



THE WORLD FEDERATION OF METHODIST AND UNITING CHURCH WOMEN

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# *The* TREE *- of* LIFE

# Be bold

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# President's letter

## Be Bold!

Dear Sisters,

As I write, I have just returned from the United Methodist Women's Assembly in Ohio, USA where we were celebrating 150 years of women's ministry (lay and ordained)

Be bold, be wise, be prayerful, as you are 'called to proclaim' in Jesus' name.

in the United Methodist Church. We heard about the courage of women through the years in standing up and speaking out for justice, especially for women, children and youth. The Assembly theme was 'The Power of Bold' and I shall be writing a full report for the website. For now, I wanted to share with you three recent occasions when I have been encouraged to 'be bold'. The first was after I had watched a TV programme featuring Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, in conversation with Sir David Attenborough, a popular broadcaster and naturalist. They were discussing the Commonwealth Canopy Project in which forests are being given protected status and more trees are being planted in order to help halt the reduction of forests worldwide and restore the healthy balance of our global climate. What a great idea, I thought ... and wrote to tell her so. I also told her about our Tree of Life emblem and that I would be encouraging Methodist women around the world to plant trees as part of our response to climate change (SDG13). Please consider planting a tree in your garden, or village or town or city,

maybe in memory of someone or to celebrate a birth or marriage or World Federation event. Take a photo or video to put on our website and let others know you have helped save our planet by planting a tree. If it is a fruit tree, so much the better!

The second occasion was while I was at a weekend event organised by my own Unit, Methodist Women in Britain. We were encouraged to get creative and embroider a cloth table napkin with a message for our local Member of Parliament, asking him or her to take action on an issue of injustice that was on our heart. For many this was poverty and hunger (SDGs 1 and 2). You may have seen some of the results of this 'Craftivism' initiative on Facebook. Some have already met their MP face to face for productive discussions and many have

received appreciative written responses. We hope and pray for positive and transformative action to be the result.

The most recent occasion of 'being bold' was in Ohio, the day before the UMW Assembly, when a peaceful but determined crowd of women gathered outside the Ohio State Legislative building in Columbus, demonstrating in favour of the introduction of a living wage. It is clear that the existing minimum wage of \$8.30 an hour is not enough for a typical US family of four, as it is well under the recognised poverty level. A living wage would increase income to a more reasonable (and just) level.

This 'speaking truth to power' is something that can take a great deal of courage. In Ohio that day, I felt quite safe, but I am aware that in many situations, speaking out and standing up for justice is much more risky.

Be bold, be wise, be prayerful, as you are 'called to proclaim' in Jesus' name.

Every blessing,

- Alison Judd

# Respect one another

Respect is something we find so rarely in our society. Children tend not to respect their parents, youth not to respect the elderly, and we all tend not to respect our leaders, and the list could go on. Of course, respect is gained, but even though a person is worthy of respect, still somehow it is omitted. We should all respect every human being no matter what their skin color, no matter what their ethnic group, no matter what their age. We should respect and love one another.

A story tells how a rabbi, sitting with his students, asked them:

“When does the night end and the day start?”

He has received several answers:

“When you can distinguish between sheep and goats,” said one student.

“When you can distinguish a fig from an olive tree,” said another one.

The rabbi was sitting silent. So, the students asked him: “But, rabbi, what do you believe?”

