



IRCA eNews June 2026

Verse of the day

Then justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.

Isaiah 32:16-17

Voice of the day

Peace is not the absence of war or struggle, it is the presence of justice.

Ella Baker

Prayer of the day

True God, remind us that justice is an inescapable prerequisite for any conversation addressing peace.

Sojourners, Verse and Voice 22.06.2026

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear IRCA Family,

As we are entering the final stage of registrations and confirming travel plans for IRCA 2026, I am excited about gathering with many of

you, but I'm also sad about the number of people who will not be able to join us in Sibiu because of circumstances beyond our control. The current state of uncertainty in the world has contributed to rising costs or complications in air travel and challenges with visa applications.

As I have said numerous times before, IRCA is an association of people who are passionate about what God is doing in rural communities. We are not an 'organisation' but, instead, we are a family, which means that it doesn't matter whether it is your first IRCA conference or your eighth, or whether you are physically in the room in Sibiu or join us online, your voice and contribution is important.

For the first time, we have more people registered to join online than in person, so we are working hard to ensure that those who join online are still able to participate in various aspects of the conference programme, including the 'family group' sessions by using breakout rooms on Zoom. Our panel discussions will include contributions from online alongside those in Sibiu. We plan to send further information about online participation in early July and we look forward to seeing how technology can support IRCA connections now and in the future.

A key part of the conference is dreaming about plans for opportunities to connect rural ministries in our respective regions or countries, continuing to facilitate international connections through Zoom prayer times, and, of course, plans for the next international conference (in 2030). On Friday, 24 July, there will be an opportunity for regional and/or country group reflections on next steps. This should include discussing nominations for people to serve as part of the IRCA leadership team from 2026-2030. ***Please note, both online and onsite people can be nominated to serve and we encourage online participants to be involved.***

It has been my honour to serve IRCA as the chair for 2023-2026, but it has also been a lot of work and I am deeply grateful for the support of the wider team. We (the IRCA leadership team) would like to encourage IRCA participants to nominate two co-chairs, one from the Global North (Minority World) and one from the Global South (Majority World), recognising that we are an international association and it is important to see people working together across regional boundaries.

If you have any questions about participating in the leadership team, or about what is required for a particular role, please speak to one of the current leadership team members (<https://irca.online/leadership->

[group/](#)). Several of the core team members would be happy to provide training and support, so, if you feel that you would like to serve in one of the core roles, there may be opportunities for a mentoring 'apprenticeship' over a period of months or years.

Blessings, Heather

IRCA CONFERENCE 2026

Time is drawing near for IRCA 2026 gathering face-to-face in Sibiu, Romania, and online around the world. More than 50 people are on the list to receive ZOOM and livestream access, with 32 committed to attend in person.

The latest details about the conference can be found at [IRCA Conference 2026](#). This page is where you find the sign up sheet to receive links for remote access. All are welcome to join in remotely and we have arranged for remote hosts to be on task to lead ZOOM rooms when the conference moves into small group conversation time.

There is still room for people not requiring a visa for Romania to join in person. We just need you to get in touch immediately by emailing ircaprayernews@gmail.com.

A key part of any IRCA Conference has been conversations among participants. Focussed time for this is provided in what is called "Family Groups" - at the venue and online. See below for the topics that are being explored.

Family Group Times	Guidance Topics for Conversation
Family Groups (1): History and Telling our stories	Introductions & exploring relationships with the past (What is your story? Think about how you introduce yourself, what is important? What informs identity?)
Family Groups (2): Land & 'Home'	Exploring relationships with where we live / work (May include climate change, vulnerability / fragility of food production, changing conditions, etc.)
Family Groups (3): Communities / Families	Exploring relationships with people (Family, neighbours, newcomers, governments, churches, migrants, etc.)
Family Groups (4): Global Issues	Exploring relationships with the wider world - What are the shared issues affecting us? How can we learn from & support each other?
Church / Community Workshop	Cristien Fortified Church - Reflections on Church & Community - Adapting to local relationships, needs, etc. - How do we use the things that are part of our communities / churches? What prevents us? How do we respond?
Regional / Country Group Reflections:	(Language groups?) - IRCA at Home (Sequel Gatherings, Regional Networks, eNews Contributions, Global Prayer Links, etc.), Nominations for Regional / International Teams

Sadly, many people who wanted to come have had their visas declined. This happens in the normal run of things, but it seems this year it is even more difficult, what with international conflict, subsequent flight disruptions, and devastating disease in central Africa.

