



THE WORLD FEDERATION OF METHODIST AND UNITING CHURCH WOMEN

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The TREE — of LIFE

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President's letter

It's all so simple!

Do you find that everyday life is getting more complicated each year? I know I seem to be juggling family responsibilities, local church commitments, keeping in touch with friends, as well as doing my best to keep informed about world events and various issues within the World Federation. And then there is the social media which I still find time-consuming: emails, Facebook, twitter – all vying for my attention. Finding space for everything in the diary can be tricky. At Christmas time our lives can get even more complicated as we plan our special events, services and gatherings.

At an event to celebrate World Federation day in October, when I was speaking about Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality Education, I quoted Malala Yousafzai: 'One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world'. It sounds so simple, almost too simple, but it has truth within it.

The story of Christ's birth can sound simple too! One angel, one girl, one manger, one baby that would change the world. The various versions as told by the gospel writers introduce some complications. Yes, there was a journey to be made just at the most inconvenient time for a pregnant mother and accommodation to be found in a town that was thronged with the descendants of King David. Yes, there was fanfare as the host of angelic beings filled the air with their singing and a quick decision to be made by the shepherds. Yes, there were calculations involved as the wise men followed the star and then evaded King Herod's attempt at trickery. Yes, there were dreams and visions

for Joseph and an unexpected escape to a foreign land for the little family.

Complicated, or simple? We know that nothing is impossible for God and it was God who made all the arrangements for this first Christmas. You might say that nothing was left to chance. The stars that came together in the eastern sky, the angel messengers declaring the good news to Mary, Joseph and the shepherds, the census and journey to Bethlehem in accordance with the prophecy of Micah (5:2), the safe haven provided first in the stable and later in Egypt, the adoration of the magi ... All these elements combine to reveal a God who cares for every part of his creation, from the least to the most powerful. A God who comes amongst us in our complicated lives and shows us that love is the answer. Pure and simple. Love.

For God loved the world so much that he sent his only Son to be our Saviour. All we need to do is believe in Him and we shall be given eternal life. (See John 3:16). It's all so simple.

Every blessing for Christmas and for the year ahead,

- Alison Judd



What is good?

*He has shown you, O mortal,
what is good.
And what does the LORD require
of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your
God. (Micah 6:8, NIV)*

So, what is good? According to the text above, good contains three things:

- To act justly: this means you have to choose what is right, to do what is right and not to opt for or encourage evil deeds. This also means you shouldn't lower your standards or God's standards. It means you do not compromise, because compromise is not justice. Another meaning is that you should help people who are in unjust situations. Do you stand for justice and God's standards even though this is not so trendy anymore? Do you stand for God's principles even though everyone around you believes that they are old fashioned?
- To love mercy: a requirement is not only to be merciful, but to love being like that! As Christians we should be

people that spread not only justice, but also mercy through our forgiveness, words and deeds.

Justice and mercy epitomise the commandment to love others like you love yourself, a commandment which is not easy to keep especially now, when we live in a very individualistic world, where we are ego-centred. This reminds us about the legend of Narcissus, an extremely beautiful hunter who, being fascinated by and in love with himself, wanted to embrace his reflection in water, fell in and drowned.

The truth is that we are more preoccupied by what we love, rather than what kills us. We are more preoccupied to look good in people's eyes than to stand for truth.

If you were not so concerned about your own image, you would have the courage to stand for God's principles and to make justice and mercy the object of your love!

- To walk humbly: to respect God more than yourself from all points of view. This means you also have to leave the pride behind, even though you have a very good job, many diplomas, even if you have an important position or you are

wealthy. Humility is also the opposite of arrogance, impertinence, insolence, dishonesty, disrespect, shamelessness – the list goes on, because today we live in an era when, more than ever, people are defiant, and behave impolitely and shamelessly. More than that, if you walk humbly with your God, that means that you trust Him in everything, in every problem and also in every solution.

Meditation: Are justice, mercy and humility life principles for me?

Prayer: Dear God, help me in every moment of my life to choose what is right, to do what is just and what is true. Help me to put more value on Your principles than on my own image. Help me to care more about Your opinion than about people's opinions. Help me have mercy because you are a merciful God and give me strength to forgive with all my heart Help me to help people and encourage them. You are greater than anything; help me walk humbly in Your greatness!

*-Ligia Istrate,
Tree of Life Editor*

Dear God, help me in every moment of my life to choose what is right, to do what is just and what is true. Help me to put more value on Your principles than on my own image. Help me to care more about Your opinion than about people's opinions. Help me have mercy because you are a merciful God and give me strength to forgive with all my heart Help me to help people and encourage them. You are greater than anything; help me walk humbly in Your greatness!

Amen.

"Why All this Fuss About Christmas?"

