



The TREE — of — LIFE

Advent reflections

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President's Advent reflections

I write this the day before setting off on a journey to friends in Scotland and the North of England. I have done my packing and the car is waiting outside, full of fuel and ready to be packed with items of clothing for ourselves and gifts for our friends. I am looking forward to this 'road trip' with my husband. We may encounter some cold weather on the way and it will take two days to get to our destination, but I am fairly confident we shall arrive without any problems.

It would not have been like that for Mary and Joseph, setting off from Nazareth to go to Bethlehem, the city of David and of their ancestors. They may have had a donkey to help them on their way, but it is unlikely that Mary would have been able to ride. No, even in her condition of pregnancy, she would have been expected to walk. They were commanded by law to make this difficult journey. Yet, from the story as told in Luke's gospel, chapter 2, their distant relations in the city were not waiting to welcome them with generous hospitality. In Matthew's version of events, 2:13-14, the little family then became refugees in Egypt, fleeing the

murderous Herod.

We have lost track of how many thousands of people, men, women and children, have resorted to walking countless miles in search of sanctuary over recent months. We have even lost track of how many have perished in the attempt to cross the seas. We don't know how many have been tricked by ruthless traffickers into putting their children in danger. From North Africa and the Middle East, from Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Pacific Islands people are making difficult journeys to find a place of safety.

As Christians, we recognize we are all members of one human family. It should grieve us to know that any of our sisters and brothers are refused safe passage or denied a welcome. In the letter to the Hebrews 13:2 we are urged to 'practice hospitality to strangers for by doing that some have entertained angels.' Such strangers are our sisters and brothers in God's family.

May God bless you with safety as you travel this Christmas!



- Alison Judd

Editor's word for New Year

For me New Year's Eve is a joyful event, but also a melancholic one. Joyful because I usually meet with friends, we eat good food together, discuss and play and, of course, before Midnight and at Midnight we spend time in prayer and meditation for the next year. Melancholic because another year of life has ended.

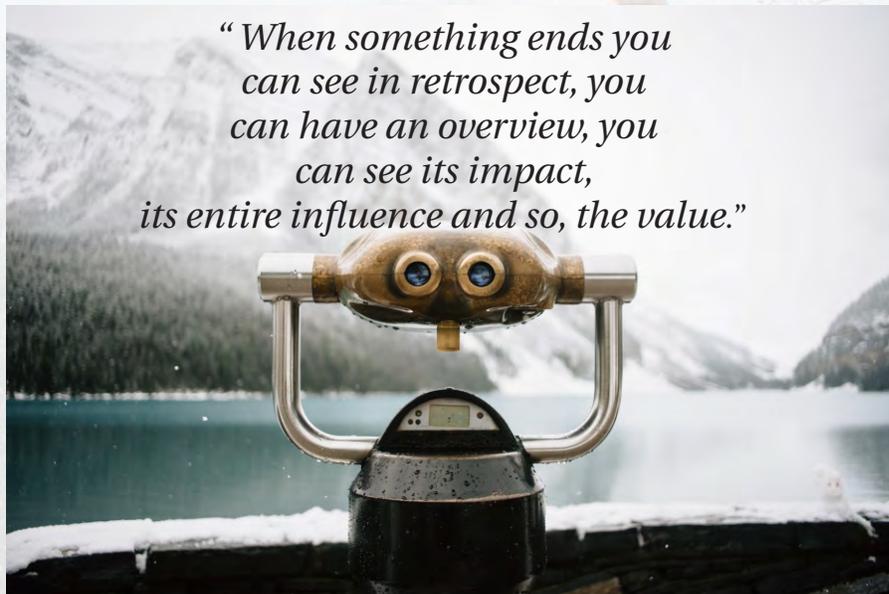
A year is gone: with good moments, with happiness, with different situations and grows, but also with periods of sickness, of sorrow, of loss. Many of us lost a family member or a friend. We will enter into a new year richer or poorer, with new friends or without our friends, with our job or with a new career. A new time is at our door.

