

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

This letter will be published just after Methodist Conference 2017 in Birmingham, but I am writing it at the beginning of June and looking back over my past two years as President of MWiB. Since my own commissioning at Southport in June 2015 I have spoken at MWiB events in 22 districts across the Connexion and have relished the opportunity to get to know so many of you and to hear some of your stories. By the time you read this, Sandra will have been commissioned as our new President, and I shall look forward to supporting her in that role, as I become Vice President again.



When I left my teaching role in July 2014 I could have never envisaged the adventures and the challenges which I would encounter in this role. Very early in my time as Vice President, Linda Crossley asked if I would join the Heritage and Archives task group. I replied that history was not really my 'thing', but yes, I would pick up the challenge of working towards the MWiB exhibition at Epworth, which was opened just over a year ago. Do try to go and see it this year if you have not yet had the opportunity (details on the back page).

I have especially enjoyed my visits to the United Methodist Church in Germany. I have been invited in July to join Bishop Rosemarie Wenner and others from Denmark and Sweden to represent European

Methodism at the stand of the Community of Protestant Churches in a World Exhibition in Wittenberg, celebrating 500 years since the Reformation. We were delighted to have Bishop Rosemarie as our speaker at the MWiB Residential Weekend at Swanwick at the end of March and to hear of the work of the church in Germany with refugees and asylum seekers.

A different kind of highlight was my visit to Greece last year with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. I continue to share stories of my meetings with refugees there, most recently at the Methodists for World Mission Conference, which Carolyn reports on elsewhere in this newsletter. I will also be sharing those stories with an Anglican gathering at the home of the Bishop of Crediton, Dame Sarah Mullally, in June. Please continue to look out for ways to support displaced people, either locally or through recognised charities. I have been particularly pleased that so many of you have supported *All We Can* in your fund raising and your giving throughout the past year.

I have also been privileged this year to visit Revd Barbara Glasson and the team at Touchstone Bradford, described as a 'listening community' with the vision of making safe places of hospitality where people who are radically different can listen to and with each other. I am keen that we find ways of supporting their work amongst women in Britain's most Muslim city, and that we continue to look for opportunities to be good listeners in our own communities.

I am so glad that God led me to this opportunity to serve with Methodist Women in this role, and grateful for your friendship and love as you have welcomed me into your homes and your fellowships around the Connexion. I look forward to the coming Connexional year, especially to a visit to the Synod of the Church of North India in Delhi in the autumn.

With love and every blessing

Anne



Vice President's Visit to Bolivia

Writing this letter is one of the many tasks I have now embraced as the new President of MWiB. Over the last twelve months Anne has gently eased me into the role and I know that I will continue to have her support, along with that of our executive team during my term of office. I will be sharing a little more about myself in the President's blog on the MWiB website over the next few weeks, but now I'm going to share a few snippets about my official overseas visit to Bolivia, which took place in April and was arranged by the World Church Office.

Chris Thompson, Forum Representative for the Chester & Stoke on Trent District, and I flew via Lima to La Paz, the city which was to be our base for the duration of our visit. We received a typically, warm Bolivian welcome from the leaders of FEFEME (Bolivian equivalent of MWiB), Bishop Modesto Mamani, head of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia (IEMB) and his team.



After a day's rest and the opportunity to acclimatise to the altitude we travelled to several Districts in the Altiplano region joining in Easter services and celebrations. Worship was sincere and enthusiastic. Hymns, accompanied by brass band or keyboard, compensated in volume any lack in musicality. Enthusiastic dancing followed – quite a challenge in an atmosphere low in oxygen!

The Altiplano region of Bolivia is a vast agricultural plain nestling in the Andes. Most of the population are indigenous, Aymaran or Qechuan, farmers who rely totally upon their crops, sheep or cattle for their daily survival. Climate change, resulting in the longest drought in living memory has severely affected this year's crops but, despite this, communities came together from surrounding villages, often walking long distances bringing food to share. Desperately poor in a material sense they are rich in fellowship and hospitality. Many planned to sleep on the church floor overnight before returning to their villages the following day.



Rising at 5am on Easter Sunday morning, Chris and I joined members of the non-conformist churches in their Resurrection March through La Paz. Celebration worship followed with a congregation of well over a thousand people.

