

[Azerbaijani](#)

[French](#)

[Indonesian](#)

[Kannada](#)

[Mizo](#)

[Mongolian](#)

[Portuguese](#)

[Russian](#)

[Spanish](#)



**THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH
JANUARY 09 – 13, 2025**

**REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF THE WESLEYAN
CHURCH**



Rev. Capt. Dr. The Hon. Joel Cumberbatch

Greetings

Fellow General Superintendents Rev. Dr. Wayne Schmith and Rev. Dr. Amos Anteg, other members of the International Board of The Wesleyan Church, leaders of local, national, and regional conferences, delegates, specially invited guests, friends, well-wishers, partners of the global Wesleyan Church, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters in Christ, greetings in the wonderful name of Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Saviour. I take this opportunity on behalf of the International Board of The Wesleyan Church, to especially welcome you to this the 5th quadrennial Conference of The Wesleyan Church held in Johannesburg, South Africa – a land of exquisite beauty, enchanting history, rich

cultural diversity, and which forms a unique part of the African continent, which is the second largest continent in the world.

Great Son of the Soil

For many of us this meeting is particularly nostalgic and strategic. It is nostalgic because we have the opportunity to visit our ‘motherland’ for the first time, and to symbolically share this space with the great South African and global icon - the late Nelson Rolihlahla Mandella, whose work, sacrifice, and service as an anti-apartheid activist, politician, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and the first black President of South Africa, have not only been legendary and inspirational, but has also set the standard for inter-racial relations and general diplomacy in both ordinary and highly sophisticated, complex, and challenging local, national, regional and international arenas globally.

The following quotes equally highlighted Mandela’s purpose and strategy with respect to his operations and demeanour in the apartheid context, and which have parallel significance for us as we meet as a Wesleyan family over the ensuing days – January 9 – 13, 2025:

1. ‘What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.’
2. My dream would be a multicultural society, one that is diverse and where every man, woman and child are treated equally. I dream of a world where all people of all races work together in harmony.’
3. ‘There is nothing like a fixed, steady aim with an honourable purpose. It dignifies your nature and ensures success.’

Gathering

Brothers and Sister, we gather from over 50 different nations and several different races and languages across the world, to be informed, inspired, motivated, to cement our quintessential bonds, enhance our capacities and capabilities, and to further strategize with respect to the ongoing pursuit of extending the Gospel to the ends of the earth. The current Motto and theme – ‘Everywhere to Everywhere: Reaching the Unreached Together’ speak to our collaborative responsibility and focus and has essentially driven the missional and

evangelistic thrust of the international Wesleyan community over the past six years or so, and even beyond.

From May 12 – 15, 2019, Barbados and the Caribbean hosted the 4th International Conference under the theme – ‘Everywhere to Everywhere,’ with the opening ceremony being held at the Garfield Sobers complex, named after The Right. Excellent Sir Garfield Sobers - National Hero of the Republic of Barbados, and renowned as the greatest cricketer of all times in the cricketing world. On that occasion, Dr. Schmidt aptly set the tone for the conference as he ‘rallied the troops’ in the following words:

‘.....One of those things that move us so deeply these days is the deepening fellowship that we experience with our brothers and sisters across the globe, and how increasingly we in North America are learning from you.....We look forward in this conference to intently listening to each other so that we may learn together as a global Church.....The Spirit of the Lord is stirring His people everywhere in order that they may respond to that Spirit, and be sent everywhere to those that need the Gospel.....’

That purpose and commitment remain the same five years hence. The excitement and energy that we are already feeling, coupled with the serious corporate charge and responsibility with respect to reaching the lost, will undoubtedly propel us further toward the realisation of our goal.

Gratitude

We give God thanks for the expansive work of the Global Wesleyan Church, the new frontiers reached, and the continuing evangelistic thrust, as we sought to fulfil the Great commission. The statistical report provided by Global Partners (North America) will provide some insight into our numerical strength and the places of geographical engagement, with deference for those sensitive areas where it is not prudent to provide such information publicly. What is publicly known however, is that the Asian continent has the greatest number of unreached people groups, and that Europe once the bastion of the propagation of the Gospel, is now in need of a spiritual awakening and revival. Additionally, based on information provided by Global Partners (North America), some 23 of the 52 countries in Africa are impacted by the ministry of the Wesleyan Church.

