The Steering Committee of the World Methodist Council met on 20 August 2020 virtually via Zoom. Steering Committee members present were:

Bishop Ivan Abrahams  
Ms. Christine Elliott  
Rev. Dr. Jean Hawxhurst  
Rev. George Mulrain  
Archbishop Chibuzo R. Opoko  
Mr. Joshua Rathnam  
Archbishop Michael Stephen

Rev. David Bush  
Ms. Gillian Kingston  
Mr. Kirby Hickey  
Rev. Samuel Murillo  
Rev. Dr. J.C. Park  
Bishop Darryl Starnes  
Bishop Rosemarie Wenner

Committee Chairs:  
Ms. Lissa Belle Brown  
Bishop Teresa Jefferson-Snorton  
Dr. Amos Nascimento  
Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett

Rev. Tony Franklin-Ross  
Rev. Oyvind Helliesen  
Rev. Dr. Reynaldo Leao-Neto  
Rev. Dr. Paul Swarup

Affiliates:  
Rev. Steve Hickle  
Rev. Dr. Kim Reisman

Ms. Alison Judd  
Conference Program Chair:  
Rev. Dr. Martyn Atkins

Staff:  
Ms. Jackie Bolden  
Unable to attend:  
Rev. Dr. Amelia Koh-Butler  
Bishop John White

Ms. Michaela Hannah  
Bishop Paulo Lockmann

Following a greeting by General Secretary Abrahams, President Park led the devotional. The Steering Committee shared how their constituents were dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, which had been affecting the world since the beginning of 2020. The North American Sector [GEN NA 01] and New Zealand [GEN NZ 01] had contributed reports and all responded verbally. It was agreed that everyone had been affected in some way, whether it be health or economic, gender or racial violence, and other problems. It was also noted that while there had been many struggles with everyday life circumstances—including worship, celebrations and funerals—many good things were also happening as people cared for each other. Sometimes more people were participating virtually than had in person. The discussion also included what is happening worldwide to secure racial justice and how many WMC constituents are working to bring systemic change.

The Agenda [INF 01] was unanimously adopted.

APPROVED without revision: 28-30 August 2019 Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting in Mexico City, Mexico, [GEN 01] following a motion by Archbishop Stephen and second by Vice President Kingston.
Updates were given on Membership, with Bishop Abrahams saying there have been many inquiries, which were answered with a letter and application form. He explained that he and Dr. Park had visited Thailand earlier in 2020 and would bring a recommendation to the Steering Committee and Council that they accept the Methodist Church in Thailand as a member church. Pakistan was still being considered and was anxious to join the Council, but due to the coronavirus, Dr. Park had been unable to go there as planned. Dr. Park would email the Pakistani Bishops regarding his report and would plan to go at a later date.

A Property update was given as the Steering Committee had agreed to the sale of the Reynolds Building at its meeting in Mexico. Bishop Abrahams reminded the group that an Agreement had been reached for one of the two properties at the last meeting, but the area was actually considered one property. He reminded those present of the long-term Museum challenges and explained that the Museum and Reynolds Building shared a parking lot. He noted that the issues and studies of the Museum had been shared with them earlier in the meeting attachments. Three studies had been completed, and while some of the suggestions were implemented, others were unable to be accomplished. The Museum had been discussed for many years as to the need for an update to both the interior and exterior. He explained that it appeared that three options were open regarding the Museum:

1) Make an offer to the administration to LJ to take over the Museum
2) Make an offer to the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the UMC to be the custodians of the Museum
3) Make a decision to bring the building up to code and pump in what would be close to a million dollars.

Another option would be to consider closing the Museum and exploring the possibility of selling that property. Bishop Abrahams wanted the availability to explore the option to sell. A general overall plan would be shared of how the assets might be deaccessioned to Methodist colleges, museums, and the sale or auction of some items.

Dr. Park asked those present to remember that this is the WMC inheritance, even though it is in a decaying stage, and he requested about the Museum's future. After discussion, suggestions, and questions answered, including what to do if an offer was made, Dr. Riesman moved that the Steering Committee give the General Secretary the authority to do what he deemed appropriate. Bishop Starnes seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously APPROVED.

