



THE WORLD FEDERATION OF METHODIST AND UNITING CHURCH WOMEN

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# *The* TREE — *of* LIFE

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# President's letter

## 'God is with us'

For a while now I have been going into my local hospital three mornings a week with my husband, Les, while he receives treatment for a kidney problem. His illness is a new experience for both of us: Les as the one who needs treatment, me as the one who tries to support him. We realise we have much to be grateful for: friends and family who are praying for his recovery, doctors and nurses who patiently work the dialysis machine and administer drugs, the equipment that is available to us and the modern hospital that is only a 30 minutes' drive away and where medical provision is free through our National Health Service (paid for by UK tax payers).

We are well aware that not every country is able to provide such medical care or treatment. In many parts of the world, women and men have to walk miles to reach a clinic only to find the drugs they need are not available or are so expensive they cannot afford them. Doctors and nurses do their best to provide for thousands of patients in really challenging environments, often with an unreliable source of electrical power. In those places that have suffered recently through storm, earthquake, flood or fire, medical help may be available only from fully-stretched relief agencies.

There is another thing about our hospital for which I am grateful. Each visit, as we make our way through the building, we pass a chapel. This is a room offering space for quiet reflection and prayer, a holy place that is

always open, where weekly services are held for patients and staff who are able to attend, a reminder that in all our troubles, God is with us. On the wall, a wooden carving bears symbols of God's presence and character. It includes a vine with bunches of grapes, a candle with flame burning bright, a dove of peace and a tree of life. All these are set in a circle, symbol of eternity and with a cross at the centre reminding us of the cross of Christ that redeems us and brings us hope even in the darkest times.



At Christmas we give thanks that God came to live among us as Emmanuel, God with us. In Jesus, the Word made flesh, we have a brother and a friend who has experienced human laughter and celebration, but also pain and loss, sadness and death. In all our experiences, good and bad, we can know the presence of the One who loves us more than we can imagine, loves us enough to leave the majesty of heaven, live on earth as one of us and go to a cross of wood for our sakes. In whatever situation you find yourself this Christmas, kneel before the infant Jesus who became our risen Saviour and give thanks for His abiding love for you!

Every blessing,

- Alison Judd

# Behind the visible

"At least there is hope for a tree: if it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail."  
(Job 14:7 (NIV))

We, as humans on this Earth, are faced with different problems and challenges: sadness, sickness, death, wars, disasters. There are so many things that seem to work against us. Many times, we are so down – almost at the point between death and life – only to be reborn again as the phoenix bird.

The mentioned verse reminds us that even in “death” there is hope. What seems lost and dead at the surface, can be still alive in the

roots; exactly like a tree, that may seem dead, but its roots can grow again and create another tree.

Jesus Christ, the One we celebrate at this time of the year, to Whom we are thankful, is also compared with this type of tree. In Isaiah 53:2 is written: “He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire Him.” He came to a dried-up world, that seemed dead and without any hope, in bad circumstances, to a people occupied by another power, on an Earth created by Him, but which didn't have any space to receive Him. In spite of everything, He bore fruit. This is the majestic wonder of God: He creates life from nothing and new growth from the dead. We all have one root and we are all Jesus' shoots.

Every Christmas we are reminded that one of God's names is “Emmanuel”, God is with us, a name that was given to Him before His birth. The message is that Jesus was born in this inhospitable world “to be with us”. When He ascended to heaven, when His ministry ended on this Earth, He strengthened the people, telling them: “And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20) And so, we are encouraged that we are never alone, and that with God it is impossible not to be renewed, to become green and to bear fruit. He is here. For You. You have motifs of joy!

Merry Christmas!

- Ligia Istrate



*“What seems lost and dead  
at the surface,  
can be still alive in the roots;  
exactly like a tree,  
that may seem dead,  
but its roots can  
grow again and create another tree”*



# Latin America devotional:

## Sewing with LOVE!



The story of Dorcas from Acts 9:36-42 shows us women marked by God - a testimony, a very beautiful example of what is Living to Serve, what is "sewing with love." Dorcas was called by Luke to be a disciple, which means that she was a follower of Jesus Christ. Her love for the Master was demonstrated by love and dedication to others, and for this, she used her natural talent as a seamstress, assisting others in the making of clothing. She was a woman sensitive to people's needs. How we need more women like her!

