Winter Newsletter 2026

Welcome to our final newsletter for 2026 – and what a busy year it has been.

Since our last newsletter the new constitution for Methodist Women in Britain was approved by the Charity Commission and our new Board of Trustees held its first residential meeting in October. We are excited as we move forward in our new structure and encouraged when we hear news from different groups in the connexion through our Ambassadors. This is a time of adjustment and change but together we continue to work 'for women, for justice, for Christ'. As you read this we will be part way through 16 days of Activism and hopefully holding Butterfly services locally as together we stand up for a world free from violence against women and girls.

In late August the WFMUCW held their 15th World Assembly in Auckland, New Zealand and you can read reflections from some of those who attended. Speaking personally this was a wonderfully inspiring event; meeting and worshipping with women from around the world, hearing their stories, sharing in conversation and prayer, listening to powerful preaching and Bible Study as well as experiencing some amazing singing and dancing, colourful costumes and once in a lifetime experiences.

In October at our World Federation Day in Nottingham we were able to share a taste of the Auckland event with ladies (and gentlemen) as we were joined by Wanda Hogan, Area President Britain & Ireland, who flew over from Ireland to speak at our day which was organised by our own Helen Cunningham (Vice President Britain & Ireland) and Izzy Solomon (Helen Kim Memorial Scholar). An inspiring day of fellowship was a blessing to all there.

Booking is now open (www.mwib.org.uk) for our annual residential conference to be held at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire, 9-11 April 2027. This year our theme is Wellness and we are delighted to welcome our keynote speaker, Deacon Karen McBride, who will help us explore the theme alongside a variety of workshops, worship and Bible study. Our marketplace will enable your shopping wellness, and this year not only sees the return of a Quiz night but also the disco and circle dancing – wellness in all areas!

Bronwen Braisdell (Lead Trustee Communications)

Postcards from the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women 15th World Assembly held in Auckland, 26th-30th August 2026

The WFMUCW 15th World Assembly in Aotearoa, New Zealand was from start to finish a feast for the senses and nourishment for the soul. A worldwide organisation made up of 9 Areas and 89 Units, this time over 500 ladies from across the globe gathered to celebrate their faith; share the work of women in their locality; be challenged by powerful preaching and Bible Study; to dance, to sing, to rekindle friendships and make new connections within a worldwide sisterhood united in one vision – to know Christ and to make Him known.

The theme for this World Assembly and the coming quinquennium is: 'Arise and Shine, for the Glory of God is upon you' Isaiah 60:1 This is, said World President Sipiwe Chisvo, both a promise and a calling. God's glory is already upon us, and we are called to reflect that glory in our lives, our communities, and our service. Powerful preaching from Rev Charissa Suli (Australia), Rev Tara Tautari (New Zealand), Bishop Pumla Nzimande (South Africa) and many others during worship, plus Bible Study from Rev Jenny Pathmarajah (Great Britain) and a variety of workshops led by women from around the world cemented the theme with challenges to live out the message.

Some of the ladies from Britain who were fortunate to attend reflect on their experiences in these 'postcards'.



As I step down after 15 years' service on the World Executive of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, I am filled with confidence for the future of this global organisation. The new World Officers 2026-2031 will make a great team: Louise Wilson (Ireland) as World President; Patricia Mapani (United Methodist Church, Zimbabwe) as Vice-President; Simulata Pope (New Zealand) as World Secretary; and Jeanette Bouknight (USA) as World Treasurer. *(Pictured left)*

Sipiwe Chisvo from Methodist Church Zimbabwe now becomes President Emerita. It was also encouraging to meet the incoming Area Officers and the Helen Kim Memorial Scholars who will 'Arise and Shine' to ensure the work of the Federation continues in the local Units.

