



The TREE *- of* LIFE

The Resurrection Now!

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President's letter

Dear Sisters,

To many of us*, the letters TOL mean one thing: Tree of Life! We cherish our Federation logo of the Tree of Life that reminds us of the verse in Revelation 22:2 'On either side of river is the tree of life, with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.' (NRSV)

Our newsletter is called the Tree of Life, and we use it to encourage each other to be fruitful in our service to God, and to help us connect with each other on a regular basis. Such connection is especially important in this current crisis that is making many feel isolated due to the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful to all those who contribute to the content of the newsletter, to Ligia, Jude and Cristian who edit, proof-read and design it respectively, and to Nicholas who posts it on our social media on our behalf.

All Area Officers also receive a copy via email and they send it on to their Units, so it spreads around the world like the roots and branches of a great global tree. I hope that any of you reading this might also pass it on to a friend who may not otherwise see it.

However, today I want to share with you another possible meaning of those letters, TOL. A friend taught me that they can mean 'Take over, Lord!' I rather like that. On the days I feel particularly stressed or anxious, it reminds me that I can turn to my amazing friend Jesus and say 'Take over, Lord. I surrender all to you. I can't do this work on my own but you can. You can see this through, in your way. You can direct my thinking, my actions and all my efforts so that they can

bear fruit for your kingdom's sake.'

In a way, we say 'Take over, Lord' whenever we pray. It occurs to me that as we pray through this crisis, the peoples of the world will experience a new unity, a bond of connection not known before. In our weakness and vulnerability, in our giving and receiving of support and care, we shall see God.

Jesus gave us such a good example of what it means to surrender all to God when, in his deepest need, he cried out in the garden of Gethsemane 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done'. Luke 22:42

Be blessed this Easter and in the months ahead.

Alison

*With apologies to the non-English-speakers among you!

-Alison Judd

A Prayer

God who is always attentive to our needs, we ask that we may be aware of the needs of others.

When we feel isolated and fearful, may we know your companionship.

May we remain faithful to you and trust you, the one who gives new life through your son Jesus.

May we be your instruments of healing in the world as we remain connected to you. Amen.



Editor's word: The Resurrection Now

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

(Philippians 3:7-11)

Christ has died and Christ has risen. If He had just died, He would have been a powerful historical figure, but that is all. He has risen and that is why we are Christians today. Because of His resurrection, He is present in our lives today. We know and feel that He is with us today, no matter what, no matter what the circumstances are.

Because of His resurrection we do not have to stay in our graves anymore, in the graves of sin, graves of loneliness, of addiction, of depression, of unhelpfulness, in the graves of our past. We have been resurrected with Him to a new life and we can benefit from the power of His resurrection – an amazing power that is available to all of us. Because of Him and the power of His resurrection, we can live now for the present. We do not have to live in the past and we do not have to be afraid of the future.

As human beings, we want to pass over 'this moment'. I hear many people saying: “I can't wait for my small children to grow up. It is very hard now”, or “I can't wait to finish school and live my life”, “I can't wait to grow up and take a job and leave my

parents' house”, “I can't wait to get married”, and so on. We either live in the past, or we look forward to the future. The problem is that we do not live our present life, exactly how it is. We're always waiting for something better, and so we miss the blessings of the present.

Father Mike Schmitz, in one of his sermons, challenges us to notice the “sacrament of the present moment”. He says that in order to live the present, I need to do four things: number one is to identify the season – to identify the season that I am actually in as opposed to the season I WANT to be in. Because, if I live just for the future, I will not be grateful for any of the things God is actually doing in the present season of my life. Number two: to be patient. I am not happy with my achievements because I think I should be somewhere where I'm not yet ready to be, but actually I should be happy that I am growing, exactly like an athlete training to achieve something. The goal is not achieved from the beginning. Number three: to be active, start moving. Do the work of the day, not the work of tomorrow. If I know I am called to marriage, to be a mother, that means that right now, those are the things I should be working on in my life, so I can be that kind of mother, so I can be that kind of spouse. The fourth thing: Jean Pierre de Caussade talks in his book *Abandonment to Divine Providence* about "sacrament of the present moment", to be aware of God. You know, we don't live in the future, we don't live in the past—we can't do that. I can only have the present moment and actually, this is the only moment in which God communicates Himself to me. He talks in the present, but I often miss it, why? Because I'm looking forward to the next season. You don't have to wait to be in your vocation to become a saint. You don't have to wait to know your vocation to start being holy. Why? To be holy is to say yes to God's will, whatever season it is, whatever day it is whatever God's will is in this moment. To simply say yes to that, that's to be a saint.

