



# *The* TREE — *of* LIFE

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# President's letter

## What can I give Him?

I remember as a young child being in a school nativity play dressed as a cherub. Don't laugh!

I remember how, at the end of the play, all the children came forward and knelt beside the (toy) baby Jesus as we sang the lovely hymn by Christina Georgina Rossetti whose last verse is:

*What can I give Him,  
poor as I am?*

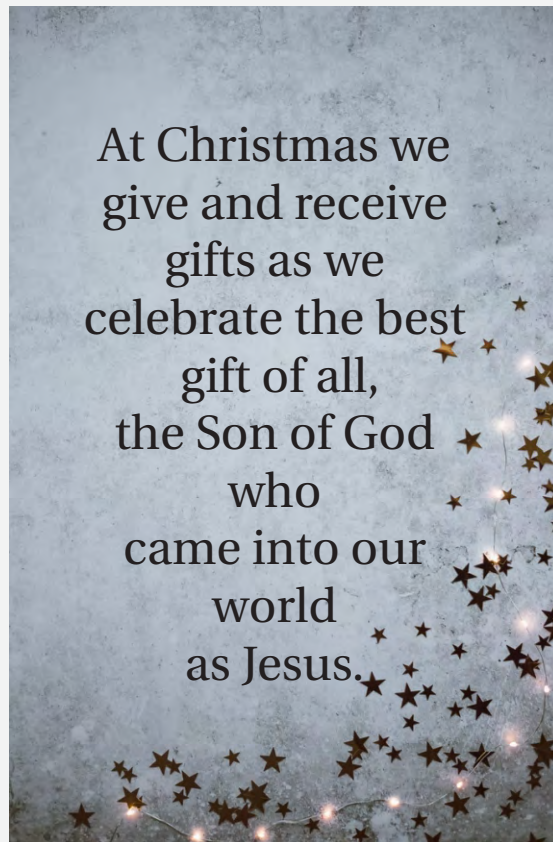
*If I were a shepherd, I  
would bring a lamb.*

*If I were a wise man, I  
would do my part,  
but what I can I give him,  
give my heart.*

Over the last months I have become acutely aware of the gifts and skills of various Federation women: the gift of intercessory prayer, the skill of organization, communication, encouragement, forward-thinking, clear thinking, using technology, creativity, neighborliness, commitment, perseverance... The list goes on. Each one of us has at least one gift we may offer lovingly for the work of making Christ known. I am so grateful to those of you who offer your gifts and skills to God through the World Federation's activities. You may read more about these in this issue of the *Tree of Life*.

At Christmas we give and receive gifts as we celebrate the best gift of all, the Son of God who came into our world as Jesus. Our world?

Yes, God gifted the world to us as a created earth to cherish and care for as stewards. But this year we have recognized that we have failed to care adequately for this precious gift. We have squandered and neglected and polluted our environment and allowed global warming to play havoc with our climate. The poorest nations are suffering the most from rising sea levels, storms, drought, and wildfires. COP 26 resulted in new commitments on the part of many nations we represent. We must keep up the pressure on governments to stand by their commitments and continue to support those most in need.



Some of our Federation Units have been struggling to pay their levy this year because of considerable local challenges. If you or your Unit is able to offer to pay the levy for another Unit, please get in touch with the World Treasurer, Leu Pupulu. Remember that only the Units that have paid their annual levy are permitted to vote at our World Assembly business meetings.

*Loving, generous God,  
We thank You for your gift of  
creation.*

*We confess we have not always looked after it.  
We thank you for Your gift of Jesus.  
We celebrate His life among us as we make Him  
known to others.  
We thank You for the gifts and skills You have  
given each one of us.  
Help us to use them for Your kingdom's sake  
As we offer You our loving hearts. Amen*

*- Alison Judd, World President*

## Editor's word:

### DARE

## Sometimes craziness is all that is needed.

Remember Noah: imagine building an ark in an area where rain hardly ever falls. People were passing by, asking questions, and Noah kept working on the ark, explaining to people that a great rain will soon come. The situation was unimaginable and, of course, people mocked him, and they thought he was crazy. But it was exactly this craziness brought about the deliverance of humanity. The rain came, and the ark was the salvation, not only of humans, but of the animals also.

