



The Tree of Life

October - December 2015 | Edition # 4 WORLD FEDERATION OF METHODIST AND UNITING CHURCH WOMEN



World Federation of Methodist & Uniting Church Women
13th World Assembly 2016
Houston, Texas, USA

Theme: Chosen People: Called to proclaim

1 Peter 2: 9 & 10. (based on the Good News translation)

Dates: Monday 29th August - 3rd September 2016, Houston, Texas, USA.

Get World Assembly update every Tuesday on Federation Web site: wfmucw.org &

Weaving Together a **Community in Christ** European Areas: Britain and Ireland; Europe Continental.



- 1. Weaving Together a Community in Christ1
- Joint WTP & Seminar1, 3 & 4
- 2. Editorial2
- 3. President's Pen2
- 4. World Federation Day 20155
- Portuguese Women's Federation5
- 5. Wings of Hope6
- The Pop Up Monastery Experience6
- 6. 'Transforming the world from the kitchen'7
- 7. Exploring the Psalms.....8

Few of those attending the Joint European Area Seminar in Italy in 2014 would have believed that the themes of migrancy and trafficking addressed by our keynote speakers would have become so hugely relevant just a year later.

Now in our daily media, we see disturbing images and hear shocking accounts of incredible courage and appalling treatment of the thousands fleeing their homelands in Africa and the Middle East in search of safety in Europe. The stories of welcome and provision by the few are outnumbered by those of rejection, refusal and loss of life.

The situation could unite us across borders as we realise this is a global, not just a European, problem of disastrous proportions. It also frustrates those of us who believe our governments are failing to respond to such widespread need with basic Christian humanity.

A Prayer: Lord help us to step forward together in hope, welcome the stranger and discover we have angels in our midst. Amen (See Hebrews 13:2)

Alison Judd (Area President, Europe: Britain and Ireland)



Margarita
President



Alice
Vice President



Alison
President



Maureen
Vice President

Forward together...



...in Hope

Joint WTP & Seminar

After much planning and preparation, the highlight of the summer months of 2014 was the 9th Joint Area Seminar held in Hotel Selene Pomezia, South West of Rome from 5-9th June with the theme '**Forward together in Hope**'. It was attended by 170+ delegates from 23 countries including

16 from Ireland and about 80 from Britain.

The Weaving Together Programme was hosted by the World Officers on the preceding two days. We all found it was a very special time of learning

about the organisation and sharing with Area Officers and Unit delegates from Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB), Methodist Women in Ireland (MWI) and Europe: Continental. Seventeen European countries were represented altogether including one young woman from Algeria.



World President, Ann Connan posed the question, 'What's in your basket?' and proceeded to give out woolly hats, (knit by her congregation), for us to pass on to someone in need.

Contd on.....page 3





God Gave the Song

A great amount of water has flown under the bridge since I last interacted with the WFM&UCW in any way. It was Dorothy Kumar's insistence to share my thoughts in the columns of "The Tree of Life" that forced me to surface. - to my own joy, and I hope, that of my World Federation friends' and sisters' too.

I remember the fear and trepidation with which I went to the then "West Asia' WTP & Area Seminar in Lahore, Pakistan January 2000, as Unit President, All India WSCS; then it was with a sense of excitement and anticipation to the World Assembly at Loughborough, England in 2002. The last event I participated in was the Weaving Together Programme of the South Asia Area in Colombo, Sri Lanka 2004, as outgoing Vice President of our Area.

As I reminisce, a song of the 70's sung by

the Bill Gaither Band, "God gave a Song", comes to my mind. Through the ups and downs of life over these years, it has been amply clear to me that this song the Father Himself has given will never cease - through time and then into Eternity. For I'll be singing for my Lord and Saviour, singly and collectively, in thanks and adoring praise to the Great I AM, the Alpha and the Omega, The King of kings and The Lord of lords, the very present help in time of trouble, the Friend who sticks closer than a brother.

In Exodus 15, we read of how God Himself gave Moses a Song. He instructed him to write it down and teach it to the Israelites. In Revelation 15:3-4 the song being sung is the "song of Moses and of the Lamb". The song the angels sang that first Christmas was undoubtedly given by God, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests." (Luke 2:14, NIV).

It is God Himself who gives to His own songs in the night. Great hymn stories of saints like Horatio Spafford who wrote the popular hymn, "It is well with my soul", following the death of his four daughters in 1873. The all time great, "Precious

Lord, take my hand", penned by Thomas Andrew Dorsey in 1932, after the death of his young wife, both bear out this fact.