-Ligia Istrate, *Tree of Life* Editor



THE PRESENT MOMENT IS ALWAYS FULL OF INFINITE TREASURE. IT CONTAINS FAR MORE THAN YOU CAN POSSIBLY GRASP. FAITH IS THE MEASURE OF ITS RICHES: WHAT YOU FIND IN THE PRESENT MOMENT IS ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE OF YOUR FAITH. LOVE ALSO IS THE MEASURE: THE MORE THE HEART LOVES, THE MORE IT REJOICES IN WHAT GOD PROVIDES. THE WILL OF GOD PRESENTS ITSELF AT EACH MOMENT LIKE AN IMMENSE OCEAN THAT THE DESIRE OF YOUR HEART CANNOT EMPTY; YET YOU WILL DRINK FROM THAT OCEAN ACCORDING TO YOUR FAITH AND LOVE.

(JEAN-PIERRE DE CAUSSADE)

4th March: World Cancer Day

The annual World Cancer Day is a day when we all remember this disease and the ones that suffer from it. It is organized by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) and became an opportunity to rally the international community to end the injustice of preventable suffering from cancer. Some people call it “the disease of our century” and somehow, they are right. I do not think that there is a single family without at least one member affected by it. Many members of my own family have passed because of cancer: my grandmother and two of my aunts, plus friends of mine. I have friends that suffered and are now healed, and I have friends that are still fighting this awful disease.

I want all of those who have fought cancer or are still fighting to know that they are not alone and they aren't forgotten. It is a hard fight, I know, but remember you are great warriors and the world looks at you with honor and esteem.

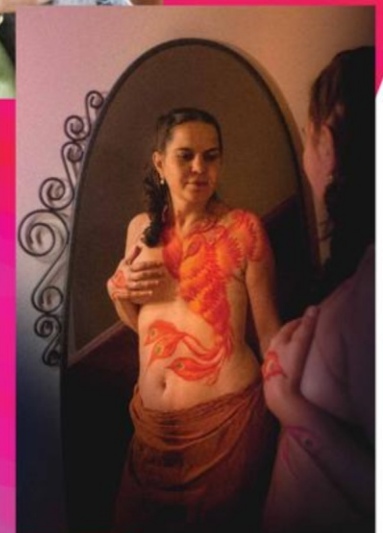
On this occasion, I want to add a testimony of one of my friends from Romania, about how she dealt with cancer and the outcome of it:

“My story begins in the summer of 2016 when I was diagnosed with stage 4 colorectal cancer. During the medical investigations I discovered that I have a genetic mutation: Familial Adenomatous Polyposis (FAP), an extremely rare and complex disease. I decided that I wanted to live no matter what, so I started fighting it: twelve sessions of chemotherapy, 28 sessions of radiotherapy, four major operations ... and all kinds of feelings.

I really wanted to make the best out of my second life, so I started talking about cancer and offering support to other people challenged by this diagnosis. The more I did this, the better I felt. This is how I realized that the mind does wonders. My belief in myself and in

God grew and I felt like I could fly. I believe that His wonderful plan for me is to bring hope to people challenged by cancer.

But how could I do this without scarring people? A few courageous ladies accepted my challenge to be a part of (On)Cool Art, to paint our lives on the scars that the surgeries left on our bodies. It became a way for us to show the world how we wanted to be seen: with marks just on our bodies, and not in our souls. We were in the spotlight, 'models' for one day of shooting. We searched for a special location, one that was warm and welcoming and inspiring and where we were able to undress both of our clothes and our disease. We left behind all hardships and worries and let ourselves be guided by a body painter who in a few hours was able to transform us. The photo session that



followed was unbelievable. The photographer did not search for perfection, she searched for that look in our eyes that was able to convey the essence of this project: the joy of living!

