



THE WORLD FEDERATION OF METHODIST AND UNITING CHURCH WOMEN

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The TREE — of LIFE

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President's letter

This will be the last time I sit at my desk to write my letter for *The Tree of Life*. What a privilege it has been to be given the opportunity to share some thoughts every few months during the past four years.

When we each begin the task to which we have been called, we rarely begin it in isolation. We ask questions, seek advice, listen to those whose footsteps we are following, and are usually grateful for the support and reassurance we receive as we grow into our role. I am deeply grateful to the World Officers with whom I served from 2022 to 2026. I thank God for those who have walked these four years with me. I think of the people who pledged to pray for me when I was elected as the first Black woman from Africa to serve as World President, and I say thank you. This is how far the Lord has brought us, and we give Him all the glory and honour.

The time is coming when things will change. The Assembly will elect new World Officers, and a new Editor of *The Tree of Life* will be appointed. For every task that needs to be done, someone will be raised up to fill that role, and the work of the Federation will continue to move forward.

As Federation sisters, we affirm the World Federation's purpose: **“To Know Christ and To Make Him Known.”** We read Scripture in our own languages, we sing and dance in our Units and Areas, and soon we will gather at the 15th World Assembly in Auckland, New Zealand, worshipping together as

sisters from around the globe.

Like the disciple John, who saw a vision on the island of Patmos, we are reminded of the great multitude that God revealed to him through the Spirit. John was ushered into the throne room of heaven, where he saw “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9–10). Together they worshipped God. We too will be proclaiming in our different languages, “Salvation belongs to our God”, because we are bound together by the love of God that knows no barriers. Now we arise and shine, for the glory of God is upon us.

I ask for your prayers for those who will gather at the 15th World Assembly; for those who will be elected to serve in the Federation; and for those elected in their Areas and Units. We have been preparing for many months, and now we count down the days. We give special thanks to the South Pacific Area and to our sisters of the New Zealand Unit, who have embraced the vision and worked so diligently to ensure a warm welcome for everyone.

With heartfelt gratitude for the privilege of serving alongside you and advancing our shared mission,

- *Sipiwe Chisvo*, World President.



**“WE ARE BOUND TOGETHER
BY THE LOVE OF GOD
THAT KNOWS NO BARRIERS.”**

...from every nation, tribe, people and language...

Passing the Torch: Lessons in Faithful Leadership

Reflections at the End of a Journey

As I write these words, I am aware that this is my final contribution as Editor of *The Tree of Life*. It is a moment of gratitude and reflection for me. As I considered what I might write for this final issue, my thoughts turned to the Scriptures and to those servants of God whose ministries came to a close. I found myself drawn particularly to Moses and Joshua, two leaders who were called by God, served faithfully through many challenges, and eventually reached the end of the work entrusted to them.

What is striking is that neither man spent his final days speaking about his own achievements. Instead, they focused on the people they had served and on the God who had been faithful throughout their journey. Their farewell messages were not expressions of regret, but of hope.

There is an interesting contrast between these two great leaders. Moses spoke to the people before they entered the Promised Land. The journey through the wilderness was ending, and the fulfilment of God's promise was near, but still lay ahead. Joshua, on the other hand, spoke after the conquest of the land. The promises had been fulfilled, many of the battles had been won, and the people were settled in the inheritance God had given them. Yet their messages shared remarkable similarities.

Moses first called the people to remember God's faithfulness. Looking back over forty years of wandering, he reminded them that the Lord had never abandoned them, even when they did not obey. Every step of their journey had been guided by God's hand. How important it is for us, especially at times of transition, to pause and remember where God has led us and how faithfully He has sustained us.

Second, Moses urged the people to love God wholeheartedly. He read the Law before them so that they

would know what God expected of them. His famous words still challenge believers today: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." (Deuteronomy 6:5) Moses placed before the people a choice between blessing and curse, life and death, urging them to walk in God's ways so that they and future generations might flourish. Every generation must make its own decision to follow the Lord faithfully. The same is true for those entrusted with ministry and leadership; in our case, every woman who serves or leads within the Federation.

