
Fwd: Here's BRIDGES for May 2022

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Ber

WE PRAY FOR THE WORLD



WORLD OF THE DAY

The world outside is at war, people need love,
and You and I are here with a purpose to pray for all of them,
so, enough judging, let's pray for the people, because they
need our prayers...

--Image courtesy of Arca de Noe



BRIDGES

Official Newsletter of
The World Fellowship Of YMCA Retirees
May 2022 * [View as Webpage](#)



Notes from the chair...



Hello Albrecht,

As I write this, my brain has conflicting thoughts of optimism and pessimism, of hope and despair. We are 85 days away from convening the 7th WFYR Conference in Denmark where we will celebrate the work of the YMCA and its retirees in making the world a better place to live.

However, on 24 February, war began in Ukraine, and once again we must come to grips with the atrocities that occur when one country invades another. Despite

these conflicting thoughts, it is never good to give into pessimism.

Thus, my goal for Denmark remains to celebrate the **FELLOWSHIP** that exists among YMCA people everywhere. YMCA Europe has joined hands to help refugees from the Ukraine War. WFYR has brought 70 staff into a **GLOBAL RETIREMENT INITIATIVE** in the past four years, so they may have a pension during retirement that allows them to live in dignity. YMCA Retirees throughout the world accomplished the goal of doubling the amount of gifts made to **SECOURS SPECIAUX** (World YMCA Emergency Assistance Fund) to ensure that the most-needy among us received financial support during the height of the pandemic and for ongoing critical financial and health needs.

And, the WFYR's FUTURE is secure as we look forward to the formal election of Chairman-nominee **Kohei Yamada** to serve as the WFYR leader for 2022 – 2026. He will be the first non-USA person to lead this important organization.

I pledge my support to him, and WFYR, during his leadership. My final goal is that WFYR continues to define the **NEW NORMAL FOR RETIREES**. We must be actively engaged in responding to the world's problems and offering our help, not from the sidelines or rear lines, but from the front lines.

Let us remind ourselves of Christian teachings that two roads are before us. One leads to despair, one leads to hope. It is up to each of us which road we travel.

Phil Dwyer

WFYR Chair



Thoughts from the editors...

We received a puppy for Christmas and our retired lifestyle has been altered. However, getting up very early for a quick outing has enabled us to enjoy some glorious sunrises at our shore home.



Easter morning was particularly spectacular, as the full moon shone like a spotlight on a cloudless night and we both were down on the beach to rejoice with others as the sun rose to bless a new dawn. What a glorious way to celebrate Easter.

This morning the moon was half shadowed as we read the news of the barbaric war in the Ukraine. It seems like the entire world is shadowed in gloom and despair as we witness the slaughter of innocents amidst the bravery of those resisting aggression.

COVID 19 still creates an environment that prevents return to normalcy for most of our WFYR groups, but this edition of *Bridges* provides news of gatherings, projects and plans that are encouraging to report.

The World YMCA Conference in Aarhus will be in-person and virtual, allowing for those not ready or able to travel to join many of the events via Zoom video technology. Our friends in Canada are using virtual sessions to increase involvement of retirees with current YMCA leaders across the country. Retirees in the U.S. have raised over half a million dollars to initiate and sustain a housing and partnership program with a Native American tribe that has its own YMCA serving families on the reservation.

Your editors are going to obtain interviews and pictures of WFYR delegates in Aarhus, but after the gathering, we have been invited to visit **Guenther and Margaret Ozdyk**, retirees from Germany in their home and join in local activities. That will make our journey just that much more special. We are indeed thankful for the opportunity these WFYR "Ambassadors" are offering and we plan to relate our experiences in future editions of *Bridges*.

WFYR will be changing leadership in Aarhus. Your editors have enjoyed working with Chairman Phil and look forward to providing support for **Kohei Yamada's** leadership in the coming years.

We close these comments with a prayer for war clouds to soon stop obscuring the beauty of our sunrises and dawn of a new day.

Len and Joyce Wilson
Editors

Y's Retired of the UK;
'Good to feel the fellowship...'

By Graham Clark, President

In what has been a difficult year for everyone, it has been good to feel the warmth and strength of the fellowship of **Y's Retired**, even through the tedious days of lockdown and the inability to hold physical gatherings.



We were particularly saddened by the death of our founder President Reg Wake at the age of 100.

For so many, he was an inspiration and a shining example of Christian Service and it is a source of great regret we have been unable (as yet) to celebrate his life in person.