We are grateful to the Romanian team for continuing to work very hard despite the uncertainty we have been faced with since early in the year. Those who are able to attend will do their best to be part of something that can be a stored resource on the IRCA website, as well as ensuring it is an event inclusive of the world-wide family of IRCA who will be participating online in plenary and group sessions.

Opening and closing worship - on Monday and Friday nights - will be held in the Church next door to the Academy, and will be two very special occasions, one of welcoming, the other of commissioning. The video message Heather shared earlier this year showed us the Church alongside the Academy building. You can view it at this link [IRCA2026 Greetings](#).

See below the full programme for the conference. Keep an eye on the website for any updates to this.

If you are planning to join online, you may want to gather a group to watch and participate together. When each online session ends you

could talk together about what you have seen and heard.

	Monday 20 July	Tuesday 21 July	Wednesday 22 July	Thursday 23 July	Friday 24 July	Saturday 25 July
0100-0230	Overnight flight arrivals					First flights: 0605 / 0710
7:30	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
8:45		Morning Worship - Oceania	Morning Worship - Americas	Morning Worship - Africa	Morning Worship - Asia	
9:15		Morning Notices / Updates	Morning Notices / Updates	Morning Notices / Updates	Morning Notices / Updates	
9:30		Keynote (1): <i>Story of IRCA (Roots, History & Identity)</i> - Lothar	Panel Discussion (1): 'Faith, Culture & Identity'	Keynote (2): <i>Stories of Restoring Churches in Romania</i>	Panel Discussion (2): 'Training & Equipping for Rural Ministry'	Departures - Either for flights or for post-conference trip(s) - Details TBD - Transport Arranged as necessary
10:45		Coffee/Tea Break	Coffee/Tea Break	Coffee/Tea Break	Coffee/Tea Break	
11:15		Family Groups (1): History and Telling our stories	Family Groups (2): Land & 'Home'	Family Groups (4): Global Issues	Large Group Sharing & Feedback from Family Groups: What are we taking home?	
13:30		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
14:30	Delegate Arrivals in Sibiu - From pre-conference trips / flights - Transport arranged as necessary - Tea/Coffee Available on arrival	Outing: Exploring Sibiu & Sibiu's History - (led by Roger) - Showcasing Romania - Diverse People, Places, Languages & History	Family Groups (3): Communities / Families	Workshop: Cristien Fortified Church - Reflections on Church & Community - Adapting to local relationships, needs, etc. - How do we use the things that are part of our communities / churches? ++++++	Regional / Country Group Reflections: Ideas for IRCA at Home, Nominations for Regional / International Teams	
16:00			Family Group Feedback: Sharing Our Learning (from 1, 2 & 3)	Organ Music in Church (TBC?)	IRCA International Reflections & Visions for the Future - Proposals for IRCA 2030 & Commission New Leadership	
17:00			Free Time		Free Time	
18:00	Opening Worship & Welcome (in the church) - Formal Welcome, Introductions, Programme overview	Free Time	Evening Gathering: Sharing Music, Stories & Creative Expressions from across IRCA International Participants	Outing - Sibiu Village: Free Time to Explore Local Saxon Village - Options include visiting Zosim Oancea Museum of Icons on Glass and a local Orthodox church	Closing Celebration, Eumenical Worship - Commissioning Prayers, Multi-National Music/Singing, etc. (Dietrich as lead, Bishop Prasad, Representative Prayers from every continent/region)	
19:00	Evening Prayers (in the church)	Evening Prayers - City Centre Church (TBC)	Evening Prayers (in the church)	Traditional Village Meal with Music & Entertainment	Closing Communion (in the church) - Dietrich	
19:30	Welcome Meal & Drinks Reception	Evening Meal - Post Tour	Evening Meal & Fellowship		Celebration Meal	
	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Evening Prayers (in the church) - optional	Free Time	

NEWS FROM IRCA OCEANIA

IRCA Oceania comprises countries that are the furthest away from Romania, so, unsurprisingly, few have been able to sign up for the face-to-face experience. Added to that are time zones almost opposite to Romanian time, so joining 'live' online will be too difficult for many.

