



Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church



Communion

Ecumenical and Interreligious News

November 2019

Promoting unity and peace through strengthening ecumenical and interreligious relations worldwide.

John 17: 23

*I in them and you in me,
that they may become completely one,
so that the world may know that you
have sent me and have loved them
even as you have loved me.*

UMEIT Plunge

The second cohort of the UMEIT: Plunge has been set for July 20- August 3, 2020. Young adults can still be named and sponsored by any UM bishop, as there is still space available in the group. The young adults will gather in Geneva, Switzerland to have intensive training about the sites of the Ecumenical Movement and then spend a week at Taizé in France in order to put their information gathering into practice. The participants covenant to take their own interreligious pilgrimage the following year, which they fund themselves. For more information contact Dr. Hawxhurst at jhawxhurst@umc-cob.org. The deadline for bishops to sponsor participants is 31 December 2019.



UNITED METHODIST ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS TRAININGS

By Rev. Dr. Jean Hawxhurst



UMEIT Global in Germany

Each year the Council of Bishops sponsors a UMEIT event somewhere in the world. At the invitation of Bishop Harald Rückert, the June 2019 location was the School of Theology in Reutlingen, Germany. The training was created to be a block seminar both for credit and for audit. Classes were offered for bachelors, masters and doctoral students in the School of Theology, as well as for pastors across Europe. There were over 60 Methodist participants from Germany, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Macedonia, Switzerland, the UK and the USA. Additionally, a group of Church of the Nazarene members came from Great Britain to engage in the conversation from their perspectives. Participants shared about their migration stories, their desire for churches to reflected their culture, and issues involved in intercultural, interreligious and ecumenical relationship-building in local churches. Always present were the same questions about unity within our own denomination. There was a very positive spirit about the event, and all the presenters and lectures fit together quite well. This was one of the most productive and engaging UMEIT's to date.

The next UMEIT: Global will be held in Puerto Rico in 2020.

UMEIT Young Adult Network

The second cohort of the Council of Bishops' UMEIT: Young Adult Network began at the end of 2018 and will continue through the end of 2020. The group of nine young adults have gathered together via 2-hour video conference 8 times, and in September 2019 they participated in their first face-to-face gathering. The meeting was in Nashville, Tennessee, and they were hosted by the Scarritt Bennett Center, the Upper Room, and member Nick Baird Chrisohon. The following young adults were present: Katie Chambers (Chicago), Nick Baird Chrisohon (Nashville), Michele Chun (San Francisco), George Dixon-Gough (Methodist Church in Britain), Mike Mullin (Rochester), Shannon Sullivan (Fredrick) and Jack Tickle (Erie). Ecumenical Officer, Bishop Mike Watson also joined the group. Unable to attend due to visa denials were: Mauche Iyashya (Nigeria) and Chona Panaguitan (Philippines).



The group used the ecumenical curriculum developed by the Council of Bishops (COB) as their training base, sharing in one session with a young adult Sunday School class at West End UMC. The young adults were also given copies of the Ecumenical and Interreligious handbook developed by the COB and a new video series on Islam in America. They were introduced to three United Methodist organizations and had meetings with staff of: Discipleship Ministries, the Upper Room and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. They toured the Upper Room Chapel, where they shared in the Eucharist. And, they worshipped together with West End UMC. Each of the young adults shared their vision for their ministry project, which is what the group will be working on for the next several months. Their projects will help teach Christian unity and interreligious relationship-building in their home contexts.

Updates on Scholarships and Grants

Bossey Scholarship Recipients

Rachel Callender is currently participating in the graduate school at The World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Institute (Bossey). She and her classmates have begun their studies of the global Ecumenical Movement. These studies, including writing a final thesis on ecumenism, continue through the end of this year.

Meanwhile, the Council of Bishops is pleased to announce the Ecumenical Officer has named Ms. Ericka Jallah as the recipient of the UM scholarship for Bossey for 2020. She is a member of the Liberia Annual Conference and a graduating senior of Gbarnga School of Theology. She serves as the local pastor of the Jacob Town UMC in the Kakata Farmington River District, and was recommended by her bishop, Bishop Samuel J. Quire, Jr. Pending her acceptance into the school, she will begin her studies in September of 2020.