Our Secretary's report pays tribute to other friends and colleagues who have passed on to eternal rest. We remember them with gratitude and pray for those who will miss them most.

We have not been purely inward looking. It was very satisfying to be able to reach out to colleagues in great need in other parts of the world by arranging a donation from the former APS/AOS benevolent fund to be made to **Secours Speciaux**.

The changing world has brought some advantages! The presence of Zoom has enabled The Scottish group to meet virtually and to have a Presidential Visit! It has also enabled more personal conversations between officers and will enable an AGM to happen in real time.

We hope that during the course of this year we will be able to follow the Scottish model and hold some Regional or National get togethers. We also are looking at freshening up our constitution but we promise not to make that too exciting!

I am sure everyone will want to join in expressing sincere thanks to David Smith for his tireless editing of the Newsletter and 'One YMCA' in Watford for distributing the hard copies. Thanks to Andrew Jenkins for keeping the finances on track and thanks to Vic Hills for keeping us all on track.

With the rest of the world, we look forward in faith together to a more positive year when family and friends will be able to share together as we would want.

IFYR Japan:

'Doing something to bring peace'

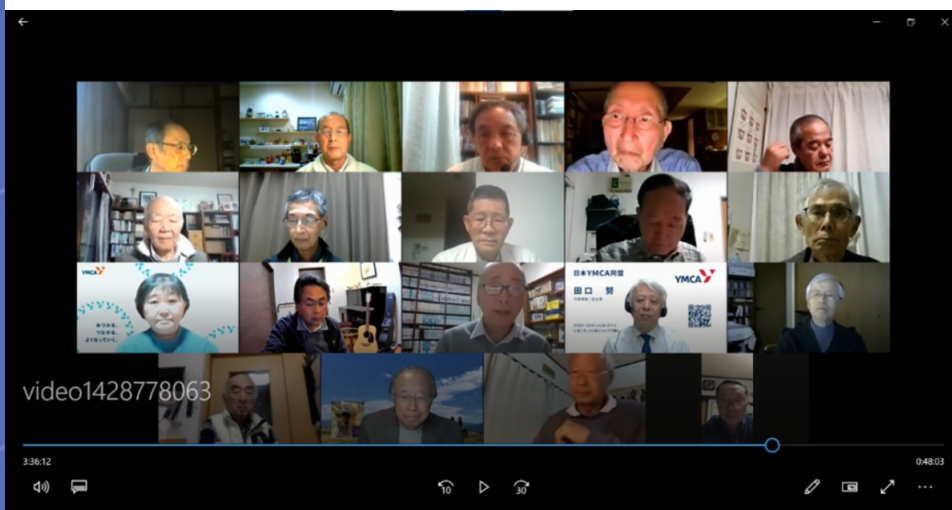
By **Shinichi Sakata**, JFYR Chair



We have a lot of sad news right now regarding Russia attacking Ukraine. We watched a special program on TV focusing on the speech of the Ukraine President. That made us angry with the one-way view of Russian politicians. Right now the National Council of YMCAs of Japan has been trying to accept Ukraine refugees to Japanese communities through YMCA roots between Japan and European YMCAs. I hope this could be a time for the YMCA all over the world to do something that could bring peace in the world.

Here I would like to introduce what we have done in JFYR this year.

On Nov. 20, 2021 in the afternoon, 19 of the JFYR members met via Zoom to hold our 15th General Assembly of JFYR of 2021. One of the agenda items was about the officers of JFYR. The current officers accepted they will stay in office because the activities in the last two years have been very limited due to COVID 19.



The main theme for this general meeting of JFYR was about the relationship between Japan and Korea, our neighboring country. How can we build a better and warmer relationship between the two neighboring countries? The speaker was **Mr. Sunam Kim**, who was born in Japan as a descent of Korean parents, therefore he was born Korean in Japan. He was the General Secretary of Korean YMCA of Japan in Tokyo. His speech title was "Future Relationship between Japan and Korea."

His main topic was the following three points concerning the current issues between the two countries.

- ① Territorial disputes about a small island located between the two countries. Both Japan and Korea have insisted their territorial rights and fight and blame each other.
- ② Comfort Women during WWII: During the war, many Korean women were brought into Japan as comfort women to the Japanese soldiers. Those women have fought in court for their rights to be compensated.
- ③ Forced Labor: The issue of being forced to work without proper compensation in Japanese companies during the war. Those people appealed their right to be compensated in Korean Court, which has decided and ordered those companies to pay back wages to them. However due to political reasons this issue and court case are still being continued in the Korean Court system.

