



The TREE *- of* LIFE

**For unto us
a child is born!**

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President's letter

For unto us a child is born!



It was a joy to receive news in early November from our editor Ligia Istrate that she and her husband Cristian now have a son, Iamin, a brother to their daughter, Hannah. We wish the family much joy and delight and send our love and congratulations to them all.

We can imagine the celebrations, the exhaustion, the relief that all is well with mother and son.

Birth is always a risky business, and so the celebrations that follow are often tinged with relief and a great feeling of thankfulness. We are aware that for some who long for a child, the pain can be deep in the heart that is denied the

experience of childbirth.

The bible tells us that a child has been born to each one of us! Isaiah the prophet announced this would happen and even gave suggestions for names! The angel who visited the young Mary told her the child she would bring to birth would be named Jesus and would be called 'the Son of the most high' or 'the Son of God' (Isaiah 9:6).

The scriptures give us many names for Jesus: Lord (to whom we offer our lives in obedient service), Saviour (one who rescues us from slavery to evil and death), Prince of Peace (who brings reconciliation and healing to arenas of conflict), Mighty Counsellor (one who listens and guides us), Emmanuel (God with us), Son of God (fully divine) and Son of man (fully human). What name do you use for Jesus? Which one is most significant and helpful for you in your present situation?

Our own given names are usually chosen with care by our parents, in memory of a family ancestor, or because of their original meaning. We may use a shortened form of our given name or even a nick-name. By what name does Jesus know you? Do you ever imagine Jesus speaking your name?

The child whose birth we celebrate at Christmas speaks to us with words of love, delight and forgiveness. He smiles at us as one who recognises us as sisters and brothers, dear to his heart. He speaks our language. He draws us together as family. He weeps with frustration at our failure to understand him. He reaches out to us with hands that are

scarred with nail prints because he was willing to die for each one of us. Risen from death, he is unrestricted by time or space, but is with us for ever to bring us joy and blessing and delight. God with us, Emmanuel. Thanks be to God!

Season's greetings,

The child whose birth we celebrate at Christmas speaks to us with words of love, delight and forgiveness. He smiles at us as one who recognises us as sisters and brothers, dear to his heart.

-Alison Judd

Will we receive this child with open and joyous hearts?



Usually, I write my article at the same time the President writes hers, and when she sends it to me, I find that is on the same subject as mine and I see how wonderfully the Holy Spirit guides us both.

This time, her message inspired me to encourage you. When I read our President's letter, I was really enthusiastic about what she said, with so much wisdom: some people cannot have children and it is very painful, but the reality is that we all have a child! To all of us a child was born! What a great message!

Now, it is up to us how we react to this gift from above. Will we receive this child with open and joyous hearts, or will we continue our life, our rush for different things we want to have for Christmas? I do not know much about how you celebrate Christmas in your countries, but in Romania we deep-clean our houses, every corner and every wardrobe and closet; we decorate the house with Christmas ornaments, candles, lights; we put up the Christmas tree; we buy a lot of gifts for family and friends; buy new Christmas clothes and prepare a lot of food, from appetizers to different salads, steaks, soup and many cakes. All these take a lot of time and a lot of money. Many Romanians are so tired on 25 December because of all this work, that they

do not want anything more, not even to go to church, they just want to stay home and rest. I have friends that tell me: "This year I will not do it again!"... but they are doing the same.

I like a Romanian carol very much and I will leave it here so you can think about its words:

*Glowing lights, carols echo, it's a Celebration
again
Balloons and flowers in dozens of colors, silver
bells
Gifts on show, luxury display cases, thousands
of glittering lamps
Offers in packages, outdated choruses,
Christmas balls and toys,
But I ask myself in all this, what is your place,
Jesus?
I find it harder and harder to find You, where
did they take You?*

*If You were to come for Christmas in the world
once again
How would we receive You? Would we send You
to a manger or to a throne in a palace?
How many people will stop from their weird
rush
To tell you "Welcome!" and to worship You,
Emperor Child?*

*Silver stars, polished city, thousands of steps in
the snow
Garlands and Christmas trees, lights in the
cheeks, but mud in the hearts
The altar is empty, there are discounts at the
mall, Santa Claus is on the street
In my soul I am cold and I feel like crying out
"What's going on with us?"*

