



# *The* TREE — of LIFE

## Prince of Peace

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# President's letter

## The time that God has appointed

*“When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, so that we might receive the full rights of sons.”  
(Galatians 4:4-5)*

God Himself determined the time when Jesus would be born. He sent His Son, who had no sin, into the sinful world to make it possible for sinners to be His children. Because Jesus was without sin He, through His death on the cross, paid the ransom for our debt of sin so that there would no longer be a deep gully between sinful people and a holy God. By bearing the punishment for our sins, He made it possible for God to forgive our sins.

It is easy to become sentimental about Christmas. This is a trap into which we often fall when we look at Christmas decorations and listen to Christmas music. We run ourselves ragged buying and wrapping presents and getting Christmas dinner on the table. But Paul writes to the Romans (16:25-26): “Now to Him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed by command of eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey Him.” These final words of Paul in his letter to the Romans point us towards a real understanding of the Christmas message and include a surprising secret for every

believer. A secret that should make hearts glad. A secret that needs to be proclaimed to the church and the world. This secret that once lay in a manger as a little child now lies in the hearts and mouths of believers. Every ear must hear Him, and every eye must see Him, including the eyes and ears of little children. If this does not happen, the mystery of Christmas will remain a secret.

The birth of Jesus Christ means that you are set free from your sins. He redeemed you when His blood flowed on the cross just as slaves were set free in the old days by having a freedom price paid for them. He appointed a time for your repentance. If you belong to God, you are already experiencing that

freedom in your own life and you are no longer a slave to sin. If not, do not wait any longer to respond to God's time. Jesus came so that you could be free.

Let us thank our Heavenly Father that He appointed a specific time to send His Son into the world, and that He also appointed the time when we would acknowledge Him as our Saviour who brings peace, joy, mercy, and truth to

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us and the world.

- Sipiwe Chisvo, World President



# Editor's word:

## Jesus, the Son of God, Prince of Peace

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)*

Peace is something desired by God, and God in His intrinsic being is peace. How do we know this? One of Jesus' names is Prince of Peace or *Sar Shalom* (רַשָּׁאֵן שְׁלוֹמִי, Hebrew). The interesting thing is that this title includes politics. *Sar* in Hebrew means

prince, minister, general, army commander, etc. And when this Prince of Peace was born, if you remember from the Bible, the hordes of hosts sang. In Hebrew the word for hordes is *tzeva*, the army of angels – again, a political position, and from this word comes one of the names of God, God Sabaoth – that means the God of the armies.

And what did these armies of angels sing? “Peace on Earth!” The armies that could fight real wars were using their voices not to threaten or to frighten, but to evoke peace all over the Earth. They were not announcing a war against humanity, but a war against sin.

Jesus was born during the so-called Pax Romana or Roman peace (27 BCE to 180 CE). This refers to a period of relative peace and stability that existed throughout the Roman Empire. We all know that speaking about peace in those times is quite a big leap. The world eagerly needed a person to bring peace for those times and forever, and this is a paradox.

God is the chief of the army of peace and Jesus is the

Prince of peace. It is wonderful to have this image in mind. Jesus is not a Prince who fights with cruelty to impose what He thinks and wants, but He leads armies that bring peace.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus started His ministry on Earth as *Sar Shalom* and He ended it as *Sar Shalom*. According to the Bible, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling a prophecy from the Old Testament (Zechariah 9:9) which states: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

The use of a donkey rather than a horse had significant symbolism. In biblical times, a horse was a symbol of war and conquest, whereas a donkey was a symbol of peace and humility. Jesus' choice to ride a donkey symbolized his peaceful intentions, his humility, and his rejection of the earthly kingdoms and powers that used horses and chariots to assert their dominance. It also showed that Jesus came not as a military conqueror, He did not come to make war, but as a spiritual savior who brings peace.