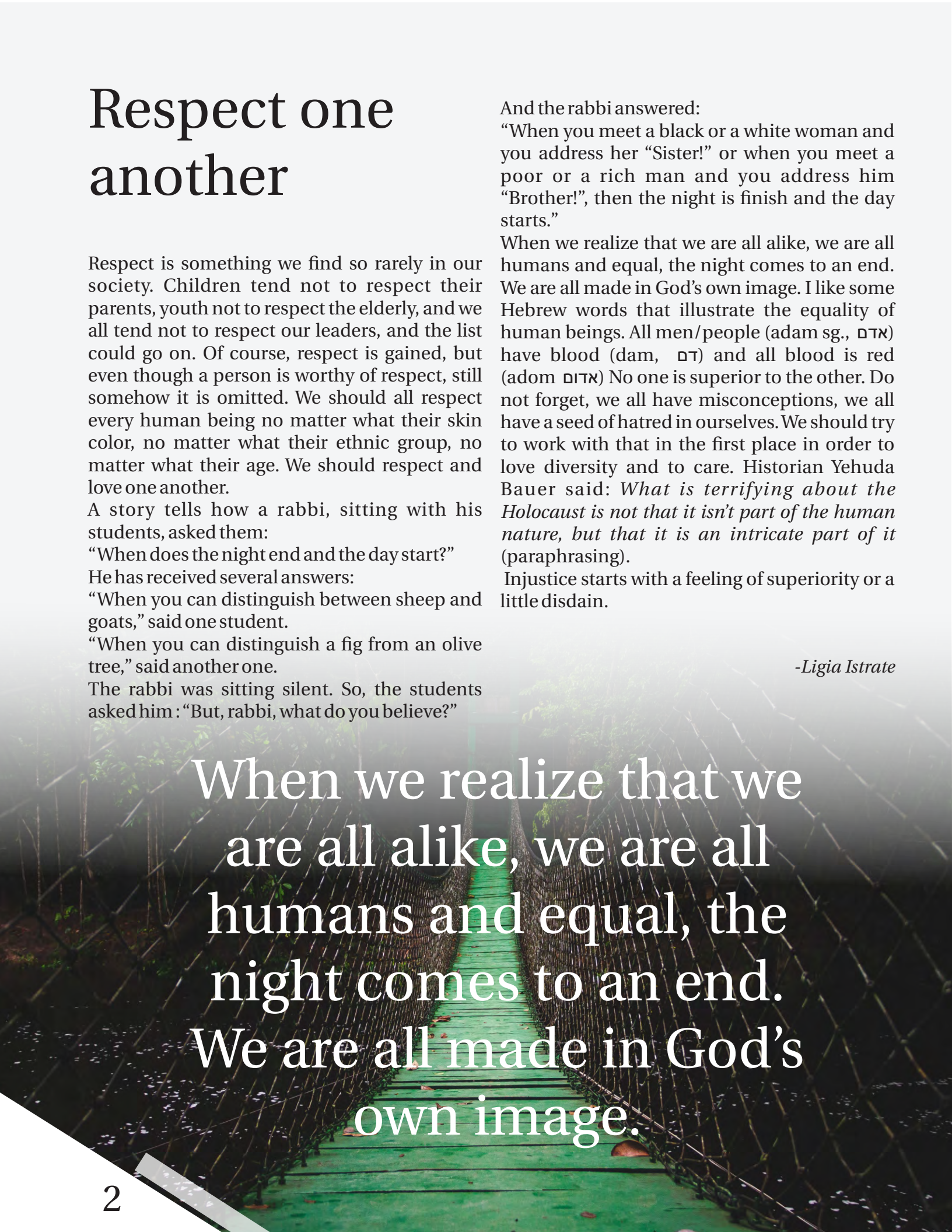
And the rabbi answered:

“When you meet a black or a white woman and you address her “Sister!” or when you meet a poor or a rich man and you address him “Brother!”, then the night is finish and the day starts.”

When we realize that we are all alike, we are all humans and equal, the night comes to an end. We are all made in God’s own image. I like some Hebrew words that illustrate the equality of human beings. All men/people (adam sg., אדם) have blood (dam, דם) and all blood is red (adom אדום) No one is superior to the other. Do not forget, we all have misconceptions, we all have a seed of hatred in ourselves. We should try to work with that in the first place in order to love diversity and to care. Historian Yehuda Bauer said: *What is terrifying about the Holocaust is not that it isn't part of the human nature, but that it is an intricate part of it* (paraphrasing).

Injustice starts with a feeling of superiority or a little disdain.

-Ligia Istrate



When we realize that we are all alike, we are all humans and equal, the night comes to an end. We are all made in God’s own image.

