



OPCEMI *news*

CIRCOLARE AUTUNNO 2024

Meditation

Galatians 1:1-5

Paul an apostle - sent neither by human commissiom nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the father, who raised him from the dead – and all members of God’s family who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God our father and Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.



Dear brothers and sisters, a letter, every letter, comes written with a very precise motive. All the writings of Paul are letteres: have you wondered why? Why did he always and only used them to talk about faith, grace, Christ, or instead of writing another gospel, a text that contains his theological thoughts, his history and his concerns?

I will respond to this question this way: Paul writes letters because first, he is a pastor who has a series of distant communities to take care of therefore, it is insufficeint to preach only orally. And also, a written text that captures all his thought would not be enough because for Paul communication to his society always has a particular motive.

The letter to the Galatians is a written with a sense of urgency. Paul is a shepered that has to care for his sheep in different places outside the confines of Isreal, divided by sea, desert and mountains, diverse languages, history and culture. A care that he feels is necessary especially when it is the gospel of God in question, which for him is the gospel of the cross, the gospel that talks about faith in the death and ressurection of Jesus our saviour.

This is not an easy thing, especially in a time when this *good news* was not accepted by all. Paul who at first was part of the persecutors and he knows very well thier ways for silencing christains, now has turned all his attention to those who receive this news because **no one can convince him that there exists another gospel**, another good news that does not have the name of Jesus of Nazareth and that does not include his death and ressurection as a gift of God to humanity. We also know that we do not anymore communicate with written letters, it is too slow in a world where we only have to press a buttom to send a message to any part of the world. We also know that when

only have to press a button to send a message to any part of the world. We also know that when there is an emergency, the fastest and secured way is to send a message. It is important to note the verb: "send".

Yes, Paul in his letters when he is the sender, always puts the word "sent" next to his name apostle. Not a position, a calling, a title, but a purpose, not something he does, but something he is. An apostle, for Paul represents all his sense of existence and the foundations of his faith. He the persecutor becomes the persecuted, he who wanted to silence every voice that spoke about Jesus Christ, now is the voice of the Christ that lives in him. Sent yes, but by who? He is not a paper letter that was written by human hands, that needs to be sent to a destination. No, he is not sent from humans. He is a letter of flesh and blood that has been sent by Jesus Christ and God the Father. This his assurance makes the word apostle not only another name he has taken on, but the sense of an new life, the light on our path and the objective of the mission.

The name Paul and the verb *send*, are inseparable according to Paul, while for those who consider him only a renegade madman, that name and that verb are separable. Although not directly, from the very beginning of his mission Paul finds headwinds against his witness to the gospel. Who is he that from being the champion of the battle against the followers of Christ, now becomes their voice to the point of wanting to go beyond the borders to reach out to the Gentiles, the heathen, those who know nothing of Christ to tell the world that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead by God the Father? And so every mission of Paul in a foreign land is often followed by a mission contrary to his own that seeks to maintain the Jewish law as the foundation of membership of God's people. compare with the one at home

This precisely what happened in Galatia, one of the oldest geographical zones which today is a part of Turkey, where Paul went for one of his missionary journeys to proclaim the good news. Now there is no time for another journey, there is an urgency that needs to be addressed immediately, because someone is denying what Paul preached. There is no time for a long journey as this, maybe there is not a lot of financial resources and this Paul of flesh and blood, a man of mission, who uses the paper letter to reach his recipients and reiterate with force the gospel of Jesus Christ. The letter for Paul is a way to do theology, to speak of God and connect with those far away, ears and heart that do not know the truth about God that is closer to and embracing humanity .

We are debtors in the letter to the Galatians, of an announcement of liberty that is not only written on a paper, but a sword that cuts the cords that holds us to sin and its seduction. A letter is not a private act, because a letter is always directed to a recipient and whom it is always written for. A letter is not a random act but, its is motivated by a thought that one wants to share. And the letter to the Galatians resonates with us today, men and women who do not write or receive letters anymore, like a new announcement but not expected, because we too like the Galatians 2000 years ago and maybe more than them, are surrounded by voices that want to distance us from the gospel of Christ. And that is why this letter today speaks to our reality, enslaved by the idea that we can do without God, assuming a God exists.

