



BRIDGES

PUBLISHED BY THE WORLD FELLOWSHIP OF YMCA RETIREES

The Chalice Letter

Feliz Navidad el Camino de Santiago

The aromatic scent waifs through the narrow cobblestone streets from chestnuts roasting over a vendor's simmering coals as the bells of St. James calls the observant to Friday evening mass. At the end of a beautiful cruise through the Douro River Valley of Portugal, MaLes and I visited Santiago in the Galicia community

of northern Spain. As one of the world's great historic cities, Santiago is an important spiritual center for all Christians that concludes The Way of St. James from Jerusalem.

The Old City of Jerusalem is the traditional site of martyrdom of the first disciple to be executed. Before the execution, St. James had spread the Gospel to Iberia. This is why "The Way" is considered sacred by millions of observant Christians. The top three countries with the most

pilgrims walking el Camino Santiago de Compostela are from Germany, Japan and the USA. I have no doubt many of our colleagues have trekked at least a portion of the centuries old pathway.

Just a few weeks ago this past Friday evening in November at St. James Cathedral at the center of Santiago, it is standing room only with local parishioners joined by pilgrims and visitors from all around the world.

Following the worship protocol and the angelic singing nun, the service concluded with the ritual of the botafumeiro. Five priests teamed to man the massive rope assembly attached to the swinging incensory, as it quite literally soared up into the towering arch ceiling over the parishioners. What better way to prepare for thanksgiving and Advent for the celebration of the Birth of Jesus at Christmas.

Why does Camino de Santiago capture so much global devotion and enduring commitment from so many in the 21st Century?



Then why is it a compelling way to celebrate Christmas? Paulo Coelho, the brilliant Brazilian novelist and lyricist, wrote *The Pilgrimage*, among his many works. He writes of the arduous journey symbolic of The Way to Santiago. One of my favorite quotes is: "A boat is safest in the harbor, but that is not the boat's purpose." The journey's goal is not just reaching the end, but more importantly, to discover your true north and inner peace while finding out what you will do with that revelation. For some pilgrims coming to Santiago, the journey by foot begins as far away as Jerusalem, Russia or Japan before reaching the open square before St. James Cathedral in Santiago. Completing the journey requires commitment, preparation and a strong intentional spirit to overcome obstacles along the way. Many do not complete the journey.

The annual celebration of the Birth of Jesus at Christmas may not require an arduous journey, but it does remind us to prepare, to be intentional, to open our heart to receive with joy the gift of love and accept hope for peace among all mankind.

Soon we will all be celebrating the coming of a new year consistent with the best of traditions in each of our countries. In Spain, the tradition consists of eating a grape with each bell strike at midnight of December 31. Families prepare a special plate with 12 grapes each for all the children served after a special dinner. According to the tradition, this simple celebration leads to a year of prosperity.

May you and your loved ones have a wonderful "grape" year filled with hope for peace, fulfillment of love among those closest to you and the best of health for all.

Norris Lineweaver

WFYR Chair

WFYR World Reunion at YMCA World Assembly,
Chiang Mai, Thailand –
July 2018. Details pending. Stay tuned to BRIDGES
for more announcements.

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BRIDGES



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(If we missed your group or erred, please let us know.)

This edition of *Bridges* was intended to highlight predictions for 2017, but events playing out around the world defy predicting outcomes. We can only hope and pray that world leaders come to their senses and examine models that we in the YMCA know work based upon cooperation, values and justice, and not try to withdraw from the challenges facing our entire, increasingly connected, world. Our time with the Jerusalem YMCA permitted us to witness families and individual members of diverse backgrounds coming together to share feelings, fun, futures and fears in a true spirit of reconciliation. If it can happen in Jerusalem, it can happen anywhere. [See page 7.]

Your editors continue to be impressed with the growing number of service projects that involve WFYR members. It seems that WFYR groups around the world share a common goal. We must devise new ways to reach out, recruit and retain new members. Service projects in the community and internationally, connections with local YMCA staff, and stimulating programs are what the newest crop of retirees are seeking.

This edition of *Bridges* provides some in depth looks at events and plans for the coming year from several WFYR groups. Canada has embarked on an ambitious self-discovery process with new leadership at the helm. The reports from Japan, the UK, Sweden and Germany indicate the importance of meaningful and values based programs to retain active members. The article by Past- President Jerry Prado Shaw provides insights into WFYR's newest initiative to aid YMCA staff receive the promise of a stable retirement. Our friends in India are making direct connections with local YMCAs and our newest members in Bangladesh are giving all of us an example of how to utilize social media to spread the good news.