A modern-day Noah is Amir Peretz, an Israeli politician who proposed the missile defense system. This was in the years 2000, when the rockets fired into Israel were very few, causing literally one death per year. This situation could not justify spending huge amounts of money on the system. Everybody mocked him - the people, the politicians - and he was ridiculed in mass-media photos, slandered, and isolated in politics. What military knowledge can he have if he is a politician? Why should anyone invest in such an expensive system while the offence is low and almost no one dies?

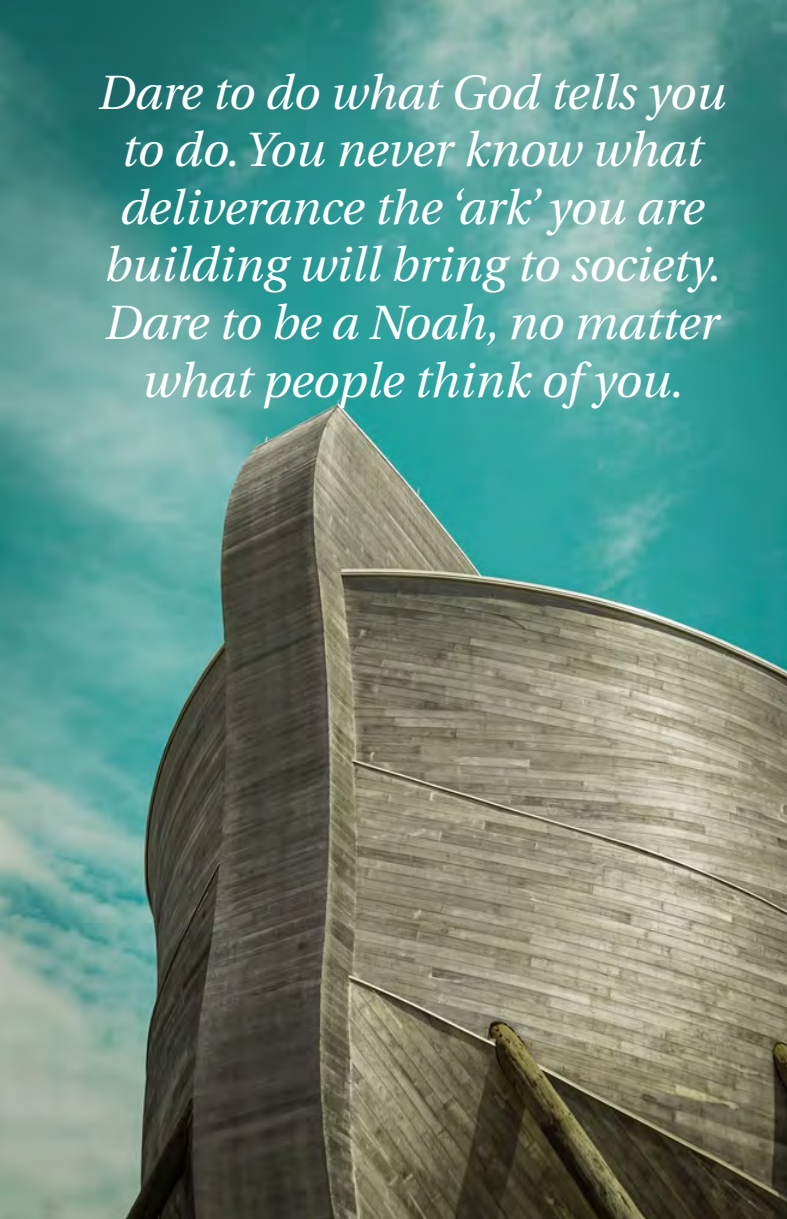
He faced down the skeptics and continue to push for the development of the missile defense system, the well-known Iron Dome. Of course, he looked like a madman in the eyes of the Israelis. But not for long. Now we know something they could not have imagined: the thousands and thousands of rockets that have rained down on Israel since then. Israel would have been destroyed and thousand of people would have lost their lives if there was no man called Amir Peretz, if he had bowed his head down when he was criticized, and if they had not built the Iron Dome, a modern-day ark for the Jewish people. The system is designed to

intercept and destroy short-range rockets and artillery shells fired from distances of 4 to 70 kilometers away, whose trajectory would take them to an Israeli populated area.