*If you want to listen to this carol, search on
You Tube:
De-ar fi sa vii de Craciun - Dolores Wagner
or click on this page:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yShfU9OPG0>

-Ligia Istrate, Tree of Life Editor

A Christmas reflection

The night is dotted with Christmas stars that shine brightly outside a few Indian homes. Shops are already bustling with people buying Christmas gifts and ornaments. The sound of carols wafts through the air as carolers eagerly visit homes. Christmas is a time of celebration. But also, a time of reflection. Christmas is a time to reflect – on Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Sonship:

Isaiah prophesied about Him: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given” (Isaiah 9:6a). A child is born, but a Son is given, because the Son existed even before the existence of time. A. W. Tozer writes: “From the vanishing point to the vanishing point... The mind looks backward in time till the dim past vanishes, then turns and looks into future till thought and imagination collapse from exhaustion and God is at both points, unaffected by either.”

Relationship:

John said, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14a), which literally means “pitched His tent”. The Godhead comes to dwell in His creation. He leaves His heavenly glory to restore and mend our broken relationship with Him. C. S. Lewis aptly puts it: “The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God.”

Worship:

Two thousand years ago Jesus came as a baby, but one day He will come in power and glory. At the Name of Jesus, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He deserves our worship.

The Godhead has visited us! May we, with the hymn writer, John Wade, sing:

O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
Jesus Christ the Lord.

- Lynette Johnson, South Asia

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News



Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA) Women

The MCCA is a unit of the North America Area of the World Federation and was represented at the North America Area Seminar, held at the Hilton Northbrook Hotel, Illinois U.S.A. during October 3-6, 2019. The President of MCCA Women, Dr. Lois Grant-Hector, and MCCA Women Secretary, Mrs. Patricia Newell Pennant, represented the Caribbean Region.

Dr. Lois Grant-Hector was confirmed as North America Area Vice-President at this Seminar.

The World President formally welcomed her and presented her with the WFMUCW medallion. In her acceptance, Dr. Lois Hector expressed how thankful she was to be appointed to this position. She encouraged women to pray for the ongoing work in the region and she expressed concerns about

participation. She also encouraged women to pray for the devastation experienced in the Bahamas recently, as a result of the passing of Hurricane Dorian.

- Patricia Newell



young women not joining the Women's groups. She pledged to establish programmes that will encourage youth

World President, Alison Judd, presenting the medallion to Dr. Lois Hector. The Area President, Dr. Sandra Gadson, looks on.



Bossey Program

Equipping each other for Christian Witness in a multi-cultural and multi-faith World

“And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone ... correcting his opponents with gentleness” (2 Timothy 2:24-25)

I am privileged and honoured to have been a part of the Ecumenical Continuing Formation at Bossey (6-15 August 2019). It was an enriching program for my

made me look at my own perspectives of faith in a positive and multi-dimensional way.

We were a group of 14 members arriving from different countries (India-4, Greece-2, USA-2, Brazil-1, Italy-1, Mexico-1,



Thursdays in Black

Nigeria-1, Australia-1, Trinidad-1). Each day our schedule started with a wonderful morning prayer in the medieval

at the plenary. Our first day started with introductory speeches about us, the objectives of the program, and games. On the second day, Prof. Wesley Ariarajah addressed us about sharing faith in a multi-cultural and multi-faith world. The keynotes were about Evangelism, Mission and Witness. On the third day Fr. Lawrence Iwuamadi gave a presentation on reading the Bible in a multi-faith and multi-cultural

context. Next day, Friday, we made a visit to the Taizé Community in France. The Brothers that lead the community answered our questions and helped us understand the mission work and the reconciliation of each person at a personal level. On Saturday we had an interactive session with Mikie Roberts about celebrating together. We learnt that it is not so difficult to sing, pray and breathe together. It all depends on how we see and embrace each other in God's love to be One. We also had a one-day tour to Geneva and the Reformation monument. On Monday we listened to