Those political and historical gaps between the two neighboring countries still exist unfortunately. In this reality, and on the other hand, Japan YMCAs and Korean YMCAs have kept a platform for youth exchange for many years.

From Germany:
Remembering Dietrich Reitzner

By **Albrecht Kaul**, Vice-chair Europe

Dietrich Reitzner was very active for Austria and Eastern Europe. His death is a great loss for Europe and the YMCA worldwide.



"Even a journey of 1000 miles begins with the first step." One of the striking words that **Dietrich Reitzner** used as a motto in his employee training courses. Now he has taken the last step and his Lord, whom he served faithfully and energetically, has taken him in.

On January 9, 2022, he passed away at the age of 84 and was buried in Vienna. His life was characterized by missionary work and even before his training at the Johanneum in Wuppertal, he was already employed by the YMCA in Vienna.

Two years of work in the YMCA Langerfeld in Wuppertal followed before he was called back to Vienna. At first he worked for the city association and soon as general secretary for the YMCA Austria. The "Salzburg Youth Day" and many ideas go back to his initiative. The special postage stamp, however, is a grateful idea of his family!

From 1987 on, Dieter was employed for the development of the YMCA in the Eastern Bloc countries - that's where his heart was! Even we in the GDR benefited from it. Again and again he came - sometimes unexpectedly - and asked how we were doing, what our plans were and how we could live our faith under socialism. As a "citizen of the West" he was not allowed to be privately accommodated, but had to stay in the Interhotel (East German chain of luxury hotels) for hard currency.

I often drove him to the front steps of the hotel "Bellevue" in Dresden, which the Stasi did not fail to notice. He was a regular guest at the hotel "Jalta" on Wenceslas Square in Prague. In Czechoslovakia, around the time of the fall of communism, he held intensive talks on how to get back the YMCA house in Prague and how to build up a functioning YMCA. He was even able to win the deputy president **Josef Hromadka** as an ally in this matter.

He had been in contact with spiritual leaders in Hungary since 1965. All in all he has been to Hungary about 200 times and was inspired to revive the YMCA there, which unfortunately was not wanted by the church in order not to provoke the government. His efforts were not so much structural, but he relied on committed local volunteers and influential pastors.



His staff training especially nurtured the potential of volunteers. In doing so, the Paris Basis was his guide: To win young people for young people in order to spread the Master's kingdom. As soon as it was possible to invite young people from the CSSR and Hungary to Austria, he arranged large training courses in Neufeld - a YMCA recreation center. The YMCA's refugee work began there, and he was responsible for it in cooperation with the UN.

After socialism also came to a miserable end in Romania, he founded with the young Christians there the 2 + 5 Initiative (staff training). The humble beginning with two fish and five loaves of bread was to give courage and become a movement that would make the YMCA possible again in the battered country.

When he could no longer work at the European YMCA in 1994, he remained committed to his vocation. He has set up training courses for destitute farmers in Romania for "World Vision." Finally, after his retirement, he put all his energy into the YMCA Vienna and tried to make evangelization and inspirational youth work possible with help from Germany.

Dietrich Reitzner was also a man of the Evangelical Alliance. In Austria he was a member of the steering committee and even before the Peaceful Revolution he traveled to Bad Blankenburg to the annual Alliance conference in the GDR. He was inspired by the 2-3 thousand young people there. He discussed with them until late at night and he knew the spiritual power of these conscious Christians would change something in the GDR. This finally happened through God's intervention and the courage of the people on the streets in 1989. Dieter is the only one who got a real piece of concrete of the fallen Berlin Wall from me.

YMCA Alumni (USA): *'A thrilling response to service...'*

By **Jean Carmichael**, President

YMCA Alumni have been thrilled with the response our members have shown for our new National Service Project. To date, generous YMCA Alumni donors have contributed more than half a million dollars in support of the initial phase of the project to build a village of tiny homes and program centers in partnership with the Sioux YMCA in Dupree, South Dakota.



The outpouring of support, both financially and in volunteerism, has been heart-warming. The first two groups of volunteers are set to break ground and begin construction this month with four more "waves" scheduled in July and October.

Still another important volunteer project



By **Wayne Uhrig**, Chair

That is not the only volunteer project that is up and running again as pandemic restrictions are slowly being lifted. **Matt Leininger** of York, PA is spending 10 weeks in Nuremberg, Germany as an International Service Corps (ISC) volunteer.



