



**World Federation
of Methodist & Uniting Church Women
Europe: Britain & Ireland Area
Area Report March 2019 - July 2020**



Methodist Women in Ireland

- **Unit President: Joan Strong**
- **Unit Correspondent: Phyllis Watters**
- **Helen Kim Memorial Scholar: Wanda Hogan**

Methodist Women in Britain

- **Unit President: Hilary Evans**
- **Unit Correspondent: Jude Simms**
- **Helen Kim Memorial Scholar: Rachel Allison**

CHOSEN PEOPLE CALLED TO PROCLAIM . . .

We are living in a strange and unique time, which none of us could ever have imagined. Throughout the world the Coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we live our lives, at work and at leisure; it has changed the way we worship our God, the way we relate to our family and friends, and the way we act to help and support others. However, it has not changed the God who, *“is the same yesterday, today and forever”*; the God who loves us and calls us. The Vice President of our Area, Carolyn Lawrence, has heard that call from God to serve as the Vice President of the Methodist Church in Britain for one year from June 2020. We know that our sisters throughout the Federation will join us in praying for her and wishing her God’s blessing as she seeks to help lead His Church through these difficult times!

. . . through WORSHIP

Since our last report in March 2019, both Units in this Area have welcomed new women to the role of Unit President: Hilary Evans in Britain and Joan Strong in Ireland. They were each installed during inspirational services, back in what seems like another time, when we were still worshipping in our church buildings.

Following on from their work with visual impairment, MWiB had produced a resource for churches to support people in our congregations with some degree of hearing difficulty. Hopefully, it will not be long until we are back in our familiar places of worship and people will need to avail of this resource again.

In the meantime, we have been learning new ways of ‘being Church’ and worshipping; many of us have become experts at using technology we didn’t even know existed before. MWiB have entered into partnership with ‘Twelvebaskets’, an online worship resource producer, to support them in producing ‘The Vine at Home’, a downloadable weekly worship service.

Study Day material produced by our Area for use in October 2019 focused on SDG 5 Gender Equality, especially the issue of violence against women. Both Units have cancelled the events planned to celebrate the Study Day in October this year (2020) but the material focusing on health and well-being produced by the West Africa Area has still been widely circulated.

Likewise, both Units had to cancel the Easter Offering services for 2020; these are traditionally organised by the Methodist women and held at Easter throughout Methodist churches in Britain and Ireland to raise funds for global mission. Instead, MWiB is working with the Methodist Church in Britain to produce a short reflective act of worship for use in autumn 2020, looking at how Covid-19 is affecting our global church partners.

. . . through RELATIONSHIPS

The two Units have continued to develop their close relationship, sharing prayer concerns with each other and sending representatives to each other’s residential weekends. As Area Officers we are also able to be present at these events; in fact, Louise led the Bible Study at the MWiB weekend in April 2019. Unfortunately, the residential weekends planned for April 2020 by MWiB and September 2020 by MWI have both been cancelled due to the coronavirus, but the dates are in our diaries for 2021!

The good relationship between the two European Areas is also highlighted by the fact that one of the Area Presidents represents both Areas at the European Methodist Council when possible; Lidia Ribet, the Europe Continental Area President, represented us in Italy in September 2019 and Louise will be representing us at the Council, online via Zoom, in September 2020.

Before lockdown women from both Units, through the mission departments of their churches, were able to visit church communities in other parts of the world. So far in this quinquennium women from this Area have visited our sisters in South Africa, Costa Rica, Myanmar, Germany, Italy, North India, Sri Lanka, Bolivia, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and most recently Hilary Evans has been to Mexico. Before it was cancelled, MWI had planned to enable three women from the Methodist Church in Upper Myanmar to attend their residential weekend in September this year.

Our Helen Kim Scholars have been among those developing global relationships. We are delighted that Rachel was able to accompany Carolyn to South Africa and that, more recently, she has been representing the World Federation at the UN in Geneva. MWI was privileged to help Wanda visit Zimbabwe in August 2019 to work alongside the Sethule Orphan's Trust.

It is impossible for us to know when these visits will start again. During this crisis we hold our sisters, and indeed all people, in the Areas of the Federation in our prayers. We thank God that technology, in the form of smart phones, WhatsApp and Zoom, has allowed us to share our concerns and our prayers with each other at home and around the world.

Technology has also enabled Unit meetings to take place at national, and local level. Women have been using Zoom to share fellowship and fun with each other, such as through Bible studies, prayer meetings, quiz evenings, and book clubs.

. . . through SOCIAL ACTION

Locally, women from both Units have for many years been actively involved in a variety of social action projects and initiatives, such as: foodbanks; parent & toddler groups; carer support groups; luncheon clubs; women's refuges; and street pastors. Now, at this time when many people are losing their jobs and even their homes, and many are struggling to feed themselves and their families, our women have been among those working tirelessly to help in foodbanks and in serving hot meals to those in need.

While for many of us being 'forced' to stay at home has enabled us to grow closer to those with whom we share that home, for others home is not a safe or happy place, and the numbers of women and children suffering abuse and violence in the UK and Ireland during lockdown has more than doubled. In the UK a Domestic Violence Bill has been before Parliament and the women in Britain and Northern Ireland have been lobbying our Members of Parliament on the issue. Despite the fact that we are not meeting and gathering, we have still encouraged all our women to wear 'Black on Thursdays' – even in their own homes – to show our solidarity in stopping violence against women!

. . . final word from Carolyn, Area Vice President (Vice President of Methodist Church in Britain)

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland." (Isaiah 43:18–19)

Stand with me in believing that God's purposes will not be thwarted despite the peculiar way things have turned out, and that we will indeed witness God doing a new thing amongst us and see those streams in the wasteland bringing life, strength, healing and wholeness wherever they flow.

With our love and our prayers,

Louise & Carolyn

Louise Wilson, Area President

Carolyn Lawrence, Area Vice President