We must continually commit ourselves to praying to the Lord of harvest that He would send forth workers into His harvest. Concomitant response to that call is imperative! We also specially remember all those Wesleyan missionaries serving under the banner of The Wesleyan Church, as well as other Wesleyans who are serving with other agencies and organisations, and who are faithfully fulfilling their mission in some of the 'soft and hard' places around the world, bringing hope and peace to many.

Grave Historical Period

The period under review also had its fair share of challenges especially as it relates to the COVID – 19 pandemic. Many lives were lost in the process, and the economies of several countries were severely disrupted or destroyed. As a result of the latter, there was mass unemployment and a significant rise in poverty in many countries globally. Unfortunately, many families across the world could not even pay their last respects to their dead in a dignified manner as customary, because of the severe health risks. Currently, many of the congregations in some of the regions have not returned to pre – COVID 19 levels, and in some instances, many persons and nations are still battling with the socio – economic, mental and psychological impacts of that traumatic period.

Interestingly however, there was a paradoxical element to the COVID 19 scenario. While face - to – face church attendance in some parts of the world was prohibited by law, there was at the same time a dramatic increase in online attendance as persons still yearned for fellowship and social interaction. Many able-bodied persons are now viewing the online ministry as the most viable and preferred method of churchmanship. One source in response to that health phenomenon stated:

'Now is the time for global solidarity and support, especially with the most vulnerable in our societies, particularly in the emerging and developing world. Only together can we overcome the intertwined health and social and economic impacts of the pandemic and prevent its escalation into a protracted humanitarian and food security catastrophe, with the potential loss of already achieved developmental gains.'

Global Ongoing Challenges

Other significant factors like environmental hazards, escalating wars and tensions across the world, also negatively impacted the global community in one way or another over the

past six years, and to some extent may have temporarily derailed the global evangelistic efforts. With respect to the former, there have been diverse catastrophes across the world resulting in significant loss of lives and billions of dollars in damage to property. These catastrophes have taken the form of hurricanes, typhoons, tornadoes, flash floods, mudslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, drought, heat wave, wildfires, flooding, land collapse, to name a few. Indeed, no geographical area was exempted.

Generosity

I wish to take this opportunity to extend appreciation to World Hope International and other charitable organisations who have always risen to the challenge of responding to disasters and other pressing needs. In the Caribbean, we have been the beneficiary of such generosity. On December 27, 2020, St. Vincent and Barbados were severely impacted by the eruption of the La Soufriere Volcano in St. Vincent. On July 01, 2024, Hurricane Beryl ravaged the sister islands of Grenada – Carriacou and Petite Martinique, as well as St. Vincent and some of its sister Isles, including Union Island, Mayreau, Canouan and Bequia. Jamaica also suffered significant damage to its agricultural sector, while Barbados' fishing fleet of vessels was decimated and parts of the coastline of the country also suffered extensive damage. On both occasions, humanitarian assistance was extended to St. Vincent and some of the Grenadine islands by the Caribbean Wesleyan community, and World Hope in the case of the volcanic eruption, and by another United States benefactor in the case of hurricane Beryl. Assistance with the cutting of felled trees and a damaged parameter wall on the Campus of Caribbean Wesleyan College was extended by another US benefactor as well. The United States itself also experienced the fury of Beryl with damage estimated at between \$28 – 32 billion US. It is my understanding that the North American Wesleyan Community contributing significantly to some of the pressing needs on the home front, due to the damage and displacement caused by that hurricane.