# East Asia devotional

*In loving memory of  
Viola, for her faith,  
strength and courage  
as she fought cancer  
and lived her life to  
the fullest until she  
rest in peace in mid-  
2017.*

She shared the same trust and submission to God as Naomi (the Book of Ruth).

Naomi means *pleasant* or *sweet* in Hebrew, but her life is bitter (Mara) because of the death of her husband and of her two sons in a foreign land, in the time of famine when Israel had judges. How could she call herself blessed or pleasant or sweet? *The Lord has afflicted me, the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.*

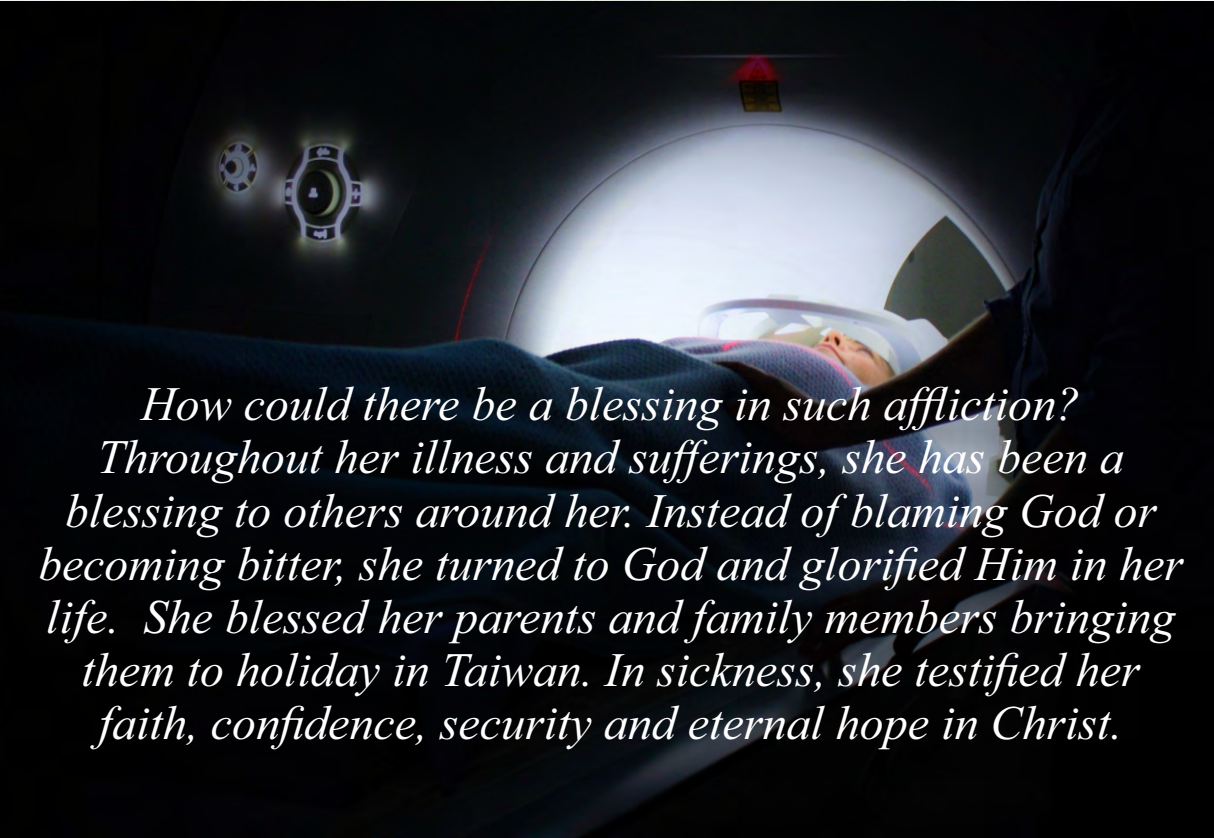
Life couldn't be more tragic, but instead of despairing, she turned to God and acknowledged God's sovereignty over circumstances and

she set off home towards Bethlehem, the *House of plenty*. God showed His mercy and worked out an eternal plan not only for her, but also for the house of Israel. Behind the scene, God's hidden hands work to graciously provide a faithful, God fearing daughter who came alongside to support Naomi and look after her, and ultimately blessed her more than "seven sons". As she turned to God, God restored her sweetness and blessed her. Through her son, Obed, King David and Jesus, the promised Messiah, were born.