October 26, 1939 is a historical moment in the life of the World Federation. These numbers are special to us as a family as well. Permit me to add a personal detail. 26th October happens to be my birthday; and the year 1939 is Bishop S R Thomas - my husband's year of birth! Now back to my reference of historical moment in the life of the World Federation. The motto and song "To know Christ, and make Him known" - is still ringing loud and clear, proclaiming Christ, the Saviour of the world - for whom to know is life eternal. I



believe the song will go on, till it heralds His return. As my song puts it "But since I/we have found the source of music, I/we just can't help it; God gave the song!"

▶ **Shirley Mildred Thomas**
Unit President AIWSCS:
South Asia Area: 1998- 2002:
Vice President:
South Asia Area: 2001-2006



Hasn't life been full of awful events lately?

On a national and international level, on land, in the air, in cities and in rural places. And for many in a personal way, too.

I've struggled personally over the Assembly arrangements as an Agreement the World Methodist Council wants the Federation to sign, makes it impossible for the obligations of our Constitution to be fulfilled. I've made myself unpopular as I've fought for our needs to be recognised. And I hate confrontation! If anything difficult involves me, I generally end up in tears!

My father was a pacifist. I don't remember him as I was 2 when he was killed in a road accident, but I do know

that he would not sign up during the Second World War until 1942 after Australia was bombed by the Japanese in Darwin.

Twenty years ago our family hosted a Japanese student from our local High Schools's sister school in Tokyo. Rowena, our youngest was learning Japanese and the following year she went to stay with Mariko's family. During that first visit Mariko was very shy and wouldn't attempt anything in English until she'd checked it out in her little book! Now, after 7 visits to Australia and our girls both visiting Japan again, she is our "daughter" and even understands John's terrible "dad" jokes!

Rowena loved Mariko's grandfather who had learnt English from the BBC broadcasts during the War.

I often commented how I loved to see these two girls together when their grandfathers had been on opposite sides during those war years.

Mariko came to Melbourne to be Rowena's bridesmaid. Now she is being married on November 28th.

She waited to set the date to be sure much travelling Aussie Mum could come.

So we are going - John, Ann, Rowena and 3 month old Elijah. Mariko asked if she could wear Rowena's wedding dress, so it was sent over some weeks ago.

As we enter the Advent season and prepare for the birth of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, I find this personal part of our family's life to be very relevant. Mariko's family is Buddhist but she attended church with us every week she lived with us. Surely this is an example of the peace which Christ brought to the world, the peace which all people in the world desperately need now. This peace includes a willingness to break down barriers, respect differences, recognise our similarities, and hope for Shalom for all.



This is my prayer for you, your family, your friends, your community this Christmas Season.

▶ **Ann**

Contd from..... page 1 **Joint WTP & Seminar**

We were encouraged to share from our basket, stories of hope. We heard how Norwegian Methodist Women help foreign students and immigrants to make friends and practice their language skills at a craft and chat club. A young Polish girl told of her passionate struggle to be accepted for ministry. She is not giving up! Another French lady has been inspired to encourage the women of her unit to become actively involved in WF.

Wearing the Thursdays in Black tee shirts and seated in the warm morning



sunshine with the birdsong in the background, the WTP concluded with a most meaningful service of Holy Communion.

When all the seminar delegates finally arrived on the Thursday evening we were seated at dinner tables identified by different female biblical characters. This became the sharing group to which we belonged for the seminar. It was a useful way of getting to know one another discussing issues.

Diacona Alessandra Trotta, President of the Methodist Church in Italy, welcomed everyone in her opening address. She commented on the continent of Europe, noting that today it is going through a serious crisis of identity, politically, morally and economically, a time of spiritual unease and sterility. She called us to 'live as women of hope', referring to Abraham and Sarah's journey from a place of sterility, accepting God's promise of fertility and trusting him to bring new life, a new future and a new community. The evening ended with a wonderful concert from the Korean Methodist Choir in Rome.

'Together in Diversity' was the theme for the first full day of the seminar. In her bible study on the story of Ruth, Deaconess Alessandra brought new insight from her experience of work with immigration and integration in the Palermo Mission.

