



The TREE *- of* LIFE



Things are hotting up!

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President's letter

Things are hotting up!

It is said that the favourite topic of conversation for British people is the weather. Well, in the UK in July we experienced higher temperatures than ever before (38.7° C in Cambridge) and also a huge amount of rainfall leading to severe flooding in some areas. A reservoir damn in Derbyshire was in danger of collapse due to heavy rain and many residents of a nearby town temporarily evacuated their homes.

The recent extremes of weather in the UK and elsewhere in the world have been explained in terms of climate change and global warming. Leading scientists warn of worsening climatic conditions, but some are still dismissed as scaremongers. The Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg has mobilised young people to challenge the authorities to take urgent action before it is too late. We are being urged to re-think our reliance on plastics and fossil fuels that are damaging our environment.

At the Methodist Conference in Birmingham in the first week of July, delegates were urged to go back to their churches and take action. The Conference encouraged its members and churches to reduce plastic pollution, and for church cafés to consider signing up to a refill scheme, offering free refills for water bottles. However, I am mindful that in countries where there is little fresh water fit for drinking, bottled water offers a life-giving

essential. What is the answer? How can we better care for our world – God's beautiful creation – of which we are stewards?

A Rocha International runs workshops in conservation and environmental education in many parts of the world. An example on their website www.arocha.org/en describes a Ugandan Primary School “where pupils have created an orchard, nursery beds and medicinal garden. They are growing bananas and maize and growing their vegetables in sacks where space is limited.” Meanwhile the Church of South India, one of the first in India

to promote environmental concerns, has held its 5th International Eco-Conference: Greening the Global for Sustainable Living. In Ethiopia, 350 million trees have been planted in one day, part of an initiative to restore forests and combat climate change. You will know of other examples of positive action in your own countries.

*Creator God,
Show us how to care for the
earth, our temporary home.
Remind us that we, humans, are
just one part of Your precious
creation.
Teach us how we can be better
stewards.
Amen.*

It seems that the extreme weather and the changes in our global climate have encouraged many countries to take notice and take action towards achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 13 'Climate Action'.

What are YOU doing to combat global warming? Have your church leaders become aware of the difference they can make?

Climate change will be just one of the topics addressed at our 14th World Assembly in Gothenburg, 10th-15th August 2021.

Blessings,

-Alison Judd

Be holy, for I am holy

Is all *hevel*?

At first view the book of Ecclesiastes is quite surprising, if not depressing. The teacher presented in the book has a very pessimistic view of the world. For him, everything – gathering riches, having pleasures, gaining wisdom and knowledge, and so on – is *hevel*: futile, vanity, a chasing after the wind. Everything is *hevel* because even though these things should make us feel good and enable us to have a good life, they are no guarantee that we will have the life we want. Why? Because we cannot control our lives. Time takes our life away; injustice exists, and death also. We cannot control the repercussions of the negative things in our life. The book continues in this way until the end – but the end is quite different. There is one thing that is not *hevel*: the fear of God.

This does not refer to anxiety, but to the reverence one has for Him, and to the keeping of His commandments: Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)

And this verse made me realize that the judgement of the God is NOT something we should be afraid of, but rather something that should make us TRUST Him when our life is stolen, and injustice occurs. In the negative circumstances of life, the having hope for God's judgement is vital. Even though now bad people prosper, a day will come when the saints will prosper. Even though now is not exactly how I wish it would be, a day will come when tears and dissatisfaction will be no more.

So, when all is *hevel* – and it is true, that riches and

career and knowledge are nothing without Him – the reverence one has for Him and the trust we have in Him remain and should give us enough power to move forward.

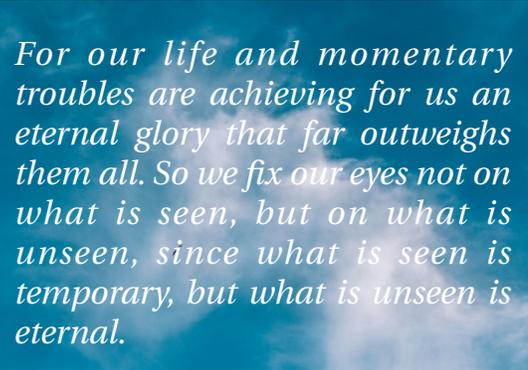
This makes me think of the communist era: I was born in a communist country, but Romania was not one of the communist countries, it was the one with the most repressive regime. I wish I could tell you I had a beautiful childhood, but I cannot say that. We lived in continuous fear: Christians were persecuted and killed, churches were destroyed, people died of hunger, believers were kicked out of their jobs because of their faith, they were tortured, put in prison and so on. Still, they continued to be Christians and continued to believe in a God of love, because many times what we experienced here was *hevel* (and the Hebrew word has another meaning: vapor – something that will disappear, will go away), but God remains forever. And trust me – or if you do not trust me, go and search for testimonies from the

Communist era – they could feel God's love and care for them, better than we can feel Him now, in a time of peace.