In the next few days Chris and I, along with Augustina, Isabella and Nieve, the FEFEME leaders, returned to the Altiplano region to visit two more Districts. This time we shared specifically with women's groups. Again many arrived on foot carrying food to share. During worship, Chris shared a Bible study based on Ruth and I spoke about 'Leadership, Susanna Wesley Style', previously requested by the women.

New Equality laws in Bolivia are encouraging women to 'find their voice'. Keen to show us their beautiful handmade crafts, fresh herbs and vegetables they proudly described how they could now meet together in safety, join in fellowship, to teach, learn and, if necessary find safe refuge and overnight lodging.

Two centres for women have been established in the Altiplano region and FEFEME are hoping to open another, currently partly constructed centre 'Tabita House' in El Alto, a rapidly expanding city on the outskirts of La Paz. Unfortunately the original source of funding for this building has ceased leaving them with a building without a roof!

Our final two days were spent in La Paz where we participated in the National FEFEME conference. We later discovered that the date of their conference had been changed to coincide with our visit! In the evening of the first day I found myself elected to the panel of judges for a 'Strictly Come Dancing Bolivian style' competition!

Well, I hope these snippets of information have given you a little taste of Bolivia. I shall enjoy sharing more stories as I travel around the Connexion – and I may even be persuaded to show off my new hat!

Love and blessings

Sandra



EXECUTIVE MEETINGS: 5th September and 22nd November 2017

FORUM MEETINGS: 30th September–1st October 2017 and 17th–18th February 2018

If you have any issues to raise or questions to ask, please speak to your Forum Rep.

METHODIST CONFERENCE FRINGE EVENT—23rd June 2017

More than 150 people, both Conference delegates and visitors, came together to share worship and fellowship at our Fringe Event at the Methodist Conference in Birmingham last week. The event took place in the context of worship, and included a review of recent MWiB activities, the announcement of winners of the 2017 writing competition, and the commissioning of Sandra Goodwin as MWiB President.



Pictured left is Revd Jenny Pathmarajah, who beautifully read aloud the two prize-winning entries of the writing competition, this year on the theme of *Stepping Out*. The first prize of £150 was presented to Margaret Doughty, a retired presbyter from the Lincolnshire District, for her entry 'Stepping Out: Reflections of a Circle Dancer', and last year's winner, Sue Whalley from the Leeds District, was this year's runner up, receiving a prize of £50 for her reflection on Matthew 14:22-23 entitled 'Two Seas, Two Scenes'. The two winning and five commended entries will appear on the MWiB website soon.

As Sandra was commissioned and we pledged to work with her and pray for her in her new role, Anne Browse, the outgoing President, handed over the President's badge of office (*pictured right*), and presented Sandra with a voucher to buy a book of her choosing that she could use as she travels around the Connexion visiting groups and speaking about her theme of 'Water' and her recent visit to Bolivia (see a taster of this on page 2).



Taking Sandra's theme of 'water', Revd Peter Barber (Chair of the Chester and Stoke District) spoke on Ezekiel's vision of the water flowing out from the temple, beginning as a trickle, and growing to become a river deep and wide (Ezekiel 47:1-12). He reminded us that much of God's word is spoken to a people in a state of exile, disappointment and fear—an observation particularly pertinent in a world where things are not as they should be, and among people in exile, people filled with disappointment, people living in fear. Peter noted particularly three things from Ezekiel's vision:

- the waters of healing and wholeness come *from* the temple, *from* the presence of God among God's people;
- it doesn't begin with a great flood, but with little trickles, which join together to become a great river;
- when the river meets stagnant places, then rather than the stagnant water contaminating the fresh, and contrary to nature, instead it refreshes them and brings abundant life.

Peter went on to say that MWiB is known to be a movement engaged in contradicting the normal, confounding expectations, and creating life in dead places, through confidence in the transforming power of God. "Spontaneous flash floods" of love are sometimes needed, as in the recent aftermath of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, but just as effective are the ongoing 'trickles' of compassion for a broken world that bring fruit and life and healing, and Peter encouraged us: "Don't despise the trickles!"

[Report: Jude Simms; photo: Carolyn Lawrence]

Learning to Lead

With pilgrimage on the rise in both sacred and secular contexts, Methodist Women in Britain had the vision to resource a short training event for potential pilgrimage leaders. The group met in early May at Cliff College—an ideal venue with its blend of hospitality, spirituality and beautiful surroundings. The event was led by Jill Baker, a pilgrimage leader and currently Vice-President Designate of the Methodist Conference, and Gillian Womersley, MWiB's finance officer.

