



The TREE *- of* LIFE



Help in times of sorrow

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President's letter

Dear Sisters,

On the 10th of March the 200th anniversary of the birth of a remarkable woman was observed. Harriet Tubman was born into slavery in Maryland USA, probably in 1822. She escaped to freedom in 1849 and became an anti-slavery campaigner. She was known as Moses as she helped to guide more than 70 slaves to freedom through the 'Underground Railroad'. This March, our sister Joan Capel in New York emailed me to say she was planning a virtual birthday party for Harriet, explaining that 'AME Zion is extremely proud of our



connection to Harriet. She was a "Zionite". Since Harriet was a member of AME Zion, doesn't that make her a "posthumous" member of WFMUCW?'

Right now, many thousands of

people are being helped to freedom, as they escape domestic violence, natural disaster, human conflict, or oppressive regimes. The war in Ukraine is horrifying and frightening. It is filling our news in the UK and maybe on your news media too. But there are other atrocities in other parts of the world. These conflicts may get publicity for a while and then get overtaken by events



elsewhere. But still, women courageously campaign against their oppressors, like the woman I saw arguing with a Russian soldier on the streets of Kyiv. Russian people too are demonstrating about the invasion of Ukraine.

What can we do? What does our Christian faith offer in the face of such horror? Does prayer make any difference at all? I believe that the faith of women like Harriet Tubman and the courage of that Ukrainian woman and the Russian people that protest provide the impetus for us to stand up and be counted. To stand up and speak out. To stand up and take action against injustice, oppression, and violence. As timid as we may feel, as we pray, alone in our room or with others in a group, we tap into the strength that Christ showed in willingly giving his life as a ransom for our souls.

The voice of Harriet Tubman calls to me: 'Always remember you have within you the strength, the patience and the passion to reach for the stars, to change the world'.

The Commission on the Status of Women has been meeting in New York and virtually during the month of March. This year's priority theme was: Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs. May we be inspired to play our part in challenging injustice and working for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The voice of God too, says 'For I know the plans I have for you; plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' (Jeremiah 29:11) Be blessed and be a blessing to others.

- Alison Judd, World President

Editor's word:

Help in times of sorrow

I have found that in times of sorrow, the thing that helps the most is remembrance - remembrance of what God did for you in the past.

It is so easy to lose hope as a human being, and sometimes I'm guilty of this myself. Then, I say in my mind: "God has helped me in the past. He will help me this time too."

As we read the Old Testament, we find that the Jewish people are a people of remembrance. Many laws were given as a way to remember what God did for them in the past, for example: "And you are to love those who are foreigner. Indeed, problems, sorrow, trouble, pains come, but we have to remember how God has worked in the past and in this way we can have hope, faith, and joy for our future, no matter how bad the present is, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10: 19). And not only laws but also holidays, such as, for example, the Passover - given in order to remember how God has liberated them from Egyptian slavery. And not only holidays but ritual objects, like tefillin, the little black boxes worn by Jews during morning prayer, the law being deduced from verses like Exodus 13: 9-10: "This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that this law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year."

The Old Testament is sprinkled with recollections of the past in order to have faith for the present. Another great example is the memorial stones taken from Jordan which remind the Jews of the help they have received from God who saved them from death: "Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In

the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever." (Joshua 4:5-7) The manna that was put in the ark of the covenant had the same significance of help: "Moses said to Aaron, 'Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the LORD to be kept for the generations to come.'" (Exodus 16:33) Manna was in this context the opposite of starvation, and implicit of death, again.

We must have the help we have received in the past in front of our eyes in order to have faith and hope for our future. Another situation that comes to my mind when trouble comes is Isaiah 51. The Jews were in Babylonian exile and in this context, God reminds them that He is a God of miracles. "...Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was only one man, and I blessed him and made him many." (vv1-2) God did a miracle for them in the past, creating an entire people from a barren woman and an old man, and now, when they are forced to live in a country that has occupied their land, God promises another miracle for them.

Indeed, problems, sorrow, trouble, pains come, but we have to remember how God has worked in the past and in this way we can have hope, faith, and joy for our future, no matter how bad the present is.

Psalm 77: 7-12 "Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger

withheld his compassion?" Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand. I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds."

-Ligia Istrate, Tree of Life Editor

Indeed, problems, sorrow, trouble, pains come, but we have to remember how God has worked in the past and in this way we can have hope, faith, and joy for our future, no matter how bad the present is.