Dorcas had not only a Greek name, but also a Semitic one. Tabitha in Aramaic and Dorcas in Greek meant "gazelle, deer", an animal that walks on high

places, protecting the flock and being alert to warn of danger. This was compared to the request of that woman: always ready to protect someone, from the height of her noble soul. She was a follower of Jesus and that made all the difference. Dorcas, a woman of faith, worked especially for poor widows and children. She lived to serve! She served with other women, with stitches, needles and fabrics, sewing tunics. Her tender gaze made her see the greater needs of other people, with skilled hands, that put her faith into action daily.

One day, Dorcas became ill and died. Her friends who worked with her, cried and called Peter, who prayed for her to come back to life. The coastal city of Joppa was never the same after Dorcas returned to life. By hearing and seeing the miracle of the resurrection of Dorcas, many people converted and believed.

No doubt, this generous disciple, gifted with skillful hands and a heart converted to the Lord, took out her needle and stitched again and continued her benevolent and compassionate ministry to all who lived around her. We can all bring hope to people, using a "stitch and needle", sewing the word and love of God to all. We, women, have sewed a serving history through Societies and Federations, etc. This is the opportunity to praise the Lord of life who gives us His grace and, every day, has confirmed the work of our hands. When we place our gifts in the service of God, with love, we know that God will walk with us, giving us

life. We can make a difference in people's lives, using our gifts, "sewing" the word, having a life of testimony like Dorcas. How she was wanted! How she was recognized! I would like to have this desire, of being someone different. And you? But mainly, I want, and I feel in my heart the desire to be a disciple, a follower of Christ, to have Him fully in my heart! May the Lord bless us and keep us! Do not miss the desire to "sew or work", to serve God with joy!

### Prayer

*Like the testimony of Dorcas:  
With simplicity in small  
gestures,  
Give us, Lord, the opportunity  
to serve;  
In welcoming the homeless and  
abandoned,  
Give us, Lord, the opportunity  
to serve;  
In the hours when the crying  
seems stronger,  
Give us, Lord, the opportunity  
to serve;  
In the hours when death seems  
victorious  
Give us Lord, the opportunity to  
serve.  
At all times let us be  
seamstresses of hope,  
Placing care and affection in  
the plots of our history,  
Making our mission, a joint  
work of art,  
Upholstered with goodness,  
worked with bonds of love ...  
In the name of Jesus Christ, the  
Word that gives poetry to life,  
Amen.*

(Rev. Luciano Lima - in memoriam)

- Geny Amorim



# News



## News from Southern and East Africa: Lord Orphan Care Home in Kambuzuma

Following our theme for this quinquennium 'Chosen People Called to Proclaim', the units in Southern and East Africa area visited the Lord Orphan Care Home in Kambuzuma Township, Harare, Zimbabwe. A total of seven units took part in this initiative. The outreach team was led by Mrs Ellen Charimari and Mrs Letty Mhizha, founder of Lord Orphan Care Home and the Area President, Sipiwe Chisvo, and Vice President,

Patricia Mapani, led a delegation and handed over a 5000-litre water tank and 82 blankets.

Lord Orphan Care Home is a halfway home that caters for vulnerable children, aged 5 to 19 years. It was registered in 1998 and is founded on the Christian principles of James 1:27: "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you." Letty Mhizha founded the care centre nineteen years ago after she received an instruction in her dreams to go to a

specific house in her neighbourhood. She was obedient to the instruction and she went to the house that very morning. She found five orphaned children, four girls and a small boy living and caring for themselves, as both parents had passed away. She knew they needed parental care and support and she took the children to





instruction in a dream to care for five children has ended up as a home for 82 children who are assisted now with school fees, clothing, food and shelter



to do their homework.

"Oh, Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility and gentleness and patience." (Colossians 3:12)



\*For more details, please visit: <http://wfmucw.org/chosen-people-called-to-proclaim>

*-Sipiwe Chisvo  
Southern and East Africa Area  
President*

## **News from South Asia: Widening Frontiers for Adivasi Women, the Tribal Women of India**



To learn the struggle of Adivasis (aboriginal tribal groups living in India for centuries), one must start one's own journey with a heart to blend into their community and immerse into their lives, to know the reality, experience truth and to understand the organic essence of their lifestyles. In India, the most deprived and marginalized sections are Dalits & Adivasis. Women in these groups are still experiencing exploitation, poverty, illiteracy, early marriages, lack of daily wage, sexual abuse, health problems, and psychological trauma.