I was privileged to meet with the Helen Kim Memorial Scholars, in one of their training sessions prior to the assembly. These are young women between the ages of 18 and 30, chosen by their Area as having potential to benefit from leadership training and engage with their Unit and Area during the coming 5 years. We are excited to welcome Izzy Solomon and Hope Graham into this role in our Britain and Ireland Area. The HKMS presentation, including singing , dancing and inspiring messages on the last day of the Assembly, was one of the unforgettable highlights of our time together.

Alison Judd (President Emerita 2022-2026)



I am totally inspired, and feel incredibly supported by so many awesome ladies. My time at the 15th World Assembly of the WFMUCW was an honour to experience. I was very nervous to travel so far by myself, but I felt so loved and safe as soon as I met the women that I will be working alongside for the next 5 years through the Helen Kim Memorial Scholarship. Before the assembly began, we had a few days of just the 14 of us, and our trainers. The programme was brilliant, we learnt lots about the Federation, and the scholarship, as well as the work undertaken in the last 4 years. We had time to have those important reflections, conversations, and prayers on what we would like to do with our roles over the next 5 years. Then it was many days of a packed and amazing programme, alongside hundreds of amazing women..

Too many memorable moments happened over the week to attempt to squeeze them all in, so I am choosing one moment to share.

I wear black on a Thursday, but I have never experienced being part of a group when I do this. So one of the most poignant moments for me was coming down for breakfast and seeing a sea of women wearing their black outfits whilst warming their toast or making their tea. It reminded me that what I do on a Thursday, as quiet as it is, is part of something bigger.

That felt like one of the main lessons from the conference: travelling, and seeing more of the world, more people, more variety and expressions of our faith and love of God, and seeing you are part of something bigger.

It is hard to remember, when you go to the same building every week, and do the same things every Sunday, that there are so many beautiful women across the world worshipping alongside you.

Izzy Solomon (HKMS Britain 2026-2031) *(pictured HKMS)*



Although it wasn't so easy to Arise & Shine for the first day of the World Assembly in Auckland NZ after a long journey into a different time-zone, we were soon caught up in the atmosphere of around 500 Methodist women from approximately 70 different countries as we all enjoyed a traditional Māori welcome before the Opening Worship and wonderful parade of Area Banners. The Assembly's logo of the rising sun reminds us that God's mercies are new every day & where better to celebrate that than in New Zealand, one of the first places to see the beautiful sunrise every morning. The 14 Helen Kim scholars who had just begun their new study programme were on hand to settle us in with our welcome bags & programmes; it was a delight to get to know them all in the days ahead.

Thursdays in Black are memorable when we see everyone together in the Assembly Hall dressed in black to remind ourselves and the world outside of the pain and violence experienced by so many women and girls in their daily lives. Alongside the daily worship, prayer-time, Bible Study & workshops on offer, for me the opportunity to catch up with old friends from previous Assemblies & European Seminars is one of the most important aspects of each get-together; although I remain in regular contact with some of my World Federation friends in between times, with others there's the exciting moment of recognition that once more we're together again for a few days when we can share news of Church & family life. And of course there are new friends too each time within this wonderful gathering together of world-wide Methodist women of all ages. I treasure each and every person whose faith path crosses with mine at the Assemblies, as we remember each other in prayer. Until the next time! We left Auckland with the words of our new World President Louise Wilson from Ireland reminding us all that “we are each called to Arise and Shine together for such a time as this". Amen

Pamela Stenson (Darlington District Ambassador MWiB)
(Pictured with Bronwen and Ana (R) from FEMMA in Argentina)

I am a member of Ilford Methodist Church in Ilford, London, and of the Methodist Church Zimbabwe Fellowship UK. It was such a blessing to meet a world of faithful women at the conference! As I reflect back, I realise we have made lifetime memories and history—meeting in person with fellow Christian Ladies/Sisters.

This was my first time and felt so inspired and empowered especially with the guest speakers and the wonderful workshops. I also found Thursday's in Black very powerful.