Viola was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer. She went through surgery and difficult treatments for about a year. How could there be a blessing in such affliction? Throughout her illness and sufferings, she has been a

blessing to others around her. Instead of blaming God or becoming bitter, she turned to God and glorified Him in her life. She blessed her parents and family members bringing them to holiday in Taiwan. In sickness, she testified her faith, confidence, security and eternal hope in Christ. Her benevolence stretched beyond her life. She donated her body to medical education and research in the medical school and subsequently her body was returned to ground in ash scattered in a garden. In the Father's home, she is restored eternally in a new body. Amen.

- Sing Hong Ting, East Asia  
President



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# News

## East Asia Area

Three EAA officers attended the 34th National United Methodist Women's Society of Christian Service Assembly at The Subic Peninsular Hotel in the Philippines from 19th to 22nd April 2018. The Assembly theme was "Transformed Women, Therefore Go!" The Women's Society in the Philippines has been serving faithfully and diligently. Many families have been witnessing for Jesus Christ. In the region, they have helped the poor, empowered the oppressed and provided practical support to the socially disadvantaged. During the Assembly, the EAA officers had the pleasure of presenting the hymn "Blessed Assurance" in English, Chinese and Tamil



Philippines Annual Conference and EAA Officers

simultaneously. The four-day Assembly ended with Closing Worship, Commitment Service and Holy Communion.



EAA Officers at the Assembly

### Mandarin Leadership Training Workshop in Taiwan

The Hong Kong Methodist Women's Association participated in the Mandarin Leadership Training Workshop in Taiwan. The 140 Mandarin Speaking EAA members from Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sabah, Sarawak and Taiwan gathered under the theme "The Joy of

Religious Women". We felt greatly inspired by the works and testimonies of our fellow sisters in different regions.

## The Annual General Conference of Hong Kong Methodist Women's Association



This event was held on 12th May 2018. The theme of the year was "Sisters Go! Make Disciples of All!" Ms. Florence Yu from Sheng Kung Hui, Holy Trinity Cathedral, delivered a sermon on the topic of "Witnessing God to the Last Day".

Our Hong Kong president announced that the celebration of the Women's Association's 60th anniversary will be in May 2019 and the 11th East Asia Area Seminar, will be held from 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> March 2019 in Hong Kong.

*- Sing Hong Ting, East Asia President*

## Italy

Methodist women are part of the association that includes all the protestant women's federations in Italy, the FDEI (Federation of Protestant Women in Italy) in order to have a better response in society. The three biggest projects we joined are:

- "The Occupied Chair"

- A petition submitted to the Italian Parliament
- A booklet we prepare every year - "16 days".

**The Occupied Chair  
(take possession of a place in the name of a victim of femicide)**



Most of the public spaces (parks, city halls, libraries) have a seat that is "occupied" to remember that a woman will never be able to sit there because she was murdered by her husband, partner or any other men that thought she was their possession.

**Petitions**

In our churches two petitions against violence to women, one addressed to men and one to women, have been signed and sent to the Commission for Women's Rights in the Parliament. The petitions are the same for both genders and urge the Government not to ignore the necessary help that women need because of their suffering due to violence, in its many forms, as well for the children that suffer the consequence of violence in the family.

In May a representative group was invited by the President of the House to which the petitions were submitted. The petitions have been accepted and they are now in discussion by the Commission for the Women's Rights.

**"16 days"**

Every year we publish a booklet with stories of abused women, one for each day from the 10th to the 25th of November, and a Bible study.