In scripture, there are many women who brought good news to the community. For example, Hannah kept her word with God and offered her son, who later became a great prophet. The daring Esther has given good news to her people and redeemed them from massacre, and Virgin Mary, who offered her womb to Lord Jesus, and hence the entire creation received the Good News. Though some women were considered as angels of good news, they don't have good news at all in today's world. To resist this, let

us be united to build a transformed society where women can play a key role. Please remember the key verse in the book of Esther 4: 14.

In this context, I would like to share the life story of a tribal girl, Yamini (name changed for privacy). In tribal families, when a girl attains puberty, she is ready for marriage, and Yamini's mother comes from such a marriage. Her father was a drunkard and often used to abuse his wife, but he was killed in a communal conflict when Yamini was two years old.

One day, Yamini's mother forced her daughter's tender hands into the fire. Yamini was shocked and cried out with pain and fear. Certainly, this cruel act devastated Yamini's life. Now she is sheltered in our children's care home. She is now 14, studying in 9th standard class. It is very hard for her to write, eat and to do personal work with her deformed fingers. She feels very inferior and unable to mingle with her friends and stays alone. We are taking care





of her medical needs and we will try to help her undergo plastic



-Usha Kiran

surgery. This is just an example of the devastated lives of Adivasis and Dalits.

For me, it was very hard to cope with their stories of struggle and I started to help, but not alone. The support from my family, women's team, and volunteers is really appreciated. We work among Adivasi-Dalit women and children to procure them better lives and encourage their own participation in transforming their community. I always say to my team that our discussion towards people's empowerment should not remain in one room, but the action should go into the grass roots.

“I want to see a mighty flood of justice, an endless river of righteous living” (Amos 5:24 (NIV))

- Mrs. Usha Kiran Martin  
Director, Adivasi Mahila Nava  
Nirman, Chittoor A.P, India  
[ushakiranapindia@gmail.com](mailto:ushakiranapindia@gmail.com)

## News from Europe: Britain & Ireland: Don't despise the trickles!

“water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple... and it was a river that I could not cross, for the water has risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be crossed.” (Ezekiel 47:1-5)

More than 150 people came together to share worship and fellowship at the Methodist Women in Britain 'Fringe Event' at the annual Methodist Conference in Birmingham in June, which included the commissioning of Sandra Goodwin as MWiB President. Sandra's theme is 'water' – both the spiritual water of life offered to us in Christ, and real, physical water so often affected by environmental, political and economic issues. Taking this theme of 'water', Revd Peter Barber (Chair of the Chester and Stoke District) and Mrs Jill Barber (former Vice President of the Methodist Conference, and Director at Englesea Brook Museum of Primitive Methodism) spoke about Ezekiel's vision of the water flowing out from the temple, beginning as a trickle, and growing to become a river deep and wide (Ezekiel 47:1-12). He reminded us that much of God's word is spoken to a people in a state of exile, disappointment and fear—an observation particularly pertinent in a world where

things are not as they should be, and among people in exile, people filled with disappointment, people living in fear.

Peter asked us to consider three things from Ezekiel's vision:

1) The waters of healing and wholeness come from the temple, from the presence of God among God's people. God – not ourselves, not our own ideas or efforts, but God alone – is the source of grace and compassion, and so God must be the focus of all that we do in his name.

2) It doesn't begin with a great flood, but with little trickles, which join together to become a stream, which grows to become a great river, deep and wide. Jill told the story of how the great Welsh Revival of 1904 began with a single, simple conversation between a preacher and a coal-miner, yet went on to fill chapels in Wales to bursting, and led to revival throughout the rest of Britain, Scandinavia and other parts of Europe, North America, the mission fields of India and the Orient, Africa and Latin America.

3) When the river meets stagnant places then, utterly contrary to nature, rather than the stagnant water contaminating the fresh water, instead the fresh water refreshes the desolate, hopeless places, and brings abundant life.