The Bible Study by Rev Jenny Pathmarajah on violence against women being referenced to by Bible verses really opened my mind because I had never looked or understood it in that way and neither, in all the years I have attended church, not any Reverend/Pastor has ever gave a sermon or preached like that!!! What an eye opener!!!

What a joy it was to attend despite being clouded in darkness by the death of Amai, the Zimbabwean President of the Ruwadzano Manyano; wife of the Zimbabwean Methodist Bishop; and other members who were unwell and some had to be admitted during the conference period.

It was great to witness different languages, cultures, dress codes, interests, food, worship and prayer styles—but ONE God, ONE faith, and ONE family! The 15th World Assembly has reminded us how blessed and proud we are to belong to one family under God. "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" — Psalm 133. God is good—all the time!

Siwela M Ralephata



Firstly I would like to comment on the transport arrangements that were well organised from the beginning till the last day! From the airport where we were met by a group of friendly ladies and gentlemen and taken to the respective hotels. Daily shuttles to and from the conference venue and last day transfer to the airport. Well done! Whoever came up with the idea of having the whole conference program on our ID badges hanging on our lanyard deserves a gold medal!

The opening event was brilliant with the traditional dances on the opening ceremony. The events themselves were well organised and the devotions very spiritual each day. The President's report and the Area reports showed us that the women are working hard behind the scenes. We got an insight of what goes on in those five years. So many achievements among a lot of obstacles that need to be overcome! The women continue to Arise and Shine for the glory of God is upon them!! The available workshops were quite moving, spiritual and informative.
The food was not bad and the tea breaks offered us the different confectionery of NZ! The New Zealand people are a friendly people! I'm still missing the entertainment during breaks! The dancing and the costumes were out of this world! The market stalls had lots of nice things! There is a lot of memories I will cherish about NZ! It was a well organised conference which I will always remember!

Margaret Mmazivanhanga



The Theme of the Assembly "Arise and Shine for the glory of the Lord is upon you " was so poignant to me as I reflected on my role as a woman of faith living in this challenging world. However the various topics covered during the course of the Assembly gave me understanding and hope that together with other women we can each make meaningful contributions to those disadvantaged in our societies and in so doing making Christ known to those we get to work with. Listening to the work of women in various parts of the world gave me hope that if each one of us continue to ARISE AND SHINE, not only will the glory of God be upon us but also to those we will be working with. The diversity of cultures amongst attendees was amazing.
For me the workshop on Women in Bible led by Rev Jenny together with her Bible study session helped me view and understand these women in a very different perspective .
All in all it was an interesting, amazing and inspiring experience to be part of the Assembly deliberations.

Monica Sibindi



My heart is still overflowing as I reflect on the 15th World Assembly of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women in Auckland, New Zealand, held under the inspiring theme, “Arise and Shine — for the glory of the Lord is upon you” (Isaiah 60:1). Serving in the vital role of the voting member for the Britain unit within our Britain and Ireland area—and having the distinct privilege of representing our unit as an election scrutineer—made this deeply spirit-filled and humbling week even more meaningful.

Surrounded by a rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and traditions, I was powerfully reminded of Pentecost, when the early disciples gathered together and were filled by the Holy Spirit to speak in different languages. Just as on that day, our gathering proved that the language of the Holy Spirit transcends every barrier, uniting us in one accord of praise and worship.

The warmth of the New Zealand host community provided a breathtaking backdrop for our fellowship, grounding our days in sacred connection and shared mission. Through every heartfelt prayer, vibrant song, and profound interaction, God's presence was undeniably tangible. I leave this sacred gathering transformed, deeply encouraged, and newly committed to shining His light in my corner of the world.

Olive Ruvimbo Ruzvidzo (National Chair Methodist Women in Britain)

(Pictured with Wanda Hogan Area President Britain & Ireland)

The sound of Heaven is the fervent murmur of countless voices praying the Lord’s Prayer, each in their mother tongue, in more languages than I could name. It is, I’m sure, like the sound of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – individual voices and languages united in worship of God the Creator, God our Ultimate Parent, who, like the mother hen, tenderly gathers her children from all nations under her wings and enrobes us all in the security of Unconditional Love.