Our life on this Earth is in a continuous state of change. We are not the same people we were: God teaches us more things as we let Him teach us, we experience life in a deeper way as we mature and gain knowledge. From being children of our parents we ourselves may become

parents and grandparents, and we miss the old days, our childhood, the relatives and friends that are not on this Earth anymore. We change from all points of view. Even

something ends you can see in retrospect, you can have an overview, you can see its impact, its entire influence and so, the value. Remember this and have this in mind.

"When something ends you can see in retrospect, you can have an overview, you can see its impact, its entire influence and so, the value."



our bodies change as we age, we gain weight, wrinkles and maybe grey hair. This is LIFE on Earth. This change or metamorphosis can make people sad.

But in this continuous changing of ourselves, of people, of life, of context, God remains the same. He never changes. He is the same, today and forever. Isaiah 26:4 says: "Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting Rock." Everything changes around us and we change, but He remains the same. He is the axis on which we balance.

And Ecclesiastes 7:8 says: "The end of a matter is better than its beginning", because this shows its value. When

Don't forget to end this year in meditation and communication with your God and tell Him your plans for the new year. See Psalm 37:5 "Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you."



- Ligia Istrate
Editor

A letter from the President

Dear Sisters,

I wonder how you celebrated World Federation day this year? It is 77 years since our movement was formed. I had the joy of sharing in an event within my home Unit in Britain. We called it a 'Taste of Texas' and all who came experienced a flavour of our Assembly in Houston. We explored the theme 'Chosen People: Called to Proclaim' in a day of worship, bible study, and workshops, sharing highlights of our work through the United Nations and the Helen Kim Memorial Scholarship programme. Our offering made that day will go to the World Federation so that this important work can continue.

The decisions made at the business meetings in Houston are recorded in minutes that have been sent out to your Area Presidents and Vice-

Presidents. We joyfully welcomed three new Units as members of our Federation: the re-formed Unit of Sweden (now a Uniting Church of Sweden); Benin (formerly two branches but now joyfully united) and Cote d'Ivoire. We appointed our new World Officers for the next five years: Mataiva Robertson, World Secretary, Matilda Johnson, World Vice - President, Leu Pupulu, World Treasurer, and myself as World President. We are so fortunate that we shall have Ann Connan continuing to serve as President Emerita.



Our Archivist is now Judith Siaba and our Tree of Life Editor is Ligia Istrate, a HKMS for Europe: Continental. This means that for the first time, we have a current and former HKMS on the World Executive. We urge all Area officers to encourage their Helen Kim scholars to participate fully in the life of their Unit. As our movement was born through the vision of a younger woman, Helen Kim, so our movement will flourish as we

continue to listen to the voices of our gifted younger women.

In our business meetings we addressed the issue of finance. We are grateful to Ann and Leu for saying they will continue to work to regain the lost money from a previous quinquennium (QQ). We considered how far we could realistically raise the annual levy to rebuild our funds and it was agreed that for this QQ, the levy be set at 10 US cents per person per year. We recognize this will be difficult for many Units but I want to

urge you to think imaginatively about how you might raise the money. It is amazing how generous women are with their time and commitment to the Federation. Let's all find new ways of supporting

their efforts.

Our Area Presidents will meet with World Officers in our next executive committee in Chicago in March 2017. Please let them know any good news or concerns from your Units so they can pass this on to the rest of us.

Every blessing,
Alison

The New Executive (part 2)

World Archivist: Judith Siaba



Judith Siaba has been very involved with UMW since 1975, she served as Director of the

Women's Division of UMW (2000-2008) and in 2011 she was elected as the North America Area President (until 2016). Judith is an Administrative Assistant to the Director of Congregational Development of Northern Illinois Conference of the UMC, but she is preparing to retire at the end of the year. She is very thankful for having a supportive husband, three daughters, one son-in-law and 4 grandchildren. She also loves music and she looks forward to working with the Federation. The Archivist requests: "Please send me information about your areas to be kept for posterity. With God's help we will keep proclaiming God's love in all of our lives."