Gifts in times of sorrow

I live in Romania, as many of you know. Since the war in Ukraine started, my country has received hundreds of thousands of immigrants. I have never seen my people as I see them now. They have all come together to help. Many have been to the borders to help the refugees, they have taken them to the places they needed with their own cars, to different airports, even to different countries for free. At the borders, people were welcoming them with food and drinks. So much food and drinks were at the border, that our President asked us through television to stop sending things to the borders because they spoil.

Everyone, even people you could consider poor, has welcomed the Ukrainians in their homes, giving them the best things they have.

Many churches have opened their doors for protecting these people, organizations have gathered clothes, food, medicines, toys, and everything that is needed. Universities have offered free places for Ukrainian students, factories, hotels, and restaurants have offered jobs, and financial help from the state has been given. The Romanian railroads are giving free trains tickets for Ukrainians, and teachers that speak Ukrainian have offered free classes for pupils. I cannot describe and I know you cannot imagine what I see here day by day. All these are deeds made by a people considered poor in the European Union.

The Methodist Church has received many families, but also an entire orphanage from Kyiv. When the orphans arrived, besides my husband, who is the Methodist pastor, the Pentecostal pastor was there, the Orthodox priest was there, the mayor was there, intellectual people were there, and very simple Romanian peasants were there. We all worked together, preparing food, cleaning, helping - no matter the denomination, no matter the status - and... I felt a bit of heaven. This

connection has never happened before. We were all equals; we were living gifts for these children saved from the bombs.

But there is also another gift I want to speak about: the people around you that are gifts from God.

We were exhausted, working and waiting for several days for these orphan children to arrive. It was almost the middle of the night when they arrived, and we served them food. Communication was difficult as Ukrainian is a Slavic language and Romanian is a Latin one,

even though it has Slavic influence. I was thinking: I

cannot communicate words, but I can communicate love. I could caress them, and I could hold them in my arms.



I was caressing a little girl and she effectively jumped in my arms. My husband Cristian was near me. She then stretched her arms so my husband could hold her too. Cristian took her and asked her in Romanian

with love: "Are you God's gift for me?" She looked right in his eyes and very assured, clear, and loud she said "YES!". The word yes is very similar in Romanian and in Slavic languages.

God was healing us through this little girl.

Someone took a picture at the exact same moment, my husband had no idea about the picture, and the man that took it had no idea what they "said" - they spoke love. You can be a gift for others and others can be a divine gift for you. We just need to open our eyes.

- Ligia Istrate, *Tree of Life* Editor

News



Update on 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 will open on 9 May – look out for further details online

Registration fee US \$50

This year's world assembly theme draws on John 15:16 and is a call to spirituality, productivity, and sustainability. There will be Workshops, Bible Studies, Action Plans, and Inspirational speakers, so get the dates in your diary and look out for booking opening in May. The planning continues and steering group members are grateful for your prayers as they prepare for this exciting event.

We are very pleased to announce two of our speakers:

Our Bible Study will be led by Jill Baker, who modestly describes



herself as a Methodist local preacher living in Glasgow.

Our Keynote Speaker is Amanda Khozi Mukwashi who was until recently CEO of Christian Aid but now lives and works in Lesotho with responsibilities within the United Nations.

The business meetings via Zoom will be attended by voting delegates only. Voting delegates are:

Current World Officers, Area Presidents and Vice-Presidents, Tree of Life Editor, and one voting delegate from each Affiliate Member Unit having up to 100,000 members. Larger Units are entitled to an extra voting member for

every additional 100,000 members up to a maximum of seven. See our Handbook page 28.

Names of all official voting delegates must be sent to the Area Officers and the World Secretary

before 9th April.

Proposed changes to the Constitution should be sent to the World Secretary [world.secretary@wfmucw.org] in writing before 9th April so they can be presented to all Units 90 days prior to the Assembly.

Come to our Assembly, and Go and bear fruit that will last!

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty or sixty years ago women's lives were different from this year of 2022. Globally some countries have still not accepted changes for women. We hear comments about feminism, women's liberation, violence against women, gender inequality. And yes, we seniors comment on how the world has changed. Smiling

with our friends, we comment that "We have come along way, baby!" Have we? Feminism is about seeing women as achievers, not as victims, as helpless. In 1918, in North America and other countries, women over 30 with property were allowed to vote. Many could not. Some still cannot.