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14)

10 years old John was frustrated about going to Christmas service at church. He wanted to stay at home and play video games. He didn't understand why his parents and all these people were so excited about going to church to celebrate a man's birthday who died two thousand years ago. John wondered, how do they even remember this man's birthday? Yes, he had heard about this man at church and from his parents, who obviously loved this man more than their own son. John really didn't care about this man and wished the service would finish early, so he could go back and continue his game. The winter break was his only chance to play as many video games as he wanted, and he was not going to waste any time.

John was surprised to be greeted by one of his classmates, Mike, at church. "What are you doing here?" asked John. "I am welcoming people to the church. Welcome!" Mike put on a big smile and offered a handshake. "Well, I am not too excited to be here, so you don't need to welcome me." John did not reach out for his hand. "You aren't, but I am happy to see you." Mike was not bothered and even gave a bigger smile to John. "Alright, see you later," said John and walked away. He wondered why his classmate could be so happy

about welcoming people and shaking hands. However, he did feel a little bit better about coming to church after seeing his friend.

"The best gift of Christmas is Jesus Christ; because of his birth into this world, we are saved and our sins are forgiven." John was falling asleep during the sermon, but as soon as he heard the word "gift," he woke up, because he was not going to miss out on any gifts. He did not quite understand the part where the gift is an actual person. However, there was one thing John finally understood about people getting all excited about this Jesus. He is the best gift – and who doesn't love gifts? Since the pastor said Jesus is the best gift, then he would like to have one of those too. After the service, John went to look for Mike and asked him if he had the best gift. Mike told him not only Jesus Christ is the best gift but is also free for anyone who wants it. John was excited and asked where he could get the gift. Mike said John could get it right now and asked if he wanted to pray with him. John was confused but said yes. Mike prayed for John and asked Jesus to go into John's heart. After the prayer, Mike said now John has the best gift too.

On the way back home, John told his parents that he got the best gift, Jesus. John's parents got more excited than John imagined, and they even had tears in their eyes. That night, their family prayed together and thanked God for giving this wonderful gift to them. John was happy that he got the gift, but he

still did not know the way to open it. He asked his parents about this gift and how he should open it. They gave him a Bible and said that John would be able to open the gift by reading the book. They also taught him to use prayers to open this gift. The reading part didn't seem exciting to John, but he decided to pray. He prayed, "Dear Jesus, my name is John. I heard you are the best gift that I can ever have, but I still don't know why you are the best gift. Please teach me why you are the best gift."

That night, John had a dream. There was a man who had a big smile like Mike. This man smiled at John and said, "John, Merry Christmas! I wanted to tell you how much I love you and I am so happy to meet you. You, your parents, and all people are the best gift to me." John was astonished and answered, "Me? I don't think I am that great." "Trust me, you are more than you think."

What is the best gift that you have ever received? Imagine something a thousand times better than the best gift you have received. It is worth more and it is even for free! It is a gift for you too, as it was for John. If you want it, you can have it. It will be the best gift that you will ever have received. Jesus Christ is that gift and he came down to earth from heaven to love you and to die for your sins. Merry Christmas!

-Kyeo Ree Lee,
HKMS



News



World Federation Day in UK

World Federation day is celebrated each year on the nearest Saturday to 26th October to mark the founding of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. 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. The event is usually held in a different location in the Connexion each year and this year it was held simultaneously in two venues, Truro (in the south west of England) and Blackburn (in the north west).

The theme for this year was 'Life and Learning – Quality Education for All', based on one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Around 80 people gathered at Truro Methodist Church and another 100 at St Paul's Methodist Church in Blackburn. Delegates at both venues were welcomed by the warm hospitality of the local churches.

In Truro, the opening worship was led by Jill Nute and Cathy Arscott from the Cornwall District. This was followed by a Bible study led by Carolyn Lawrence, the Vice-



President for the Britain and Ireland Area of the WFM&UCW, on the theme of 'Learning from God's Word.' Carolyn spoke from various passages about what the Bible



The team – L-R Jill Nute (Cornwall District MWiB President); Paddy Miles (SAT-7); Adrienne Simpson (Cornwall District MWiB forum rep); Chris Miles (SAT-7); Steve Wild (Cornwall District Chair); Hilary Evans (MWiB Connexional Vice President); Margaret Lilley (Scripture Union); Alison Judd (World President WFM&UCW); Carolyn Lawrence (Britain and Ireland Vice President WFM&UCW)

teaches us about knowledge, wisdom and learning and how we can share that legacy of learning with others. There followed a keynote speech from Alison Judd. She spoke about issues of education in UK and across the world and shared some of her experiences of her recent travels as the World President of the WFM&UCW.

In Blackburn the opening worship was led by Deacon Jane Harpur, the District president. The Bible study was led by Sandra Goodwin, Connexional President for MWiB and the keynote speaker was Jill Baker, ex-Vice-President of the British Methodist Conference.

