



Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome

2021 Annual Report

SEPTEMBER 2020 – AUGUST 2021

PREPARED BY
THE REVEREND MATTHEW A. LAFERTY

MEOR Mission Statement

Approved by the MEOR Forum in April 2016

The Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome is a presence for the World Methodist Council:

- to be a channel of dialogue with other churches in the search for a deeper unity
- to foster relationships with other agencies and faith communities in order to promote better understanding and joint action for justice and peace
- to offer a ministry of prayer and prayer and reflection, of learning and growth, and
- to be a place of open hospitality to Methodists and all visitors to Rome.

Terms of Reference for the MEOR Forum

Approved November 2018

In April 2014 the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) approved the establishment of the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome (MEOR), building on the work of previous British Methodist ministers at Ponte Sant`Angelo, in consultation with other partners.

The Revd Dr Tim Macquiban was appointed director and started work on 1 August 2014.

The Methodist Church Britain is the lead agency in this work, committed to the appointment and oversight of the Director of MEOR and financial support in partnership with other churches and institutions, whose nominated members constitute the Forum, being related to the educational and ecumenical mission of MEOR.

Partners in the scheme are the World Methodist Council (WMC), European Methodist Council (EMC), the Methodist Church in Britain, OPCEMI (the Methodist Churches in Italy), the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church (UMC), and The Wesley (Rome).

The Forum will, through an annual meeting in Rome and regular email contact with the director, give attention to the following functions including:

- Receiving regular reports from the Director
- Approving an annual work plan
- Authorising new initiatives after consultation

The Forum may, with the agreement of its existing members, widen and strengthen its role by inviting others who are directly involved with educational and ecumenical mission of MEOR to become partners in the joint venture.

Meetings of the Forum will include at least one and no more than two representatives of each of the partner churches/institutions, travelling at the expense of their church or institution. Hospitality, accommodation, and arrangements for the meeting will be facilitated by MEOR. Further representatives and observers may be invited to take part from time to time by agreement.

The Forum will have an enabling style focussing especially on strategic questions, on mobilising support for the office and on promoting linkages and connections to advance the ecumenical work. The Director will have responsibility for the day-to-day functions of management and administration of the Office.

Consultation will be the normal style of working and each partner will consult with preferably all, but always at least one, of the others before proposing a new initiative.

For the period September 2019 to August 2020, the Chair of the Forum will be the Secretary of the Conference of MCB (the lead agency). Thereafter Forum members will elect one of their number as Chair on a rotational pattern to be agreed.

Members of the Forum will routinely:

- Promote MEOR and its activities within its organization.
- Encourage the Methodist family to make use of MEOR when arranging tours or planning ecumenical initiatives.
- Assist the smooth running of the Office to meet the demand on its services.

Appointment of staff will be carried out through MCB with the agreement of the other members according to its normal procedures and be overseen by its nominated officer, with day-to-day management of the Office being carried out by the MEOR Director.

MEOR Forum Membership 2021-2022

European Methodist Council	Mr. Doug Swanney
Methodist Church in Britain	Revd Michaela Youngson Revd Conrad Hicks
Methodist Churches in Italy <i>(L'Opera per le Chiese Evangeliche Metodiste in Italia – OPCEMI)</i>	Revd Mirella Manocchio
The United Methodist Church	Rev. Dr. Jean Hawxhurst
World Methodist Council	Bishop Ivan Abrahams Mr. Kirby Hickey
MEOR Director	Rev. Matthew Laferty

Program Activities by Month

This section of the report—program activities by month—is not an exhaustive list but highlights major activities and encounters each month.

SEPTEMBER

In the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Reverend Matthew A. Laferty assumed leadership as the director of the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome on 1 September. Serving in Vienna, Austria, prior to his assignment at MEOR, Rev. Laferty is a presbyter of The United Methodist Church and mission partner of the Methodist Church Britain with a five-year mandate as MEOR director.

Ms. Stefanie Gabuyo, a member of the Methodist Church in Italy, became acting MEOR administrator for one year while Ms. Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman took leave.