They were not forgotten by God: sometimes their torturer became a believer; sometimes a package of food arrived from the UK or USA or some other country and they could feed themselves for several days more; sometimes God hid from the police a car carrying Christian literature (Christian literature was

forbidden and the one caught smuggling it into the country earned the death penalty); sometimes a prison inmate would share the last piece of bread with another one and, despite the persecution, Christianity was spreading. Those were “stones of remembrance”, that God is here and He is in action, on the not-so-easy-Christian-path.

For our life and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)



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-Ligia Istrate, Tree of Life Editor

A prayer of thanksgiving from South-Pacific Area

Dear Father God,

I thank You, that I am fearfully and wonderfully made and that You knew me even before my mother conceived me. Thank You that You know all about me and that there is nothing hidden within, about which You do not know...

I am coming to You today because I want to sit in Your presence, bathe in Your beauty, rest in Your love and simply spend time alone with You.

Lord, I just want to be with You because I love You. At times I am overwhelmed by Your loving-kindness and tender mercies towards me. I don't understand it, but I praise You with all my heart.

Words are insufficient to convey the wonder of who You are - and I thank You for being my Saviour and for loving me as You do. In Jesus' name I praise Your Holy Name .Amen.

*- Ilaisa Kapani,
South Pacific Area Vice-President*

80 years young!

I heard recently of a woman who is nearly 80 years of age, but still runs over a mile each morning and swims regularly. She is very active in her social life and church work and has no intention of slowing down as she reaches a milestone on her next birthday. Not everyone is able to maintain a physical discipline of this sort, but I know many of you (whatever your age) do maintain a disciplined prayer life which energises you for mission. You 'keep fit' for the work God has called you to do, and so continue to 'make Christ known' by the life you lead.

The World Federation is celebrating being 80 years of age this year. The original charter was signed in Pasadena, California on 26th October 1939. Since then, women have prayed, campaigned, evangelised, preached, taught, served, encouraged, enabled and equipped others across the world and in their local communities. These women have made a real difference, they have proclaimed the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and they have borne fruit for the Kingdom. In all of their work, they have been empowered by prayer.

There is still work to be done. I thank God that our Federation includes women of all ages and every skill level, for the world is still waiting for justice and healing, and God needs everyone to play their part.

Happy 80th Birthday, World Federation sisters!
Keep on praying and keep on proclaiming!

- Alison

Faithful God, we thank You for Your blessing on the women of the World Federation over 80 years. We thank You for Your Son, Jesus, who has opened the way for us to share fully in the work of reconciling the world to Yourself. We thank You for the influence of the Holy Spirit who teaches us Your truth and inspires us to action for the sake of Your kingdom. We thank You for the wisdom of our mothers and grandmothers in the faith who were such a good example to us. Show us how we can be even more effective in bringing justice and fullness of life for women and children in every land. We pray in the name of Christ.

Amen.



News



Thursdays in Black



Germany has a strong Thursdays in Black Campaign that is promoted with the Kirchentag (German Protestant church day festival) occasion. One of the strong promoters of the event is Bishop Rosemarie Wenner of the World Methodist Council. The message is that there should be no space for rape and violence in our world. The campaign includes stories, music, and other activities. During the event, the World Council of Churches (WCC) organizes a plenary on how sexual violence is a part of everyday culture – in songs, media and conversations. Announcement: Communities and individuals everywhere are invited to make a powerful,

international statement of their commitment to end rape and violence through contributing to a large quilted tapestry exhibit being developed by the World Council of Churches. The tapestry is intended to reflect a waterfall with messages and images from around the world. It will be displayed in 2020 at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva and at major events and will continue to be expanded up to the WCC Assembly in 2021.

More information available at:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/no-space-for-rape-and-violence-thursdays-in-black-at-kirchentag>

and

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/contribute-to-a-thursdays-in-black-global-exhibit-waterfall-of-solidarity-and-resistance>

National Women's Camp, Dominican Republic, 2019

AMIED (Women's Association of the Dominican Evangelical Church) organized a time of empowerment and communion from 18th-

20th July 2019, in Baní Municipality, Peravia Province in the south of the Dominican Republic. About 250 women participated and the theme was 'Looking for Him to grow'.