Dare to do what God tells you to do. You never know what deliverance the 'ark' you are building will bring to society. Dare to be a Noah, no matter what people think of you.

And, as Christmas approaches, do not forget that Noah and his saving ark is an image of Christ and His saving Death. Jesus dared to leave everything, to be born as a baby, to live on this Earth, to minister and to lose Himself in order to save us all. We rejoice for His birth, but we cannot separate this event from the reason why He came. Birth and death intertwine and bring us the Good News. He dared - and He gives you strength to dare to change the world you live in. May God give you joy, peace and boldness!

*-Ligia Istrate, Tree of Life Editor*

A large, multi-story wooden ark structure, constructed from light-colored wood planks, stands against a bright teal sky with wispy white clouds. The ark is viewed from a low angle, looking up at its towering, curved walls and a pointed roofline. The structure is composed of several distinct sections, with visible horizontal and vertical wooden beams. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day.

*Dare to do what God tells you to do. You never know what deliverance the 'ark' you are building will bring to society. Dare to be a Noah, no matter what people think of you.*

# New beginnings

How things have changed since this time last year! As restrictions have eased here in the UK it's wonderful that we are now able to meet together and to sing together in church. Many families are now celebrating all the events that were postponed during the lockdowns. Others are still trying to come to terms with some of the losses and difficulties of the past eighteen months.

For me, this has been a year of big changes, moving to a new area of the country with my husband, who is a Methodist Minister, and getting settled in our new home, church, town, and county. As I write this, we already feel really at home and are excited about all that God has in store for us in the coming years.

An often-quoted poem at the beginning of a New Year is 'The Gate of the Year' by Minnie Louise Haskins. It was written in 1908 under the title 'God knows' and came to the attention of the public when King George VI quoted it in his Christmas speech in 1939. You can find the whole poem on the internet, but the most quoted part is the beginning:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God,

trod gladly into the night.

And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

I love this poem as it reminds me that at the beginning of any year, we do not know what lies ahead, but as we walk into an unknown future, we walk with a known God who has gone ahead of us and walks with us, no matter what the circumstances of our lives.

I don't know what plans you have for 2022, but I imagine we are all hoping and praying that we can continue our move towards our new

normality and enjoy all the postponed events planned for the year ahead!

At Christmas, we will celebrate again that in Jesus, God came to earth to live as one of us: to experience our trials, our joys, and our sorrows and, ultimately, to die for us and our salvation. As we trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus, we can each know and experience His peace and strength in our lives. We can have that assurance of His presence with us, no matter what we face, and there is always hope for the future, no matter how bleak things may appear.

I close with the chorus of an old hymn which was sung

in practically every service during our visit to Brazil just before the first lockdown – and I pray that the words will bring you encouragement and hope today and for the year to come:


*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow;*

*Because He lives, all fear is gone*

*Because I know He holds the future;*

*And life is worth the living just because He lives.*

- Carolyn Lawrence,  
Europe: Britain and Ireland Vice-President



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# News



## The 14th World Assembly of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women

**Theme:** 'Go and bear fruit - fruit that will last'.

**Date:** 9th – 14th August 2022

**Venue:** ONLINE registration via Humanitix  
(date to be announced)

The World Assembly normally occurs every five years. It is a gathering of women from more than 70 nations, including around 80 official World, Area and Unit delegates, but with many others attending at their own expense because they value the opportunity to meet with their Federation sisters from other parts of the world. However, this Assembly will be different. Aware that the global pandemic is severely restricting travel, the bold decision was made by the World Executive to hold our 14th World Assembly in 2022 **as a virtual, online event.**