Peter went on to say that MWiB is known to be a

movement engaged in contradicting the normal, confounding expectations, and creating life in dead places, through confidence in the transforming power of God. He spoke of a recent fire which had killed more than 80 people in London, and of the Manchester bombing (and of course, you can think of many such tragedies close to home), acknowledging that yes, spontaneous 'flash floods' of love are sometimes needed, especially in the wake of such human disaster, but just as effective – perhaps more effective – are the ongoing 'trickles' of compassion for a broken world that bring fruit and life and healing. With God's transformative power in us, all things are possible – and as Peter reminded us and encouraged us: “Don't despise the trickles!”

- Judith Simms

## Congratulations



W o r l d Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, under the presidency of Mrs Alison Judd, would like to congratulate the World Day of Prayer movement on

their Journal for 2017, that recorded another fruitful year of informed prayer and prayerful action.

We warmly encourage the women to read their web page, by accessing: <http://worlddayofprayer.net/journals.html>

## AREA SEMINARS

DATE	AREA	HOST VENUE	WEAVING TOGETHER PROGRAMME
30 <sup>th</sup> January – 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2018	SOUTH ASIA	YANGON, MYANMAR	29 <sup>th</sup> & 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2018
7 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2018	JOINT EUROPE CONTINENTAL & BRITAIN AND IRELAND	BELFAST, IRELAND	5 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> June 2018
2 <sup>nd</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> July 2018	SOUTH PACIFIC	NADI, FIJI	30 <sup>th</sup> June – 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2018
10 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> September 2018	WEST AFRICA	ACCRA, GHANA	9 <sup>th</sup> & 10 <sup>th</sup> September 2018
TBC	NORTH AMERICA AND MCCA	TBC	TBC
27 <sup>th</sup> – 30 <sup>th</sup> March 2019	EAST ASIA	HONG KONG	25 <sup>th</sup> – 27 <sup>th</sup> March 2019
11 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2019	LATIN AMERICA	BRAZIL	11 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> April 2019
28 <sup>th</sup> – 30 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	SOUTH & EAST AFRICA	KENYA	26 <sup>th</sup> – 27 <sup>th</sup> November 2019



## Contact details you may find useful

Role	Area	Name	Email
World President		Alison Judd	world.president@wfmucw.org
World Vice-President		Matilda Johnson	world.vice-president@wfmucw.org
World Secretary		Mataiva D Robertson	world.secretary@wfmucw.org
World Treasurer		Leu Pupulu	world.treasurer@wfmucw.org
World President Emerita		Ann Connan	president.emerita@wfmucw.org
World Archivist		Judith Siaba	world.archivist@wfmucw.org
Editor, Tree of Life		Ligia Istrate	treeoflife@wfmucw.org
UN Representative		Dr Brenda Smith	un@wfmucw.org
Area President	South Pacific	Joy Jino	southpacific.president@wfmucw.org
Area Vice-President		Ilaisaane Kapani	southpacific.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Area President	North America	Princess Pegues	northamerica.president@wfmucw.org
Area Vice-President		Sandra Gadson	northamerica.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Area President	Latin America	Leila Barbosa	latinamerica.president@wfmucw.org
Area Vice-President		Jessica Solar	latinamerica.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Area President	East Asia	Ting Sing Hong	eastasia.president@wfmucw.org
Area Vice-President		Mary Devadason	eastasia.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Area President	South Asia	Mu Mu Than	southasia.president@wfmucw.org
Area Vice-President		Evelyn Mercylin	southasia.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Area President	Southern & East Africa	Sipiwe Chisvo	seafrika.president@wfmucw.org
Area Vice-President		Patricia Mapani	seafrika.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Area President	West Africa	Rev Jemima Amanor	westafrica.president@wfmucw.org
Area Vice-President		Aniema Udofia	westafrica.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Area President	Europe:Continental	Lidia Ribet	europa.president@wfmucw.org
Area Vice-President		Lilla Lakatos	europa.vice-president@wfmucw.org
Area President	Europe:Britain & Ireland	Louise Wilson	britainireland.president@wfmucw.org
Area Vice-President		Carolyn Lawrence	britainireland.vice-president@wfmucw.org



Editor: Ligia Istrate

[ligiaistrate@gmail.com](mailto:ligiaistrate@gmail.com)

Cover design, interior design:

Cristian Istrate

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