Following that, the Keynote speaker, Rev Gabriella Lio, made us think about how we

feel as immigrants and how being church together is much more than 'being welcoming', it is about absorbing the rich and wonderful traditions of others making us a more vibrant and relevant church. We shared together in small groups of seven and were able to explore further individual experiences despite the language barriers, managing to get to know and understand one another better in the process. The day continued with breaks to eat, to go out into the warm sunshine or browse at the market place. Alternatively we could spend time at Prayer Stations set up in quiet spaces to focus on the Millennium Development Goals. In the evening we were entertained to an Italian film on the history of the Waldensian Church, telling their story of hope and survival from persecution to acceptance within Italy today.

We were led in an outstanding message of 'Hope in the Wilderness' in the bible study next day by Jill Baker from MWiB. Speaking on Miriam she helped to identify Miriam as 5 women: bright girl, joyful woman, jealous sister, missing person, and ultimately as 'a sign of hope', a sign of God's love for his people. We can identify ourselves in some of the pictures of Miriam and can draw comfort from the sign of hope too.



The second keynote speaker Elise Lindqvist, with her interpreter, brought what was the most dramatic insight into her experience as an abused child, teenage prostitute and adult drug addict, enlightening us to the very real issue of sex trafficking in her native Sweden. This 78 year old behaves with the energy and enthusiasm of the 19 year old she claims to be! Nineteen years ago when she discovered about forgiveness for herself, she was washed clean in the Holy Spirit when she learned to forgive others. Since then she has become a 'mummy' in the red light district, bringing the love and compassionate heart of Jesus to the girls, as she hugs them, prays with them and distributes hot food, drink and clothing each week.

Later we could choose to attend one of

seven workshops all exploring the theme of hope. For example, Charlotte Maye, MWI President led 'Hope for children in Education' Linda Crossley, MWiB President led 'Hope for Dalit people' and the three Helen Kim Scholars led one on 'Hope for younger women'. Other workshops focused on mission, the Roma people, literacy, and the spirituality of older women. After refreshments it was time to indulge in a variety of creative activities, liturgical dance, drama, singing, celtic designs or making prayer bracelets. More cultural fun ensued in the evening with Bulgarian dancers, Italian drama, Zimbabwean singing & dancing and Irish gals gave their rendering of 'Sweet Molly Malone!' After consuming a variety of sweet treats it was evening prayer and time for bed!

The highlight of the seminar for many was the invitation to worship in one of the Methodist and Waldensian Churches in Rome on Pentecost Sunday. The service in Chiesa Valdese - Piazza Cavour included confirmation and Holy Communion which was distributed as we all formed a circle around the church. Holding hands and sharing the peace together was memorable as was the hospitality at lunch served afterwards. We were treated to an impromptu concert while others took up the offer of a guided tour to the Vatican. All too soon we were meeting with our new sisters for the last evening meal and closing worship celebration.

Looking back we appreciate more deeply now, both the diversity and oneness we have within the sisterhood of the WFM&UCW. United in the love of Jesus we go forward with renewed hope and commitment to support one another, praying and working more passionately for justice particularly for women. However it is the fun, the stories and the friendships which will live long in our memories.

As one of the British Unit said, *'You leave such a conference being far more knowledgeable than you went; you feel more passionate about justice in general and justice for women in particular. Those people and places that you abstractly think about and pray for have become real, flesh and blood, part of your story too.'*

Contd on.....page 4

Contd from..... page 3 Joint WTP & Seminar



Irish Unit



Margarita & Nina



British Area Network Umbrella



The Tree of Life Prayer Tree

Continuing to 'Walk together in hope'

Since the joint Area Seminar, relationships have been strengthened even further between and within our two Areas. MWiB is actively encouraging links and visits with women in Bulgaria, Germany and other parts of Europe. MWiB's new Unit President Anne Browse had a very successful visit to Germany in June this year and we aim to build on this new partnership with the United Methodist women of that country. Three women from Ireland attended the annual MWiB weekend in April 2015 and Alison made a return visit to Ireland for the installation of their new Unit President, Linda McGuffin. Meanwhile, Margarita was able to attend the Women in Ireland Conference, held in September 2014 and to meet with women from around Europe at the European Methodist

Council meeting and the European Methodist Historical Conference in Ruse, Bulgaria. The theme of the European Historical Conference was "Women in Mission: Who Evangelized Europe". The theme choice shows the great respect and appreciation bestowed on women's contribution to the growth of the Methodist Churches in Europe. Women's groups within the Europe Continental Area form partnerships and share ideas, stories and resources, despite language diversity.

Women across the two Areas continue to work hard to bring hope to many: sanitary facilities and clean water for villagers in Sri Lanka, training and support for women and girls in North India,

leadership training and resources for women and girls across Europe, encouragement and practical support for churches in Britain to be 'Dementia friendly'.