Local Initiative Grants

The Council of Bishops is also pleased to announce the recipients of the 2020 Local Initiative Grants. These grants are used by groups or organizations who wish to further ecumenism and interreligious relationship-building in local contexts. Recipients receive \$1,000 US in order to facilitate their ministry programs. They are:

*The Columbia South Carolina Wesley Foundation, whose project is to work with local Jewish and Muslim campus groups. They hope to build relationships and work together in their local college contexts.

*St. John UMC & Trinity AME Church, whose project is to work toward reconciliation, after a separation of 175 years. The Native American and African American churches will conduct several ministry projects together (VBS, youth day, etc.)

*GBHEM, whose project is to gather university presidents to encourage them to include interfaith teaching in their curricula. The grant will be used to purchase the most recent book by Eboo Patel and give to each of the participants.



UMEIT: USA Grants

Scholarships for first-time participants in UMEIT: USA will be available again for 2020. Watch the bishops' webpage (www.unitedmethodistbishops.org) and Facebook page for the application form, which will be posted before the end of the year. UMEIT: USA will be held next in Houston, Texas 23-27 March 2020 in conjunction with the National Workshop on Christian Unity. Young adults and persons of color are encouraged to apply.

UPDATES ON ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS EVENTS AND GROUPS

World Methodist Council



The World Methodist Council Steering Committee met in Mexico City 27-30 August 2019 with: Kirby Hickey, Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, Rev. Kim Reisman, Rev. Øyvind Heliesen, Rev. Steve Hickie and Dr. Jean Hawxhurst representing The United Methodist Church. The focus was on climate change and the business of the Council. Three faith communions are petitioning for membership: The Primitive Methodist Church, The African Union First Colored Methodist Protestant Church and the Union African Methodist Episcopal Church. A new curriculum, *FastPrayGive: Ending Hunger by the Means of Grace* by Andy Morris will soon be released by Wesley Men. Another new curriculum, *Embrace*, has been created by Kim Reisman to teach Christians about evangelism and is now available.

Rev. Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman has been named the Interim Director of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome (MEOR) and is pictured here with his wife, Grace. Applications are being accepted for the permanent Executive Director, who will be named before September of 2020. The 2018 peace award will be given to Rev. Boghal from England. The 2019 peace award will be given to Dr. Laney from Emory.

Finally, we are asked to promote the following are events annually:

- *The Time of Creation, (beginning of September through beginning of October) (www.seasonofcreation.org),
- *The Week of Action on Food (mid-October),
- *United Nations Harmony Week, 2-7 February 2020, and
- *Thursdays in Black, (every Thursday).



The next World Methodist Conference will be held 18-23 August 2021 in Gothenburg, Sweden (www.worldmethodistconference.org).

THE EUROPEAN METHODIST COUNCIL

The European Methodist Council (EMC) met in Vallerti, Italy, 14-17 September. World Methodist Council General Secretary, Bishop Ivan Abrahams challenged the group in his opening devotion. Participants examined how to welcome migrants and how to work for humanitarian corridors to allow the most vulnerable migrants to enter Europe with humanitarian visas. The EMC pledged to work toward climate justice and to reduce their carbon footprint. Newly elected Co-Chairs of the EMC are Mr. Doug Swanney of the Methodist Church in Britain and Bishop Harald Rückert of the United Methodist Church in Germany.

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The United Methodist Church is well-represented on the World Council of Churches Central Committee by Bishop Mary Anne Swenson, Bishop Sally Dyck and Cynthia Kent. The Leadership Team on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relationships (LTEIR) is currently working on the list of persons they will recommend to the Leadership Discernment Team as UM representatives to the next assembly.

That assembly will be held 8-16 August 2021 in Karlsruhe, Germany.



THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE USA

The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA held its annual Christian Unity Gathering October 14-16 in the Hampton area of Virginia. That site was chosen, so participants could be near and take a



pilgrimage to “Old Point Comfort,” where the first enslaved persons from Africa were brought to the colonies in 1619. Time was spent learning about that event and the continued events and attitudes of racism that have persisted since that time, with participants committing to make a

difference in their contexts. Convening tables also gathered, bringing together diverse Christians to work together in areas such as higher education, justice and advocacy, and faith and order. A full report is available from Dr. Hawxhurst at jhawxhurst@umc-cob.org.