South Pacific Area President: Joy Jino



Joy Jino is a teacher by profession, but she has taken early retirement from her teaching

career and is very much involved in church, taking leadership roles especially with women's and young girls' programs. Joy is a member of the United Church in the Solomon Islands (UCSI) and she confidently says that her journey and Christian growth has been shaped by the leadership roles that she has taken up in the church through the women's fellowship organization. This includes attending meetings, seminars, retreats, rallies, training sessions, bible studies, etc., both in the church, nation and abroad on behalf of UCSI. Being the Vice President in the South Pacific Area for the last five years (2011 – 2016), Joy says that it has been a learning leadership journey, she especially wants to give thanks to Lynne Scott for sharing her wisdom and experience.

The South Pacific Area President's message to the South Pacific sisters: "Let us journey together in love, support each other and pray for our Federation family." Philippians 4:13 *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

North America Area President: Princess R. Pegues



Princess Pegues is the holder of two B.S. degrees and a Master's degree in Business

Education. Princess is a retired high school business teacher and she serves as president of the Women's Missionary Council of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. She is also the founder of the SOS (Save Our Sons) program. Princess has attended five World Assemblies and has taught mission classes in Jamaica and Africa. Her favorite scriptures are: *"Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only."* (James 1:22) and *"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom*

shall I send? And who will go for us? And I said, "Here am I. Send me." (Isaiah 6:8)

Louisville, Kentucky, Houston and also in Johannesburg. Her will is to serve God.

has since settled there with her husband, Andrew Ngui. Together, they are blessed with two children and four grandchildren. Sing Hong attends the Ward Memorial Church in Hong Kong and represents the Hong Kong Methodist Women's Association Unit. She is actively serving in the Women's Ministry, Sunday school, Sunday Service and at the Only Methodist Old Nursing Home. She is currently the Director of the Methodist Yang Memorial Social Services and Yang Dental Service. Previously, Sing Hong held the EAA Treasurer position (2011-2016). She is very thankful to be able to serve the Lord in these ministries.

Latin America Area President: Leila de Jesus Barbosa

East Asia Area President: Sing Hong Ting



Leila de Jesus Barbosa was born in Rio de Janeiro and she is an

Elementary School Teacher by profession. Leila is married with Edmo Cardoso Barbosa, and they have a daughter, Liliane, and two boys, Claudio and Ricardo, who bring them many joys. All three children are married and have given them five grandchildren. Leila was actively involved with the work of the Women's Society, where she held the position of President for three terms and has also worked as a District Secretary, Recording Secretary, Secretary and Correspondent, and Vice President. After all these functions, Leila was elected as Vice President of the Brazil Confederation for a period of eight years. She attended the World Assembly in London and the Women's Methodist Assembly in Saint Louis, Missouri and



Sing Hong Ting was born into a Methodist family in Malaysia. She completed her

secondary education in Malaysia. In 1973, she obtained a Business Management Diploma from Otago, New Zealand. In 1976, she went to Hong Kong to work as a company secretary and



Photo of the New Executive

News

Central and Southern Europe Consultation: the leader's feedback

Women's Work of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe (CC CSE), guided the Consultation (Delegate Assembly) under the theme "Spiritual Formation - to be shaped by God".

Looking back on the meeting, Barbara Büniger says: In the Bible we can find the well-known verse: "Everything has its time". For the consultation, I formulated a

think about the presentations of Claudia Haslebacher, Swiss district superintendent, which highlighted the topics "Identity in Christ - God's child, a valuable person", "My personality, strengths and weaknesses"; "Building a community and seeing the bigger perspective - we are building the kingdom of God". Too little time available to delve deeper into the structures, values and goals of our work with and for women at the level of the Central Conference.