A recent article in "AARP *the magazine*" highlights that happiness is a cure for aging and emphasizes that staying connected is a biological imperative and a real challenge as we age. The article concludes with good news for us in WFYR. "Happiness comes primarily from connection. And being part of a group means giving back to the group. Altruism is a biological need. **Connect, commit, and care.**" We hope that readers were able to spend quality time with families and WYFR friends during Christmas and the New Year season.

Len and Joyce Wilson

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WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

CanaFYR by *Franco Savoia*

A New Executive acclaimed in the Canadian Fellowship of YMCA Retirees(CanaFYR)

CanaFYR's 120+ members elected a new executive in September: **Franco Savoia**, President; **Rich Bailey**, President Elect; **Judith Levkoe**, Secretary; **Bob Duck**, Treasurer; **Jacqueline Jenkins**, Membership Coordinator; **Colin Hatcher**, VP for the West Region; **Tom Coon**, VP for the Ontario Region; **Gordon McKay**, VP for the Maritimes; **Don Noble**, Director, Secours Speciaux; **Gary Schofield**, Past President and Tielines Editor.

Rich Bailey is CanaFYR's representative on the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees. Most members of the Executive have had long time careers within the Canadian YMCA.

The new and retiring committees had a joint meeting in Toronto on October 19, 2016. They reviewed the "Framework for Moving Forward." This was the culmination of 18 months of study, reflection and renewal. The Executive engaged the Alberta Charities Support Network(ACSN), a retiree group of professionals who assist charities pro bono, to conduct a survey of the CanaFYR membership to which, 80 percent of the membership responded. ACSN summarized survey results as follows: FYR should continue; communication and engagement of the membership needs to be enhanced using all of the social media developments; and the fellowship needs to identify some overarching goal for its focus and work.

The Executive then hosted three telephone focus groups of its membership to receive input on next steps. The Executive reflected and discussed all of the input and developed a Framework for Going Forward. The foci of the framework: increased communication and engagement within our membership, the local YMCAs, YMCA Canada, the YMCA Retirement Fund and the World Fellowship of YMCA retirees; support and engagement to assist fellow YMCA retirees in the developing work; assisting all YMCA retirees to age with dignity and grace; and assisting wherever possible the YMCA to have greater impact in our world.

At the October 19th joint Executive Committee, a two-year work plan was drafted to make the framework a reality. The 2016-2018 Executive met via teleconference on November 10th and approved the work plan. The work plan is a living document that will continually be updated and amended.

To help realize the work plan, each Executive committee member shared their 100 day actions relative to their position on the Executive. The Executive will meet monthly via teleconference.

CanaFYR wants to leverage its skill and competencies to

advance the work and impact of the YMCA in Canada and the world. There will be an effort to update the organization by reviewing our constitution and bylaws.

CanaFYR is beginning its repositioning phase. It will look to other YMCA retirement groups for ideas and suggestions.

Bangladesh

The Pre-Christmas and First General Meeting of the Bangladesh Fellowship of YMCA retirees was successfully held in December, 2016 at Dhareda, Savar, Dhaka. .

Mr Morendra Chisim, fellowship advisor, announced the

newly elected executive members for 2017-2018. The executive committee signed the final by-laws to provide for the smooth running of the Fellowship.



Sweden

Greetings to our WFYR Friends from Sweden.

Bridges looks forward to more news in the coming year from YM and YW retirees in Sweden. **Anita Andersson**, who some of us met at the conference in Colorado, is taking responsibility for being WFYR's official link and ongoing communicator.

Anita points out what many of us feel has been a major factor in sustaining enthusiasm for Y retiree membership growth. "The early YWCA-YMCA secretaries were all-round staff, youth leader, organizer, Bible-study leader, fundraiser, editor, caretaker for localities and properties, camp leader. Nowadays it is more common that the staff are recruited for a special task where experience and education for that area is needed. For most persons it is no longer a life-long profession."

Anita expresses an enthusiasm for current activities occurring in the Swedish KFUM (YMCA) and feels that the technological links from SKYPE and you-tube are expanding the reach of the Y within Sweden and around the world. In her work with the Swedish YMCA-YWCA archives, she has studied hand-written correspondence from 75 to 100 years ago and notes the same enthusiasm and passion displayed within the new technology. She plans to send Email **Bridges** to Y retirees in her country.

[Editors' note: More and more WFYR members are reading the electronic version of **Bridges**.]