*- Lidia Ribet, Europe: Continental Area President*

**Testimony from Bulgaria: The Power of Prayer**



In mid-November a young widow and her two sons (aged 13 and 12) were involved in a terrible car accident. The older boy immediately died on impact and the mother was so badly injured that her survival was in question. The congregation she had just started to attend was in shock. A prayer request was sent around the world. The younger boy who was only bruised was quickly discharged from hospital and

underwent counseling. The mother underwent five operations on her pelvis, jaw, arm and chest. She was kept in a coma for about a month and at the beginning of January the doctors declared her strong enough to learn about the death of her older son. In mid-January she was discharged from hospital and sent to a rehab center. Three weeks later she was sent home but continued with physiotherapy and counseling. Doctors could not believe such a rapid recovery was possible. But we know that this is the result of the prayers of so many people around the world. In May both mother and son were back in church, fit and smiling, grateful to God and for the support of their known and unknown brothers and sisters all over the world. The congregation is also encouraged to experience the power of prayer in such a wonderful way.

*- Margarita Todorova, Bulgaria and Romania Unit President*

**Europe Area Seminar**

The Europe Area Seminar was held in Belfast, Ireland from 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> June. Prior to the seminar, from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> June was the Weaving Together Program with the participation of the World Officers, Units presidents, Tree of Life Editor and other HKMS and several delegates. Each of the



participants gave a report regarding her work. There was also a time of worship and prayer. *Ketso* was used for establishing the good things of the Federation, and the problems, and for finding solutions. Each of the participants took a decision to do something of impact for this world and for the Federation.

The Area Seminar started with a wonderful evening, in which the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Deirdre Hargey, gave a speech. All the days of the seminar started with prayer and worship and ended with an evening devotion.

Besides all this, on 8<sup>th</sup> there was a



*Lord Mayor of Belfast, Deirdre Hargey*

workshop on worship with Val Mullally, Wendy Johnston and Melanie Johnston, area meetings and sharing groups. On 9<sup>th</sup> there was a bible study also, led by Gillian Kingston, Vice-President of World Methodist Council. In the afternoon women could choose from two optional excursions:



*World Officers*

Titanic experience or the City Tour.

On 10<sup>th</sup> the HKMS were presented and interviewed and Matilda Johnson, the Vice-President of the Federation, gave several Reflections on SDGs. In the afternoon, the women attended five different workshops on SDGs: SDG 1 “No Poverty” (Greetje van der Veer), SDG 4 “Quality Education” (Carolyn Lawrence), SDG 5 “Gender Equality” (Rachel Allison), SDG 10 “Reduced Inequalities” (Susanne Meister) and SDG 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions” (Ligia Istrate). The Area Seminar ended with worship and Holy Communion, as well as a sermon preached by Alison Judd, the World President.

*- Ligia Istrate, Tree of Life Editor*

## Helen Kim Memorial Scholars

Wanda Hogan (Ireland): Since the World Assembly in Texas 2016, Wanda has continued to teach Sunday School and takes part regularly in the organisation of both youth and children's activities in her district. She has enjoyed joining her local Methodist Women's group that meet up once a month for fellowship, and for a time of devotion. She has preached in three different Methodist churches around the country and has spoken to two women's groups and also to the Christian Union at University College, Cork. Recently, Wanda has been kept busy with her work on the planning committee for the 10<sup>th</sup> Joint European Area Seminar

which took place in Belfast. Wanda was grateful for the support and encouragement of Louise Wilson (Area President), Phyllis Watters (Seminar Secretary), and Janice Walker (Seminar Treasurer) in particular. Over the seminar weekend, Wanda was delighted to be able to spend time with Ligia Istrate and Rachel Allison, two of the other HKMS and many of the delegates who she had met in Texas as well as meeting many new ladies from all over Europe. Now that the seminar is over, she is looking forward to working with her unit on SDGs 4, 5 and 10 over her final three years as HKMS for Ireland.