We are particularly blessed by our Helen Kim Memorial Scholars in the two European Areas. Each of them has contributed greatly to the life of their Unit and Area and their friendship has grown since they first met in Johannesburg. We were all delighted to congratulate Rachel Collins (nee Coates) of MWiB on her marriage earlier this year.

Check out the websites for more information about our activities in the Europe: Britain and Ireland Area. www.mwib.org.uk and www.irishmethodist.org/mwi

You can find us on Facebook too!

Alison Judd, President
Maureen Young, Vice-President
Europe: Britain and Ireland Area.

Margarita Todorova, President
Alice Margareta Cooper, Vice-President
Europe: Continental Area.

Two Samples of the Prayers, based on Matthew 28:18-20.



Leader: Lord Jesus, you told your disciples that all authority had been given to you in heaven and on earth.

All: Thank you for your promise that you will be with us always.

Leader: You commanded us to go and make disciples of all nations.

All: Thank you for your promise that you will be with us always.

Leader: We are called to win souls in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All: Thank you for your promise that you will be with us always.

Leader: We will teach them as you have taught us.

All: Thank you for your promise that you will be with us always, even unto the end of the world. Amen

Intercessions on MDGs - for more than 1 voice.

Leader: Lord, you call us to make disciples.

Response: We thank you that you are with us always, even to the end of the age.

MDG 1: In a world of greed and materialism, where a few enjoy great affluence, while many struggle: teach us to share our resources and to work to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

Response: We thank you that you are with us always, even to the end of the age.

MDG 2: In a world where many children are deprived of adequate education enabling them to be self-supporting: where young girls are thought not worthy of receiving education: help us to support those working to bring about change.

Contd on.....page 8

World Federation Day 2015

On 24 October, 2015 Methodist Women in Britain (MwiB) celebrated 76 years of the World Federation, 70 years since the formation of the United Nations, 15 years of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the launch of the new Global Goals for Sustainable development. Nearly 100 women gathered in a Methodist Church in Northampton to hear how much had been achieved in relation to the MDGs and to gain inspiration to continue the work using the new Global Goals. During the day, each person visited eight MDG 'stations' gaining information from partner organisations like Christian Aid, All We Can (Methodist Relief and Development organisation), Christians Aware, Traidcraft, Nigeria Health Care Project and Children Unite (who support child domestic workers). One 'station' encouraged us to continue to work for MDG 7 by reducing our carbon footprint while another elaborated on our special partnership with the Church of North India to provide secure training opportunities for Dalit women and girls.

The event began and ended in prayer and worship, each person being encouraged to

commit to a particular Global Goal in the months ahead.

We concluded with those wonderful words from Ephesians 3: 20-21

Now to him who is able through the power which is at work among us to do immeasurably more than all we ask or conceive, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus from generation to generation for evermore! Amen.



More about the activities of MwiB can be found on our website - www.mwib.org.uk

▶ **Alison Judd**
President, Europe: Britain and Ireland



Portuguese Women's Federation

The Portuguese Federation of Methodist Women [FMM], first organized in 1980, gave the existing groups the opportunity to keep on with their work in a more active way. From 1997 the Executive of the FMM is composed by 4 coordinators who lead the 4 areas: Administration and Network; Culture and Training; Spirituality and Finance, and 8 assessors. In 2015 we integrated into the Executive 3 young women aged between 30 and 40 who brought renovation of activities and ideas.

The local groups are engaged in *empowering women; supporting elderly women; developing activities with children and teens.*

Nowadays, as a result of the *network with other women organizations*, the FMM opens new doors looking outwards to serve those around in need in a society where the struggle to live is harder and harder. The FMM aim is "To know Christ and make him known as well to Love and to serve" and it wants to be involved in making better days for many people from our church but also outside it.

Since 1996 we prepare projects to raise money to carry out our activities. We have helped and keep on helping children, women through academic education, elderly people. With the support of the UMC Women organization the FMM helps financially young women in their school and university activities. This sponsoring project started in 2000 and serves both local women and African women who live in Portugal

(17 young women have been helped, of whom 9 have graduated). All of them are involved in church activities: three of them working in the elderly centre in Valdozende, one finishing her theological studies and just ordained as a pastor.

For 2014/2015 school year the FMM has offered scholarships to 9 young women. Last year we gave 14 scholarships to young women and men, though this work is essentially devoted to women. Social witness of the Church has been extended to children, youth and elderly people.