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

India Fellowship of YMCA Retirees (IFYR)

The 21st Annual Conference of the India Fellowship of YMCA Retirees (IFYR), held in Chennai from August 18-20, 2016, was hosted by the Madras YMCA at its YMCA International Youth Centre, Vepery. The Madras YMCA under the dynamic leadership of **Mr. P. Asir Pandian**, General Secretary and CEO, took special care of everything, including conference program arrangements and hosted a sumptuous dinner.

Mr. Jacob Rajkumar, Hon. Vice-President of the National Council of YMCAs of India and Hon. Treasurer of Madras YMCA, as the Guest-of-Honor, thanked all YMCA Retirees who attended the conference and expressed gratitude for their immense contributions to the overall growth and development



of the YMCA Movement in India, As a child of a successful YMCA Secretary and later General Secretary of Madras YMCA (Mr. Jacob Appadurai), he grew up in an YMCA atmosphere. He shared the life history of Alexander the Great, and concluded that when we leave this world, once and for all, people will only remember our good deeds and not how much wealth one had.

Mr. Swaraj Sircar, Secretary/Treasurer of IFYR shared the warm greetings received from **Mr. Norris D. Lineweaver**, Chairman of World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees, who said, "Due to the sacrificial contributions of time and talent from each of you, alongside all your colleagues, the YMCA in India shines brightly within our World Movement as a beacon of opportunity for mutual engagement among people of India. Thank you for your service."

The chief guest of this IFYR Inaugural Program was **Mr. M. M. Selvakumar**, Hon. President of Madras YMCA. In his address he referred to Isaiah Chapter 46:4 which states, "And even to your old age I am He and even to hoar hairs will I carry you, I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry and will deliver you." He said that even in old age God provides us strength to carry on His work. He wished each one a happy and comfortable stay in Madras and a fruitful conference.

It was unanimously decided that the President of IFYR will attend the World YMCA Retirees' Conference/World Alliance Gathering. It was also made clear that any retired YMCA professional can directly write to them seeking permission to attend.

It was proposed that the next IFYR Conference in 2017 be held in any of the following venues : Ernakulam YMCA, Trivandrum YMCA, or Madurai YMCA.

Germany To Not Be Alone at Christmas by Regina Bäumer

Member of the board of CVJM/ YMCA Duesseldorf (translation by Pascal Rosenthal)

Many people do not have someone to spend their time with on Christmas Eve. They are alone! And on no other day is it harder for them to not be together with a loved one. Especially during these Christmas days single people are looking for company, supporting words and signs of understanding and solidarity. Recognizing this concern, since 1927, the staff of CVJM/ YMCA Duesseldorf has hosted a Christmas night party for single men every year. We do not care about origin, nationality or religion of our 700 to 800 guests. We simply want to make the people who are coming, many homeless or living in poverty, happy.

About 150 volunteer helpers are necessary! But this night always shows that the YMCA does not give opportunities of involvement only to young people. Many older people have been helping for years, some more than 50 years, and they bring their experience to the organization and implementation of this night. It is such a big support.



We decorate a hall named Radschlaegersaal, close to the Rhine River, magnificently before the night starts. And then there is good dinner, music, group singing, a little theatre show and the good news of the birth of our savior. Of course every man also gets a gift bag with nice and useful things.

Nevertheless most important is the conversation at the tables. Some of the guests have appointments with the same volunteers every year. This creates close relationships, which makes it possible to have more than small talk.

You surely ask who are the volunteers not celebrating Christmas Eve together with their families. Actually there are whole families, who cannot imagine Christmas without visiting the men! There is the divorced woman and her daughter, who do not want to spend their time at home. There is the successful manager, who wants to do something meaningful.



It is important to everybody to meet everybody with love. This is how God shows love for us, which becomes visible in the birth of Jesus .

It's greatly enriching for all the volunteers to spend Christmas Eve in this way. And when the night comes to an end, when the hall is tidied up, the dishes are washed and the kitchen is cleaned, everybody goes home, tired but filled with gratitude.



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

JFYR, November 14-15, Kyoto, Japan *Reported by Kohei Yamada*

More than thirty YMCA retirees came together for an annual meeting of JFYR held in Kyoto. The meeting alternates from the East side of Japan to the West side each year.

Mr. Hoshino, Chairperson of JFYR, began the meeting by asking a question. "What are key factors for living happily and healthy when one turns eighty?" Data shows that 80% of respondents choose wealth. 50% felt that being famous and well respected was a factor. Mr. Hoshino introduced a study by Robert Walker indicating that maintaining relationships made earlier in life (the 50's) were a key factor for helping and being helped in the 80's.

