

Message from Alison Judd

Area President, Britain and Ireland Area

June 2016



Dear World Federation sisters,

I am writing with a heavy heart as our Britain and Ireland Area is in political turmoil in the aftermath of the EU Referendum. The content of this letter does not express an official B&I Area 'line' but a personal reflective response. It is written to reassure you of my own desire that our various relationships across national boundaries will continue and grow.

It feels as though the referendum has wounded us. It has highlighted divisions within political parties, between generations, regions of our country and the various nations that make up Britain. It threatens to isolate us from the rest of Europe. The implications for the relationships across Ireland are particularly sensitive. Even within church communities and groups, individuals will have voted according to different views, and with the best of intentions. Before 23 June, I considered the effects of going public on my own intentions, wondering whether I owed this to the movement as an Area President. I decided against doing so and now feel it would serve no purpose to reveal how I voted. Now is the time for increased efforts towards unity of resolve, co-operation, love and understanding as we go forward into an uncertain political future.

I have been praying about this and have been reminded of some important truths about the World Federation. Our aim, 'to know Christ and make him known,' remains the bedrock of our movement and one that still unites us across all national boundaries. Our logo and motto drawn from Revelation 22:2 remind us that 'the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations', much needed at this time of pain and hurt. Our vision, initiated by our founder, Helen Kim, to bring justice, peace and fullness of life to all people of the world is just as vital now as it was in her time. Our relationships across national boundaries, within our own Area and importantly with our sisters in Europe: Continental, developed through many years of shared Assemblies and Area Seminars, are of inestimable value. Whatever the future holds, we have the desire and the responsibility to remain united as sisters in Christ.

It seems to me that our movement and our witness in our communities and the wider world is now even more important than ever. Our relationships need to remain strong and purposeful. The kingdom we share with each other is not of this world, and our one Lord is Christ in whom we have hope.

About eighteen months ago, a parcel arrived at my home, a long cardboard box containing five miniature 'fruit trees'. We planted these in tubs filled with compost and watered them and waited. This summer, four of the five trees have many leaves and some even have a few fruits. One appears to be dead. I am learning to be patient and doing my best to care for these fragile plants, with God's creative help. Our World Federation movement, too, needs our committed, careful nurture and God's provision and blessing.

In my dining room I have a beautiful banner depicting another tree with 'leaves'. It is the cross of Christ, looking 'oh so dead' at its base, but sprouting leaves further up and a variety of butterflies around it. I look at this image every morning at breakfast and am reminded of the hope we have in Christ and his cross that still brings healing and new life and unites his people as they experience forgiveness and resurrection hope. Bamblelela! – Never give up! Christ is our hope.

A Prayer: Christ, our hope, bring healing to our nations, hurt and wounded by conflicting views. Anoint each of us with your power - to forgive as we have been forgiven, to love as we are loved, to build and strengthen relationships as you reached out to all, especially the marginalised and oppressed. Guide us in the way ahead; help us to persevere for your kingdom's sake. Amen