



THE WORLD FEDERATION OF METHODIST AND UNITING CHURCH WOMEN

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The TREE —of LIFE



Shine in your
community!

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President's letter

Dear Sisters,

I have been reflecting on Revelation 21:22 where John's visionary book describes a city without a temple, 'for it had no need of a temple for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb.'

During this time of restrictions due to Covid-19 many of us have been told to keep the doors of our churches locked. We have been unable to worship or sing together in our church buildings. And yet we have gone outside into our communities and shone the light of God there by our actions, by our love, by our concern for others. Even in the midst of acute pain and sorrow and hardship, we have discovered God at work in our communities, our villages and our cities.

A Scottish evangelist, Henry Drummond, once produced a pamphlet called The City Without a Church. He imagined building a city and laying the foundation-stone for a church before he did anything else. But then he imagined preaching in that church about the vision of John who saw no temple in the new heavenly city, for it was already filled with the light of the glory of God and of the Lamb. Henry Drummond longed for Christians to

have the light of Jesus shining within them and taking this light out into their communities. He wrote, "the great use of the church is to help people to do without it."

Locked out of your church buildings, you are finding new opportunities to continue the work of making Christ known. I know that in your local communities you are still proclaiming the love of God for all people. You are reaching out in new ways to support those struggling through this global pandemic that has radically changed our everyday lives. Some of you are making good use of online tools to share the gospel message with those who may be hearing it for the first time. You are staying connected with the women in your Units and discovering skills you did not know you could possess.

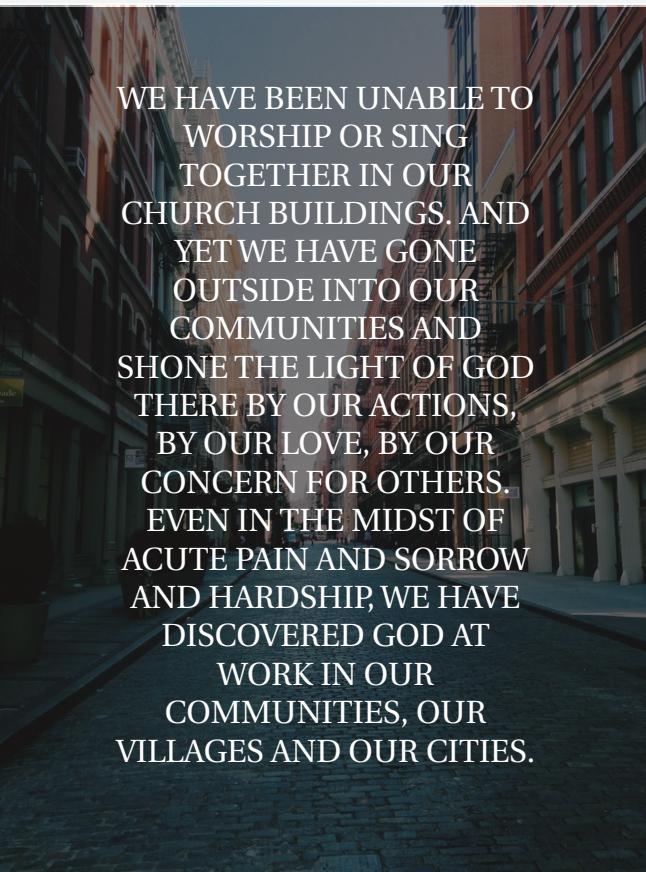
By now you will all be well aware that our 14th World Assembly has been postponed to August 2022. However, the planning progresses. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find an explanation of the logo for the 14th World Assembly, designed for us by Sally Bamford and chosen by the World Officers. Our theme for the

2022 Assembly, when we shall hopefully meet in person, remains 'Go and bear fruit - fruit that will last.'

Meanwhile, we are still 'Chosen People: Called to Proclaim.' We are discovering, by God's grace, that we do not need a church building in order to share the gospel message.