Third, Moses encouraged them not to be afraid of the future. Leadership would change, circumstances would change, but God would remain the same. His reassuring words continue to encourage us, especially at this turning point: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid... for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you." (Deuteronomy 31:6)

Fourth, he appointed a new leader, Joshua, and encouraged him. This too will soon be our experience. "Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, 'Be strong and courageous... The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.'" (Deuteronomy 31:7-8)

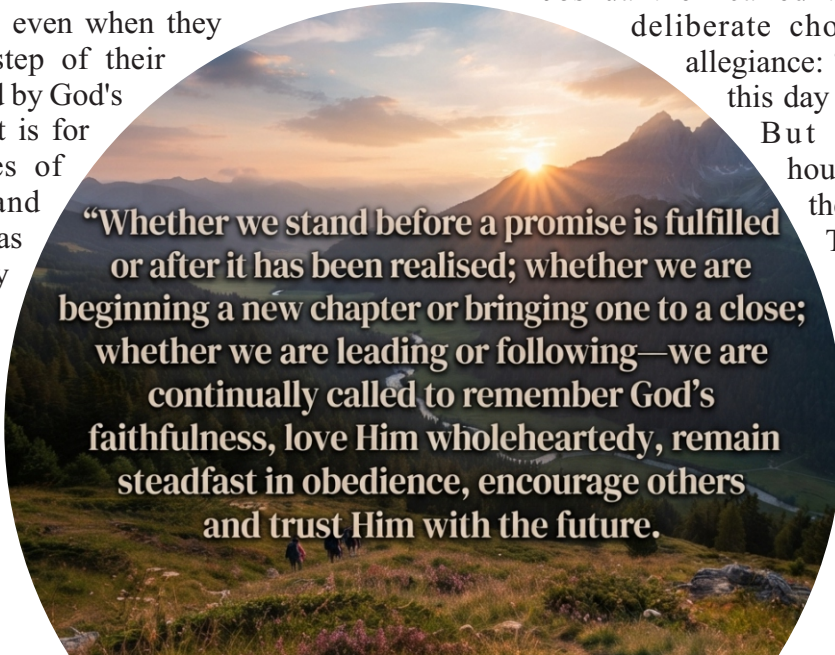
Fifth, he blessed the whole people of Israel.

Joshua's farewell echoed many of these themes. Having witnessed God's promises fulfilled, he urged the people to remain faithful. Joshua said: "Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left." (Joshua 23:6) Faithfulness, he understood, requires perseverance. It is not enough to begin well; we must continue walking with God throughout our lives. The most important thing is how we finish the journey. To finish well is better than to start well. Ecclesiastes 7:8 reminds us, "Better is the end of a thing than its beginning."

Joshua then called the people to make a deliberate choice concerning their allegiance: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve..."

But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15)

This is a personal choice for every individual. It was not enough that their ancestors had made this choice, or that previous generations chose God. The new



"Whether we stand before a promise is fulfilled or after it has been realised; whether we are beginning a new chapter or bringing one to a close; whether we are leading or following—we are continually called to remember God's faithfulness, love Him wholeheartedly, remain steadfast in obedience, encourage others and trust Him with the future.

generation that entered the Promised Land had to choose for themselves. Each and every one of us must make that decision.

Perhaps this is the enduring lesson from both Moses and Joshua. Whether we stand before a promise is fulfilled or after it has been realised; whether we are beginning a new chapter or bringing one to a close; whether we are leading or following—we are continually called to remember God's faithfulness, love Him wholeheartedly, remain steadfast in obedience, encourage others and trust Him with the future.

Leadership changes, responsibilities pass from one person to another, and seasons of service come to an end. Yet the mission remains the same: to love God and make Him known.

May we, like Moses, look back with thanksgiving. May we, like Joshua, look forward with faith. And may we all be able to say with conviction: "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

- *Ligia Istrate*, Tree of Life Editor.



Weaving Lives: The Women of Exodus and the Silent Power that Transforms

When we think about the book of Exodus, we almost always think of Moses. We remember him before the burning bush, confronting Pharaoh, or leading the people toward freedom. Yet before Moses ever lifted his staff, there were women who lifted up life. Before the great liberator, there were hands that protected, eyes that watched, hearts that endured, and women who made courageous decisions in the midst of fear and oppression. Exodus begins with a reality marked by fear and violence. The growth of the Hebrew people caused fear in Pharaoh, and that fear turned into control, oppression, and eventually a cruel order: the killing of Hebrew baby boys. It was an attempt to destroy the future of an entire

people.

But precisely there, in the midst of uncertainty and threat, women appear.

The first are the midwives, Shiphrah and Puah. They received a direct order from Pharaoh: kill the Hebrew children. Yet the text tells us that they "feared God." This fear does not refer to terror, but to deep conviction and faithfulness. They recognized that life belongs to God and chose not to become instruments of death.

Then we encounter Moses' mother. She protects her child and does everything possible to care for him. But there comes a moment when she must place him in a small basket on the river, entrusting to God what she can no longer hold with her own strength. Faith also means trusting when we no longer have all the answers.

Moses' sister shows us another type of leadership: quiet, attentive, and present. She watches from a distance, waits, and acts at the right moment. She is not at the center of the story, yet her presence proves essential. We also find Pharaoh's daughter, who represents a compassion capable of breaking through established structures. She belonged to the very system that had ordered the death of Hebrew children, yet she chose to act differently and protect life.

