Union and Co-operating parishes can explore these themes within the parishes, and perhaps reach out to neighbouring parishes of other denominations to reflect on the way in which the Reformation continues to impact upon the life of the church. We are reminded of the need for prophetic courage when basic issues are at stake. How can we encourage a spirit of openness in the church today to address any and every question?

Jurgen Moltmann tells joke

In his ninety-second year esteemed German theologian Jurgen Moltmann continues to address conferences and publish papers. In a recent article in the *Ecumenical Review* (Vol 68 no 1, March 2016) he told the following story:

Two planets meet somewhere in the universe. Asks the one, "How are you, my friend?" Answers the other, "I feel very bad, I'm sick. I have *homo sapiens*." Says the first, "Oh, I'm really sorry for you, that's really bad. I've had that plague also, but don't worry, it passes."

Moltmann sees the future of theology having to deal with the destructive nature of the human community in relation to the planet. He sees that there are resources in the theological tradition that can shed light on our present predicament. "The firm land of reality is always surrounded by an ocean of possibility."

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 150th anniversary.

An affirmation

I offer this affirmation for use in worship:

We believe in the tough
tender, tenacious
love of God.

We believe in the persistent
persuasive, passionate
gospel of Jesus.

We believe in the silent
surprising, subversive
work of God's Spirit.

We believe that we are called
to embrace the love of God,
to walk in the way of Jesus
to be open to the Spirit of God.

Terry Wall.

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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 2016**

... 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.

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| <p>Please send your donations by cheque in favour of Mission and Ecumenical Fund</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 BNZ Account No. 02-0800-0766004-03</p> <p>Amount: \$ _____</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |
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