Everyone had the opportunity to participate in four different workshops. Carolyn Lawrence and Rachel Allison (Helen Kim Memorial Scholar for Britain) presented workshops on the vital work of All We Can and how they are seeking to remove barriers to education in some of the poorest countries in the world. Chris and Paddy Miles from the charity SAT-7 gave an overview of their work and ministry in the area of education

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Deacon Jane Harper and Jill Baker

across the Middle East and North Africa. A third workshop was delivered by Margaret Lilley on the work of Scripture Union and shared ideas about how we, as individuals and churches, can get involved in supporting our local schools. The other workshop was led by Wanda Hogan, Helen Kim Memorial Scholar for Ireland, who spoke about education in Zimbabwe, and Hope Journey, a charity working to tell the Bible story in an interactive way in

many schools in the North West of England.

The final session at both locations was a quiet reflective space – a welcome oasis of peace and stillness in an otherwise busy day using prayer resources prepared by the local teams. The day concluded with closing worship led by Alison Judd and Rachel Allison, which included prayers of intercession about some of the topics from the day. Many of those who attended expressed their gratitude for an interesting and inspiring day and lots of ideas about practical ways they can get involved in supporting education locally as well as across the world.

If you want to find out more about the work of Methodist Women in Britain please visit www.mwib.org.uk.

-Carolyn Lawrence,
British Area Officer for
WFM&UCW

Announcements

Dear women of the Federation, we invite you to regularly check out our Website, Facebook and Twitter! New materials are published all the time and, in this way, you also have the opportunity to share many materials with a wide audience/readership and this will be a good way for the Federation to become known more widely!

The next two Area Seminars:
East Asia Area 27-30 March in
Hong Kong
Latin America Area 12-14 April
in Sao Paulo, Brazil

Request: Please pray for these events and for the Weaving Together Program for Area and Unit leaders that will precede them.

World Day of Prayer: for the World Day of Prayer please check the following link:
http://worlddayofprayer.net/uploads/7/4/0/5/74052031/wdp_journal_2018_fa_final.pdf

The 2019 WDP service will take place on Friday, 1st March, and it is provided by the women of Slovenia with the theme 'Come - Everything is Ready'.

Invitation to all the Areas: You may wish to publicise your Units' news, events and actions in future issues of the Tree of Life.

Please contact the ToL Editor, Dr. Ligia Istrate.



Confederation of Methodist Women of Latin America and the Caribbean

The Methodist Women of Latin

Methodist Centre of Alajuela, in Costa Rica, with the theme "Women proclaim life" and 15 countries participated: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador,

country. During the first two days women could participate in inspiring discussions, on the theme: "Women proclaim life", and Louise Wilson, the President of Europe: Britain and Ireland Area spoke. On Thursday all the women wore black: black shirt, pins etc, as the women's struggle continues everywhere. Besides all the activities mentioned, the women prayed together, had devotionals and also enjoyed their time with crafts, trips, a cultural night and Love demonstrations! Love demonstrations was guided by Geny Amorim and everyone received small gifts. It was a moment of hugs and a lot of love!



America and the Caribbean held their seminar from 4-7 July 2018 in Costa Rica, with the help of the Area President, Leila Barbosa and her board

Panama, Uruguay, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Great Britain and the United States.

The Seminar began with the Opening Service, which was under the care of Rev. Zulay Palomo, who read the Word and also sang the hymn "How great is He".

The Closing Service was led by the President, Leila Barbosa and by Latin America Vice-President, Jessica Solar and many helium coloured balloons with messages and contacts were tied up and released in the air and hopefully women in need will find them!



and also with the hospitality of the President of the Women Federation of Costa Rica, Rev. Zulay Palomo, who from the beginning offered the place, food and other things needed. The seminar was held at the

The message was ministered by Bishop Dr. Luis Fernando Palomo, who spoke of the importance of recognizing the ministry of women in the family, in the community where they are called to serve. After that, the banners processional took place, for every



The mother of Methodism

20th January 2019 is the 350th anniversary of the birth of Susanna Wesley, often referred to as 'The mother of Methodism.' She certainly had a profound effect on her children (all 19 of them) and on the villagers of Epworth where she lived in the rectory with her husband, Samuel. Crowds flocked to her home to hear her teaching. In her busy household,

Susannah found an unusual method of ensuring that she was undisturbed while engaged in prayer: she would put her apron over her head so that she could concentrate! Her children knew they must not interrupt her prayer time. Fortunately, she wrote down some of her prayers in her journal. Here is one of them, a benediction:

I heartily pray God that you may continue steadfast in the faith and increase more and more in the knowledge

and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ.

That Holiness, simplicity, and purity may recommend you to the favour of God incarnate. That His Spirit may dwell in you, and keep you still, as now, under a sense of God's blissful presence.

Amen.

Prayer from Hearts Aflame – Prayers of Susanna, John and Charles Wesley, Michael McMullen (Editor), SPCK 1995.

350th anniversary
of the birth of
Susanna Wesley,
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