Sessions included a brief history of Christian pilgrimage, a bible study on the journey to (and from) Emmaus, on-the-ground practice, and much sharing of ideas and experience. Revd Dr Stephen Skuce, interim principal of the College, inspired the group with insights into John Wesley's understanding of whole-life-pilgrimage and the spirituality of travel. Sarah Friswell, chair of the Methodist Heritage Committee and, professionally, involved in both tourism and pilgrimage for all her working life, shared some valuable insights into the differences and similarities between the two.

The sixteen participants had come from all directions and were sent out in all directions on a wonderfully sunny afternoon to explore the grounds of Cliff College and prepare mini-pilgrimages. Like the disciples in the gospels they came back rejoicing, and with lots of great ideas. Ian White, lecturer in Vocational Ministry at the college (amongst other roles) had shared his knowledge of the grounds to help the pilgrims prepare: a fascinating study. Cliff College has so much to offer in this context—labyrinth, cross, open views and secluded corners; hopefully this can be further developed.

After 48 hours together the group dispersed to take their new understandings around the Connexion; to invite others to come and share their exploratory journeys, to tread pilgrim paths old and new and, hopefully, to discover more and more of the blessings, challenges, missional opportunities and spaces for encounter which pilgrimage offers to us all, and to the church.

[Jill Baker, May 2017]

Methodists for World Mission Conference 2nd–4th June 2017

This year's theme was 'Moving People, Moving Stories', focussing on the current situation with refugees and migrants around the world. Anne Browse and I attended on behalf of MWiB, along with around 110 delegates staying over the weekend, with some extra day visitors on the Saturday, representing churches from across the connexion and the world. This included some of the World Church Relationships team, returned mission partners, and various people invited to speak on the theme. We met two lovely ladies (Joan and Moira, right) attending on behalf of Methodist Women in Ireland, sharing some wonderful times of fellowship and laughter with them, and also had chance to catch up with Alison Judd in between some of her travels.



Beth Leeming and Rita Bennett led a creative and interesting programme for the children in attendance, and in the final session they shared with us some of what they had been doing as they retold using shadow puppets the story of Mary, Joseph and Jesus becoming refugees in Egypt.

On the Saturday and Sunday mornings we took part in a challenging Bible study led by Rev Dr Inderjit Bhogal, who led us via recorded video, on the theme of 'Sanctuary.' We learned something of his own story of migration and of the work of the 'City of Sanctuary' movement, and discussed various questions in small groups. We were encouraged to think of how we can give sanctuary first of all to God by inviting him into our lives, then some practical ideas on how we can offer sanctuary as individuals and as churches, and show hospitality to the stranger and the visitor among us.



We heard from people working with refugees and migrants and heard some harrowing and moving stories from Greece, Italy, Syria, Mexico and Palestine. We were also privileged to hear stories from a lovely group of young people from the Karen Community in Myanmar, pictured left, who are now living in Sheffield, and they shared some of their songs and dancing during the Saturday evening. Anne and I had a go at the dancing but we're not sure we'll make their dance troupe! A group from Zimbabwe also took part during the Saturday evening and led us in some exuberant and joyful singing.

During the Saturday afternoon there were about eight workshops on offer, two of them led by Anne and myself. Anne shared stories of her experiences in Germany and Greece and I based mine on a workshop I had attended in Houston on Biblical hospitality, which generated some lively and interesting discussion. Other workshops were led by Youth President Tim Annan, sharing stories of his trip to Mexico, Laura Cook from All We Can speaking about forced migration in the Middle East and Africa, Katy Brookes-Duncan speaking about the charity she has helped to establish called 'People Not Borders' working with refugees in Greece, and a group from the Living Stones of the Holy Land speaking about some of the current issues in Syria and Palestine. As part of that we heard a moving story from a man who was born in one of the Palestinian refugee camps, which brought a personal touch to the workshop.

There were several stalls with information and products from various organisations and charities and a temptation to buy a variety of wonderful things. I came home with several new books and a Nepalese Yak blanket for a family member's birthday!

The conference closed on the Sunday with a service of Holy Communion and an exhortation to make sure that we reflect on what we have learned and seek God for a way in which we can help show the love of Jesus to displaced people in our communities, our nation and across the world.

Aside from all the speakers and activities, I found it a wonderful opportunity to meet with others who share a global view of the church and to fellowship with brothers and sisters from around the world and learn more of their lives.