In 2023, IRCA Oceania solved this problem by holding a Sequel Conference in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a number of people attending in person and even more on ZOOM. Recordings of sessions from the 2023 Conference in Dubuque, Iowa, USA were used for a two day event that picked up the issues shared at the international conference and had what we call "talanoa" - conversation, discussion, solution-seeking - for our own context. Some of those who attended

the USA conference were able to attend the Sequel and bring their fresh insights from participating in the international conversations.

We're doing it again in 2026, with a lead taken by Linda Cowan and The Village Church in Christchurch. Manasa Vatanitawake is gathering a group to attend from Fiji, with the plan to stay with Fijian church relations. At least one person is planning to travel "across the ditch" (the Tasman Sea) and join us from Australia. Hopefully more will decide to join us nearer the time.

We're sharing this here, because it may be that other regions would like to do a similar thing. It has the big benefit of being able to focus on one's own context in conversation, while drawing on the experiences and insights from rural church people around the world.

Please let us know if you make plans to gather. We can help advertise your event and include information on the website in connection to your region.



INTERNATIONAL RURAL CHURCHES ASSOCIATION

The IRCA family are gathering in Romania in July this year, a conference that will be available on-line for those not able to be there in person. With the time-zone difference, it may be easier for Oceania people to have our own gathering after the Romania conference.

The IRCA Oceania family is therefore invited to attend an in-person *and ZOOM* gathering

Wednesday 7- Friday 9 October 2026

Christchurch Aotearoa New Zealand

Hosted by The Village Presbyterian Church, Bryndwr

This gathering will be an opportunity to view recorded sessions of the Sibiu Conference and talanoa on the themes and issues in relation to our own home context and to the Oceania region

Themes at the Conference in Sibiu:

- Roots, History and Identity of IRCA
- Faith, Culture and Identity
- Stories of Restoring Churches
- Training and Equipping for Rural Ministry

Family Group Talanoa:

- History and Telling our Stories
- Land and Home – climate change vulnerability, food fragility
- Communities and Families – exploring relationships within the community – families, newcomers, migrants
- Global Issues – shared issues and learning from one another

Participants are to arrange their own accommodation to suit – there are a number of nearby motels and hotels.

Express your interest in attending in person or by ZOOM by going to

irca.online/irca-2026-oceania-sequel/



Transylvania Evangelical Academy, Sibiu, and The Village Church, Christchurch

Something to Ponder

as we think about the state of the world...

Resurrection Inside Ruin

We do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia, for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself ... so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (NRSVUE)

Paul wrote this from the wreckage of something he couldn't fully explain—some affliction so crushing, beyond the body's ability to carry it, that death seemed less like an ending and more like a door. And he named it with the precision of someone who's has stopped caring what they look like while they're drowning:

"We despaired of life itself."

This sentence belongs to us right now. Not as metaphor. As testimony. Because something is pressing down on this generation with a weight that has no single source and no simple name. It is an accumulation: the wars and the votes and the headlines and the glaciers and the cruelty normalized by repetition until we stop flinching. It is the particular exhaustion of people who are paying attention and cannot stop.

What I know to be true is that God is not above this weight, watching from a safe distance. God is in it—the divine presence that absorbs every suffering, carries every grief, holds every child lost, every species gone, every justice quietly dismantled while we were paying rent.

The lure toward life is still sounding. Faintly, maybe. Underneath everything. But Paul did not write "We despaired of life itself" as a confession of defeat. He wrote it as the beginning of a testimony: "So that we would not rely on ourselves, but on the God who raises the dead."

Not the God who prevents the crushing. The God who is present inside it. The God who makes resurrection a verb, not just a doctrine.

We are crushed. We are not finished. Both are true. *Simultaneously*. Hold them both.

Prayer

Ancient Ruach, hovering still over every void we have made and every void that has been made of us—breathe into this.

Sam Houser

Daily Devotional, 22.06.2926, UCC USA