The United Nations Status of Women Commission aims to end violence against women, gender inequality, empowerment of women, reduction of child mortality, reduction of malaria and other diseases. Women's hard work has made their lives and ours much better! The World Council of

Churches took these issues seriously with a decade to overcome all violence; violence against women is still a major concern and includes physical abuse, verbal abuse, and low pay for work of equal value. Regretfully, in recent years in some parts of the world, there seems to be an increase, a return of physical violence. We women all must be strong to overcome this with confidence. To make life happy and meaningful for our daughters and granddaughters in all places in the world.

-Marion Logan, former Tree of Life editor and Companion of the Centre of Christian Studies

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The disciples of Jesus

Luke tells us that Jesus travelled in Galilee from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. He



The Last Supper, Irish artist Nora Kelly, from We are Church Ireland Facebook page.

says that Jesus was accompanied by twelve disciples, and also some women. In this account, the names of three of them are mentioned. Mary was from the town of Magdala in Galilee. It is possible that she had a fishing business on the Sea of Galilee, which allowed her the necessary resources to help Jesus' group. Joanna was the wife of Chuza, an administrator in Herod's household, an environment of luxury and Roman customs. Susanna supported Jesus' ministry with her goods. These three women were part of the group that went to the tomb of Jesus to prepare his body, and were surprised to find him resurrected. They had been cured of evil spirits and diseases, and I suppose they became great leaders in the church.

But there were other women who made the decision to follow Him from the beginning of His ministry in Galilee. These women contributed with their own resources to support Jesus and His disciples, too. They

followed this practice in forming the first church in Jerusalem (Acts 4:32-37): all the believers were united in heart and spirit and shared all they had.

Let's look at this beautiful image, different from the one we have always seen: here the Lord's supper shows us that women were also with Jesus, walked and shared with Him. I imagine Jesus saying, "Hey, Mary, get warm, the wind is blowing". Or maybe saying: "Hey Peter, do you want more bread? Come on

Susanna, John, everybody, let's tidy up, clean up!". How beautiful it is to know that Jesus broke the scheme of exclusion of women and established them as equals in the kingdom of God, with full right to serve Him and to serve the world. Jesus had a surprising way of relating to women, something that was not common in His time, the freedom to interact with them as persons, as disciples, on equal terms.

We could ask ourselves what it means to be a woman today. Latin American countries have a similar history. Since childhood, women here have noticed that we do not have the same opportunities, and, in the case of girls, even a double disadvantage: being female and being poor. If we were to ask these girls, from any ethnic group, what their dreams are, how they see themselves ten years from now, they would probably answer that they would yearn to be in a country that respects them, takes care of

them, and allows them to achieve a different standard of living, to feel free. Today, women have once again assumed more relevant roles in daily life and in the church. However, their womanhood often becomes more of a point of conflict than their human abilities or skills to carry out the work involved. Let us continue to teach girls from their childhood that in God's kingdom, all people can serve according to their abilities.

- Jessica Solar, Latin America Area Vice-President

Prayer in times of war

I no longer pray for peace:
I pray for miracles.
I pray that stone hearts will turn
to tenderheartedness,
and evil intentions will turn
to mercifulness,
and all the soldiers already
deployed
will be snatched out of harm's
way, and the whole world will be
astounded onto its knees.
I pray that all the "God talk"
will take bones,
and stand up and shed
its cloak of faithlessness,
and walk again in its powerful
truth.
I pray that the whole world might
sit down together and share
its bread and its wine.
Some say there is no hope,
but then I've always applauded the
holy fools who never seem to give
up on the scandalousness of our
faith:
that we are loved by God...
that we can truly love one another.
I no longer pray for peace:
I pray for miracles.

-Ann Weems

God has a plan

Joseph, the patriarch Jacob's son, remained focused and faithful wherever he found himself. He allowed himself to be used by the Lord, regardless of his environment. If you are familiar with Joseph's story, you know that he was falsely accused, which landed him in prison but only for a matter of time. Joseph "stuck it out" and "toughed it out", and when all was said and done, God blessed and elevated him.

The Lord placed him in a position where he was able to help a vast number of people, including his brothers who betrayed and wanted to kill him! Everything that happened to Joseph was preparation for what was to come. God had a plan, and in the end, it all made sense.

Events will occur in your life that you may not comprehend initially. You may cry many nights - but stay faithful.