Rachel Allison (Britain) returned from Houston with a renewed passion to get more young women involved in the work of the World Federation and work on SDG 5 Gender equality. She has been blessed with the opportunity to share her experience of the World Assembly at World Federation Day, the Europe Area Seminar and at many local Methodist Women in Britain meetings. She has also decided to focus on educating women about the practise of Female Genital Mutilation both in Britain and around the world. She has been invited to speak at a number of events and has started a postcard campaign, asking Members of the UK Parliament to take the problem seriously and provide more education on the issue. As well as this she has sat on the Methodist Women in Britain's board of trustees (known as the Forum) and taken part in many of the events that MWiB has run over the past two years. In her personal life she has graduated from University and started working part time in the House of Lords and part time in the Joint Public Issues

Team as a researcher.

Helene Benedikte Granum-Aanestad (Norway) currently lives in the capital, Oslo, with her husband. They got married in 2017. This August, she will start the sixth and final year of her theological studies. Helene's aim is to be a full-time pastor in The United Methodist Church, Norway as now she is working as a part time pastor in a congregation an hour out of Oslo. Helene's desire is that her work and calling, studies and gifts can be used for God's glory. Apart from being a student and a pastor, she is also the Unit president of United Methodist Women Norway (being elected in spring 2017). For her is a huge privilege and also a big responsibility to be elected leader for the Norway Unit, and she is very grateful for the amazing, passionate and positive board she works with. Helene's prayer is that God will show His grace and love to others through their work, and that we together are able to contribute to a world of peace, justice and love for one another.

Ligia Istrate (Romania) is an active member of the UMC Romania and she is the coordinator for UMW Romania, being responsible for the women's meetings, conferences and events. She is involved in the Central Conference activities on women's work, coordinated by Barbara Bunger, and last year she travelled for its conference in Novi-Sad, Serbia. She was also invited to speak in different women's meetings in Romania and in the United States, where she has presented the "Chest of Jewels", a devotional book dedicated for women. Since last year she is also the director of Super Kids Academy, a children's centre that helps orphans and poor children from single parent families with teaching, emotional support, Bible lessons, school supplies, and a hot meal each day. Ligia still tries to be active in her domain as author and historian. Last year she published her third book: *The Paradoxical Brotherhood: Jews and Egyptians in history and theology* and she has visited Puebla, Mexico, where she spoke about peace between Jews and Arabs and Reutlingen, Germany, where she spoke about the Egyptian Coptic church. She has also participated in a programme at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland, with the support of the World Federation. Regarding her work for the Federation, she is honoured to be the Tree of Life Editor and to participate in as many of the Federation's events as possible, including the South Asia Seminar in Myanmar, where she was invited by the Area President, MuMu Than and the European Area Seminar, with the help of the Ireland unit, led by

Louise Wilson.

## Prayer request

On 4 May the three major parties in the Bulgarian Parliament introduced changes to the Law on Religion. The proposed changes include banning funding and financial support from abroad to religious organizations. The State will provide financial support only to the Orthodox Church and to the Muslims. Only the Orthodox Church and the Muslims will have the right to open theological training schools and Universities. Nobody who has obtained theological training abroad will be allowed to serve in a priestly position until his/her training is approved by the State. Foreigners cannot preach without a prior approval by the State. If this proposal passes, the Methodist Church will be badly hit – pastors' salaries, the running costs of the churches, various church projects, the women's Annual Seminars, the translation and distribution of materials are all heavily dependent on funding from abroad. Three of the seven ordained pastors have been trained abroad. The diploma of one of them is lost and a copy cannot be obtained. The Bishop is Swiss and will not be able to perform his duties to preside at the Annual Conference and will not be allowed to preach. Please pray for these proposed changes to fail.

## Prayer of the day

Our heavenly Father! We thank You for this day that You have given us as a wonderful gift. We thank You for all blessings You will give us for this day! We Thank You Jesus Christ that You have taken our sins up on the cross and forgiven us. Create in us new heart and life so we can be in You and You in us. Holy Spirit breathe on us so we can understand more about Your will and Your hope for us. We put our lives in Your blessed hands. In your name Jesus, we pray. Amen! Blessings!

- Walla Carlsson

## Announcement

The 14<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women will be held from 10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021 in Gothenburg, Sweden. The Executive Board of the Federation invites all women to come to the Assembly, so please start to save money for this!



## Contact details you may find useful

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