I wish to further laud the efforts of World Hope International who conducted extensive Disaster Preparedness training in Barbados on July 20 -23, 2021 and subsequently a course conducted in Search and Rescue Operations in 2022. The Faith Based Organisations including The Wesleyan Holiness Church were significant beneficiaries of these initiatives. We remain hopeful that this programme can be extended to other parts of the Caribbean region. We are also aware that these humanitarian efforts are replicated by this noble organisation in a variety of ways including the provision of clean water and

improved sanitary and hygienic facilities for persons around the world, especially in areas where these assets are a scarce or non-existent commodity.

Guardian of our Resources

There is a prevailing view that some of the natural disasters which are linked to climate change, will increase in the future with negative consequences for humanity. As a church we must therefore become more conscious with respect to the preservation of our environment and reflect that undertaking in our orthodoxy and orthopraxis. As reiterated by one source: 'We must rethink the future of our environment and tackle climate change and environmental degradation with ambition and urgency. Only then can we protect the health, livelihoods, food security and nutrition of all people, and ensure that our 'new normal' is a better one.'

Undoubtedly, this commitment is applicable to all people everywhere, and as a community of faith, we must set the pace in educating those under our care about the urgency of this undertaking, and the stewardship implications as part of our Christian mandate.

Guidance

Followers of current affairs and international relations, whether on the home front or globally, will be uniquely aware of the myriad challenges that confront us as a human family. Apart from those mentioned previously, some of these challenges relate to Peace and Conflict, The Status of Women, Global Foresight and Decision Making, Global Ethics, Convergence of IT, The Rich – Poor Gap, Health Issues, Availability of Clean Water, Education and Learning, Democratization, Population and Resources, Energy, Transnational Crime and many more. The current 'hotspots' around the world make the first topic of special interest to all. The grim results of some of these engagements are portrayed before our eyes in the traditional mass media and the various online platforms daily. Let us continue to pray for the leaders of the world as well as for the peace of the world.

As a Wesleyan family, while we are not immune from some of the impacts, we can make a difference in our own sphere of influence by adopting perspectives which are biblically sound and shaped through informed consensus, thus empowering us to make intelligent and informed decisions which are upbuilding to our respective societies and communities. In this regard, The International Wesleyan Conference has already established such a

precedence by way of its 'We Speak with one voice' position papers on Human Trafficking, Homosexuality, Refugees, and Ending Gender Based Violence. These topics can be accessed at the following link: <https://icwc.wesleyan.org/resources>. I have no doubt that this undertaking will continue and expand in a more dynamic way in the future.

Great People: A Great Church

The past ten years as a member of the International Board of The Wesleyan Church, have afforded me the privilege to interface with some of our outstanding leaders across the globe. It has also provided me with a greater appreciation for the inner workings of our church at the international level. Indeed, there are more things that unite us as a Wesleyan family than divide us. It is my personal desire to see that unity extend in more tangible and dynamic ways, beyond just meeting every four years in a conference, but solidified through meaningful partnerships and agreements that will see a greater use of human resources across borders, embracing our global Wesleyan theological institutions and agencies and relevant personnel, for the empowerment and betterment of the global Church, especially in areas of significant need.

From the Caribbean perspective, we periodically hosted some of our North American brethren to minister to varied Caribbean audiences both online and face - to - face. Over the evaluative period, a significant contingent of Caribbean Youths also attended the 'Follow' Youth Conventions in North America for the deepening of cross – cultural ties, and key personnel from both North America and the Caribbean have been represented at each other's General Conferences. Personally, I have had the distinct privilege of visiting with our brothers and sisters in the Philippines on two occasions. I have no doubt that this level of interaction and 'cross – fertilization' has been happening in other parts of the Wesleyan World as well.

We cannot forget the outstanding contribution that Indiana Wesleyan University, Kingswood University, and other Wesleyan academic institutions in North America have been making to the development of the global Church consistently over the years. Many Wesleyans across the globe have benefitted immensely from generous scholarship opportunities which have afforded them a high-quality tertiary level education, and in many instances, they have returned to their respective countries and territories to empower others. This applies across a wide range of disciplines. For this level of benevolence, the international church is

eternally grateful. In the Caribbean and other developing countries, it is hoped that through meaningful agreements we can have some of our North American and other international students studying at Caribbean Wesleyan College in Jamaica and some of our other accredited institutions around the world.