Listening to the Brothers in Taize

life and the insights I have gained were enormous. The learning experience

chapel at the Ecumenical Institute, followed by sessions and discussions



Our group with a rabbi

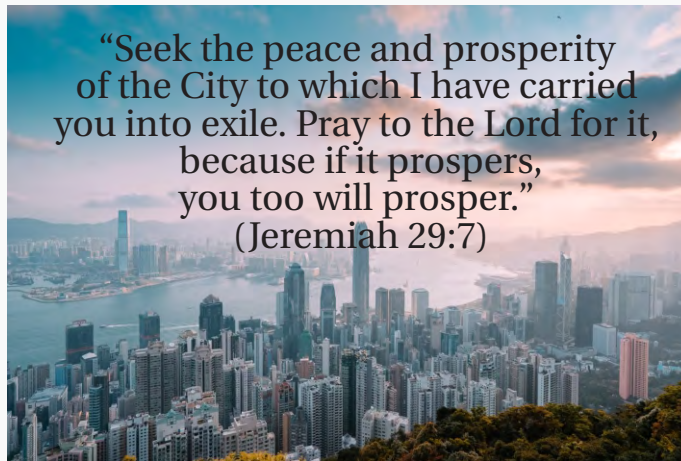
Rev. Nathan Day Wilson speak to us about the challenges of religious pluralism: "Saying YES to a stranger sometimes means saying NO to harming a stranger". We also visited the World Council of Churches in Geneva and we had presentations on the water crisis and on Feminism and Gender Injustices. On the 14th we had a speech by Prof. Benjamin Simon about how mission is not about conversion, but about Translation, Transmission and Transformation - the three Ts. On the same day, we had closing prayer in the chapel, and we bid farewell to each other.

- *Rhema Anu Natarajan.*

Call to prayer

HONG KONG, CHINA: Hong Kong is one of the safest and richest cities in the world for the past decades. Unfortunately, over the past six months, Hong Kong has suffered and disintegrated

passing the Extradition Bill, which the majority of Hongkongers were strongly against. However, Hong Kong had a district election last Sunday,



on the 24th of November, though there were uncertainties everywhere. Surprisingly, the pro-democracy camp took over 85 percent of all district Council seats, gaining a majority for the first time since the British handover of 1977 to China.

"Seek the peace and prosperity of the City to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (Jeremiah 29:7) We, your Hong Kong brothers and

because of many conflicts and escalating violence, loss of trust, deep division and relational breakdown because Hong Kong's Government insisted on

sisters, pray to the Lord for Hong Kong, we pray for its peace. The word shalom means complete reconciliation, a state of flourishing in every facet of life: physical, social, and spiritual, where all relationships are perfect and right and filled with joy.

JAPAN: Japan had in October a very severe typhoon, Hagibis, which has left massive destruction across the country. There was a large number of casualties, even though they prepared well before the typhoon hit Japan.

We saw on the TV that there were so many diseases resulting from the deadly typhoon. It had left thousands of people dead and more than half a million houses flooded. We pray that everything will recover soon with the help of government, volunteers and

Christian groups.

There are many parts of the world that are struggling with potentially disastrous situations, either natural or political. May our Lord give us all peace, mercy, love and hope at all times and: "In Him, we trust!"

- *Ting Sing Hong, East Asia Area President*

Announcements

World Assembly 2021

Just prior to the opening of the Southern and East Africa Area Seminar in Nairobi, the World Officers met and reviewed plans for the Assembly in Gothenburg in 2021.

We remind you all that possible designs for the Assembly logo to fit with the theme: “Go and bear fruit: fruit that will last” are requested to be sent to the World Secretary by the end of February. Please let all creative artists know!

Similarly, suggestions for Workshop topics and presenters are sought from all Units by the same date.

-Ann Connan, President Emerita

MCCA Women 7th Quinquennial Assembly

The MCCA Women will host their 7th Quinquennial Assembly during the period July 22-27, 2020 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel and Conference Centre, Port of Spain, in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Early registration is in progress and ends on January 31, 2020.

Detailed information on plans for the Assembly is available on the website

www.mccawomen.org

-Patricia Newell

Merry Christmas

“It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you...yes, it is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand.”

- Mother Teresa



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ROMANIA





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