This glimpse of heavenly unity in love, is the abiding image in my mind as I return from the World Assembly. Women from many nations, embracing each other as they met again after years apart and, later, as new friends departed to travel home.

Women from around the world jointly undertaking World Federation business sessions; sharing resources in creative workshops to make sure there was enough to go round; planning ways to share all we learnt with our friends and families back home, so to arise and shine the Christ-light for others who couldn't be there but are never-the-less part of God's family. And not just for women…



It was a joy to welcome as our guest, Rev. Edgar de Jesus, World President of Wesley Men, who told us that the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Men are joining the Thursdays in Black movement and are calling Godly men across the world to stand with their sisters against gender-based violence.

Helen Cunningham (Area Vice President Britain & Ireland)

I hope these 'postcard reflections' have given you a flavour of this amazing gathering. It truly was a privilege to be part of it. It was wonderful to see our new Britain and Ireland Area President Wanda Hogan (Ireland) and Vice President Helen Cunningham (Britain) take their place with the new World Officers. We look forward to our Joint European Area Seminar sometime during the next 5 years. Because so many were unable to be present due to travel, visa or health issues all the main sessions of the World Assembly were recorded and can be viewed at www.wfmucw.org They are well worth a watch and will I hope inspire you to Arise and Shine.

Bronwen Braisdell (Lead Trustee Communications MWiB)



Methodist Women in Britain ladies pictured on the Thursday of the Assembly

Please contact communications.mwib@gmail.com if you would like someone who went to New Zealand to come and give a talk to your group about the WFMUCW 15th World Assembly.



MWiB at Foxhills

At the end of September 23 ladies from the Bolton, Wigan, Leigh & Hindley and Monton circuits in the NWED plus a couple of our friends who now live in Lancashire and North Wales met up for our 2nd retreat at Foxhill's Christian Centre in Frodsham. Feedback was that this was another excellent event and everyone is already asking about what is happening next year!! Our numbers were only limited by the size of the venue – we were fully booked –and could have had more - what a blessing it was to spend 24 hours in fellowship, faith and fun with such an amazing group of women. Particular thanks must go to Reverend Sarah Hooks, minister in the Bolton circuit, who led us as we learned about Esther – the first suffragette – a women who suffered so much for her people. *Philippa Hill, Vice Chair MWiB*



We all dream of a chance to escape the world and enjoy some peace and rest, even for a little while. So, what happens when you are offered exactly that but find yourself searching for every excuse you can think of to stay at home. Why, because you just want to get on with it!

That was me!

However, not being able to say no, I found myself on the way to Foxhills. Foxhills is a retreat house near Frodsham in the Cheshire countryside. A beautiful house surrounded by trees and lawns and paths to walk on.

I arrived to find an atmosphere that was warm and friendly and other women searching for the same peace and rest. I found myself enfolded in love and grace and care. I belonged.

In the space of 24 hours, we talked and created and shared our stories. We worshipped together, prayed together, and shared communion. We enjoyed lovely homemade food and best of all we learned so much together in so many different ways.

I, amongst my friends, learned the most from Rev Sarah Hooks from the Bolton Circuit. Sarah treated us to a clear insight and understanding of the book of Esther. In looking at Esther's story, we learned together, so much

about what God has to say about the world we know today. We encountered power and strength, perseverance and bravery and survival. We witnessed people trusting God and stepping out in faith in the face of danger.



All this and so much more in the space of 24 hours.
Am I glad I didn't say no? Absolutely!

Many thanks to all the ladies who made our time away possible.

Sue Snowden

Cherry Blossom and Christianity



A fantastic event was held at Monton by MWiB when Philippa Hill (Vice Chair MWiB) talked about her visit to Japan. She drew out ways in which her faith had been enhanced by the experience and invited her listeners to learn more from another culture.