Nowadays we are challenged to develop smaller projects, reflecting upon great social questions. We have been engaged in *promoting various activities for children/teenagers, youth and elderly* both from the churches and the surrounding communities:

A week holiday for elderly women is prepared yearly as from 1998, giving special attention to women in need, but being open to any women who wants to participate according to their different financial capacities. This week holiday includes spiritual activity, handwork and visits to local museums and leisure moments on the beach. The number of participants has increased over the years and lately, elderly men have requested permission to attend this camp. In every Camp we have between 35 to 42 people.

A Camp group



A Women group in the Camp doing handicraft to raise money for this activity



A Spiritual Weekend is a time of sharing the Love of God and our Christian love to many who want to be with us. Last year about 30 women participated in this weekend, working in the theme "From Hope to Action-Women from the Bible". The weekend closed with Holy Communion, presided by the Bishop.



Lessons learned, challenges we face

The *intergenerational project* built up ties that get more and more strong; Family is standing as a value for the younger generations. The influence has been felt in the communities as well as in the families making us grow as Christians.

▶ **Ana Paula Magalhaes**

Wings of Hope [Methodist Women in Ireland support Women in Sri Lanka]

The Ireland Unit of WFM&UCW have been partnering with 'Wings of Hope Lanka', a non-profit organisation which seeks to support women and children, living and working on a tea plantation in the village of Kuodaya, in the Hatton district of Sri Lanka. There is no government funding and families are among the poorest, often rejected by society. There is little work for men so women are the bread winners, working long hours in the fields for low wages. They can seldom afford to buy the uniforms, shoes or books required for school and living in poor sanitary conditions, the children often suffer ridicule because they are not clean. Occasionally boys may be sent to boarding school in bigger towns but among girls and women, literacy rates are especially low. Many marry early, suffer abuse or are abandoned by their husbands.

Most homes are one roomed shared by all the family, and with no running water or proper sanitation, disease is common. Water has had to be carried from a communal tap 2 Km away, a heavy chore for women and especially little girls.



Adrian, the Estate owner, the Head of the village and others with the materials

In 2014 we embarked on a three part project for community and spiritual development delivered by 'Wings of Hope' through Rebecca Alexander, a young Methodist woman, who works with the local church and in partnership with the Christian Medical centre in Colombo.

Initially we have helped the **Water Tank and Sanitation Project** with the purchase

of two water storage tanks, a pump and pipe lines. Using voluntary labour and the assistance of many excited children,



The children who did all the small errands for the older folk!

fresh clean water is now available from a tap in the village. In addition toilets and washing facilities are being built in the homes of the neediest. Already there has been much rejoicing and praising God at a dedication service conducted by the local pastor.



First Water from Tap

The other parts of the project are child focused and community based so fund raising continues for

- **An Education Programme for both Single Mums and their Children:** To deliver Basic Health and Hygiene, Nutrition, First Aid, Prevention of Disease, Child Protection, Abuse Awareness; supply of tuition fees, school uniforms, shoes and books for the neediest single mums; Health Checks and follow up support.

- **Mother and Baby Programme:** To supply nutritional supplements to 10 of the neediest pregnant and nursing mothers and their babies; provide ante - and post-natal Health Care & Baby Care Training Program.



WOH Program - 27.11

By sharing the love of Jesus in these practical ways, it is hoped to empower the women and children of Kudaoya, enabling them to develop a sense of their own personal worth and realise their potential to live purpose filled lives. We pray that God will bless Rebecca, and that her life will be a witness to those she works with and for in the community.



“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.”
Isaiah 43:18-19

Maureen Young, Vice-President
Europe: Britain and Ireland Area

The Pop Up Monastery



In August I travelled to Germany for the first ever Pop Up Monastery. It was a week where 21 women of different ages, denominations and from different countries spent a week together and was organised by the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women.

The retreat took place at the Kloster Mariensee which was a stunning

convent, set amongst beautiful scenery, in a quiet village in Mariensee and dating back to 1207.

The theme for the week was about journeys; looking at our own journeys and our journeys with God. During the week we became a sisterhood and a monastic community. Many monastic communities have moments of silence, and so also did we.