The theme for 2022-2026, that will be launched at our Assembly, is taken from the words of Jesus recorded in John 15, in which He describes Himself as the true vine and his disciples as the branches, urging us to abide in Him so that we can be effective in our service. He warns, 'Apart from me you can do nothing' (verse 5). Yet, following the example of Jesus to love one another, we become not

just servants, but friends of Jesus, appointed to **'go and bear fruit – fruit that will last'** (John 15:16). Therefore, our theme is a call to **spirituality, productivity, and sustainability.**

Our online Assembly will be streamed live over several days, and registration will be open with a small fee of US\$50 to help cover our costs. Interpretation into several languages will be available. It would also be possible for women to register individually but gather as a group in a venue with internet. Separate business meetings will be open to those with voting rights as participants. Workshops will be pre-recorded as video presentations, with suggestions for group discussion.

Our emblem, the Tree of Life, bears twelve fruits, as described in Revelation 22:2. During the last 20 years we have used the United Nations Goals as the basis for our priority actions. We aim to bear fruit in our work in health, education, alleviating poverty and

hunger, addressing gender-based violence and social injustice, and learning to care for creation. In Area Seminars during this quinquennium we have heard about the concerns facing women today. These topics will inform us as we choose our workshops.

**Twelve workshops** will address the following issues:

- **Reducing Poverty (SDG1)** - through skills training and income generating initiatives.
- **Gender Equality (SDG5)** - empowering opportunities for women, providing training in leadership, communication, and technology as well as access to education in schools and colleges.
- **Health and Well-being (SDG3)** - of body, mind, and spirit, including music, prayer, and nutrition.

- **Eliminating Violence (SDG16)** - against women in the home and in wider areas of conflict.
- **Care for Creation (SDG13)**- recycling, reducing, restoring, planting, growing, to combat climate change.

Our Assembly will also include:

- **Daily worship**, in a variety of styles, supported by our music director, Rev Amelia Koh-Butler (UC Australia).
- **Bible study**, led by Jill Baker (Methodist Church in Britain).
- **Inspirational speakers** including Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, currently CEO of Christian Aid.
- **Presentations** from the nine Areas, United Nations representatives, and Helen Kim Memorial Scholars.
- **Creation of an Action plan** based on the workshop topics.
- **Commissioning service:** Bishop Rosemarie Wenner (World Methodist

Council/World Council of Churches/ UMC Germany).

- **Business meetings** for voting delegates and elections of new World Officers for 2022-2026.

## National Women's Seminar of UMC Women, September 23-26, 2021, Hungary, Europe Continental

The end of September each year is the time when we, as United Methodist Women in Hungary, get together. This year we met with an especially great joy, because we must admit that nowadays having a live retreat (not online) is truly a gift from God. We had our good old members with us, but we have welcomed brand new participants, too: altogether 54 lovely ladies and some men too, as you can see in the picture. Every year this is our most important meeting. Organizing such a Seminar is not easy, and we are exhausted by the end, but at the same time, it gives us more and more joy and satisfaction; it is always a huge ocean of blessings.

The story of Martha and Mary from Luke 10, the evening spent at the house of Zacchaeus, the disciples of Emmaus, or the Last Supper – what do these stories from the Bible have in common? Yes! That's it! They are all stories where the loving God is sitting at the table, and He is having a meal with different people. This was actually the title for our women's weekend: "Having a meal with Jesus". Do you like to sit down and drink some tea or eat a piece of cake with your family? Do you often share a dinner with your friends, with your loved ones? How do you do that? Who do you invite for dinner? These were some of the questions we discussed, and we rejoiced about the fact that Jesus is ready to have table-fellowship with all kinds of people. My heart was touched by the story of the woman from Luke 7:36-50, the sinful one that anointed Jesus with expensive oil. Sometimes I feel that when I serve Christ, I botched it up, and I am not very well prepared, or what I do is not a nice performance. Well, the woman in the story did something shocking, and she felt embarrassed maybe, or she muddled, but all she did meant a lot

to the Savior. We still talk about her, as it is written in the Gospel. So, dear Sisters, be encouraged: if you offer something to Christ, if you do something for Him, He looks at your heart, and not at the performance.