What moves me most about this story is that none of these women acted alone. Each did something that seemed small: one protected, another watched, another accompanied, and another made an unexpected decision. Without realizing it, together they formed a network that sustained a life and opened the way for the liberation of a people.

In my own journey walking alongside women from different communities across Latin America and the Caribbean, I have seen something similar. I have met women who carry wounds, silence, and deep weariness; yet I have also seen women who, even in the midst of their own struggles, continue sustaining the lives of others.

Moses' story began with women who chose to protect life. And today, God continues calling women who, from both visible and invisible places, keep weaving hope and sustaining the future.



- *Jessica Solar*, Latin America Area President.

Be My Witnesses

I have been reflecting on the place of personal testimony in encouraging others to a deeper faith, both within the context of worship and beyond our church walls in the wider community.

I know that some people speak freely about their individual faith journey, while others are more reserved.

Damascus. He told his story more than once, and it had a powerful effect on those who heard it (Acts 22:6–21).

His testimony was not always received positively, and perhaps that is one reason we sometimes hesitate to share our own faith stories. We make ourselves vulnerable when we speak about our personal experiences. Is that what makes us reluctant to do so? And yet we know how powerful such testimonies can be.

Some of you will be able to testify to how the Holy Spirit has guided and protected you over many years. As you have borne witness to the love of God, you will have encouraged others to place their trust in the One who brings hope to all who believe. As you have shared your story, you will have glorified God.

The 15th World Assembly marks the conclusion of my fifteen years in various leadership roles within this wonderful global movement. I have published a book of memoirs on Amazon telling my story. It is entitled *Here, There and Everywhere: Journeys in Response to a Call*. **All profits will go to the World Federation. I pray that it brings glory to God.**

Prayer

Lord Christ Jesus,
We thank You that You have given each of us a personal story to share. We thank You that You have come to each of us in a unique way and that Your presence has transformed our lives. We thank You for the opportunities You give us to share our experiences of You, to tell our stories, and to bring glory and honour to Your name.

Forgive us when we are too shy to speak of Your goodness, too timid to share our faith stories, or too frightened to bear witness to Your faithfulness.

Guide us, Lord, as we seek to make disciples. Remind us that You choose the most unlikely people to participate in Your kingdom of grace. Thank You for choosing us. May we rise to every challenge and shine through Your strength and love.

In the name of Christ our Saviour, Amen.

- Alison Judd, President Emerita.

Here, There and Everywhere



Journeys in Response to a Call

Alison Judd

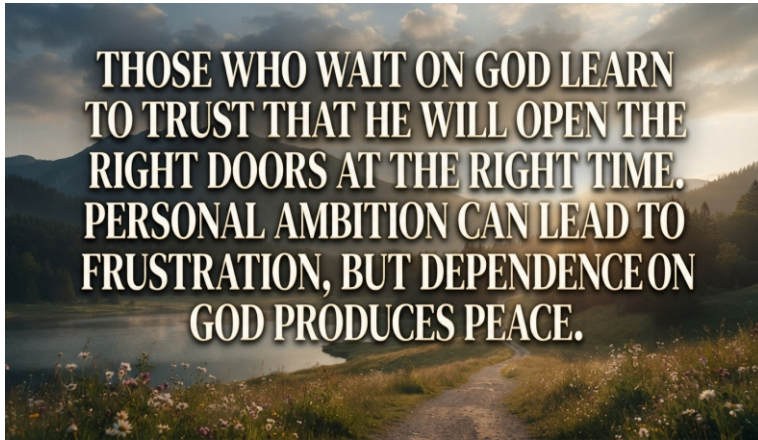
For those who would like to order a copy of the book, it is available through Amazon at the following link:

<https://tinyurl.com/3yxauffh>

Yet I suspect—and hope—that we all have a story to tell about how Jesus has touched our lives. It may have been a dramatic encounter, as Saul experienced on the road to

The Calling Comes from God

God's calling is not obtained through human negotiations, influence, or agreements between people, but through the sovereign will of God.



When a person desires to serve the Lord, it is natural to long for opportunities to do so. However, there is a danger in thinking that service in God's work depends on recommendations, alliances, favoritism, or human negotiations. The Bible teaches that God is the One who calls, prepares, and establishes each person in the place He has determined.

When Moses was called, he did not seek a position; in fact, he felt incapable. When David was chosen as king, he was not even present when his family presented the possible candidates. God had seen him before men did. Likewise, Jeremiah received his calling because God had set him apart before he was born.

Genuine service begins with a willing heart, not with a campaign to be chosen. Those who wait on God learn to trust that He will open the right doors at the right time. Personal ambition can lead to frustration, but dependence on God produces peace.