Those present were warmly welcomed by the MWiB ladies of the church and included a large number from Bolton, from Greater Manchester and from Lancashire. A ploughmans lunch and variety of cakes was enjoyed by all.

Prayers for Japan are found on Day 21 of the Methodist Prayer Handbook.

Sharon Harbottle

If anyone would like Philippa to visit their group with this talk please contact her: cochairs.mwib@gmail.com

<u>Newcastle District MWiB Retreat</u>

Under the heading, **Serving Two Masters**, Madeleine Reed, past Helen Kim Memorial Scholar, led thirty four women most ably through the Sermon on the Mount. Through teaching, meditation, prayer, various activities and hymn singing Madeleine guided us skillfully and joyfully. Her faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ shone through.

During our free afternoon there were choices of a short prayer walk, an art activity or circle dancing as well as having time to renew old friendships and make new friends. There was fun and laughter in the President's Hour.



On Thursday many of us remembered to wear black, demonstrating that we are part of the global movement which works towards a world without rape and violence.

Through the whole retreat we were abundantly blessed as we worshipped our amazing God together.

Judy Tasker (Newcastle upon Tyne District)

Pictured at the North West District Synod
Caroline (Lead Trustee Resources & Events), Naledi (NWED Ambassador) & Philippa (Vice Chair)



showing their support for a world without rape and violence against women and girls and advertising our Thursdays in Black campaign, encouraging others to wear black on Thursdays.
Together we can make a difference.

Did you know that a small gift in your will can have a huge impact?

After looking after your loved ones, please consider leaving a gift to 'Methodist Women in Britain'.

A gift of any size can help change lives and make a massive difference through our Gifts and Grants programme.

Contact finance.mwib@gmail.com for further information

To all MWiB Treasurers – *a reminder that you cannot pay into our CFB account using the old paying slips. Payments must be made electronically into our CAF Bank or by cheque payable to MWiB sent to our address.*

General enquiries: 0300 030 9873 **Or post to: MWiB, c/o Stamford Methodist Church, 11 Barn Hill, Stamford, Lincs PE9 2AE**

Registered Charity No: 1156626 Methodist Women in Britain

Website: www.mwib.org.uk

Find us on Facebook, Instagram & YouTube; Use QR code to access website

<u>Southampton District Methodist Women's District Day</u> was held at Chandler's Ford Methodist Church focussing on the theme 'Stones and Silence; rising in rubble'.

Rev'd Rachel Bending, Chair of Southampton District encouraged interaction from the gathered group of fifty or so, mainly women, around a central display representing 'rubble'. Various kinds of 'rubble' which many, if not most of us, live with were explored, and reflected upon. This led on to an exploration of the biblical story of the woman accused of adultery, using an image from the Methodist art collection by Clive Hicks-Jenkins, to consider the ways in which the story is often told, but then wondering together what might be the 'back' story, and what might have happened in the ongoing story after the part of it that we read. This developed a much fuller picture of the event, bringing to life the probable perspectives of those who were there, Jesus, the woman and those in the gathered group of locals.



Contemplating the relevance to our own times and reflecting on the kinds of 'rubble' with which we live and seek to respond illustrated the resilience and persistence of women to keep striving and to cope in their individual situations.

Workshops followed which gave options to consider further the roles and tasks of women, and how we can support one another. The SHE [Start Her Enterprise] was featured and is the District partnership project for 2026/7. The Christian charity Restored focussed on what makes healthy relationships, based on their work with women and churches to support women who have experienced forms of abuse. Rachel provided craft materials so that responses to the morning could be created, and opportunity to hear something of the World Federation Assembly which took place last August in New Zealand also featured.