2022 Conference Report was ACCEPTED. The update by Dr. Atkins included his appreciation for the welcoming way the Uniting Church of Sweden was responding as the host. The Program Committee is working diligently to have a great 2022 Conference. He noted that the date had been moved from 2021 to 2022, but nothing else had changed from the formerly announced plans. He complimented the Uniting Church of Sweden and the people involved with the planning who had moved speedily and brilliantly. Everyone was assured that the 100-minute sessions would continue as planned without losing the sense of the key issues, as had been decided in Mexico. The sessions would include Bible study, good theological reflection in groups, and several activities which would be happening within the same timeframes. There would be time for sharing in these groups. He thanked people who had suggested program participants. In early October, the next Zoom Conference is planned for the Planning Committee.

International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges, and Universities (IAMSCU) had just decided that week to hold its conference in conjunction with the WMC Conference in 2022, Dr. Nascimento announced. It would be 7-10 August so that attendees could also participate in the WMC Conference.

Rev. Helliesen stressed that he had read in the reports that several Steering Committee members wished to have workshops and other activities. This should be communicated directly to Dr. Atkins, including specific information.

International Methodist Youth Leaders Seminar (IMYLS) will be 4-9 August, while Metanoia is scheduled 1-7 August, according to Rev. Murillo and Dr. Riesman. Rev. Murillo said there is hope to have the Youth and Young Adults (YYA) be part of the Conference, and stay even longer. He added his documents were the same as
presented in Mexico City, with only the dates changing. The venues would not be the same, as the Uniting Church of Sweden had offered a camp place for IMYLS, which would involve 40 people. Metanoia kept its same venue, which was larger as they would be anticipating 200-250 YYA. Bishop Jefferson-Snorton noted that the dates were the start dates of all the colleges and universities in North America, which would pose a challenge for YYA participation. It was explained that Metanoia is a spiritual formation leadership conference and a broader group than the Methodist leadership of YYAs identified for Rev. Murillo.

The 2018 Peace Award presentation was unable to be held in 2020 due to the pandemic, Bishop Abrahams reported. Ms. Elliott was coordinating with recipient Rev. Dr. Inderjit Bhogal and the City of Sheffield Council, with spring 2021 set as the tentative time for the ceremony. Updates would be made as plans progress. Only one person was nominated for the 2020 Peace Award. It was proposed this nomination would be considered with any others that came in for 2021 by General Secretary Abrahams; Bishop Jefferson-Snorton seconded. The proposal was unanimously ACCEPTED.

Finance Report, presented by Treasurer Hickey. [Doc FIN 01]. ACCEPTED. He explained that expenses were less, which helped the Balance Sheet, especially in the area of travel since the WMC had been unable to travel due to COVID-19. He asked that the Committee note member church payments as well as outstanding and past due balances, adding about 70% of the expected total had been received. He thanked the United Methodist for its significant percentage of the member church payments and urged others to work to assure that member churches participated. He noted that the UMC has announced that there is a percentage cutback annually, which could be more significant in four years. Bishop Jefferson-Snorton stressed that it is not just about money but a member church's level of commitment. Dr. Leao-Neto asked Mr. Hickey about the Council's plan for 2024. Mr. Hickey said the property disposal could help as would cutbacks, but it was difficult to project more than two years out. He said the new administration could use this information to plan for the next Quinquennium. The future of the WMC would depend on member churches, the endowment, and reducing expenses as much as possible. He encouraged everyone to work to see that their respective member churches truly needed to pay in order to meet their commitment to the WMC, and for the Council to be able to accurately develop a budget.

Bishop Abrahams explained that there are Donor Development [GEN DD 01, 01a-d] strategy policies, which each person has, and he has been in communication with the chair of each committee. The only support the WMC can receive is for programming. Foundations do not support organizations. Unless efforts are re-doubled to get programming off-the-ground, then there will not be donor support. All of these strategies will not garner support unless there are concrete, active, and viable programs. He commended Dr. Reisman as there is not a day or week that goes by that something is not happening. World Evangelism is a funding and an implementing agency. "The WMC can have strong policies, but the rub is at the programming level," Bishop Abrahams stressed.

The YYA Committee is proposing to assist other committees in becoming more visible on social media. A 2021 timetable was provided for an open-session encounter every two months with one committee, being coordinated by Rev. Murillo and Ms. Brown. It might aid WMC committees to see new possibilities and to incorporate YYA in the work and decisions.