Waiting for the call does not mean remaining passive; it means preparing oneself. It is a time to grow in prayer, knowledge of the Word, character, humility, and faithfulness in small responsibilities. God often entrusts greater tasks to those who have been faithful in little things.

The One who calls us says: *Serve wherever you have the opportunity, even if no one sees you. Avoid competing or comparing yourself with others. Do not seek to promote yourself. Pray that God will show you His will. Trust that the Lord knows when and where to use you.*

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you...” (John 15:16)

Prayer

Lord,

If You have placed in my heart the desire to serve You, help me to wait for Your timing and Your direction. Deliver me from seeking recognition or positions through human means. Form in me a humble and obedient heart, willing to serve wherever You desire. May my confidence rest in Your calling and not in the approval of people. Amen.

The central principle is this: in the work of God, the most important choice does not come from people who support us, but from God Who calls us. When He opens a door, no one can shut it; and when He has not yet opened it, the best place to be is preparing in His presence.

There is a beautiful lesson in this truth: those who have been called by God do not need to struggle to be seen, because God Himself opens the way at the proper time. Often, the Lord works on our character before He works on our ministry. The season of waiting is not wasted time; it is preparation time.

Let us remember: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.” (1 Peter 5:6) And also: “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act.” (Psalm 37:5)

If God has placed in your heart the desire to serve Him, continue growing in faithfulness, prayer, and obedience. An authentic calling does not need to be advanced through human agreements; when God's time comes, He Himself confirms, equips, and supports those whom He has chosen.

May the Lord grant us wisdom to wait, humility to learn, and joy to serve Him wherever we are today. Abundant blessings for your life.

May we never lose sight of the fact that God sees the heart before appearances, faithfulness before titles, and obedience before recognition. At times, seasons of waiting may seem long, but the Lord works in silence, preparing His servants for the purpose He has ordained. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. (Isaiah 55:8)

Let us continue seeking the Lord sincerely, serving Him with humility, and trusting in His guidance. When God calls, He also equips; when He opens a door, no one can close it.

May the peace, wisdom, and grace of the Lord accompany every step of our journey. Amen.

-Ivonne Pereira Diaz, World Vice-President.



Arise and Shine: A Call to Women of Faith



“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.” (Isaiah 60:1)

These words

from the prophet Isaiah continue to inspire women across the world. In every generation, God calls women to rise above fear and limitation and to shine as reflections of His love and grace in their homes, churches, and communities.

Through my ministry in the Methodist Church in India, particularly through the Deaconesses' Conference of the Chennai & North India Regional Conferences and the Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS), I have been blessed to walk alongside women from diverse communities, cultures, and economic backgrounds. Their faith, resilience, and determination have been a constant source of encouragement to me.

To arise is to recognize the purpose God has placed within each of us. Every woman is created in the image of God, gifted by His Spirit, and called to participate in His mission. To shine is to allow the light of Christ to be reflected through our lives, our service, and our witness to others.

The Methodist Church in India has a rich heritage of combining evangelism with compassionate service. Inspired by this legacy, I believe that ministry among women must address both spiritual and practical needs.

As we share the Gospel, we are also called to encourage education, nurture leadership, uphold dignity, and create opportunities that help women and children flourish.

During my visits to churches and women's fellowships, I have been deeply moved by the faith and courage of women who continue to trust God through life's challenges. I

have met mothers who make great sacrifices for their families, widows who serve faithfully despite personal loss, and young women who long to build a better future for themselves and their communities. Their stories remind me that God continues to work powerfully through ordinary lives.

One of my deepest passions is to see women discover both their spiritual calling and their God-given potential. Through adult education, mentoring, leadership development, and entrepreneurial opportunities, women can gain confidence and develop skills that enable them to contribute meaningfully to society. When women are empowered through faith, knowledge, and opportunity, families are strengthened, and communities are transformed.

I am also committed to encouraging women to participate actively in evangelism and Christian witness. Through prayer, discipleship, and compassionate service, women become powerful ambassadors of God's grace, sharing Christ's love within their families, churches, and communities.

My ministry places special emphasis on the well-being of children. By investing in women and supporting families, we help create environments where children can grow with hope, dignity, and purpose. It is my prayer that every child may experience not only care and opportunity but also the transforming love of Christ.

As Methodist and Uniting Church women across the world, we are united by a common faith and a shared commitment to serve Christ. May we continue to arise with faith, shine with love, and use the gifts God has entrusted to us for the transformation of lives and communities, so that God's glory may be revealed through all that we do.

- *Sukhalatha Dayanand*, President, Deaconesses Conference, Chennai & North India Conferences.



WORLD FEDERATION OF
METHODIST & UNITING
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15TH WORLD ASSEMBLY

25th to 29th August 2026
Due Drop Centre, Auckland,
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“Arise and Shine for the
glory of God is upon you”

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of **LIFE**

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