God also appreciates people who are working for peace. Jesus said: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9) This verse can be interpreted

in different ways, not only at a micro level, with peace in our families and peace with others, but also at a macro level, as peacemakers on earth.

A great thing is that by being peacemakers, in our place of activity or in the world, we are like Jesus, both in behavior and in the title we receive: sons of God.

Jesus Himself is our peace (Ephesians 2:14) and He guides our feet into the path of peace (Luke 1:76-79). Follow the path of peace.

*-Ligia Istrate, Tree of Life Editor*



1. “Prince of Peace,” A Perplexing Title for Jesus, Newbreak Church, <https://newbreak.church/sar-shalom-a-perplexing-title-for-jesus/>, accessed on 17.10.2022

# Let's Celebrate Christ

Have you ever wondered about the origin of our Christmas celebrations? History has it that Christians began to commemorate the birth of Jesus on December 25th to counter some Roman and pagan festivals during the month of December. Then, the decoration of the evergreen tree, the candles, the lights, the gifts, the carols, and Santa Claus were all add-ons to make the celebration bright and festive. Over the years, with the over-emphasis on the holiday season combined with the commercialization of Christmas, many who celebrate Christmas have forgotten Christ, and the message that He brought to this world.

Let me highlight a few points that we should bear in mind as we celebrate Christmas. A meaningful celebration with the right focus will be beneficial to us and will enable us to share this message with those who have no idea what Christmas is all about.

- Christmas is about the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, who became one of us to save us from our sins. Jesus is not a baby in a manger but is the risen Lord who ascended into heaven and will return as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- The tree that Jesus hung on was a cruel cross, where He willingly laid down His sinless life on our behalf, so we could be reconciled to God.
- The greatest gift we can ever receive is the gift of eternal life, which Jesus offers to those who believe in Him.
- The star that guided the wise men led them to Jesus, who came down to Earth to be the Light of the World. Those of us who are God's children have the responsibility to be a reflection of that light to those around us.
- The carols we sing are an echo of the angelic praise the angels sang to announce the birth of Jesus. May our mouths always sing praises to the Lord Jesus who alone is worthy of all our praise and adoration.

- The shepherds proclaimed the good news about the birth of a Savior. Let's never forget that the great commission Jesus gave to all of us who are His disciples is to go into all the world, to share the good news of the gospel with everyone, and make disciples of all people everywhere.

Christ is worthy of all our honor and glory, not only at Christmas time but every single day of the year. Jesus is our Savior, Redeemer, Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Prince of Peace, our Good Shepherd, and Emmanuel, God with us, for now and throughout eternity. A Christmas without a relationship with Christ is meaningless. Have a most meaningful and joyous Christmas!

- Esther Collins, Emmanuel Methodist Church Chennai, India



## Meditating before Christmas arrives

When we give our lives to Jesus, we experience changes. He expects us to develop, advance, and bear fruit. God wants to renew us and challenges us to give more of us. Let us be satisfied with the Word as food for our body. Our communities need women committed to personal and community growth. We must be like those trees that even break the pavement with their roots eager to grow. We must not be afraid to get out of the pot and take advantage of the resources that God gives us. As we are committed to bearing fruit, He will break what limits us, break the ties, cleanse our roots, and pour the water of the Spirit on us, so that we can extend our branches. Let us grow and rise up! Let us give our lives and hearts, let us ask for forgiveness so we can grow and strengthen ourselves! The Lord says that you will be like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit. (Jeremiah 17:8, NIV)

Believe Him and strive to move forward. That way you will show that you really are a seed capable of bearing fruit and receiving His blessing.

- Ivonne Pereira Díaz, World Vice-President

# News



## Transforming Lives in Kenya

In Meru town, SIFA (Salvation is for All) ministries, led by Tsige Berhe and her husband, Reverend Esayas Solomon, has changed society.



They minister with dedication and purpose. As a missionary in Kenya Tsige, a counselor, psychologist, and early childhood educationist, offers spiritual guidance and leadership counseling for the church.