Closing worship picked up on the theme added responses from the workshops to the display and drew all present together in communion where they fed bread and wine to one another. Something special and rare infused the atmosphere during this time, hard to describe, almost electric, giving a sense of everyone together in thought and action. A day to treasure, and one that will remain in the memory for a very long time. ***Hilary Evans***

HKMS Reflection on first few months



My first few months as a Helen Kim Memorial Scholar have been such an exciting and valuable introduction to the wider work of the Methodist Women in Britain (MWIB) and the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW). I have used this time to reflect on my learnings at the 15th World Assembly of the WFMUCW, understand the organisation more, and think about how I might make myself useful over the coming 5 years. (Pictured: *Izzy & Hope)*



My scholarship began with training alongside my fellow HKMS sisters in New Zealand, at the 15th World Assembly of the WFMUCW. This provided an important introduction to the Federation, its international reach and its commitment to empowering women through faith, fellowship and action. It also helped me understand the wider context of the work that MWIB is a part of.

Following this, I was involved in preparing for World Federation Day. This gave me valuable insight into the work involved in bringing women together, celebrating our shared connections and raising awareness of the Federation's mission. These experiences also gave me a chance to get to know the MWiB Trustees more. This especially gave me a chance to spend more time with Helen, who I was very happy to be working alongside as we planned the day. It's always reassuring to know we were both learning the ropes of MWiB together!
(Pictured: Helen, Madeleine, Wanda & Izzy)



Looking ahead, one of my key ambitions is to encourage more young women to become involved in MWIB. I believe it is important to build connections across generations and ensure that younger women feel welcomed, represented and inspired to participate. I would particularly like to explore opportunities to do this at the upcoming Swanwick Conference in April. ***Izzy Solomon***

World Federation Day Reflection



World Federation Day was a truly lovely experience, held in a beautiful church in Nottingham, with our theme Arise and Shine! Our Area President, Wanda Hogan, gave us lots to think about and talk about together and we were so glad she made the trip from Ireland to be with us for our WF Day.

Another overarching theme throughout the day was Barbara Easton's recorded reflection on 2 Kings 5 and the idea of bringing home a little ball of mud to share, i.e. sharing what we have learnt. We returned to this idea at various points, thinking about what we had received from our experiences and what we could share with others.

I was keen to get stuck in, keeping busy taking photographs and videos, often from my rather hidden position at the back of the church, where I was running the slideshow! I thoroughly enjoyed being involved and saw it as a wonderful opportunity to learn more about MWIB and its members.



One of my highlights was leading a workshop inspired by my experience in New Zealand. I wanted to bring back my own little "ball of mud", adapting a workshop I had attended there with my own perspective. Under the theme of *Soul Care*, we explored the joy we carry, represented by paper flowers, and the sorrow we hold, represented by stones. It was a contemplative and personal session, with women sharing as much or as little as they wished with each other. I felt there was a real sense of prayer and comfort as we placed our stones at the foot of a cross at the end.

I also enjoyed our closing workshop, using materials thoughtfully prepared by our South Pacific sisters. As we brought the day to a close, Barbara's reflection came back to mind: we had each received something, and now had something to share.

Izzy Solomon



World Federation Day attendees at Stapleford Methodist Church

A message from John Hindson: As a mere man but senior steward at Stapleford Methodist I would like to say how helpful the day was yesterday when you came to use our premises. I hope that 'we fitted the bill' for your requirements. Personally I was interested to hear that there is an organisation called 'Wesley Men'.



'World Fellowship of Methodist and Uniting Church Men, known as Wesley Men is an affiliate of the World Methodist Council. We are formed to connect men in the Wesleyan tradition for Christian fellowship and witness through active works backed by words'.
From their website: wesleymen.org

Easter Offering 2026 raised £141, 188.88 for the World Mission Fund.
Total donations to the World Mission Fund Sep 25 to Aug 26 = **£580,191.68**
The money was used for a variety of grants eg: Jamaica, Cuba & Haiti, which received assistance following the devastation caused by Hurricane Melissa.