The MEOR Forum met 3 September to review the work of the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome, receive the interim director's report, and review finances. Bishop Ivan Abrahams and Revd Ruth Gee are the Forum co-chairs. The Forum thanked the Revd Dr Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman for his service as the interim MEOR director for 2019-2020. The Forum agreed to meet again in March for strategic planning.

The director began intensive Italian languages courses.

Rev. Laferty attended a dinner on 25 September at the residence of British ambassador Sally Axworthy with visiting members of the board of the Anglican Centre.

The director attended the ordination service of three deacons in the Church of England, held at All Saints Anglican Church in Rome with Bishop David Hamid presiding.

OCTOBER

The Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission, the official theological dialogue commission between the World Methodist Council and the Holy See, met from 9-16 October in an online format due to the global pandemic. Rev. Laferty joined the meeting as the commission began to finalize its final report, nearing the completion of its five-year cycle of dialogue on the theme of reconciliation.

The director attended a launch event on Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* on 8 October at Caravita.

Rev. Laferty and Archbishop Ian Ernest from the Anglican Centre in Rome made a joint visit to Centro Pro Unione on 14 October and met with center's director the Rev. Dr. James Puglisi. Centro Pro Unione is a long-time collaborative and supportive institutional friend of both MEOR and ACR.

The director curtailed intensive Italian lessons due to quarantine requirements after contact with a colleague who tested positive for COVID-19.

During quarantine, the Revd Mirella Manocchio, OPCEMI president and MEOR Forum member, arranged a virtual meeting with Revd Dn Alessandra Trotta, a Methodist deacon who serves as the moderator of the Waldensian Board, and Revd Luca Negro, president of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy, to discuss the work of the respective organizations.

NOVEMBER

With COVID infections in Italy at its highest since the beginning of the pandemic, Italian government officials enacted tighter controls on movement of people. The director continued intensive Italian language lessons online.

The director met the Rev. Dr. Dirk Lange, ecumenical officer of the Lutheran World Federation (13).

Rev. Laferty participated in an online meeting of the theological dialogue between the Methodist Church Britain and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and Scotland on 24 November. The focus of the meeting was on Marian theology.

DECEMBER

The director met Chiara Porro, the new Australian ambassador to the Holy See, on 7 December. She is the youngest ambassador in the Australian diplomatic corps.

The first webinar on international Methodist-Catholic dialogue was held on 10 December. Bishop John Sherrington and the Revd Dr David Chapman spoke on the commission's recent discussions on the theme of reconciliation. The director moderated the conversation. Over 55 people/devices attended the event. A recording of the webinar was posted on YouTube.

The director was introduced to Cardinal Kurt Koch and Bishop Brian Farrell from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity on 16 December.

JANUARY

The Week of Prayer of Christian Unity is the most significant event in January each year. The director was involved in several events for the octave.

MEOR along with Centro Pro Unione and the Anglican Centre in Rome organized an online prayer service to launch the WPCU on 17 January. The prayer service was broadcast live on the Centro Pro Unione website and on Facebook. The director offered a reflection during the service and organized the logistics for the event. MEOR administrator Stefanie Gabuyo and her husband Antonio Montano provided music for the event. This event is a first-ever collaboration between the three institutions.

The director attended the WPCU ecumenical prayer service of the Diocese of Rome held at St. Maria of Trasevere on 20 January.

Rev. Laferty preached at vespers at the Pontifical Irish College on 21 January.

The director preached at the Churches Together in Rome prayer service on 24 January for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Rev. Laferty represented the worldwide Methodist family at Papal Vespers held at the Basilica at St. Paul's Outside the Walls on 25 January. Unfortunately, Pope Francis was unwell, so Cardinal Koch presided.

FEBRUARY

The director met Cardinal Ayuso from the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue (19), Fr. Dan Fitzgerald from the Pontifical Scots College (24), and Fr. Hyacinthe Destivelle from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Ecumenical Studies Institute of the Angelicum (25) in February.

Rev. Laferty attended an online conference on church and music hosted by the Pontifical Council for Culture on 4-5 February.