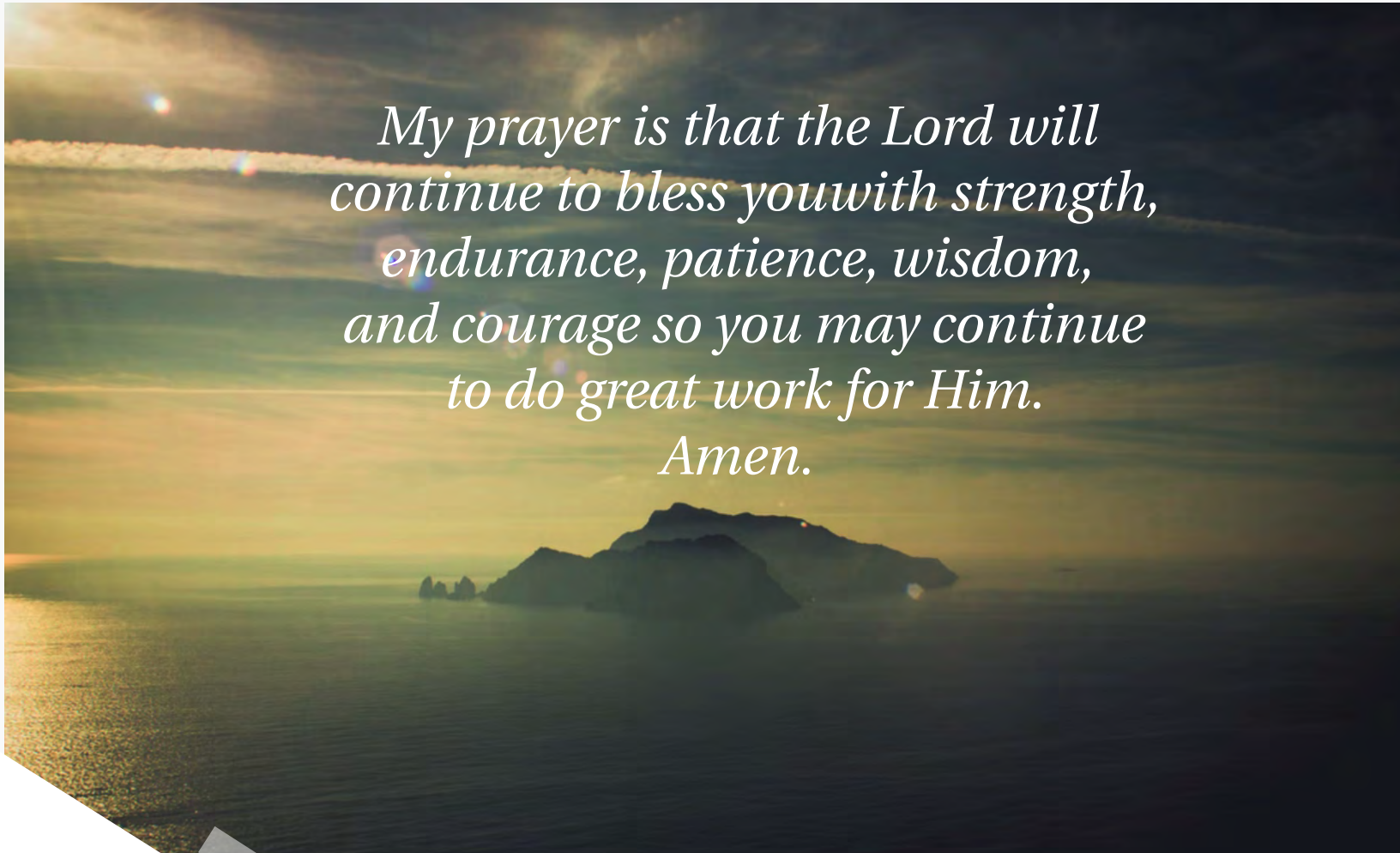
Remain obedient.

Stay focused, just as Joseph did. Remember the enemy wants you to quit.

Satan does not want to see God's plan being fulfilled through you, but dearly beloved, endurance is a must.

My prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless you with strength, endurance, patience, wisdom, and courage so you may continue to do great work for Him. Amen.

- Evelyn Mercylin, South-Asia
Area President



*My prayer is that the Lord will
continue to bless you with strength,
endurance, patience, wisdom,
and courage so you may continue
to do great work for Him.
Amen.*

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