Next year's MWM weekend will be on the theme of 'Africa – Gospel and Culture', which promises to be full of exciting stories and worship. It will be held at Swanwick from 1st–3rd June 2018, so if you haven't been to one of these conferences before, I would encourage you to come along and experience it along with me next year.

For more information about MWM check out www.mwm.org.uk

[Carolyn Lawrence, June 2017]



Exciting volunteer opportunities!

We will soon be inviting applications for the roles of
MWiB President 2019–2021 and Finance Officer 2018–2023

MWiB President: a four year commitment beginning in June 2018 (one year as Vice-President, two years as President, and a further year as Vice-President).

Finance Officer: a five year commitment beginning in September 2018.

Full role descriptions and application forms will be available from **1st September 2017**
on the website: www.mwib.org.uk or by email: admin@mwib.org.uk or by telephone: 0300 030 9873

Meet a Mission Partner

Our Woman in Papua New Guinea

Since 2013 Wande Ebofin has worked as an Education Officer in a high school, a teacher training college and a Theological college run by the United Church in the East New Britain province of Papua New Guinea.

Wande outlines a typical week:

Sunday – attend church service at Ligga. Afternoon and evening preparing lessons for the week.

Monday and Tuesday – drive to Manggai secondary school (35 minutes from Ligga) to teach Grade 12 and 11 Mathematics and IT respectively. Sometimes attend staff meetings.

Wednesday – teach English as a Second Language to First Year Pastors' College students (adult learning). One hour in the evening is a mini maths club teaching neighbours in primary school.

Thursday – same as Monday. In addition, meet with the newly formed editorial board (students) to assist in producing termly newsletter. Every other Thursday evening, meet with locals at my place to pray for issues around us.

Fridays – working with the United Church regional office planning in-service training, and use the day to catch up on admin work, writing assessments and marking. Some evenings, meet up with other expat volunteers for social.

Saturdays – go to the very early morning market for vegetables and seafood, then to the supermarket for groceries. Laundry and cleaning house day.

God is good. He enables and grants me favour to do the work in building His kingdom. Pray for the PNG general elections taking place this July 2017, that the right people to move the country forward will be selected. Pray for the young people that there will be strong role models to guide them to be useful.



Students enjoying maths activities at Manggai Secondary School



Wande at Rarongo graduation – Nov 2016

Thanks for your prayer support. You can read details on my work here on my blogsite at: pngtips2.wordpress.com

Wande



Methodist relief and development

Inspire your church to
'Chirp for Joy'
at God's creation, and
make a difference through
All We Can's Harvest Appeal!



Resources include:
worship materials
a talk and a sermon
interactive activities
an unforgettable film
and more!

Available to download:
www.allwecan.org.uk/harvest

Empowerment Gifts 2017

Each year MWiB donates £10,000 to projects which support work with women overseas. Suggestions for recipients of this year's Empowerment Gifts are welcomed via Forum members, and up to four suggestions will be brought to the Forum meeting in the autumn for approval.

The deadline for applications is 31st July 2017

Further information and application forms can be downloaded from the Finance section of our website: www.mwib.org.uk



Annual Review 2015—2016

If you'd like a copy of our Annual Review (or several copies to distribute in your Circuit) please email:

communications@mwib.org.uk

Forthcoming Events



World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women

World Federation Day 2018



Gender Equality in the 21st Century

Saturday 28th October 2017
10.00am–4.00pm

Side Door Methodist Church, Lacey Road,
Grimsby, Lincolnshire DN34 5BH

Worship, Bible study, keynote presentation,
and information, activities, and resources on
different aspects of gender equality.

Refreshments and hot lunch provided.
Suggested donation £10 per person.

Booking form available to download from:
www.mwib.org.uk
or email: communications@mwib.org.uk
or telephone: 0300 030 9873

Joint Area Seminar

Thursday 7th–Sunday 10th June 2018
at the Clayton Hotel, Belfast.

Save the date! More details to follow.



Swanwick 2018 Residential Weekend

Friday 20th—Sunday 22nd April

Keynote speaker Rachel Lampard (Joint Public Issues
Team and Vice President of Conference 2016-17)

Look out for further information and booking forms,
available 1st November 2017

Transforming the World from the Kitchen?

The story of women working together
in British Methodism

Exhibition open March—October 2017

Epworth Old Rectory, 1 Rectory Street,
Epworth, North Lincolnshire DN9 1HX



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