He is analyzing the YMCA's new facility to make more use of it for YMCA programming. We encourage all of our friends and family in WFYR to let us know of any international of volunteer opportunities where YMCA Alumni and ISC could provide assistance.



Founded in 1898, the Nuremberg YMCA moved into a large, new facility in the city center in 1960. A large amount of space has provided dormitory-style rooms for teenage refugees as well as space rented to partners, companies and private individuals.

The Y leadership wants to rework the use of the facility to make more use of it for YMCA programs. Leininger, who has served as CEO/Executive Director in PA, IN, MI and MD, will volunteer 20 hours per week to survey and analyze current use and assist with developing a sustainable strategy for future use. As a bonus, he is bringing pickleball equipment to begin a new program in the gymnasium. *(Photo: Basketball court line for pickleball)*

World Brotherhood Fund in Sri Lanka



By **Kurt Kaboth**, YMCA Alumni Board Member

YMCA Alumni (WFYR) and participating U.S. YMCAs have fully executed an agreement to provide a pension plan for eligible Sri Lankan YMCA staff. Ten new pensioners have been enrolled.

Finally, what do YMCA Alumni and the YMCA Retirement Fund have in common? Try 100 years! The year was 1922 when YMCA Alumni began and the YMCA Retirement was "born." Therefore 2022 is a very important milestone for both organizations.

Latin America LACA: *Agape postponed to 2023*

WFYR-LACA News

Agape 2022

INFORMATION

Dear friends and colleagues. Through this memo the Regional Executive Committee (REC) for the Latin American and Caribbean Area of the WFYR (World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees, signed by our Regional Vice President, Roberto Uriá Méndez, fulfills the obligation to inform that the AGAPE 2022 event has been postponed to the year 2023, for reasons beyond our control. We hope to continue counting on your support and adhesion for future ventures and, above all, on your understanding of the reasons for this collective decision.



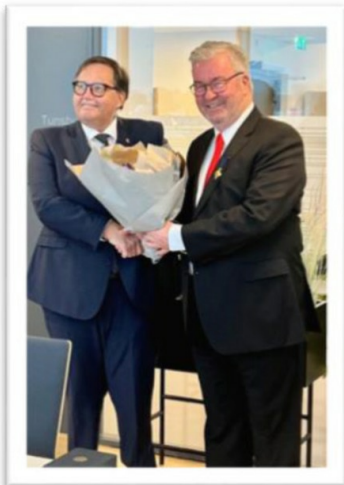
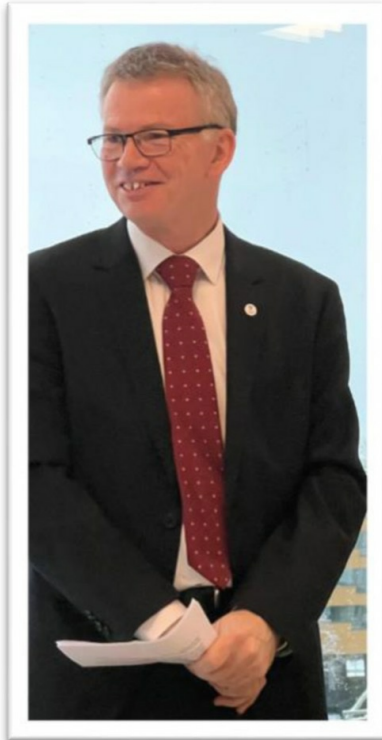
Fraternal greetings,

Maria Josefina Ríos V.

Secretary - CER - LACA

'For outstanding service...'

**MAJOR AWARD FOR
JOHAN VILHELM ELTVIK**
Secretary General of
World Alliance of YMCAs
2011-2018



His Majesty the King of Norway has appointed me Officer of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit "for outstanding service in the interest of Norway and of Mankind."

The submission was given by the Governor of the State and took place at the Bishop's office following an invitation from Bishop Jan Otto Myrseth.

The Governor of the State, the Bishop and Secretary General Øystein Magelssen in Norway's KFUK-KFUM gave speeches.

Friends from around the world of YMCA - I share this honour with all of you - thank you!

YMCA Alumni of Canada: *Looking at post-pandemic Ys*

By **Franco Savoia**, President

What will be the post pandemic normal in the YMCA?

The Canadian YMCA Alumni hosted its first 2022 virtual gathering on March 8. A panel of 4 CEOs from across our country shared their learning through the pandemic and provided their glimpses into the future. The short answer to the question of the new normal is that no one really knows.