And it is for this reason that these five verses resound to us like the sound of a trumpet in the silent of the night, the night of our faith. A potent sound that calls to us christians, to which Paul announces grace and peace, far more than a greeting, grace and peace that has been received and needs to be given.

Grace to you and peace from God our father and Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever.

Grace and peace, given as a gift, the gift of Jesus' life so that sins could be nailed with him on the cross and so that we could be protected from an evil world, from an evil time that wants to draw us to itself in order to draw us away from the truth. Grace and peace, given to be given the gift of Jesus crucified for our freedom, to free us from the chains that bind us to the materiality of our human being so that we might be liberated and made aware of our having been created in the image and likeness of God.

Grace and peace, given to be given, the gift of the resurrected Jesus who is breathing on us his spirit to send us into the world, just like Paul did, to announce to all the peace and grace and to be ourselves a gift to the world.

So let us not be afraid to be a letter ourselves to the world, sent by the word of God, apostles too, on a mission to proclaim grace and peace, the gift of Jesus who died and rose again. He, the only way to freedom from ourselves, from our human carnality, from our impulses, from our selfishness, from our desire for immortality, from our claim to be our own god. Like the prophet Isaiah, we too pray to

God saying, 'benoid, send me'. Amen.

(Past. Nicola Tedoldi, Vice President – OPCEMI)

News from local Churches

The 8th circuit of the methodists and waldensian churches organizes for the ecclesiastical year 2024-2025 the 4th **CYCLE OF STUDY SEMINARS ON METHODISM**. The meetings will take place online on the zoom platform on 07/11/2024, 06/02/2025, 20/03/2025, and 08/05/2025. All the churches are invited to participate in the seminars.

To register, write an e-mail to: ntedoldi@chieesavalde.org.

The 6th Circuit on the 30 November is expected to have a course on Circuits in presence in Milan, it will be conducted by Professor Daniele Garrone.



Evangelical Methodist Church of Gorizia

On the 26th September, at the church, there was an ecumenical service held in its Garden for the Time of the Created at 18:00 in Via Diaz 18/a. The ecumenical celebration is organized by the Ecumenical Group and Rev Jens Hansen will participate for the protestant component and Don Santi Grasso for the Catholic part.

On Saturday the 23rd November at 18:00, there will be a Concert by the Jazz group "Pericopers+1" for the launch of their new album "Good Morning World". The event is connected to GO2025! Gorizia-Nova Gorica Capitali Europeer della Cultura, which is part of a project financed by 8x1000 valdese.





Evangelical Methodist Church of Milan

The Milan Methodist Church reports below two moments where emotions, support and mutual listening could be expressed, which enriched the being Church Together that distinguishes it.

The first was during worship in May where a discussion was held on the theme of work to understand its importance for the various members of the community. Among the various contributions that emerged were the importance of a job where one takes care of people, the satisfaction when one's skills are recognised, the responsibility and calling of being present in society.

The other moment is during the synod where Sophie Langeneck and Kassim Conteh were the protagonists. The former led the opening worship of the synod and the latter was consecrated as pastoral ministry. The church in Milan organised a day trip by bus to Torre Pellice to attend the worship and consecration to support them and show their joy.

Evangelical Methodist Church of Udine

29th October – time 18:30

The Methodist church of Udine/Wesley hall – there will be the a presentation of the last book of Michele Cassese: **Before God and the community.**





FCEI

The project **'Let's stop the hatred, let's help the peacemakers'** is an FCEI initiative to respond to the dark logic of radicalisation and opposing sides, to act as peacemakers. Indeed, the project has two objectives to be an alternative to the polarisation of the debate on this issue both in the public world and in our communities by contributing concrete and positive actions. The other is to be an example of humanitarian engagement and to take the step on the difficult path of peacebuilding. FCEI's wish is to obtain financial support from the federated churches to give an accelerated start to this very important project.