For over two decades, SIFA has focused on vulnerable children and teenagers in East Africa, witnessing the transformative hand of God in numerous lives. Their paramount desire is to uplift the lives of children from all strata, breaking the shackles of poverty and safeguarding them from various adversities. Their holistic approach involves guiding, nurturing, and

imparting knowledge to equip children as they journey toward becoming responsible citizens. Additionally, they work closely with teenagers, teaching them the Word of God and providing life skills that will benefit them.

The challenges continue as some children are born outside marriage, leading them into precarious situations. Child labor, abuse, defilement, early pregnancy, and various threats, including death, confront these vulnerable children. The risk of succumbing to drug addiction, depression, or suicidal tendencies is high if not addressed promptly. While acknowledging that SIFA may not solve all the



challenges, Tsige passionately strives to make a difference in

the day-to-day lives of these individuals. Many lack basic necessities like food, shelter, and medication, and with no capable family, it becomes SIFA's responsibility to stand with them.

To counteract these issues,



SIFA is working towards establishing a center that provides mentorship, formal and informal training, and imparts life skills such as tailoring, baking, cooking, and driving. However, their efforts are constrained by limited resources, making external support vital.

If you are interested in supporting this cause, please contact the Tree of Life Editor.

*- Tsige Berhe, SIFA ministries and Ligia Istrate, ToL Editor*

# S i b i u , R o m a n i a ministries



In Sibiu city and area, the Methodist Church is very involved in the life of the city. Most of the beneficiaries of these programs are girls and women.

## Empowering Women:

The women's ministry at the Methodist Church is a testament to the commitment to holistic development. Regular gatherings for Bible studies serve as a foundation for spiritual growth, while meetings focused on personal development help

women achieve their goals. Women are provided with retreats also.

This ministry is supported by the United Methodist Women.

Additionally, the **Maxwell Equip** course provides a structured platform for women aspiring to develop their skills, equipping them for personal and collective growth.



## Teenagers After-School Program:

The church's dedication extends to the younger generation, especially those in need. The after-school program of the Ascent Center caters to both orphans and underprivileged Romanian teenagers, offering not just a safe space but also educational support, nourishment, and overall development.

The doors are open for Ukrainian teenagers, who are refugees from the ravages of war and have lost everything. They are offered not only the above-mentioned things but also English and Romanian language classes.



## Romanian Orphanage:

The Methodist Church's impact is felt profoundly in places like the House of Joy orphanage, where thirteen abandoned children receive unwavering support and care on a daily basis.

## Ukrainian Orphanage:

Nehemiah's House, an orphanage from Kyiv now located in Sibiu County, continues to receive support amid the ongoing war, showcasing the church's enduring commitment to the well-being of these children.

## Duke of Edinburgh Award Program:

This was a reward we received due to the spreading Ukrainian ministry. At the forefront of youth development is

the Duke of Edinburgh award program, spearheaded by Ligia Istrate, which focuses on enrolling teenagers eager for personal growth. Participants engage in a multifaceted



curriculum, learning about general knowledge, self-defense, and actively volunteering to bring about positive changes in society. This initiative not only empowers the youth but also instills a sense of responsibility and commitment to community welfare.

## Youth Engagement and Spiritual Growth:

Weekly youth meetings and the Alpha course on Fridays provide a space for young individuals to come together, share experiences, and explore their faith. Monday Bible study sessions deepen the Sunday's sermon.



## National and International Collaboration:

The Methodist Church actively collaborates with various national and

international organizations. It has common projects with Phoneo from



Cluj-Napoca, supporting the Ukrainian ministries and sending constant humanitarian help to Ukraine. Camps are organized together in order to help many children and teenagers, and many other events are shared between Sibiu and Cluj. Other collaborations involve World Evangelism, Methodist Women in Britain, Nazarene College, and others, for example, in helping children, conference planning, and organizing. These partnerships amplify the impact of their initiatives, creating a network of support that transcends borders.