Every blessing,

-Alison Judd



Editor's word:

I know whom I have believed

I was thinking recently about how people fight or used to fight for the things they believe in. I was born in a Communist country. Faith was forbidden, liberty was something we could not understand, food was mostly a dream. We lacked everything and we lived in fear day by day. Still, many people gave their life for Communism. Why? Because it was something they believed in. The Communist ideology brought disaster, but many people believed that they were building a new, peaceful, good society, where people are equal. The idea was that now we suffer for a while, but soon we will have this perfect society.

Communism was depicted as the peak, a society above all others. The situation was that people did not know what a normal, western society was like, and they thought theirs was the best. People believed what they had been told because they did not know anything else. They did not have a point of comparison because it was not allowed to get out of the country. So, there was nothing beyond Communism. Everything resumed to Communism. Opponents were quickly killed.

The day for a perfect society never came. More people were killed, more were sacrificed in the name of Communism; sick persons who were not 'eligible' for the new world were sent to camps, intellectuals that had wider thoughts and opinions were forcibly hospitalized in mental hospitals, Christians were put in prisons. But still, many people still believed in Communism.

I have been reading Svetlana Aleksievici, a Nobel prize winner, about the Soviet women that fought in World War II. Many of them were not obliged to go to war, but they really wanted

to. They were Communist, they were Stalinist, they truly believed in the ideology. So, many women left their families, even small children, many were pregnant, and they went to war and most of them wanted to fight on the front line. They sacrificed everything: family, youth (girls of 16-19 gave their best years to war, and their hair became grey in hours), health (most of them died, and many returned home without legs or arms, many couldn't bear children, many were psychologically affected), career, and so on. They risked everything because they believed in something more than themselves. They considered their own lives unimportant. Communism was a higher entity in comparison with small individuals. There were no regrets. I was thinking that even though they believed in something bad and false, they were very courageous women. Does this kind of woman still exist?

It is so important to have something real to believe in, something that can make the whole of society better and safer and healthier. And it is important to 'fight' for this. Christ gave us something wonderful to believe in and set us an example to build a better society. But many times, we lack the motivation and we lack the courage. It shouldn't be like that; we should stand up for and 'fight' for this wonderful 'ideology' Christ shared with us. We should step in courage to try to make life for others better. And we can take courage from knowing who we are as daughters of the Most High, we know Who stands beside us, we know Who He is and what He can do if we believe. As Paul wrote to Timothy: I know whom I have believed (2 Timothy 1:12) and he wrote this when he was in great suffering, but still, it was well with him.

We all know in WHOM we have believed. Let us all fight for this.

-Ligia Istrate, Tree of Life Editor

Feeding people in Zimbabwe



Being a resident in Chitungwiza, a dormitory town situated 30 km out of Harare, for over 30 years, this town became close to my heart. In my personal understanding and more as Area President, I felt that there was a need to exercise my Christian and social responsibility within my local church and the surrounding community. The residents of Chitungwiza town are finding themselves in unprecedented circumstances because of the Covid-19 pandemic, so with the assistance of my friend, Rosemary Mlambo of SAWA Charity, family

members and friends in Christ, I started a feeding program on the 2nd of June 2020 at Nyatsime Methodist Church. The cooking and preparation of the food takes place in the church kitchen,

done mostly by volunteers from my local fellowship Ruwadzano Women. They take turns to make themselves available for this worthy cause. We give all the Glory to God.



Our feeding program is assisting the underprivileged members of society in our church and community. The majority of people are not employed and operate as street vendors. With this pandemic and the Government enforcement of lock down, all the informal and small businesses had to stop operating, resulting in those affected failing to provide food for their families.

With the limited resources available to us, we are currently assisting families with one meal





preparing meals from Monday to Friday. On the first day of the feeding program we fed 92 people. The numbers have increased and to date we are providing food to more than 300 people, comprising young children, men, women and the elderly. It is quite touching that food hampers were prepared and given to families with elderly grandmothers who were travelling long distances everyday with their disabled

grandchildren in wheelchairs to collect their meal.