MARCH

With the pandemic restriction decreased, the director made a series of visits—in-person or online—in the month of March. Rev. Laferty visited Dr. Elena Dini from the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue (2), UK ambassador Sally Axworthy (8), the Revd Angleena Keizer from the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem (9), the Rev. Dr. Kim Reisman from World Methodist Evangelism (12), Cardinal Luis Tagle from the Dicastery for the Evangelization of the Peoples, Cardinal Peter Turkson from the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (24), Irish ambassador Derek Hannon (24), Sr. Pat Murray from the Union of International Superiors General (26), and Fr. Michael Brehl from the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists) (27).

The director participated in a special prayer service on 5 March at the Anglican Centre to mark the Women's World Day of Prayer which was prepared by the women of Vanuatu. MEOR administrator Stefanie Gabuyo played violin and accompanied singing. MCB mission partners Fiona Kendall and Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman held parts in the service as well.

On 8 March Rev. Laferty attended a webinar by the Australian Embassy to the Holy See on women at the Vatican.

The MEOR Forum met online from 10-11 March for strategic planning. Mr. Ivan Samdaan from the Methodist Church in Southern Africa served as the facilitator of the meetings. Recognizing the importance of strategic planning, the Forum had hoped to meet in Rome but were forced to meeting via Zoom. From their deliberations the Forum agreed to form two working groups to develop proposals to better integrated MEOR's governance within the World Methodist Council and strengthen the diversity of perspectives in oversight as well as explore legal incorporation in Italy.

The second webinar on international Methodist-Catholic dialogue was held on 23 March. Mrs. Gillian Kingston, a laywoman from the Methodist Church in Ireland and the vice president of the World Methodist Council, presented on the history of the international Methodist-Catholic bilateral dialogue from 1967 to 2006 in a webinar entitled, "From Denver to Dublin,

from Brighton to Seoul: History of International Methodist-Catholic Dialogue from 1967 to 2006". Over 45 participants attended online and a recording of the lecture was posted on YouTube.

On 25 March the director attended a special online prayer service on the impact of COVID-19 on migrants organized by the WMC Geneva Secretary. The director provided technical support of the prayer service and sent invitations to the respective embassies of service leaders/presenters.

The director participated in the last meeting of the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission for the 2016-21 dialogue round as the commission approved the final report.

APRIL

The director continued courtesy visits to a number of MEOR partners in Rome and around the world. He met the Rev. Dr. Herman Shastri from the Council of Churches of Malaysia on his work on moral discernment in the Methodist Church in Malaysia (7), the 3Generate Team from the Methodist Church Britain and the United Reformed Church (7), the Rev. Dr. Mario Fischer from the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe on CPCE's theological dialogue with the Holy See (8), Rev. Sam Murillo and Ms. Isay Brown from WMC Youth and Young Adults (14), Ms. Alison Judd from the Women's Federation of Methodist, Wesleyan, and Uniting Church Women (16), the Rev. Dr. James Bhagwan from the Pacific Conference of Churches (20), Cardinal Czerny from Migrants and Refugees Section at the Vatican, Armenian Apostolic representative to the Holy See Archbishop Khajag Barsamian (21), Heather Walker and Filipe Domingues from the Lay Centre at Foyer Unitas (21), U.S. charges d'affaires Patrick Connell (22), Fra' John Dunlap from the Sovereign Order of Malta (26), and South African ambassador George Johannes (29).

The director along with WMC Geneva Secretary Rosemarie Wenner and WCC central committee vice moderator Marianne Swenson from The United Methodist Church organized two virtual introductory meetings with the WCC as a way to raise MEOR's profile at the WCC and build greater collaboration between Geneva and Rome. The group met with WCC communications director Marianne Ejdersten on 6 April and with Faith and Order staff members Odair Pedroso Mateus, Simone Sinn, and Octavian Mihoc on 10 May.

Rev. Laferty presented the work of MEOR for two groups—the Leadership Team on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relationship of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church (1) and the District Ecumenical Officers of the Methodist Church in Britain (27).

In remembrance of the Armenian genocide, the director was an ecumenical guest at a special service of commemoration held by the Armenian Apostolic representative to the Holy See and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and read Scripture during the service (25).