Through these diverse ministries, the church continues to be a source of inspiration and transformation in the local and global community, and all those involved in the projects are very thankful to God.

*-Ligia Istrate,  
Tree of Life Editor*

## Invitation to Apply for Empowerment Grants



Dear Federation Sisters,

We're thrilled to announce Empowerment Grants provided by the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW). These grants empower women and girls as individuals or groups through small businesses and projects.

**Total Annual Grant: USD 5,000**

Eligibility Criteria:

- World Federation women
- Application supported by a local Unit President and the WFMUCW Area President

Application Process:

1. Apply through your Unit President.
2. Review by the Area President.
3. Final approval by the World Federation Finance Committee.

Key Dates:

- Applications are due by the end of May.
- Grants are allocated by the end of July.

For further information, please contact your Area President or Area Vice President

Let's empower our community together!

Blessings,

*- Sipiwe Chisvo,  
World President*

*Blessing:*

*May you be filled  
with the wonder  
of Mary, the  
obedience of  
Joseph, the joy of  
the angels, the  
eagerness of the  
shepherds, the  
determination of  
the magi, and the  
peace of the  
Christ child.  
Almighty God,  
Father, Son and  
Holy Spirit bless  
you now and  
forever.*

*-Ray Pritchard*

**HAPPY  
NEW  
YEAR!**

## WORLD EXECUTIVE 2022 – 2026 CONTACT DETAILS

TITLE	NAME	EMAIL
<b>WORLD OFFICERS:</b>		
President	Sipiwe Chisvo	world.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Ivonne Pereira Diaz	world.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Secretary	Louise Wilson	world.secretary@wfmucw.org
Treasurer	Mrs Ngui Ting	world.treasurer@wfmucw.org
President Emerita	Alison Judd	president.emerita@wfmucw.org
<b>AREA OFFICERS:</b>		
<b>Southern &amp; East Africa:</b>		
President	Patricia Mapani	seafrica.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Rebecca Matongo	seafrica.vice-president@wfmucw.org
<b>West Africa:</b>		
President	Muriel Nelson	westafrica.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Marcelline Beda	westafrica.vice-president@wfmucw.org
<b>Latin America:</b>		
President	Jessica Milagros Solar Munayco	latinamerica.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Claudia Lima Carmargo Lira	latinamerica.vice-president@wfmucw.org
<b>North America:</b>		
President	Lois Grant-Hector	northamerica.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Jeanette Bouknight	northamerica.vice-president@wfmucw.org
<b>East Asia:</b>		
President	Mary Devadason	eastasia.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Chao Hui Min	eastasia.vice-president@wfmucw.org
<b>South Asia:</b>		
President	Rajini Jegasothy	southasia.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Glory George	southasia.vice-president@wfmucw.org
<b>Europe: Britain &amp; Ireland:</b>		
President	Barbara Easton	britainireland.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Wanda Hogan	britainireland.vice-president@wfmucw.org
<b>Europe: Continental:</b>		
President	Lilla Kardosné Lakatos	europa.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Filipa Teixeira	europa.vice-president@wfmucw.org
<b>South Pacific:</b>		
President	Olive Tanielu	southpacific.president@wfmucw.org
Vice-President	Rev Gloria Marke	southpacific.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Editor Tree of Life	Ligia Istrate	treeoflife@wfmucw.org
Web Manager	Naomi Allison	webmaster@wfmucw.org
<b>UN REPRESENTATIVES:</b>		
New York	Joan Capel	un@wfmucw.org
New York	Alexandria Carson	
Latin America	Karen Danytza	
Archivist	Judith Siaba	world.archivist@wfmucw.org



Editor: Ligia Istrate

[ligiaistrate@gmail.com](mailto:ligiaistrate@gmail.com)

Cover design, interior design:  
Cristian Istrate

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