In answer to a question, Rev. Murillo explained that IMYLS was created to address and encourage the leadership of youth within the WMC member churches. It encourages 18 to 35 years olds to engage and usually consists of about 40 people. Metanoia is a leadership spiritual formation conference where the call to ministry and other roles are emphasized. Dr. Park urged Dr. Reisman to work toward Asian scholarships. Dr. Reisman said the groups must be creative in how to overlap. Locations are no longer the same, which adds to the necessity to be creative.

Dr. Park asked the General Secretary about a proposal to reduce the number of committees. Bishop Abrahams responded that it meant revisiting the "New Ways of Working" document that was presented in 2016 and to look at it with fresh lenses on how the WMC could operate optimally. Dr. Park suggested that it be reviewed in order to make it more concrete and ask the officers to set aside some time to come up with a suggestion for the Council. He added that if he were to presently write grant proposals, who would see that the funding is properly
implemented? At the moment, there is no guarantee that anything we apply for can be implemented. More staff is needed in order to provide assurance that the work would be carried out. Rev. Helliesen reminded everyone that this was discussed in Mexico, and it is time to look at the WMC and how it operates. Dr. Leao-Neto said the reports show that the way the Council operates and its work needed to be reviewed. Ms. Brown said it is important that YYA be part of all of the committees. Bishop Jefferson-Snorton explained that both structure and function are important, and it is nearly impossible to have a meeting after a Conference as positions change, levels of interests change, and she currently only has three or four people interested in post-Conference, thereby necessitating a leaner and more efficient and effective structure be implemented.

**President's Report and Declaration ENDORSED** [GEN 03] Dr. Park asked for an endorsement for "A Declaration for the Peoples' Korean Peace Agreement." He explained that it was a peoples' movement; Bishop Wenner seconded the action and it was unanimously endorsed.

**The General Secretary's Report** [GEN 02] was ACCEPTED as written by Bishop Abrahams, who chose not to read the report as ALL reports were noted to have been read. He suggested that the reports with resolutions attached should be received first.

**The Geneva Secretary's Report** [GEN 04] by Bishop Wenner was ACCEPTED. She presented the Resolution to join the New International Financial and Economical Architecture (NIFEA) Movement. The many partnerships involved in working toward a better future for economic justice were highlighted, and the Resolution was unanimously accepted following a second by Rev. Franklin-Ross [GEN 04a].

The Ecumenical Relationships [GEN ER 01] by Rev. Franklin-Ross was ACCEPTED. It included two proposals and a WMC Zwa-Zula Natan Dialogue Statement [GEN ER 01a], and a report on the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church in Nairobi, Kenya, [GEN ER 01b], and a Meeting at Duke University, [GEN ER 01c]. His actions included the following:

1) **Proposal – Colloquium to honor the lifetime commitment of Dr. Geoffery Wainwright.** He is putting together a process for a colloquium to be held in the next few years and to involve a wide range of people. A publication or paper would also probably be a result of this effort.

2) **Recommendation** - To note the significant anniversary of the formation of the Pontifical Council for the formation of Christian Unity, a key, long-standing ecumenical dialogue partner. He requested the WMC convey an affirmation of this anniversary and warm appreciation.

The Proposal and Recommendation were Unanimously APPROVED.

**Education Committee** [GEN EDU 01, Appendix 01a, Appendix 01b] While Dr. Nascimento had participated in other discussions, he was not available for a verbal report. His written report and its supporting documents were available.

**Evangelism Committee Report** [GEN EV 01] by Bishop Padgett-Wallace was ACCEPTED.

**Family Life Committee** [GEN FL 01] Report by Bishop Jefferson-Snorton was ACCEPTED. If such a diverse topic is to be an emphasis, then it needs greater definition in the future so the work can be meaningful, she emphasized.

**Interreligious Relationships** [GEN IR 01] ACCEPTED by Dr. Leao-Neto. The Proposal to launch a School for Peace Studies would include two WMC meetings over the current and next Quinquennium and would have a faculty to develop the curriculum. He noted that he had a job in the United Kingdom, so much of the work would be accomplished by the General Secretary and the WMC office. The written report contained information regarding a potential faculty, curriculum, etc. The General Secretary noted that the two had been in conversation at length, and this Peace Proposal had his 100% support. Other Steering Committee expressed support, explaining why this was a significant proposal. The question was raised regarding the proposed funding stream and how it
would unfold. It was noted that the Irish School of Ecumenical had a peace component, Sri Lanka was mentioned, and other ideas were suggested. Dr. Leao-Nato hoped the Development Officer might be able to fund a grant, and it might be self-supporting. It was suggested that stakeholders be created who might also contribute financially. The Peace Proposal was seconded by Mr. Rathnam and Unanimously APPROVED.