The paintings had an incredible success in the exhibition that followed. We realized that the people were eager to listen to real stories, told from the heart with the intention of informing, and not just complaining about the “tragedy that we went through”. Some of those present in the room received answers to questions kept only in their minds, unable to express them before. We were focused on solutions; we avoided the medical terms and spoke in a more approachable language. People thanked us for feeling

freed and, at the end, we were called “soul healers”. I want the world to know our (On)Cool Art paintings, I want to talk about life, love, acceptance, change and about all the feelings going through you when you meet cancer face to face. I believe that those who have defeated this disease cannot keep silent. After going through this hell, to be born again from your own ashes, to be born again from nothing and to be able to grow so beautifully, you cannot keep silent. You want to help, to be involved, to find solutions. You understand that your happiness lies in the happiness of those around you. You learn to love everything and enjoy every second of your life! Only after such an experience you understand that what matters is the life in your years,

not the years of your life. I wish for (On)Cool Art to be more than a project, I wish for it to become a movement through which we can prove that loving ourselves after suffering trauma from the treatments and the scars that follow are not a reason for shame, but on the contrary, they are proof of how powerful are those who have won this battle. (On)Cool Art is a soul project, for the souls enriched through the experience of the oncological disease. It is a therapeutic project for everybody: for those who won against the disease, for those that were supportive and for those who have a wrong perspective on cancer.” (Alina Nistor)

*-Ligia Istrate and Alina Nistor,
Romania*

*The rights to the paintings, photographs and any materials within the (On)Cool Art project are the property of the Good People Association (Asociația Oameni Buni), whose President is Alina Nistor, and (On)Cool Art is a registered trademark.

https://www.facebook.com/On-Cool-Art-474918653324867/?modal=admin_todo_tour

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News



News from British Unit: Methodist Women in Britain

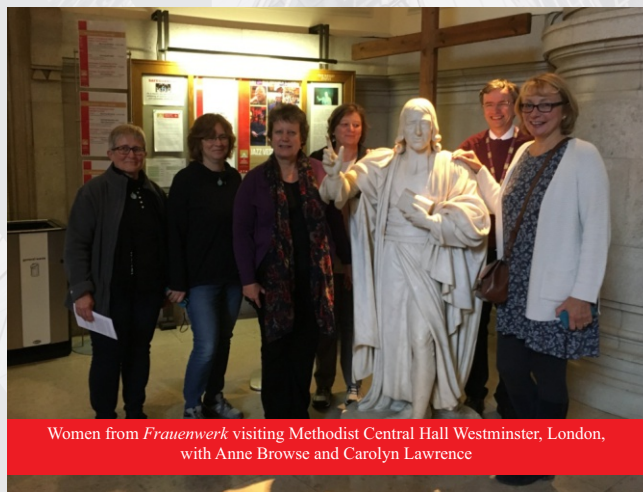
I'm compiling this news amidst the business and fellowship of our Connexional MWiB Forum meeting – a twice-yearly gathering of representatives from each District in Britain, along with MWiB and World Federation Officers, our World Day of Prayer representative, and our Helen Kim Scholar – and from here I send you our love and greetings.

Speaking at the Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) residential weekend three years ago, our dear friend Bishop Rosemarie Wenner (Germany) declared that 'There is no Brexit in the Methodist Connexion!' With this in mind we have been determined to

strengthen our links with the Methodist Church in Germany, links begun by Anne Browse during her time as MWiB President, and in autumn 2019 we were delighted to welcome to Britain three women from the German Frauenwerk (the women's ministry). The women were taken to London, where they visited Methodist Church House and

Westminster Central Hall, and were hosted by Anne in the south-west of England, being treated to the delights of the Devon seaside, stormy British weather, and cream teas! We hope that some of the German women will be able to join us at our residential conference next year, and that some of the British women will be able to visit Germany again soon.