One of the significant deterrents which prevent greater physical presence and interaction among Wesleyans in some instances, is the exorbitant travel costs, and a lack of direct travel routes. One prime example is the fact that while the Caribbean is not far removed from Africa, there are no direct routes between the Caribbean and this great continent, thus making travel to Africa and vice – versa, a long and expensive undertaking. This held true for many persons who attended our last International Conference in Barbados as well. Added to that is the differences across time zones, thus limiting the type of online activities that we can engage in. However, we anticipate the time in the not -too – distant future, when those incumbrances will be resolved for the enhancement of Afro- Caribbean Wesleyan and Afro- American Wesleyan relations and the general relations of Wesleyans of color with the African Wesleyan Church, as well as the church in the British Isles, which still has a significant number of its members with Caribbean and African roots.

However, I am happy to report that over the past six years the International Board of The Wesleyan Church leads by example, by holding frequent meetings over the entire period. The forums, which were very cordial and enlightening, provided the opportunity for updates with respect to challenges, problems and successes of the global Wesleyan Church. Adequate time was also given to prayer for special needs. Special forums on the Everywhere-to-Everywhere consultation were held with members of the International Board and other key stakeholders in Ohio, USA following the last North American General Conference. A similar consultation was undertaken in Europe from Feb. 8 -10, 2023 with representatives from around the world namely, Brazil, South Africa, Mozambique, Barbados, India, Panama, The Philippines, and the USA, to discuss the status of The International Wesleyan Church with respect to reaching the unreached peoples of the world. Based on reports from that consultation, one of the expressed views related to the fact that there needs to be a more broad – based approach to the global missional enterprise based on collaboration with respective National and Regional Conferences, and a greater ‘buy-in’ by such entities in the management and execution of the plans, strategies, and approaches of Global Partners.

One pleasing activity was the periodic 40 days of prayer sponsored by the North American Conference which culminated with international participants in corporate prayer at Pentecost. Some people from North America also participated in the Caribbean's Annual Week of Prayer. Additionally, the Executive Director of Global Partners (North America) attended many of the special meetings, events and conferences around the world, and provided the Board with timely reports as was necessary. His leadership of the global mission and his vast knowledge of the international church has truly been inspirational.

We anticipate in the future a greater sharing of information on the website of The International Wesleyan Church, and the initiation of partnerships across boundaries. This process has already started and can be enforced and expanded in a more systematic and concentrated way. I am aware that in the past the Zambian and Australian churches have shared newsletters highlighting some of the happenings in their area. That knowledge will undoubtedly provide a better understanding of each other and at the same time motivate us to respond to the needs of each other through prayer and other tangible ways as circumstances warrant.

Good News

There was improved classification of some of the geographical areas of the global Church namely the National Canadian Conference, the Ibero – America Regional Conference, and the South Pacific Conference, coupled with corresponding membership on the International Board of The Wesleyan Church. I am equally happy that other areas are also earnestly working towards National, Regional and General Conference status as well. Other special achievements included the occasion of the celebration of the centennial of The Egyptian Church, on which I extended written congratulations in my capacity as chairman on behalf of the International Board, the commencement of the construction of the Africa Wesleyan University College of Zambia, the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Caribbean Wesleyan Church as a General Conference, and the retirement from active pastor duties of the Rev. Dr. Oldain Charles of the Barbados District, who in his capacity as Assistant General Superintendent, previously served the International Board for a period of 12 years.

Dr. Dennis Jackson – Executive Director of Global Partners (North America) extended words of appreciation and congratulations on behalf of the global Church at the official retirement and appreciation service for Dr. and Mrs. Charles following 50 years of ministry and 48 years of marriage, at a special service held in Barbados on October 22, 2024. Similar congratulatory messages were extended to the Caribbean church by Rev. Dr. Stephen Elliot – National Superintendent of the Canadian National Conference, and member of the International Board, and Bishop Dr. Alfred Kalembo – former Bishop of the Zambian Church and likewise a member of the International Board, who extended those greetings and celebratory remarks on behalf of the wider African Wesleyan community.

