



METHODIST MISSION AND ECUMENICAL NEWSLETTER - February 2022

One of the opportunities that has arisen from impact of COVID is the growth on online resources through webinars, presentations and courses taught online. Admittedly, some of these are not always time-friendly to Aotearoa if produced in Europe or North America, but their recording and subsequent publication online means we can benefit nevertheless.

SOLOMON ISLANDS: remembering the life of Rev Philemon Riti

Mission & Ecumenical joins the Pacific Council of Churches and the Uniting Church of the Solomon Islands in mourning the recent death of Reverend Philemon Riti OBE after years of faithful service in the Solomon Islands, PCC Moderator (2002 – 2007) and throughout the region, and as far as the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

As a minister and later Moderator of the UCSI, Rev Philemon never hesitated to speak truth to and challenge the systems he felt caused harm to God's people. He was forthright in his views on logging, ecological justice, corruption, divisive politics and the need for reconciliation after his country's troubles which overflowed into civil unrest in 2000. As General-Secretary of the Solomon Islands Christian Association, Rev Philemon called for the involvement of the church to bring about an end to ethnic tensions by fostering reconciliation. His genuine concern for the Solomon Islands was manifested in his consistently holding logging companies, politicians and unscrupulous traders to account for their actions.



A true ecumenist, Rev Philemon was instrumental with Bishop Ellison Pogo of the Anglican Church of Melanesia in forging closer links between the clergy of the UCSI and ACOM. But they took this a step further by including the church leaders' wives in this landmark moment at Maravari, Vella Lavella, in 1993.

Rev Philemon's vision for a united people and lasting peace for the Solomon's through the joint efforts of traditional and church leaders can perhaps be summarised in his own words:

"We have to be seen together, to unite together, so that our people in the grassroots, especially those affected areas, will also have a deeper feeling of the wider community's concern for them. And, in that way, peace and reconciliation will be (achieved)."

For Rev Philemon Riti – thanks be to God. (*This tribute is sourced from PCC*).

WEST PAPUA: WCC video interview describes human rights crisis in West Papua

During a World Council of Churches (WCC) video interview, Peter Prove, WCC director of International Affairs, talks about the human rights and humanitarian situation in West Papua.

West Papua – the Indonesian provinces comprising the western half of the island of New Guinea – has been a longstanding focus of WCC's concern, and of the Pacific Council of Churches (PCC) of which West Papuan churches are part of the membership.

In the recent interview, Prove provides a helpful background, and indicates increasing concern for the indigenous Papuan population of these provinces "as a result of the persistent and quite

serious human rights and humanitarian situation in the region, which the Indonesian government has frankly failed to address and correct.”

The WCC and its partners work together to monitor civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights in the region.

To watch the video, go to <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-video-interview-describes-human-rights-crisis-in-west-papua>



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER: 4 March 2022

World Day of Prayer is an international ecumenical organisation which enables women all over the world to share the ideas and concerns of the writing country. The invitation is to join in prayer and action for peace and justice.

This year’s service is presented by the World Day of Prayer organisation for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with a theme of ‘I know the plans I have for you’. In the midst of all the uncertainties we are living under due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the WDP 2022 theme is offered as a balm of confidence. It is an invitation to place our trust in God in times of suffering.

This year’s material reflects a seed of hope to ponder where it needs to be planted in our lives and in our communities. Take this opportunity, to raise awareness on the needs of your community and offer the gifts of prayers and commitment. A seed, nourished by prayers of intercession and actions of love, bind us together around the world.

The international website including information and resources: <https://worlddayofprayer.net/>



"VOICES FROM BETHLEHEM" WEBINAR: reflections on Christian unity in the birthplace of Jesus

The Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome and the Methodist Liaison Office Jerusalem hosted a webinar - "Voices from Bethlehem: Christian Unity in the Birthplace of Jesus" - on 21 January 2022 in the northern-hemisphere observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In this webinar Christian leaders from Bethlehem and environs discussed the importance of Christian unity in contemporary times in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus.

The link to the recording is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYZYyLQhfI>

Daoud Nassar (director of Tent of Nations, a recipient of the World Methodist Peace Award, is an educational and environmental farm southwest of Bethlehem) reflected that the situation is difficult for many local Palestinian Christians, who might feel like a minority population. But Jesus spoke to the minority, Nassar noted. “He was talking to a small minority that made a big difference,” he said.

Fr Issa Michael Thaljieh, parish priest of the Greek Orthodox Nativity Church in Bethlehem, said that, while people in Bethlehem may face social, spiritual or economic problems, the faithful people still make up the church. “Without the faithful people, I am doing nothing,” he said.

Zoughbi Zoughbi, founder and director of Wi'am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center, said it is uplifting to talk about Christian unity despite all the challenges people in Bethlehem face. "These are some of the difficulties we face," he said, outlining some of those challenges, and expressed concern that people are leaving Bethlehem to go live in communities they believe have better opportunities.

Dn. Ashot Ghazaryan, secretary of the Armenian Theological Seminary of Jerusalem, agreed with Zoughbi that the diminishing population in Bethlehem is a great concern. "We see the people in number becoming smaller and smaller," he said, yet in spite of this he still feels part of a large global body. "All Christians are members of Christ's body, and we can read in the Bible what Christ says," he said.

Rev. Angleena Keizer, mission partner assigned to the Methodist Liaison Office Jerusalem and a resident of Bethlehem, shared her personal call to live in Bethlehem, despite the challenges. "The important thing is, God calls and God sends, and he sends by his church," she said.