The working title for **Easter Offering 2027** is 'Just as I am, I come' with the theme of Disability. It will be available online from 25th January 2027.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAIR ON THE VISIT TO EXETER MWiB DISTRICT DAY



Theme: *In the Ordinary Sandals of the Unsung: Wit, Wisdom, and Holy Defiance*

Overview and Arrival

On a brisk and welcoming morning, I had the absolute privilege of traveling to Exeter for the Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) District Day. From the moment I arrived at for coffee, the atmosphere was charged with warmth, eager anticipation, and a deep, abiding sense of Christian fellowship.

We gathered roughly 30 women and friends from across the district, representing the rich grassroots fabric of Methodist life. The day was meticulously planned around our central theme, *In the Ordinary Sandals of the Unsung: Wit, Wisdom, and Holy Defiance*, drawing heavily on the imagery of everyday foot-lamps, dust-covered paths, and the quiet, persistent power of ordinary women whose faithful footprints shape the Kingdom of God.

Morning Programme: Stillness, Scripture, and the Call to Walk

Following a moving **Act of Remembrance** and warm opening welcomes, the morning session commenced at 11:15 AM with a grounding moment of stillness.

- **The Three Hallmarks Explored:**
    1. **Wit (The Holy Shield):** Looking at the midwives Shiphrah and Puah (Exodus 1:15–21), we explored how divine cleverness and gentle humour serve as a shield against despair, dismantling institutional pomp and keeping our joy intact.
    2. **Wisdom (The Map for the Margins):** Through the story of Abigail (1 Samuel 25), we celebrated the emotional intelligence and swift grace that steps into crisis to avert disaster and guide leaders toward peace.
    3. **Holy Defiance (The Engine of Change):** Inspired by Rizpah's vigil on the rock (2 Samuel 21) and the women at the tomb on Easter morning, we recognised that holy defiance is the stubborn,

grace-filled refusal to accept that things must remain broken just because "they've always been done that way."

To ensure everyone stayed refreshed, we built in a well-timed 5-minute comfort break midway through the morning teaching, which was met with profound appreciation.

Midday Fellowship: The Lunch Break

We broke for lunch, sitting informally among the tables, shared stories of local circuit life, and listened to the joys and challenges facing women on the ground in Exeter.

Afternoon Programme: "The Everyday Parishes Bureau" (Practical Workshop)

Recognising that post-lunch energy can flag in a warm room, the afternoon session was designed as an interactive, high-energy practical workshop titled **The Everyday Parishes Bureau: "Solving Holy Squabbles Since 1738."**

The room was divided into working branch tables to tackle classic, all-too-relatable church dilemmas using our three core tools (Wit, Wisdom, and Holy Defiance):

- **Scenario 1 (The Kitchen Counter Cold War):** Resolving the turf war between 34 years of floral bone china and a brand-new bean-to-cup espresso machine.
- **Scenario 2 (The Rogue Thermostat):** Balancing a tropical 24°C chapel requested by Mr. Henderson against choir members fanning themselves with hymn books.
- **Scenario 3 (The Noticeboard Monopoly):** Getting a modern community food pantry poster past Arthur and the laminated 1994 Harvest Festival notice.
- **Scenario 4 (The Meeting That Would Not Die):** Defusing Donald's 45-minute paint swatch presentation on the exact shade of beige for the downstairs toilet.

Each table appointed a "Chief Strategist" who delivered a brilliant pitch of their table's solution. The room erupted in joyful laughter and applause.

It proved brilliantly effective at waking up post-lunch drowsiness while demonstrating that holy work and holy humour go hand in hand.

Closing Worship and the Love Feast

We transitioned into a sacred, intimate closing worship space, beginning with *Be Still and Know*.