The past two years have been most challenging. Seventeen YMCA centres have been closed never to reopen. Ys have had to do several lay offs as local health authorities imposed lengthy restrictions to keep communities healthy and safe. The financial assistance provided by all three orders of government has been most helpful. However over the past year these temporary supports have been greatly reduced.

As Y boards and senior staff confronted these challenges and with strong and effective national leadership, they came together and collaborated to respond to the issues in their communities and opportunities as never before. YMCAs “parked” their strategic plans.

Together they leveraged their strengths to use new digital approaches to continue to provide such programs and fitness and employment counselling online. YMCA facilities became food distribution and vaccination centres. Virtual staff and volunteer townhalls became normal. CEOs met virtually frequently regionally and nationally to share their resources and seek common solutions. The community’s response to the Y’s challenges was humbling: most Canadian Y’s philanthropic results grew.

As Ys come out of the pandemic, they are developing new strategic plans that incorporates the learning and experience of the pandemic. Hybrid communication approaches that combines in person with online platforms is the new reality. And it will be frequent.

Y leadership has understood collaboration is the most effective way to deepen Y impact in the community. This will take many forms from new mergers between neighbouring Ys to shared services such as human resources, IT and finance and administration. The focus will be on making a difference in the community rather on protecting the Y’s local autonomy.

In addition the pandemic has had an impact on the entire social sector. Some estimate that up to 25 percent of agencies and charities will not survive. Yet the community’s needs continue to escalate. Coordination and collaboration, in a world of scarce resources, are increasingly the norm. Some funders have begun to redraft their investment criteria to align with the new realities.



The CEOs were optimistic about the future as they together work at divining their future. As Y leaders they foresee more opportunities than challenges going forward. One of these is the reality there are a number of CEO and senior staff retirements across the Canadian Ys. Some of the new staff leaders are coming externally into the Y. They will bring new and fresh insights to meet the opportunities.

The Canadian Y Alumni were heartened to be part of this conversation with the panel of CEOs. Similar to the crises that Y Alumni confronted when they were in the “Y Wheel House”, there were challenges that created opportunities. The pandemic was a deep and pervasive crisis. And thus there will be long lasting changes as the post pandemic normal evolves. The Y leadership is in place to get the Y there in the decades to come.

The gathering was recorded for all Alumni to access. The Canadian Y Alumni will support in any way possible the Canadian Y leadership as the post pandemic normal evolves.

The next video gathering will be held in June.

IFYR (India): *A Silver Jubilee*



The 25th Annual meet and Silver Jubilee celebrations were held from 28th to 30th March, 2022 at YMCA International House Vepery, hosted by Madras YMCA. There were 35 participants including 12 spouses.

The colorful inaugural function started at 6 p.m. The Chief **Guest Mr. Justice J B Koshy**, President of the National Council of YMCAs India inaugurated the Jubilee Celebrations by lighting the traditional lamp. He in his inaugural address commended on the outstanding service being done by the Professional Secretaries at local, national and international levels. He wished them long and healthy life and solicited their cooperation and support in carrying out the mission and vision of the YMCA Movement in India.

Mr. Bertram Devadas, NGS, **Dr. Vincent George**, President Madras YMCA and Regional Chairman, **Dr. M. D. David** the famous YMCA Historian, and **Mr. Asir Pandiam**, President AOS and General Secretary YMCA, offered their felicitations. The Jubilee message was delivered by **Mr. T. Thomas**, President IFYR. He thanked the National YMCA and Madras YMCA for their patronage and enormous support extended towards making the Jubilee celebrations a grand success.

He thanked God for the vision and commitment of the founder leaders of IFYR and the efforts put in by all the past leaders in making it a strong fellowship. He praised God for making the jubilee celebrations a reality despite the hardship and havoc created by the COVID 19 pandemic. He made an ardent call to the members to go forward without getting dismayed. **Mr. Stanley Karkada**, Chairman of the Jubilee Committee, welcomed the gathering and **Mr. Swaraj Sircar**, Secretary IFYR, proposed a vote of thanks.

The Jubilee Memoir depicting the history and activities of IFYR was formally released at the meeting. Lifetime service/achievement awards were presented to 30 retirees who successfully completed their YMCA careers and then retired. It was a great recognition for them. The meeting was followed by special dinner hosted by Madras YMCA.

Photos: Above -- 30th March, 2022 at YMCA International House Vepery, hosted by Madras YMCA. There were 35 participants including 12 spouses.
Below -- Singing in a regional language at the morning devotion.



WFYR Leaders

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