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES TOGETHER (USA)

Christian Churches Together in the USA maintains its purpose of being a diverse group of Christians who: worship together, share faith stories, discuss a faith issue important to all, and witness to Christian unity. In 2019 the gathering was held in Montgomery, Alabama with the topic of racism. The UMC was represented by ten participants (of the 80 total), including: Bishop Mike Watson, Bishop David Graves, Rev. Fred Day, Rev. Donald Smith, Rev. Tim Barnes, Casey Culbreth, Rev. Jean Hawxhurst, Rev. Lora Andrews,, Rev. Hubert Ivery and Rev. Donna Fado. The group experienced the Equal Justice Initiative’s “Lynching Museum” and “Lynching Memorial. They watched the film *Emanuel* and heard from its producer and a family member of one of the “Emanuel Nine.” They walked, in pilgrimage form, to several markers around the downtown area, each telling the story of Montgomery’s slave trade. And, they toured Dexter Avenue Memorial King Baptist Church, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached, as he led the Montgomery Bus Boycott movement. A pastoral letter was presented and will be released soon. And, a new “Vision, Mission and Process” statement was discussed as it moves toward adoption.



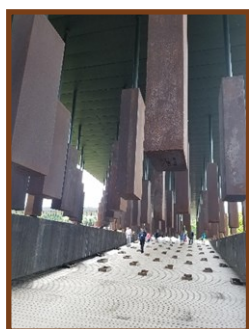
THE METHODIST CHURCH IN BRITAIN AND THE UMC CONCORDAT FOLLOW-UP



As the initial follow-up to the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the concordat between the Methodist Church in Great Britain and The United Methodist Church, two teams of people met in England in September to continue the conversations about how we can best live out our covenant. The United Methodist Church was represented by: Bishop Carter, Bishop Yambasu, Bishop Fierro Harvey, Bishop Streiff, Ms. Harriett Olson, Rev. Alfred Day, and Rev. Lisa Lewis. (Mrs. Lisa Hunt, and Rev. Amanda Liggett were unable to attend.) This group worked with their counterparts in the MCGB to narrow down the ideas lifted up at the 2018 gathering and to make particular recommendations on how our two faith communions can continue to live out the concordat between us. The group will meet again in late September of 2020 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

CHURCHES UNITING IN CHRIST (USA)

The UMC has been a member of Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) since its 2002 inauguration. At that time eight marks of commitment were accepted. Those marks included: Mutual recognition of each other as authentic expressions of church, Mutual recognition of each other's baptisms, Mutual recognition that each affirms the apostolic faith of Scripture and Tradition, expressed in the historic creeds, Provision for regular and mutual celebration of the Eucharist, Engagement together in mission, particularly a mission to combat racism, Intentional commitment to promote unity and oppose marginalization, Appropriate structures of accountability, consultation and decision-making, and An on-going process of theological dialogue.



With limited success the group has continued working on these marks over the years. The emphasis today, however, is on racial and social justice within and among the member churches. So, for the June 2019 plenary, the group met in Montgomery, Alabama to visit the Equal Justice Initiative's "Lynching Museum" and "Lynching Memorial." Moving forward, the group decided to: continue expanding the ministry of young adults, combat racism, and envision a new structure for CUIC that will allow for multilateral agreements among the member denominations.

RELIGIONS FOR PEACE INTERNATIONAL

Religions for Peace was founded in the 1970's as a vehicle to gather religious leaders for cooperation and the seeking of peace. The tenth World Assembly of Religions for Peace, International met in Lindau, Germany in August of 2019. Reports included those on: positive peace, transforming conflict, creating just and harmonious societies, human development and protecting the earth. United Methodists were among the several thousand in attendance. Dr. Azza Karam was inducted as the next General Secretary and the leadership of Dr. William Vendley was celebrated. (For more information about the organization, you are invited to go to www.rfp.org and see their new video. There you can also read the "Declaration of the Tenth World Assembly, which will guide common action for peace in the next five to seven years.)