We had a great experience as we shared faith, friendship, service and understanding on issues related to the World Federation and Latin American Confederation. The opening of the conference included worship and the word of Rev. Geovanna Santana about growing up in a healthy environment. In the second day, the plenary





was held by Area President Leila Barbosa, who spoke about the World Federation and Latin America and the Caribbean Confederation meaning and work. Other speakers were Rev. Sayri Marc, President of the Dominican Church Executive Committee, and Carmen Celis Martinez, who spoke about focusing on Christ. The afternoon included recreational time and the evening a concert with different singers and a Worship Group of the Evangelical Church of San Cristóbal. The third day began with a devotion about 'Chosen Women' lead by Leila and continued with different

workshops: Mothers are the best teachers (Sebastiana Javier), Loving God with All Your Mind (Daysi Lorenzo) and Health (Ruth de la Cruz). In the afternoon there was a leaders' meeting and a special training session with the President in which the emphasis was on the importance of the World Federation and of being a member country. So, we hope and believe that the Dominican Republic will be joining the World Federation at the next Assembly. There were also beauty and handcrafts workshops and Bible Study, and in the evening, there was a special dinner, a parade of

hats, and karaoke. On Sunday 21st July there was the Closing Service and farewell.

Thanks, God, for the opportunity.

I thank President Josefina for the invitation.

I thank The World Federation for paying my ticket.

Glory to God!

*-Leila de Jesus Barbosa,
President of Latin America*

Samoa Methodist Women's Fellowship

Talofa and greetings to you all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!

In April we were very saddened by the passing away of our dear president, Mrs Seti Apineru Lafai. She was an advocate for young women to become leaders and take ownership of their Fellowship in faith. She started small teams within the seventeen synods of the Methodist church, not only in Samoa but also abroad, in order to encourage young women to speak up about issues they want to raise and to be active



participants of the Fellowship. She is very much missed by the President of the church and her children, as well as the Methodist Women's Fellowship. May she rest in peace!

The Samoa Annual Conference of the Methodist church, which usually takes

place in July, was postponed this year to August because of the Pacific Games – the Methodist compound at Faleula, the centre of the Church and main conference venue, was being used as the Athletes' Village for all athletes and officials. The church ministers and their wives were

all involved in preparing healthy breakfasts for all athletes, officials and volunteers as well as keeping the place clean and safe.

The

Women's Conference began on 5th August and lasted a week, followed by the General Conference. Synods prepared for prayer meetings and biblical studies as well as sharing ideas for the improvement of the organization. At the same time, work is under way for the writing of the history of the Women's Fellowship from early 2000 to the present. Please pray for us as we also pray for you all elsewhere,
Thank you,

*-Lafaitale Fualuga Taupi,
Connectional Secretary for the
Samoa Methodist Women's
Fellowship.*



Announcements

- The 14th World Assembly will take place in Gothenburg, Sweden on 10-15th August 2021
- The North America Area Seminar will be held on 4th-6th October 2019 in Chicago, USA.
- The Southern and East Africa Area Seminar will be held on 27th-30th November 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Report on Assembly planning meeting in Sweden



Three shimmering glass towers of hotel rooms; a world-class conference centre with a raised-seating auditorium; trams and buses at the front door; museums and an amusement park across the street: this is

what greeted the World Officers and the Local Arrangements Committee from August 19th to 22nd (and will greet all the 14th World Assembly participants in August 2021) at Gothia Towers, Gothenburg, Sweden.

Over three days the LAC members from the Methodist Church in Norway and the Swedish Uniting Church, along with the Europe Continental Area Officers, shared their preliminary ideas and plans to support the Assembly program which was fine-tuned by the World Officers.

Event Manager from Gothia Towers, Maria, toured the Conference Centre with us, hosted lunch, answered questions and assured us of their experience and support.

One of the planned Assembly highlights will be Sunday morning worship with local churches, so the WOs and LAC 'sampled' two churches – one in Gothenburg centre and one thirty minutes out of town. Both welcomed us warmly and look forward to hosting large groups from the Assembly.

Deadlines for Workshop leadership offers and logo design entries have been extended to February 28th, 2020.

Registrations will open on September 1st, 2020 after the next

WO and LAC meeting in Gothenburg.

Look out for information on the website in the new year.

-Ann Connan, President Emerita.



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