BOSSEY ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE: Applications open anew for Bossey online course in ecumenism

Following a successful pilot project in the spring of 2021, the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey is inviting applications for a renewed version of the 10-week online course entitled "Together Towards Unity. Being Church in a Fragmented World" in 2022. The course will run fully online, from 14 March-5 June 2022, with an application deadline of 15 February.

Sixty students participated actively in the pilot of the course last year, with students and faculty engaging across a variety of key topics and challenges in ecumenism today.

For the academic dean at Bossey, Rev. Dr Simone Sinn, it was a deeply encouraging experience to teach ecumenism in an online format – not least in view of the opportunities it offers for engagement across the globe in a world that connects by digital means perhaps more than ever before. "We encourage young theologians and laypersons with an interest in the field of ecumenical dialogue and engagement to apply for this international course," Sinn says.



The new online course builds on the long-established Ecumenical Studies courses at Bossey in addressing current changing dynamics and configurations of ecumenism through a new medium. In an international cohort of students, participants will explore the biblical, theological, ethical, societal, interreligious and missiological dimensions of ecumenism.

Application details are found here: <https://wcccoe.hire.trakstar.com/jobs/fk0slrp?source> For more information on Bossey, see <https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/the-ecumenical-institute-bossey>

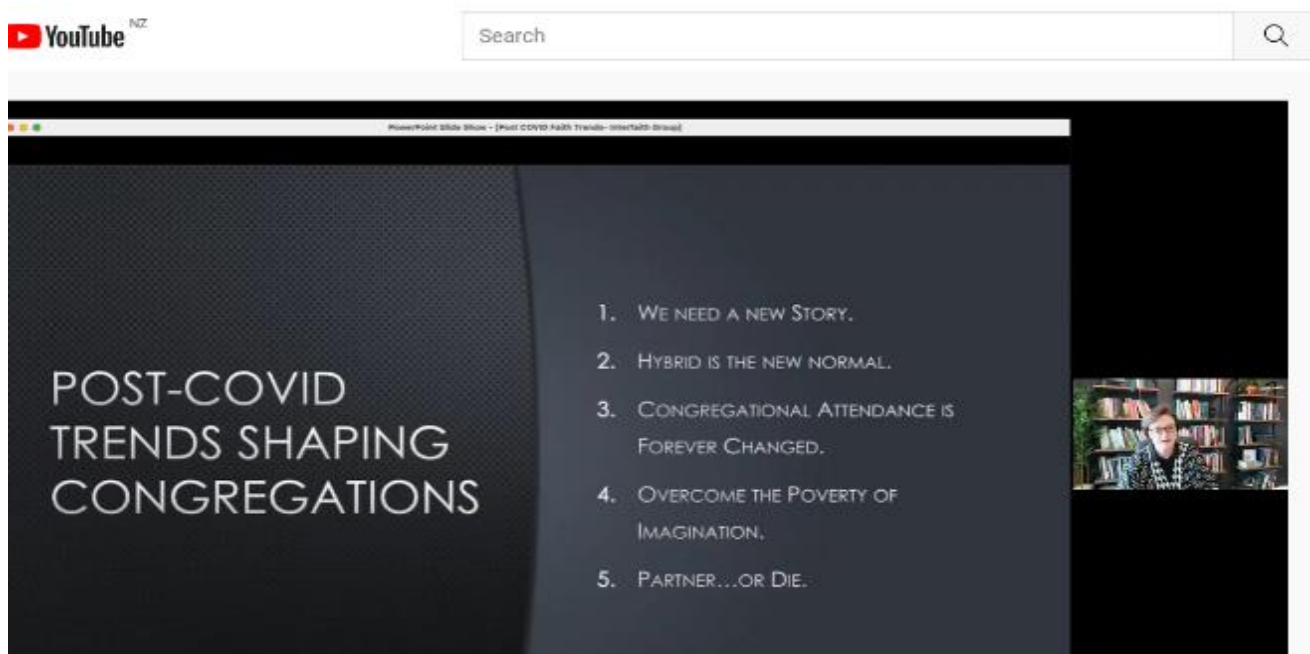
Contact the MME acting Director Tony (an alumni of Bossey) for further information and interest in studying at Bossey, either through the online course, or as a resident student of their signature post-graduate programmes.

WILL THEY COME BACK: WHAT CAN RELIGION OFFER OUR DIVIDED, POST-COVID WORLD? An interfaith webinar

Conversation and insights both with ecumenical and interfaith partners are crucial as we respond to the reality of a COVID-impacted and 'post-COVID' world. The National Jewish-Christian Dialogue in the United States (co-convened by the National Council of Churches - USA and the National Council of Synagogues - USA) meets regularly throughout the year. Its most recent session, on January 25, 2022, was held on the theme: "Will They Come Back: What Can Religion Offer our Divided, Post-Covid World?"

Presentations were offered by Rev. Cameron Trimble, CEO of Convergence; Rev. Michael Livingston, Interim Senior Minister of The Riverside Church; and Rev. Jim Keat, both the Digital Minister of The Riverside Church and a technology colleague at Convergence. Presentations offered both challenges and opportunities in the current environment.

The webinar can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/iai341lr18k>



FIRST FRIDAY LETTER monthly newsletter of the World Methodist Council



Rev Tony Franklin-Ross is the Chairperson of the World Methodist Council's standing committee for Ecumenical Relationships. Tony shares a reflection for the February edition of the WMC First Friday Letter, which can be accessed here: https://issuu.com/wmcouncil/docs/february_2022_ffl_pdf

To subscribe to the monthly letters, go to <http://firstfridayletter.worldmethodistcouncil.org/>

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