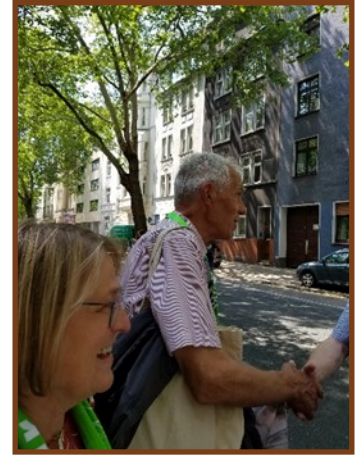
THE GERMAN KIRCHENTAG

The Germany Kirchentag ("Church Day") was begun after World War II as a way to ensure churches in Germany talk together and think about issues together, so nothing like what happened in World War II would ever happen again. The Protestant version of the latest Kirchentag was held in Dortmund, Germany June 19-23, 2019, with over 100,000 persons in attendance. The theme was taken from 2 Kings and was "What a



Confidence Is This?!" (Confidence may be able to be translated into "faith" in English.) The amazing, several-day event included worship, plenaries, workshops, exhibit booths, and lots of fellowship. Bishops Rückert and Wenner participated, as did local UM congregations and many UM members from around the world.

The next Kirchentag will be an ecumenical event (including not only German Protestants but also Roman Catholics, Free and Orthodox participants) and will be held 12-16 May 2021 in Frankfurt, Germany.



UPDATE ON BI-LATERAL DIALOGUES

REV. DR. KYLE TAU

Episcopal-United Methodist Church Dialogue Committee

The UM-Episcopal dialogue committee continues to meet in order to make plans for the upcoming General Conference in 2020 and Episcopal Church General Convention in 2021. By the approval of the Council of Bishops a resolution for full communion between The UMC and the Episcopal Church has been submitted to the 2020 General Conference for consideration. The text of the resolution was reviewed at the May 2019 COB meeting. It is based on the full report of the dialogue committee entitled *A Gift to the World: Co-Laborers for the Healing of Brokenness.*



Bishop Gregory Palmer serves as the United Methodist co-chair on this dialogue.

Roman Catholic-United Methodist Church Dialogue Committee

The UMC-USCCB Dialogue has completed drafts of its work for this round of dialogue. This round has produced several distinct projects celebrating 50 years of dialogue between our churches. The first of these projects is a theological teaching text on core elements of the Christian faith shared by our traditions: recognition of one another's baptisms, the Apostles' creed, the Lord's prayer, and the command to love God and neighbor. The second project is a practical guide for prayer and dialogue between United Methodists and Roman Catholics. It includes descriptions of shared traditions, suggestions for common prayer practices, pastoral introductions to sacramental practice, and sample liturgies for common worship. Drafts of these projects have been circulated to the whole council and will be reviewed by LTEIR for possible action by the whole COB at this November meeting.

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Roman Catholic-United Methodist Church Dialogue Committee (continued)

In addition to these projects the dialogue committee has produced two joint rites for marriages and burials for families that include Roman Catholics and United Methodists. The USCCB is currently reviewing these liturgies and deciding what kind of action they might be able to take with these resources. These liturgies will come before the COB as we learn more from our partners at the USCCB about how we might further this work.

We give thanks to the leadership of Bishop Peggy Johnson during this round of dialogue.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America-United Methodist Full Communion Coordinating Committee

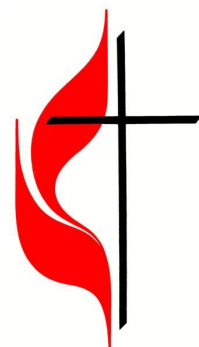
The UM-ELCA Full Communion Coordinating Committee has just conducted an ecumenical formation retreat for United Methodist and Lutheran pastors and lay people in Ohio. This was a pilot retreat that the committee hopes will now be developed into a resource for local UM and ELCA groups to use for common study and worship. The resource is to include sample texts, reflection questions, short video lectures, and liturgies for shared eucharistic worship. Bishop Tracy Malone provides leadership in this body on behalf of the COB.

Moravian-United Methodist Coordinating Committee

The newly formed United Methodist-Moravian full communion coordinating committee will hold its first meeting this December in The United Methodist Building in Washington D.C. The work of this committee will focus on providing guidance for the exchange of clergy between our churches and a basic introduction to our traditions for local churches. Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi will serve as the United Methodist co-chair on this committee.