The Chairman also highlighted major changes to JFYR in the past year: The word "secretaries" has been replaced with "persons". The association is now open to all who have worked in the YMCA. The purpose has been changed from "wishing the good work of the YMCA" to "actualize the missions of the YMCA in society and continuing to learn for that purpose". He reported that ten new persons had joined the association and overall it was a most productive year.

Mr. Kunio Takami was the first of two main speakers asked to focus on the topic, "The elderly society and the new roles of the YMCA".

Mr Takami, Secretary General of the National Association of Dementia Persons and their Families, described how he learned a great deal taking care of his mother who was suffering from dementia in her 70's. He realized that people generally see dementia as the end of a meaningful life, an illness that causes much trouble for the families. Many felt that dying would be better than dementia. He also quickly discovered the difficulties confronting families that have no idea how long a period they are facing. Family members, particularly spouses of dementia victims feel completely isolated. The Association was founded in 1980 by Mr. Takami and others with similar issues with dementia in their families. It is now in all 47 prefectures of Japan. There was additional input on behaviors common to Dementia persons.

Mr. Hajime Yamaguchi, the President of an elderly care facility in Kobe was a YMCA secretary in Kobe when his families' business was destroyed by the great earthquake in 1995. He left the Y to rebuild the business

and rebuilt a nursing home with modern facilities and high technology. His son was working on an advanced degree in social welfare specializing in Person Centered Care, and after observing elder care in Scandinavian countries he returned to convince his father that much of the welfare system in Japan needed to shift from protecting and supporting the caregivers to providing focus on the needs of the elderly in the nursing center. Mr. Yamaguchi realized that the most advanced systems in his center were not adhering to the principles of Person Centered Care. Over the last twenty years he has changed his operation from a big facility to several small personalized centers. The shift has been costly, but the new direction is correct, and he hopes it will influence the elderly care system in Japan.

Mr. Chinen, of Okinawa concluded the sessions with background on Peace Issues in his country. Before the twentieth century, Okinawa had its own identity and diplomacy that kept peace with Japan and China. He shared his own historical views of the current situation of Okinawa.

The meeting concluded with a high level of satisfaction for the fellowship and new learning experiences that were available.



Attendees at the Annual Meeting of JFYR in Kyoto

The Work of Christmas (Submitted by Ken MacKeracher, CanaFYR, with best wishes for 2017)

*When the song of angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the brothers, (humankind)
to make music in the heart.*

—Howard Thurman, Unitarian Clergyman





WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

AYR (Association of YMCA Retirees)

By Mary Carol Fish, President, AYR

Greetings to all our friends across the globe, Joy to the World. The holiday season will soon be over, and I won't say out loud that "it seems just like yesterday, that I greeted you at this time of year."

Many of our AYR chapters enjoyed their annual holiday parties.



A gift basket was one of the many items donated and auctioned off for World Service.

It's just about the best time of year to get together with friends and colleagues. Some of our chapters are combining festivities with support for those less fortunate. A Christmas luncheon raised more than \$1000 for world Service work in Haiti. Another group raises funds each year to prepare meals for needy people in the Dominican Republic.

As new retirees join our ranks,

new faces and personalities brighten our meetings and gatherings and give depth to our groups. It takes the effort of everyone to care enough to invite someone to a meeting or gathering. There is still no better way than the personal touch.

AYR is about reminiscing, caring about each other's valleys and mountain-tops in life, just plain laughter and joy with whatever we're



Meals prepared for friends in the Dominican Republic

doing at our gatherings. May Godspeed go with each of our WFYR friends this coming year as the bonds of love and comradeship embrace us all, through our YMCA connections. Keep searching for and recruiting new members at the forefront of your thoughts, as



Families gathering their Christmas meals

the new calendar year begins.

Don't you want others to experience the joy you find with AYR?

Y's Retired of the UK

The November newsletter coming from the UK is full of interesting observations and news of retirees in the area. As usual, **Jim Lamb** sets forth a challenging question. Can one start to believe that the YMCA is blooming despite constant comments from older retirees that the Y is not like it used to be?

He challenges members to read the YMCA Manifesto published in 2015 by YMCA England, and notes the two words on the cover from a young member, "We Believe." It is also important to realize that the document traces the origins of the YMCA without reference to it being a Christian movement. Readers are made aware of YMCA beliefs and Christian values. Jim goes on the point out that without the faith of the founders there would not be a YMCA that has stood the test of times for 172 years.

Jim has personally attended, and been very impressed and inspired by, the current play in the UK related the life and times of **Sir George Williams**. It seems we all need to find a way to view "The Soul in the Machine".