On 26th October – World Federation Day – we held two concurrent events, one in Darlington (in the north of England) and one in Braintree



Women from *Frauenwerk* visiting Methodist Central Hall Westminster, London, with Anne Browse and Carolyn Lawrence

(in the east). Our theme was 'Water of Life, Water for Life', based SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation. Each event began with worship, before hearing some sobering facts, figures and information from keynote speakers. We then turned our thoughts to what the Bible might be saying to us about the water of life in creation, in God's provision, and in Jesus. In the afternoon everyone participated in workshops led

by speakers from All We Can (Methodist Relief and Development), Toilet Twinning (providing sanitary toilet facilities in some of the poorest parts of the world), WellFound and Amos Trust (two charities working with local people to bring fresh, clean water to their communities), and each event finished with worship and prayer. We're already beginning to plan this year's World Federation Day events, when our theme will be 'Just Living: Being Faithful with

God's Resources', based on SGD 12: Sustainable consumption and production.

Over the last year, women around the British Connexion have been raising money for Tabita House in El Alto, La Paz, Bolivia, a project highlighted by Sandra Goodwin, the current MWiB Vice President, following her visit there in 2017. The vision

behind Tabita House was to provide a safe place for homeless women and women fleeing domestic violence, with facilities for training that will enable them to make a living for themselves and their families, but the money ran out and the building was left with no roof. MWiB pledged to raise the £11,000 needed to complete the work, and thanks to the generosity of the



Tabita House, El Alto, La Paz, Bolivia

the British women, Tabita House now has a roof – and there is money to spare for buying equipment and resources for the centre. In November the women of the Isle of Man District had a wonderful time of fellowship as they got together to create panels for the Thursdays in Black global exhibit – a Waterfall of Solidarity and Resistance. Some of the women cut and sewed, others ironed, some kept the

refreshments flowing, and still others provided moral support! By the end of the day, eight panels had been completed, and will be sent to join panels from around the world as part of the Waterfall. Methodist Women in Britain was inaugurated on 1st July 2011, which means that next year we will be celebrating our 10th anniversary. At our Forum meetings we are taking time to consider and reflect upon all that we have done and achieved over the last decade, and planning activities to celebrate our birthday. A day when every District holds its own celebration, a big national event, a presentation to the Methodist Conference, specially created bunting, and many other ideas have been suggested – including lots of

cake – so it looks like being quite a party! And, of course, we hope to bring the party all the way to Gothenburg, so that we can celebrate with our World Federation sisters from across the globe.

We'll praise God for all that is past, and trust God for all that's to come.

- Jude Simms, British Unit Correspondent and MWiB Communications Officer

News from: Southern and East Africa Area

We thank God for His faithfulness. We held our Area Seminar and Weaving Together Program in Nairobi, Kenya, from the 25th to 30th November 2019, at the Methodist Resort and Conference Centre. Nine units from our area were represented. The pre-area seminar, the Weaving Together, was attended by seven unit presidents (DRC Congo, Methodist Church Kenya, M.C.S.A. Women's Manyano, M.C.S.A. Women's Association, African Methodist Episcopal Zimbabwe, United Methodist Church Zimbabwe, United Methodist Church Zambia, United Methodist Church Kenya and Methodist Church in Zimbabwe) and one UMC Kenya unit president as an observer.

The world president, Alison Judd, gave the opening devotion, reminding us all that we are chosen people called to proclaim the wonderful acts of God and we are messengers of joy to the world. She gave each participant a knitted angel as a symbol of an angel in us, bringing joy to the world. On the second day of the program,





the unit leaders were introduced to Ketso by the World President in order to identify priority actions for the area. The Weaving Together closed with the Holy Communion, presided by Rev. Eunice Indigasi, the Women's Fellowship Coordinator in Kenya.