The spiritual peak of the afternoon was our participation in a traditional **Methodist Love Feast (Agape meal)** dating back to the 1730s. Using ordinary bread, plain water, and a shared spirit of radical hospitality, we gathered around our tables to speak informally of God's goodness in our daily lives—reminding us that Christ's presence does not require grand cathedrals, only open hearts.

After a final blessing and commission sent out into the Exeter air, the day concluded with afternoon refreshments before final departures.

Key Takeaways and Impressions

1. **Grassroots Vitality:** The women of the Exeter District continue to anchor local church life through prayer, practical service, and quiet resilience. They are the living embodiment of wisdom and holy defiance.
2. **The Power of Laughter:** Integrating humour into serious structural challenges during the afternoon workshop released deep institutional pressure and reminded attendees that joy is a spiritual weapon.

An inspiring, warm (despite the rain outside), spirit-filled day!

Olive Ruzvidzo. National Chair, Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB)



Secret Santa Action for Children would like to say a heartfelt thank you to Methodist Women in Britian for supporting us throughout 2026. Whether through your local MWIB or your church, you've helped us make a huge difference to vulnerable children and their families.

Christmas is meant to be joyful. It's a time for children to feel loved and make memories that last a lifetime. But for too many children across the UK, Christmas is anything but joyful. No presents. No festive food - often no food at all. But you could help change that. Become a Secret Santa for children like Freya*.



Freya used to come home from school and get straight into bed, fully dressed, just to keep warm. Her mum, Jess*, worked hard but still faced impossible choices between heating and eating. As Christmas approached, Freya stopped talking about the toy farm she hoped Santa might bring, convinced it simply wasn't possible.

When a freezing home left Freya ill with a chest infection, Action for Children stepped in. With energy and supermarket vouchers, a festive food hamper, a new coat, and a visit to Santa, the family finally felt some Christmas hope again. On Christmas morning, Freya discovered the toy farm she'd wished for and said, "Santa didn't forget me!"

Thanks to our amazing Secret Santas, children like Freya could stay warm, feel safe, and have a hot meal. Your support could help them feel the magic of Christmas. **Visit iamsanta.org.uk/Hope to donate today. Or call 0300 123 2112. Thank you!**

Karis Kolawole, Faith Partnerships Lead, Action for Children

**Freya's story is based on real examples of children we support.*

Dates for your Diary 2027/2028

26th June 2027 - Telford, Methodist Conference & online – Mary Bosanquet Lecture

18th September 2027 – The Triangle Bolton – Commissioning Service Philippa Hill

16th October 2027 – World Federation Day – venue tba

25th November 2027 – Butterfly Service – London - speaker Gillian Wylie

17th-19th March 2028 – Swanwick Conference

Methodist Women in Britain

Residential Conference 9th - 11th April 2027

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire DE55 1AT

Wellness

Considering together our spiritual, physical and emotional wellbeing through fellowship, worship, Bible study, a wide selection of workshops and with our keynote speaker Deacon Karen McBride, serving in the Leicester area.

We Arise and Shine as women of faith in our communities.

Cost for full board Friday evening to Sunday lunchtime

£210 per person

Booking opens Friday 6th November on our website

www.mwib.org.uk

A deposit of £100 now secures your place, balance due in February

Some support available in the form of Bursaries

Further information & Bursary form: swanwick.mwib26@gmail.com

Contact details for the MWiB Board of Trustees

Chair: Olive Ruzvidzo **Vice Chair**: Philippa Hill cochairs.mwib@gmail.com

Finance: Sheila Hall finance.mwib@gmail.com

Communications: Bronwen Braisdell communications.mwib@gmail.com

Safeguarding & Media: Ruth Dawson media.mwib@gmail.com

Resources & Events: Caroline Fillery resources.mwib@gmail.com

Governance & Admin: Gillian Pengelly governance.mwib@gmail.com

WFMUCW Area V P: Helen Cunningham wfmucw.helen@neast.org.uk

HKMS: Izzy Solomon mwib.hkms@gmail.com