It was a joy distributing masks and helping the little ones put them on. The masks were donated by Tanya Mpofu, who took her time to make face masks for children after we noticed some of the children were coming to collect food without masks on. We

really appreciate this donation to the less privileged. We desire to keep the feeding program running until the lockdown regulations are lifted and we pray that God will give us the strength and the provisions to keep it going forward for His Glory.

-Sipiwe Chisvo, Southern and East Africa Area
President

Remembering Liljana Sjanta (1960-2020)

It was with great sadness that we heard the news of the death of Liljana Sjanta, Unit President for Serbia for many years and a faithful leader of women in Europe: Continental Area. She was also known and loved by some of the women in the Britain and Ireland Area. A full tribute can be found on the Europe: Continental page of the World Federation website. Maria Ďurovka Petraš, Pastor and co-worker of Liljana, describes her as "a diligent and modest woman with a wide vision, a strong character deeply rooted in God's promises ... She was the District Women's Work president for 20 years, from 1999 to 2019 when she mobilized sisters, refreshed women's retreats and meetings, brought new ideas and experiences, and connected Serbian sisters with European and American women."

We thank Maria for her tribute, and we send our love and condolences to all Liljana's family and friends. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.



News

Peace making – not just Peace Keeping: Women of Faith

Pilgrim Team Visit to South Korea 13-15 July 2020

Together with several other Methodist and United Church women I was privileged to join a diverse group of sisters from around the globe at a virtual pilgrimage to South Korea, organized by the World Council of Churches. Originally, we planned to go to South Korea, but because of the coronavirus pandemic we had to connect virtually. I was impressed by the quality and depth of the meeting despite the fact that we, as international pilgrims, saw our hosts in Seoul and the fellow sisters only on the screens of our computers. We celebrated the gifts of our Korean sisters, visited the wounds of decades of war, militarization, and patriarchy, and learned how injustices are transformed. Our host in Korea was the Women's Committee of the National Council of Churches in Korea. In her introduction to Korean history, Rev. Moon-Sook Lee distinguished between "peace-keeping" and "peace-making": peace-keeping is rather static, preserving what has been achieved, whereas peace-making is active and progressing. In the last decades militarism and patriarchalism

had a negative impact on the lives of the people in North and South Korea and on the environment. People were told that systems of division are important to keep peace. Christian women in South Korea however are not satisfied with those peace-keeping strategies. They actively engage themselves as peace-makers. I was particularly impressed by their work for the 'comfort women' - women who had to prostitute themselves as a so-called friendly service to the soldiers of the US Army. For many years, Christian women's organizations (amongst them the Women's Division of the Korean Methodist Church) have been present in the 'Camp towns', in the neighborhoods of the military bases. They have created a space for counseling, medical assistance, advocacy, and agency of the victims through music and art. It took many years until the evil done to these 'comfort women' was officially recognized by the South Korean state. On Wednesday, July 15, we took part in a virtual demonstration in Seoul in front of the Japanese Embassy. For the last 30 years Korean women have been challenging the government of Japan to admit that 'comfort women' were misused in the time of the Japanese occupation, 1910-1945. The persistence demonstrated in this weekly protest is also expressed in the ongoing work for peace between South and North Korea. Women engage in

humanitarian aid, they are creative in enabling face to face meetings with North Korean women in neutral countries and they cooperate with international groups towards a peace treaty and to end militarization. Seventy years after the Korean War began, it is now time for peace with justice. Let us join the Christians in Korea in their prayer campaign 'Light of Peace'. I pray with the words of Rev. Dr. Hyunju Bae from the Presbyterian Church in Korea, who was the moderator in the first day of our virtual pilgrimage:

"Grant us the courage to go through the narrow gate that leads to life, not the wide gate that leads to destruction. May we leave to our children not a painful and terrible heritage, but a life that uses natural energy from your created sun, wind and water..."

Remembering that on the cross our Lord shared the suffering of the nuclear radiation victims, and hoping that a new heaven and new earth of life and peace may be realized from Mount Halla in the south to Mount Paekdu in the north, throughout Northeast Asia and all the earth, we pray in the name of Christ Jesus. Amen."