Bad time management? In her sense of time deficit, the women's work coordinator sees rather the longing for 'more': to have more time and to be able to spend it with these great women from the area of our CC CSE. To hear more about them and how they are shaped by God. To learn more about how they build the kingdom of God in their work with and for women. To see more of God's works through us in this world.

Barbara Büniger said: "We are already looking forward to all opportunities for encounters in the next four years, with the knowledge that our time together will be 'too little' again."

- Barbara Büniger



From 13th - 17th October 2016, 24 women from the United Methodist Church (UMC) in eleven European countries met in Kisac (Serbia). Barbara Büniger, Swiss coordinator for the

different statement: We had too little time for everything. So, in the five days of the consultation, there was too little time to sing and pray and share, too little time for fellowship and to enjoy the loving hospitality of the UMC in Kisac. Too little time to

World Federation Day in UK

based on 1 Peter 2 verses 4-5. She reminded us that we are all being built into a holy house, even if we feel a little bit of an odd shaped brick, and used a bunch of bananas as a visual aid! We also received a

9-10. These verses form the theme of the World Federation for the next five years, 'Chosen people, called to proclaim' and Carolyn talked about how special we are to God and how He has a unique calling on each of our lives. During the afternoon those gathered experienced a taste of some of the workshops that had been on offer in Houston. The day concluded with a report from Alison Judd, the new World President of the WFM&UCW, in which she outlined the action plan for the next five years as we look at the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and seek



Alison Judd, World President

The WFM&UCW is active in over 70 countries around the world, wherever there are national churches which are affiliated to the World Methodist Council. In UK, about 80 people gathered at Rowbarton Methodist Church, Taunton to celebrate World Federation Day. The theme for the day this year was 'A Taste of Texas', so people who had not been able to attend the 13th World Assembly in Houston could find out what happened there.

We were warmly welcomed by the local minister, Rev. Deborah Kirk, along with her wonderful team of volunteers, which took care for our lunch. Anne Browse, the president of Methodist Women in Britain led us in our morning worship

presentation by Rachel Allison who is the British 'Helen Kim Memorial Scholar'. Liz Marriott and Jude Simms, (the outgoing and incoming Communication Officers for MWIB) gave some reflections on the Texan experience, then Carolyn Lawrence, the new Area Vice President for the WFM&UCW presented a Bible study based on 1 Peter 2 verses

to help bring about God's Kingdom on earth through the working out of the goals in practical ways. She then led us in our closing worship before everyone went their separate ways. (for more information please visit www.mwib.org.uk).

- Carolyn Lawrence



Anne Browse, President of MWIB



The Thirteenth Regional Conference on Women Opens with Strong Condemnation of Gender Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean

The XIII Regional Conference on Women was held on Friday, October 28 in Montevideo and was organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Uruguayan government, through its Foreign Relations Ministry and the National Institute for Women. The



conference included a series of thematic panels, roundtables and side events. The Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean is a subsidiary body of ECLAC, and is convened every three years to identify the status of women's autonomy and rights at

regional and local levels; present recommendations regarding public policies on gender equality; undertake periodic assessments of the activities carried out in fulfilment of regional and international agreements on the subject; and serve as a forum for discussion on gender equality issues.

The enormous inequalities that are keeping women from exercising their physical, economic and political autonomy were discussed

and three spheres of women's autonomy were highlighted: physical, economic and in decision-making

processes. An important issue discussed was violence against women. Every day at least 12 Latin American and Caribbean women die on average, just because they are women. According to data from the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean



(OIG), a total of 2,089 women were victims of femicide in 25 countries of the region around the year 2014. Other issues were: women's over-representation in poor households, their lack of personal

income, the excessive burden of unpaid domestic and care work, difficulties in deciding freely about their sexual and reproductive lives, and their inadequate representation in positions of power, etc.

The call was and remains for "repositioning gender equality plans as the backbone of medium- and long-term national strategies for sustainable development."

- Ivonne Pereira Díaz
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