Readers of *Bridges* are encouraged to connect with web@ymca.org.uk for exciting accounts of Y programs and initiatives blooming in the UK.

Another YMCA BBBF Reunion was held on a wet and windy morning in July at Park Hill, Egginton, Derby, which was a YMCA BBBF center from 1939 to 1968. Some of the attendees were actual boys when they attended the YMCA horticultural retreat and training center. The group enjoyed their traditional Ploughman's lunch and dessert before a tractor and trailer ride around the farm. After enjoying their tea and dessert, the group departed set off on their journey by a poem that ended the day and set a tone for the coming year.

Friendship

Friendship buds and blossoms like summer in a full dress....

Friendship brings a harvest of joy and happiness.....

Friendship is sustaining through winter, wind and snow.....

Friendship can't be hoarded, by being shared it grows.

Africa by Samuel Anim

We in Africa are still struggling to find ways by which to solve our communication problem. I am depending on the office of the Africa Alliance to reach the colleagues in the other countries. As the saying goes "Charity begins at home" so the retirees in Ghana have made the effort to come together and have been sensitized about the usefulness of the Association. I shall soon send a brief about our plans for the upcoming Christmas gathering. I wish you and all colleagues God's Speed.



WORLD FELLOWSHIP AFFILIATE NEWS

The YMCA Global Retirement Initiative: Fallacy or Reality

by Jerry Prado Shaw

Since 1974, YMCA leaders around the world have expressed concern about the circumstances in which many YMCA professionals retire. Through the years, the YMCA has lost many of its promising young staff talent because it has not provided a secure future for the employee and their family. Those who have served in long YMCA careers without an adequate retirement program often spend their post retirement days in poverty, robbed of human dignity. There is a history spanning decades of failed efforts by concerned and well-meaning people within the YMCA movement to impact this situation.

Therefore, during the WFYR Fifth World Conference, in conjunction with the 18th World Council Meeting in Estes Park, Colorado, (June 29-July 5, 2014) a WFYR unsecured retirement committee was appointed to continue the quest to promote solutions for the problem and also to develop practical models to tackle the issue through a pilot initiative. Was this another dream? Is the Global Retirement Initiative a fallacy or it can be a reality?

Let's clarify that the Global Retirement Initiative was designed as a tool to help retain highly qualified young YMCA staff and to assist them in planning for their retirement. It aims to encourage staff to make the YMCA their career for life. It is also designed to protect the existing Secours Speciaux Fund which responds to emergencies faced by YMCA staff and retirees.

This initiative was the opportunity to actually create the YMCAs first success though a multinational collaboration. The process was immediately initiated under the servant leadership of former WFYR Chair **Don Anderson** with strong support from

current WFYR Chair Norris Lineweaver. After two intensive years of diligent work, we are pleased to witness that the fist pilot program under the Global Retirement Initiative is a reality through the committed and assertive participation of the Latin America & Caribbean Alliance of YMCAs in partnership with the Association of YMCA Retires of USA (AYR) and WFYR.

This first pilot plan will be co-founded by the Latin America & Caribbean Alliance of YMCAs, the World Brotherhood Fund (administered by AYR) and the selected young YMCA professional to lead the plan. This young YMCA professional was chosen from among several applicants though a meticulous and open process lead by an integrated Nomination Committee chosen from highly respected YMCA retirees from that area of the world, with the support and concurrency of the official leadership of the Latin American & Caribbean Alliance of YMCAs.

Thanks to the vision, commitment and perseverance of a dedicate group of YMCA retirees, the Global Retirement Initiative is a reality today, not a paper, not a fallacy, not a dream. For this we are most grateful.

Nevertheless, the overall situation is not yet resolved. This pilot experience is just the beginning. We expect that more pilot initiatives will be developed in other regions of the world. There is still much to be done but with God's grace and blessings, we continue to advance on this quest for justice and equality for all our fellow YMCA colleagues around the world. We continue firm and faithfully planting the seeds for a more promising future for the younger! Oh, yes: "Retired, but not tired"!

Jerusalem International YMCA

The children from the Al Shurooq School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Beit Jala, near Bethlehem, are always a part of JIY's Christmas. The lobby tree is a favorite for family pictures. Giving plaques provide a opportunity to support the mission of the YMCA in this special place and with soon be marking pathways around the Jerusalem International YMCA walkways.



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BRIDGES IS FOR ALL WHO WISH TO RECEIVE IT

Printing and distribution support for *BRIDGES* is provided by the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA, sending a message of "Brotherly Love" to YMCA retirees around the world.



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DECEMBER 2016