Rev. Laferty led prayers at the memorial service on 17 April for the Duke of Edinburgh held at All Saints Anglican Church in Rome.

On 19 April the director was one of two ecumenical representatives invited to attend the memorial service of Cardinal Edward Cassidy, former president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, organized by the Australian Embassy to the Holy and Domus Australia. Cardinal George Pell presided at the service and briefly met the director after the service.

Rev. Laferty attended the spring meeting of the European Methodist Council on 23 April and submitted a written report with updates about MEOR's work.

MAY

In May the director made visits to Fr. James Hanvey who is the ecumenical officer for the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) (3), the Climate Justice for All campaign (12), Bishop Walter Klaiber who helped draft the Methodist Statement of Association for JDDJ (14), and Fr. Marco Gnani from the Diocese of Rome (14).

The director attended two webinar events in May—one on human rights in China hosted by the U.S. Embassy on 11 May and the other on "Building Fraternity, Defending Justice—Challenges and Opportunities for Insular Peoples" jointly organized by the Anglican Centre in Rome and the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Human Integral Development on 21 May.

Rev. Laferty participated in the Ascension Day service held by Christ Church Lutheran on 13 May.

The director presented on MEOR's work and gave an overview of the international Methodist-Catholic dialogue to a group of students from Drew Theological School (USA) on 17 May.

Rev. Laferty participated in an online meeting of the theological dialogue between the Methodist Church Britain and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and Scotland on 19 May.

In observance of Aldersgate Day (Wesley Day), the director presented Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, a copy of 'Methodist Churches' in German by retired German Methodist bishop Walter Klaiber (25).

Rev. Laferty presented a verbal report on the activities of the Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome to the annual Italian Methodist Consultation on 30 May.

JUNE

In June the director met Revd Dr Will Adam from the Anglican Communion (10), US charges d'affaires Patrick Connell (23), Rev. Dr. Dirk Lange from the Lutheran World Federation (26), Bishop Mark Edington from Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe of The Episcopal Church (USA) (29), and Bishop David Hamid from the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (29).

Rev. Laferty and the WMC Geneva Secretary Rosemarie Wenner organized virtual visits with regional Methodist councils to better understand their work and the ecumenical landscape in the various regions. WMC general secretary Ivan Abrahams and WMC ecumenical

relationships chair Tony Franklin-Ross along with WMC officers participated in each visit along with presidents, general secretaries, and other officers of regional Methodist councils. They met with the African Methodist Council and European Methodist Council on 8 June, the Asian Methodist Council and Methodist Consultative Council of the Pacific on 9 June, the Council of Evangelical Methodist Churches of Latin America and the Caribbean on 15 June, and WMC member churches in Canada and the United States of America on 23 June.

The director attended a virtual symposium on “Teaching Ecumenism” organized by the World Council of Churches from 2-4 June.

At the request of the general secretary, Rev. Laferty met Bishop Brian Farrell, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, on June 8 to discuss the next round of international Methodist-Catholic dialogue.

The director along with Australian ambassador Chiara Porro and Irish ambassador Derek Hannon attended a small private luncheon hosted by Fr. Robert McColluch, procurator general of the Missionary Society of St. Columbian, on blasphemy laws in Pakistan. He was able to share about the United Church of Pakistan and the 2017 terrorist attack on the Bethel Memorial Methodist Church in Quetta, Pakistan.

On June 11 Rev. Laferty attended a high-level symposium on the 100th anniversary of the Malines Conversation, hosted by the British and Belgian Embassies. The Malines Conversations were proto-Anglican-Catholic dialogues which took place in the city of Malines (now known by its Flemish name Mechelen) in Belgium, starting in 1921.

The director visited the international headquarters of the Focolare Movement in Rocca di Papa and their conference center in Castel Gandolfo on 14 June. The Focolare Movement is a Roman Catholic lay movement dedicated to the dialogue of life and fostering Christian unity and interreligious solidarity.

Rev. Laferty participated in a remembrance service for migrants at the Sant’Egidio Community on 15 June. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state (prime minister), led the service. There were several ecumenical guests, providing an opportunity for the director to meet Orthodox representatives. After the service, he met Cardinal Parolin and share about Methodist commitments to migrants and refugees.