-Rosemarie Wenner, World Methodist Council, Geneva Secretary

And are we yet alive?

The opening hymn at the annual Methodist Conference in Britain begins with the words, “And are we yet alive, and see each other's face?” This hymn held extra poignancy at this year's conference as most members were meeting via Zoom and we did not see each other's faces very much at all!

The question in this verse is a good one to ask ourselves as individuals and as churches. “And are we yet alive?” These words got me thinking about what it means to be alive. The theme for the Presidential year 2020-2021 is about growth, personally and corporately, and in order to grow, something - or someone - needs to actually be alive!

According to the BBC Bitesize website (a teaching and revision website for schoolchildren), there are seven characteristics of living organisms, and I think they can help us reflect on whether or not we and our churches are alive.

Living organisms have the following characteristics in common:

Movement

The name, the Methodist Movement, suggests something that is not standing still. John Wesley didn't intend to leave the Anglican Church but Methodism gradually evolved into a distinct denomination. This pattern has been repeated throughout the history of the Church as groups beginning as a living, moving entity, soon settle and become as set in their ways as the group from which they tried to escape. Wesley is quoted as saying:

“I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power.”

Within our churches and as individuals, I wonder if we have the form of religion without the power of the Holy Spirit to help us move and pulse with life?

Reproduction

A few years ago, the British Methodist Council recognized that the greatest risk to the church was its inability to reproduce by making new disciples and that the church would cease to exist.

My heart is very much that of an evangelist and I love to encourage people to share their own faith with others. I believe it's possible for ordinary Christians to share the love of Jesus in ways that are not cringey, embarrassing, weird or dogmatic, and that we need to learn to be natural in the way we share our faith.

As churches and individuals, do we feel able to naturally share Jesus with others? When was the last time someone became a new Christian in our churches?

Sensitivity

Living things have the sensitivity to detect stimuli and respond to them. Often as Christians and as churches we can lack sensitivity to the needs of others and can become so focussed on our own lives and the practical issues around running churches that we can miss the needs of those around us.

I wonder if as individuals and churches we are inward looking - or are we sensitive to those we meet and prepared to listen to their stories and show God's love to them?

Growth

Before the lockdown I had the great privilege of visiting the Methodist Church in Brazil where the church is growing at an amazing rate - from 167,000 members in 2010 to a current membership of 275,000 and still

growing. Living things naturally grow, so I believe that if our churches are alive and thriving, we will see spiritual and numerical growth.

Respiration

As Christians and churches, are we open to the breath of the Holy Spirit to cleanse, energise, empower and enable us to live in a way that brings honour to God and extends his Kingdom on the earth?

Excretion

Often in our churches and our own lives, there are unwanted waste products that we need to get rid of in order to be healthy. We need to regularly come before God and allow the light of the Holy Spirit to show us where we need to repent and ask for forgiveness so that we don't carry these harmful thoughts, words and deeds with us, and through them cause damage to ourselves, others and the cause of the Gospel.

Nutrition

I'm often astounded by the lack of Bible knowledge within our churches, even amongst some of our leaders, and amazed at how few people have actually read the whole Bible during their lives. In Brazil and in churches in other nations I have witnessed a real hunger for the feeding from God's word and I pray for this appetite. My prayer is that we will hunger and thirst after righteousness and allow Jesus to have the throne within our own lives and within the lives of our churches.

So, these are the seven characteristics of living things and I close with the question with which I began, for your reflection and meditation: “And are we yet alive?”

-Carolyn Lawrence, Europe:
Britain and Ireland Vice-President

B o l i v i a z o o m meeting

It was such a joy to participate at an on-line meeting organized by the National Promoter of Women in Bolivia. It was



beautiful! It was supported by the church, the national authorities and Bishop Huanca. All the districts participated, a total of 70 persons. I am very grateful to God that our Units are adapting very well to the new situation!