INFO

News from abroad



European Methodist Council

The European Methodist Council annual meeting took place this year in Lisburn (North Ireland) from the 4th to the 7th of October 2024 and the President of OPCEMI and Rev. Mirella Manocchio attended this meeting.



At the World Methodist Council conference of the 2024 which took place in Gothenburg Sweden, Rev. Dr Reynaldo Ferreira Leao Neto was elected as the new General Secretary and Revd. Dr. Debra Wallace – Padgett as the new president of the WMC. The President Past. Luca Anziani and Past. Ulrike Jourdan were elected to be members of the council.

Methodist Consultation





The Methodist Consultation will take place in presence at the Centro Ecumene, Velletri (RM) on the 23, 24, and 25 May, 2025. It will begin with a dinner on the Friday and conclude with a lunch on the Sunday. We request that all registrations be sent by the 5th of May 2025.

ECUMENE WEBSITE

Calendar Sedute CP



NAPOLI

16/17 November 2024

ROMA

- 11/12 January 2025

- 15/16 March 2025

- 26/27 April 2025

- 28/2 June 2025

CENTRO ECUMENE VELLETRI

23 May 2025

Interview from Synod





Below is the interview between Enrico Bertolini, member of the permanent committee of OPCMI, and Fabio Perroni, member of the Methodist Church in Rome Via XX Settembre, at the past synod.

Q: Now it is not the first time you have come as a deputy to the Synod, how did you experience it this year compared to previous ones?

Every synod is different, unique, not repeatable, because the members are different, but even if deputies were the same, a different atmosphere is created each time, which is the result of the journey made by each and every one of the deputies, but above all in the path that the church both locally and nationally has taken over the past year. There is a continuous growth. This year, personally, 'I experienced it with greater responsibility, active participation, and a greater fraternity. This is true both in the general discussion and in the participation in the agendas.

Q: Among the three 'political' motions (Peace in the Middle East, differentiated autonomy, tax fairness) which one did you find most 'important' as an evangelical witness?

All three motions are important. The three topics strongly affect aspects of our daily lives, our society and our being in the following of Jesus as individuals and as a community. The synod focused on the state of inequality that our country, our brothers and sisters, strongly experience.

Motions are a cry and at the same time a stand against measures that will certainly create new poverty, increasing the already existing ones, which we cannot accept or keep silent. Measures that increase the rifts and distances between citizens. Inequalities brought to value and not to be bridged. But what I consider most important as a document promoted by the synod is the one on peace, for different reasons. The first is because we had, we have, lost as a priority education, training and dedicating time and energy to peace and therefore to justice. Moreover, it is a topic that has divided and still divides communities, and to have managed to draft a document that found a general agreement was fundamental. Of course, each synod would have accentuated a part or inserted missing elements, but the synthesis found is an excellent basis for discussion in the churches. Discussion that will bring out different views, but will minimize fractures and divisions if shared in the depth of the spirit of the agenda. The synod had courage and a spirit of dialogue. Faced with the difficulties of an initial text, it worked on because it believed that a strong position had to be taken, because the historical moment demands it. And it was taken with a strong and evangelical spirit.

Q: Which discussions did you miss?

I missed two discussions. Or rather, I would have given more attention and sharing among the members: the crisis of our churches as membership and participation and the 'new ministries' related topics one the consequence perhaps of the other. I find it lacking in perspective that only 32 churches responded to the questionnaire proposed by our executives. I am aware of the difficulties in facing or even accepting as reality this period of decline that surely frightens many. But we must deeply realise that only if we seriously put fraternal relationships, the gospel and the Lord at the centre of our church life, then we would no longer be frightened by the darkness.