The director met with a group of ecumenical representatives in Rome for prayer, shared learning, and fellowship on 21 June at Sant’Anselmo Benedictine Monastery. The discussed how they might jointly foster better (and more sincere) engagement with the Holy See. The group will meet again in late September/early October.

Rev. Laferty participated in a special prayer service to mark the 20th episcopal ordination of Archbishop Ian Ernest, director of the Anglican Centre in Rome, on June 24.

The director attended a farewell Dinner on 24 June Ambassador Sally Axworthy, British Ambassador to the Holy See, who concluded her service in July after 5 years. Ambassador Axworthy is a friend of MEOR. The director presented her with a small book on pilgrimages

to Methodist sites in Cornwall where Amb. Axworthy is returning after her assignment in Rome.

Rev. Laferty was one of two ecumenical guests invited to attend a lecture on synodality in the Lutheran tradition by the Rev. Dr. Martin Junge, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, on 25 June.

On 27 June the director participated as an ecumenical guest in a special service at Christ Lutheran Church in Rome, along with leaders from the Lutheran World Federation and the German Lutheran Churches.

JULY

The director attended an ecumenical prayer service for Lebanon led by Pope Francis in St. Peter's Basilica with heads of churches in Lebanon (Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant) on 1 July.

AUGUST

The director participated in a course on the principles of interreligious dialogue by the King Abdullah Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue from 10-16 August.

The director attended virtually the annual synod of the Union of Methodist and Waldensian Churches which took place 22-25 August.

REGULAR ENCOUNTERS

The director engaged in a number of regular encounters during the program year.

Rev. Laferty regularly met with Fr. Tony Currer, official for Methodist and Anglican relations at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The director along with Archbishop Ian Ernest from the Anglican Centre established a weekly prayer group which met on Thursday morning. The group consisted of Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Lutheran, and Orthodox leaders who were serving in Rome. The director believed that the pursuit of Christian unity must be rooted in prayer.

As part of the WMC ecumenical staff team, Rev. Laferty met monthly with WMC Geneva secretary Rosemarie Wenner and WMC ecumenical relationships committee chair Tony Franklin-Ross to discuss the different WMC ecumenical portfolios, develop joint projects together, and give regular oversight to the Council's ecumenical work.

The director regularly met Archbishop Ian Ernest, director of the Anglican Centre in Rome, as well as attended Tuesday Eucharist at the Centre.

Administrative Updates

MEOR developed and implemented a new social media strategy. A YouTube channel was established to publish videos from MEOR webinars. A new MEOR Facebook page was setup and regularly carries photos and reports of the director's activities, news from the World Methodist Council, and other Methodist-related posts. The Facebook page was setup in January 2021 and currently has 352 followers. The MEOR Twitter account (@MethodistEOR) was reactivated and daily tweets and retweets are published; retweets come from posts from WMC member churches.

The MEOR website was redesigned to give it a modern and revitalized look. Occasionally updates are made to the website related to MEOR events and the director's activities.

A new domain name was selected for MEOR – www.meorome.org – to shorten the previous MEOR domain.

New MEOR staff email addresses were issued in line with the new domain name to professionalize the appearance of the office.

MEOR started utilizing a special certified email address to conduct certain business. Certified email addresses carry the same legal value in Italy as a traditional certified letter.

A new MEOR logo was developed to replace the previous logo. The previous logo which was taken from the ecumenical sailboat logo authorized by the WCC did not comply with logo permission usage. The WMC general secretary Bishop Ivan Abrahams suggested that MEOR use the WMC triangle to better connect visually MEOR with the World Methodist Council. MEOR now uses the WMC triangle with the words 'Methodist Ecumenical Office Rome' or 'MEOR' in Oswald font as its official logo.

The MEOR staff started using several web-based tools for project management, professional contact database, calendars, and graphic design. Additionally, MEOR purchased an annual Zoom subscription to facilitate its work.

MEOR staff also implemented a new internal registry for official MEOR letters to conform with Italian business practices.

A new black and white printer was purchased for the office.