*-Lilla Kardosné  
Lakatos,  
Europe:  
Continental Vice  
President*



# Announcements

## EMPOWERMENT GRANTS

Do you have a vision for an initiative that will empower women and/or girls?

The World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women have set aside funds to provide Empowerment Grants to enable women to start initiatives that empower women and girls in their community. The grant will be a one-off contribution towards part of the funding. It is assumed that either there will be some self-funding from the applicant, or other contributions from elsewhere to fund the full cost of specified initiatives that empower women and/or girls. Applicants are invited to apply for a grant by the end of May each year.

For full details and an application form, contact the World Secretary by email:

[world.secretary@wfmucw.org](mailto:world.secretary@wfmucw.org)

**Reminder:** as you already know, WCC has initiated the project 'Waterfall of Solidarity'. You are all invited to create banners that will help raise awareness of the Thursdays in Black campaign at WCC Assembly in Germany, September 2022.

Please visit

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/contribute-to-a-thursdays-in-black-global-exhibit-waterfall-of-solidarity-and-resistance> for

more details.

## SDG 15 Challenge



Alison Judd, the World Federation President, challenges us to **plant a tree** in the place we live and to encourage others to do the same.

Let's all pray about the forests!

Prayer is the powerhouse that generates results.

## EMMANUEL — God with us

Christmas is a time of joy and peace. The word Christmas is all about love. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son Jesus Christ. He was given to die for us on the cross, to redeem us from sin, and to give us salvation to attain eternal life. Isaiah 9:6 says, “For a child has been born for us, a son given to us: authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Matthew 1:23 says, “They shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us'.”

Yes friends, God is with us. To many, December means Christmas. December brings holidays, celebration, good food, decorations, presents, new clothes, Santa Claus, caroling, candlelight service, Christmas service etc. But all these are in vain, if we do not experience the joy that comes from knowing that our sins are forgiven because of Jesus, and that He is with us.

The first people to hear the announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ were the shepherds, while looking after their sheep in the fields by night. The angel of the Lord said to them, “Do not be afraid; I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people; to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.” (Luke 2:8-11) The shepherds wasted no time. They went immediately to Bethlehem and saw Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling cloth, and laid in a manger, because there was no room in the inn. To the shepherds, the birth of Jesus Christ was a joyous event and a divine encounter. They returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told to them. Come, let's continue to glorify and praise God, for He is with us!

Matthew 2:1–10 illustrates how the wise men from the East, came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.” When king Herod heard this, he was

frightened. The wise men, having been led by the star, found the baby and his mother Mary in the house, and fell down and worshiped Him. Then, they offered Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The wise men offered gifts to Jesus; we should surrender ourselves as gifts to Him, who is with us. During this time of pandemic and lockdown, we Malaysians were affected tremendously. Nevertheless, at Tamil Methodist Church, Buntong, Ipoh, our ministry in celebrating the joy of

Christmas was not forbidden. Our worship services were online; Sunday School, Choir, Methodist Women's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Young Adult Ministry, Senior Fellowship, Prayer cell, Cell Group Ministry, Bible Camp for children, Women's Conference, Methodist Church Annual Conference, seminars, workshops, and Bible Study were carried out through Zoom. The participation was overwhelming. The online Christmas service and virtual caroling were the highlights of

last Christmas. Virtual carolers were well selected. Dressed in red, with caps, they sang numerous Christmas songs, which brought the feeling of Emmanuel, God with us.

Wishing you all, my beloved sisters, a Merry Christmas, and may the joy of this Christmas echo through the new year, 2022! Amen.

- Mary Devadason, East Asia Vice-President.



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