The area seminar began on the 27th of November with the banner parade from all our units present, followed by the area banner and finally by the Federation banner. Area President Sipiwe Chisvo welcomed the delegates, and then followed the devotion led by Kenya Woman Clergy. They said that we are chosen people who represent a precious possession of God, we are the bible some people read, and we need to behave in an exemplary manner and to be holy. The Area President presented the area report, outlining the achievements and travels within the Area. New units have been brought in and these are United Methodist Church Kenya and United Methodist Church Zambia. The Area Seminar had in attendance for the very first time sixteen women from Democratic Republic of Congo and one-woman representative from Burundi. Also present was Sister Grace Musuka, the UMC Women's Regional Missionary, and she was accompanied by women from Zambia, South Congo, Malawi, East Congo and Cameroon. Although Cameroon is not in our area, we were so pleased to have them present at our Area Seminar.

Exciting news was shared: the area has enrolled a girl student, Tendai Muzandaka, to Africa University in Zimbabwe, on a full sponsorship; the Area Helen Kim Scholar, Phiwe Ngwgodla, gave a report on a project that she embarked on in her community: monthly collection of sanitary pads from churches and their distribution to girls at a Secondary School with 350 girls enrolled from grade 8 to 12. Unit Presidents reported on work being done in their units, towards sustainable development goals numbers 1,2,4,5 and 13, that are relevant in our Southern and East Africa Area. Units reported that they are assisting quite a number of needy children in the form of school fees and school uniforms. Skills training is ongoing in all Units and women are earning some income through acquired skills. Methodist Church Kenya Women Fellowship reported on how they are mentoring and training girls and women on the Christian alternative rite of passage from the traditional practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) and also about early marriage.

The women at the Area Seminar commemorated Thursdays in Black and the leadership issued a press statement on violence against women. Five workshops were offered on Child Marriages, Well Woman, Entrepreneurship, Human Trafficking and Female Genital Mutilation.

The Presiding Bishop of the

Methodist Church in Kenya, Rev. Joseph Ntombura, who is also the Chair of African Methodist Council shared a message that we have been chosen to impact the world and our church, we are a special race of God and precious to Him. We had a sermon led by Rev. Dr Esther Obasi-ike. She said that we are chosen to be ambassadors for Christ reconciling the nation, living Epistles (2 Corinthians 2:3), salt of the earth (Matthew 5:16), light of the world (Matthew 5:17), God's perfume (2 Corinthians 6:18) and friends of God (John 15:15). Rev. Gloria Hokonya from Zimbabwe and Rev. Dr Mary Kinoti from Kenya also gave powerful sermons, encouraging us that it is our time now to be game changers in the world.

The seminar closed on Saturday with a memorial service for those who have departed this life since we last met at our consultative meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe in June 2017. Roses were placed in a vase by each Unit President in memory of those who have passed on in their Unit. Holy communion was offered by the Bishop Elect of Nairobi Synod, Rev. Dr. John Maromba.

The seminar ended with gifts being offered to the World Officers and a cake sharing.

Asante Sana Mama Africa! (Thank you very much Mama Africa)

-Sipiwe Chisvo, Southern and East Africa Area President

Announcements

For the first time, the WFMUCW Assembly will be held in Gothenburg, Sweden.

From the 10th – 15th August 2021, the 14th World Assembly for the WFMUCW will celebrate the diverse, vibrant and energetic women from around the globe with a gathering that will showcase the diverse voices, thinkers and worship within our global faith tradition.

Mark your calendars today for this awesome event!

The theme for the 2021 Assembly is "Go and bear fruit – fruit that will last"
John 15:16

The World Officers have presented two (2) registration options for the 14th World Assembly.

14TH WORLD ASSEMBLY REGISTRATION:

- OPTION 1
Registration, meals and accommodation (six (6) nights).

SINGLE	USD \$ 1,930.00 per person
TWIN	USD \$ 1,486.00 per person
TRIPLE	USD \$ 1,366.00 per person

- OPTION 2
Registration and meals only
(own accommodation).

USD \$ 856.00 per person

** Outings and airport transportation will be additional to the registration. More information will be shared on the website and upcoming ToL publications. The Official online registration will launch in September 2020 so watch this space!

If you have any questions, please contact the World Secretary: Mataiva Robertson on world.secretary@wfmucw.org



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