**Theological Committee** [GEN TED 01] by the Dr. Swarup ACCEPTED In an effort to be more regional, a South Asia Bible commentary is being developed in Hindi, as 70 percent of the population of Indian speaks Hindi. This and the South Asian Study Bible were progressing and would be a huge tool for the church there. There was much interest in the consultations being planned, and more webinars were planned in the coming months, he explained. Dr. Park invited Dr. Swarup to join the Oxford Institute Methodist members monthly webinar, led by the Wesley House in Cambridge and theologians worldwide. Dr. Swarup accepted and asked to be sent the links for participation.

**Worship and Liturgy** [GEN WL 01] The report was submitted in writing, but the chair Dr. Koh-Butler unavailable to present.

**The Youth and Young Adult (YYA) Report** [GEN YYA 01] by Rev. Murillo and Ms. Brown was ACCEPTED. Everyone was asked to encourage member churches to send current youth and young adults, which is not open to the public, as it is a designated group. Historically, IMYLS are sent by the member churches as the youth are part of the leadership of the respective organizations. Rev. Murillo noted that the IMYLS report had not changed from Mexico. IMYLS might be emphasized in 2021 as it would be the 20th anniversary, making this relevant for organizing and promoting online. He asked for more fundraising to support a three-month program of the YYA and IMYLS. He asked everyone to remind their member churches that all programming was to include young adults. Ms. Brown urged everyone to let the YYA leaders know they wished to be part of all the standing committees' activities. They noted a YYA website update would be coming in 2020 to revamp the YYA 2015 website and to offer more worldwide opportunities.

**World Methodist Evangelism** [GEN WME 01] by Dr. Reisman was ACCEPTED. She noted the WME would be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 2021. The WME team had been able to reach a broadened range in some countries, more than they would have been able to gather with in-person meetings. The impact they have been able to have even though unable to be present personally due to COVID-19 was reassuring. WME Facebook podcasts offer "Ministry Moments." She invited everyone to record a brief description, tell a story, upload to the WME website so it could then be included. Exciting things were happening because of the pandemic rather than in spite of it, she said. In the aftermath of George Floyd's death, WME offered a statement that was well-received. Dr. Reisman said WME would like to work with the Women's Federation.

**Wesley Men** [GEN WM 01] ACCEPTED A new copy of "Fast Pray Give" was available. Rev. Hickles encouraged everyone to download the updated document. It was on the Wesley Men's webpage, and the vital resource was available in some languages other than English. Selling COVID-19 protection masks has allowed them to reach others for the Wesley Men as these products, as well as other items, were available for sale to the public.

**World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women** [GEN WFMUCW 01] ACCEPTED Ms. Judd noted that the women are doing more and more online around the world. The 14th Global Assembly will take place in 2022, the week previous to the WMC Conference, and it would also be in Gothia Towers. They will also be hosting something in 2021. The Tree of Life newsletter is going out and is translated into many languages. She commended the WMC for their letter to Zimbabwe, adding the need to stand in solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe who are suffering greatly.

**Social and International Justice** [GEN SIA 01] ACCEPTED [No written report] Archbishop Opoko said a lot had been accomplished in the name of the WMC, about two million lire had been raised. He said 6,700 facemasks had been distributed, and many other things were accomplished. Video clips had been presented in the streets
regarding COVID-19, with 700,000 persons also learning online. As chairperson of this WMC Committee, he has assured the churches can share the necessary protocols.

It was noted that there was no certainty as to whether the next Quinquennium would be four of five years (since the meeting was changed), as it would depend on the action of the larger WMC member churches.

Dr. Park thanked the General Secretary and staff for the meeting preparations. It was noted that the next meeting of the Steering Committee was to be in Gothenburg, Sweden, on 12-14 August 2021, with the Nominating Committee meeting starting on 11 August 2021.

ADJOURNED

Recorder: Jackie R. Bolden