-Leila de Jesus Barbosa, Latin America President

The Tamil Methodist Women of Malaysia

Praise be to God! We, the women of the Tamil Methodist Church in Malaysia, are called in the Name of Jesus to create a community of the redemptive and sustaining love of God, where broken relationships are healed and broken spirits are restored. (Luke 4:8) The Ministry among the Tamil Women in the Methodist Churches in Malaysia has grown widely. In seven districts, we have 54 societies with a membership of 1563 women.

We conduct various programs to nurture them both spiritually and socially, not forgetting our motto – “To Know Christ and Make Him Known”.

We have Leadership Training Programs in all seven districts. We have days of fasting and prayer, local prayer meetings, spiritual life camps, Christian Home and Family Week and Prayer Week. Our women also visit the sick, needy, bereaved families, single mothers, and seniors, and they pray with the

people they visit, share meals, and sow the seed of Scripture. During this time of pandemic, Zoom meetings and online prayers are being held. Relief aid is also given to the needy when natural disaster strikes. A scholarship loan of Rm 1,500 is given to needy girls who are in the local universities. We have also sent our women on short mission trips to Kuching, Sapulut-Sabah (indigenous group) and to Sri Lanka. Our Annual Conference is held annually without fail in various districts. We have inspirational

speakers, workshops, Bible quizzes and reports of what each local Methodist women's group has done during the year, including attending various conferences: EAA seminar in Singapore and Hong Kong, Asian Ecumenical World Assembly in Taiwan and Exchange Programs. Once in four years we have elections for the new leadership.

We need to strengthen ourselves, again and again in the fear of God because the work of Satan is to destroy women. Let us build up strong, stable families, which results in a united, loving church which is the Body of Christ. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” (1 Corinthians 12:12) He says, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20) I am always reminded of William Carey who lived out his great watchword, “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.”

- Sing Hong Ting, South-East Asia President.



Introducing the 14th World Assembly logo

The theme of the 14th World Assembly will be 'Go and bear fruit – fruit that will last'. These words of Jesus are recorded in John 15, in which He describes Himself as the true vine and His disciples as the branches, urging us to abide in Him so that we can be effective in our service. He warns, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (v 5). Yet following the example of Jesus to love one another, we become not just servants, but friends of Jesus, appointed to "go and bear fruit – fruit that will last" (John 15:16). Therefore, our theme is a call to Christian spirituality, productivity, and sustainability. The image of the tree is precious to us, as women of the World Federation. We value the image of the 'tree of life' described in Revelation 22:2 with its leaves for the healing of the nations. This assembly logo, which uses colours of traditional Swedish



folk art, includes leaves of different colours to signify the different nations from which we come, including the blue of our host nation's flag. The red and the green in the background symbolise our common Methodist heritage and the green of productivity. The 'tree of life', we are told, bears fruit every month. As we use our Federation prayer each month, we ask that we might "bear fruit of Unity and Love". The fruit in the 14th Assembly logo contains the seeds that will in turn produce more fruit-bearing trees. The seeds also represent the faith that sustains us, the faith that grows and the faith we share. Thus, our faithful actions can have far-reaching effect. The hand tenderly grasping the fruit is clearly feminine, reminding us that the World Federation is a movement working towards the

empowerment of women and a world where there is food and justice for all. The circle represents the world in which we are set, in need of our care as faithful stewards. As we work towards achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, we long to "bear fruit that will last".

The fruit depicted in the logo is an apple, traditionally (but without basis) thought to be the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden, plucked by Eve and shared with Adam. This reminder of our sinfulness and need for confession is at the heart of our faith in a Saviour who offers us forgiveness through grace, and the assurance of eternal life.

We are extremely grateful to Sally Bamford for her logo design. You can find out more about her work on Instagram (@littlebettydesign) Twitter (@sally_lbdesign) or email her at sally@little-betty.co.uk

*-Alison Judd,
World President*



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WEBMASTER POSITION

We want to invite you to apply for the WEBMASTER position, starting August 2022.

Join our wonderful team if you are passionate about World Federation work and web design!

An honorarium will be paid for this position.

Requirements but not limited to:

- webpage design
- multimedia design
- programming
- images editing
- website update
- website development
- ability to use specific programs
- social media
- good communication

Please email your letter of application to the
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