Gifts & Good will

The Christian community the world over, recently celebrated Christmas which essentially focuses on the gift of love in the person of Jesus who sacrificed his life for the sins of the world (John 3: 16). That love also binds us together in a common hope and reality, irrespective of race, class, or creed. That great African proverb is worth repeating here: ‘A Person is a Person Because of Other People.’

I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and thanks to this Conference for the opportunity to serve as Chairman of the International Board for the past six years. Concomitantly, I wish to also extend those sentiments to my colleagues on the Board, those past and present, whose cooperation, counsel, wisdom and expertise have been an enriching experience for all of us.

In this vein, I wish to also cherish the memory of all Wesleyans who have passed to their eternal rest since we last met in Barbados in 2019. We thank God for their ministry and are assured that a crown of righteousness awaits them for their faithful and selfless service.

Special thanks are also extended to Global Partners whose office facilitated some of the key aspects of our meetings. In this regard, we must recognize the sterling contribution of Mrs. Taylor Harter in the facilitation of these meetings, as well as her phenomenal contribution in the secretariat for the Barbados conference and subsequently. Similarly, her successor Mrs. Rebekah Raffa has given excellent service to the International Board and Conference for which we are eternally grateful. The efforts of all other resource people,

including the staff of Global Partners, whether for our regular or special meetings, and the International Conference, are greatly appreciated.

However, it would be remiss of me if I did not mention the excellent contribution of the core international group who met in Johannesburg from Feb. 16 -20, 2024 to brainstorm, plan, and basically lay the foundation for the conference in terms of the programme and presenters. I must also further single out the exceptional contribution of Rev. Nikki Nettleton (Global Partners) and Rev. Doctor Galela (South Africa) who were appointed the official coordinators of the International Conference. Indeed, they have been very professional in their approach to their undertaking, reports to the International Board were frequent and prompt, and in no small measure have contributed immensely to the success of our meeting in a few short days. The Event Planner – Mrs. Winnie Malete has been equally graceful, helpful, and accommodating.

As I pass on the baton to my colleague Dr. Amos Anteg, I wish to pledge my full support to him and the entire Board, as we seek to carry out the mandate of the International Conference. Like you - our esteemed delegates and friends. I am happy to be a part of this great organization called The Wesleyan Church. I wish therefore to encourage you to make full use of all the sessions devised with your upliftment and empowerment in mind, whether it is engagement in meaningful discussion and debate of the various resolutions which will be part of the business segment, general enlightenment through the various lectures and related activities, or the times of refreshment through corporate worship and prayer. Above all else, may we seek to deepen our experience with God and establish partnerships and linkages which will serve us well as we go forward together in the great business of soul winning.

I finally close by extending thanks to God for his favor as I approach 48 years of faithful and dedicated service in the Sacred Ministry. Thanks are also extended to my wife Beverley and son Adriel, the General Board of Administration of the Caribbean General Conference, and the wider Wesleyan community nationally, regionally and internationally for their prayerful support and encouragement.

Significantly, the Government of my country – The Republic of Barbados, has bestowed on me at our 58th year of Independence on November 30, 2024 – its second highest National

Honour and Award - The Order of the Republic for distinguished service to The Wesleyan Church, Education, and Youth and Community Development. That ministry also spanned some 26 years of teaching Religious Education and other disciplines at Harrison College – one of the premier Government Secondary Schools in Barbados, and some 36 years of Ministry as part of the Chaplaincy team of the Barbados Defence Force. For this level of service, I was also commissioned as a Captain. As good Christians and Wesleyans our service to God and humanity is not driven by earthly awards or accolades. Yet we are humbled and appreciative of such favor and honour and I wish to thank our Wesleyan brothers and sisters across the globe for helping to make this possible.

To God be the glory; great things He has done!

Humbly submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joel Cumberbatch".

Joel Cumberbatch (Rev. Dr.)

District Superintendent – The Wesleyan Holiness Church of the Caribbean &
The Chairman – The International Board of The Wesleyan Church