United Methodist Committee on Faith and Order

The CFO has finalized its teaching document on ecclesiology, now entitled *Sent in Love: A United Methodist Understanding of the Church* and has submitted a resolution for its adoption as an official doctrinal statement of the church for consideration at GC2020. *By Water and the Spirit* and *This Holy Mystery* are set to expire at the end of the quadrennium so the COB has also submitted resolutions to re-adopt these so the three statements will stand alongside one another as teaching statements of the church. The full text of *Sent in Love* has been circulated to the COB and released to the whole church for review ahead of the General Conference.



The CFO also continues its work on a basic teaching resource on United Methodist identity, belief, and practice, with the hopes that this project might be published by the end of next calendar year.

Bishop Scott Jones serves as the chair for the CFO. Bishop Mike Watson, Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, and Bishop David Yemba also serve as members of the committee.

PLANS FOR GENERAL CONFERENCE **2020**

Since United Methodist ecumenical and interreligious ministries are now, officially under the direction of the Council of Bishops, the council will participate in General Conference 2020 in a few new ways. First, the COB will have a booth in the exhibit area, which Rev. Dr. Maidstone Mulenga will design and coordinate. It will contain information about our bishops as well as ecumenical and interreligious resources, and it will be staffed by students from Wesley Seminary. Second, the COB will be responsible for hosting our approximately 20 ecumenical guests and as many as 70 "Methodist family" guests. Bishops will be asked to connect with these guests and help them feel welcome. Third, the COB will be leading a special worship service celebrating our UM ecumenical relationships, during which Rev. Dr. Casely Essamuah (Executive Director of the Global Christian Forum) will preach. An ecumenical award will be given, and all guests will be introduced. Similarly, on Methodist Family day, all guests will be introduced and a statement of gratitude will be offered. And, fourth, the COB will be sponsoring a special luncheon and evening reception for all these guests. More information about where and when those events will take place will be forthcoming.



UPCOMING EVENTS

9-11 December 2019

USCCB-UMC Dialogue in New Orleans, Louisiana

10-12 December 2019

Conference of National Black Churches (USA), Atlanta, Georgia

12-14 December 2019

Heads of Communion Retreat, Atlanta, Georgia

18-25 January 2020

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

13-15 March 2020

Pan-Methodist Commission

18-24 March 2020

WCC Central Committee

23-27 March 2020

National Workshop on Christian Unity and UMEIT: USA

12 April 2020

Easter (Western)

24-27 April 2020

Ecumenical Advocacy Days (USA), Washington, DC

27-28 April 2020

National Council of Churches (USA) Governing Board, Washington, DC

29 April 2020

COB Meeting, Minneapolis, MN

1-15 May 20-20

General Conference, Minneapolis, MN

16 May 2020

COB Meeting, Minneapolis, MN

2019 Interfaith Calendar: November-December

BOLD CAPITAL LETTERS - Most important holy dates for religions
Visit <http://www.interfaith-calendar.org/2019.htm> for other faith communities



NOVEMBER 2019

- 1 All Saints Day - **Christian**
- 2 All Souls Day - **Catholic Christian**
- 10 Mawlid an Nabi - **Islam**
- 12 Birth of Baha'u'llah - **Baha'I** and **Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib** - **Sikh**
- 15 Nativity Fast begins - ends Dec. 24 - **Orthodox Christian**
- 24 Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahdur - **Sikh**
- 26 Christ the King - **Christian** and Day of the Covenant - **Baha'I**
- 28 Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Baha - **Baha'I** and Thanksgiving - **Interfaith USA**
- 30 St. Andrew's Day - **Christian**

DECEMBER 2019

- 1-24 Advent - **Christian**
- 6 Saint Nicholas Day - **Christian**
- 8 Bodhi Day (Rohatsu) - **Buddhism** and Immaculate Conception of Mary - **Catholic Christian**
- 12 Feast day - Our Lady of Guadalupe - **Catholic Christian**
- 16-25 Posadas Navidenas - **Hispanic Christian**
- 21 Solstice Yule - **Christian**
- 23-30 Hanukkah - **Jewish**
- 25 **Christmas** - **Christian** and **Feast of the Nativity** - **Orthodox Christian**
- 26 Zarathosht Diso (Death of Prophet Zarathushtra) - **Zoroastrian** and St Stephen's Day - **Christian**
- 27 Saint John - Apostle and Evangelist - **Christian**
- 28 Holy Innocents - **Christian**
- 29 Holy Family - **Catholic Christian**
- 31 Watch Night - **Christian**

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