Contd on.....page 7

'Transforming the world from the kitchen' [The story of women working together in Methodism]



Epworth Old Rectory

Since January 2015 Sarah Braisdell, researcher for Methodist Women in Britain, has been sorting through archives and artefacts in preparation for an exhibition at Epworth Old Rectory in Spring 2016, entitled 'Transforming the world from the kitchen: the story of women working together in Methodism'. Two



Sarah Braisdell with John Wesley

years ago MWiB set up a Heritage and Archives Task Group to begin researching this story. In April 2015 we entered into a formal agreement with Epworth Old Rectory to work towards this exhibition, the first phase of a two phase project to develop a permanent centre for the story of women's movements in Methodism.



Sarah writes: "Women have always been proactive in the Methodist story. Susanna Wesley was a major influence on the faith and social responsibility of her family. Three hundred years after Susanna, women make up approximately 67% of the membership of the Methodist Church in Britain and are active in every aspect of church life. No role is closed to women, although by 2014 we have only had four female presidents of Conference, so there is still distance to travel on the road to equality.

As part of this journey, amongst every generation of women in Methodism, there have been those who meet together to find ways of discovering God and of serving the community. This project aims to tell the story of the established women's movements in



Anne Browse, MWiB President & Rev Steve Wild June 2015

Methodism, from the very first organisation formed in 1858, latterly known as Women's Work, through to Girls' League, Women's Fellowship, Young Wives, Network and now MWiB. It also

aims to link the story of women working together in Methodism back to Susanna Wesley."

Sarah Braisdell and Joyce Powell, convenor of the Heritage and Archives Task Group, presented the story of the MWiB partnership with Epworth at the European Methodist Historical Conference in Ruse, Bulgaria in September 2015. The theme of the Conference was 'Who Evangelized Europe? Mission empowered by Methodist Women.'

We look forward to capturing the stories of the past and using both to inform the future direction of Methodist Women in Britain, as we seek 'to know Christ and to make him known'.

Submitted by
Anne Browse
 MWiB President
 Methodist Women in Britain

Contd from..... page 6 The Pop Up Monastery

From 10pm to 10 am the next day we had silence. At first I found it quite difficult; however as the week went by we used sign language at breakfast. I found these moments of quietness very peaceful and it was during this that I spent time reading my bible. Each morning after quiet time had finished we had morning prayer in the room of silence and evening song in the Abbey.

Throughout the week we had opportunities to take part in various workshops. I chose embroidery where I learnt about the Kloster stitch which was used by monasteries to make tapestries. Another workshop I took part in was singing. I have always loved singing and really enjoyed this workshop. In it we learnt about the

tradition of singing, of chants, and of songs from across the world.

On the Wednesday we went on the Pilgerweg Locom Volkenroda, which is a walking pilgrimage. We didn't do all of it but we did do 32km. Along the way we had moments of discussion, moments of meditation and reflection, moments of silence and moments of singing.

Our final day, the Thursday, was a day of celebration. In the afternoon the local community, friends of Kloster Mariensee and those who had led the workshops were invited to a presentation afternoon. Painting from the art workshop and the tapestries that we created were on display. Those of us from the singing workshop

performed 3 songs and some individuals spoke about their week at the Pop Up Monastery. In the evening we had a celebration as a community of sisters with a farewell meal, social and finishing with a prayer.

I really enjoyed my week at the Pop Up Monastery. The moments of silence that we had, the morning and evening prayers, the workshops, the tranquillity and peacefulness found in the abbey and the gardens as well as all the conversations throughout the week allowed me to not only deepen my faith but to spend a week journeying with God and being in His presence.

Submitted by
Sian Davidson
 Methodist Women in Britain

Contd from..... page 4 Two Samples of the Prayers, based on Matthew 28:18-20.

Response: We thank you that you are with us always, even to the end of the age.

MDG 3: In a world where many women and children experience abuse, violence and discrimination: help those working with Women's Empowerment Programmes to have a strong voice for these children.

Response: We thank you that you are with us always, even to the end of the age.

MDG 4 & 5: In a world where many children die in infancy and many mothers suffer through insufficient care during childbirth: help those who offer

support through health programmes, clinics and hospitals.

Response: We thank you that you are with us always, even to the end of the age.

MDG 6: In a world where many die from preventable diseases: help us to share what we have to supply medical care in the prevention of disease and promote good health for all.

Response: We thank you that you are with us always, even to the end of the age.

MDG7: In a world where we so often misuse our resources and are careless with the environment: "we pray for those involved in research and for those advising...."

governments on Climate Change.

Response: We thank you that you are with us always, even to the end of the age.

MDG 8: In a world where trade among nations is polluted by profiteers: help us to be mindful of the growers and farmers who are exploited for profit. Help us support Fair Trade as a way of life for consumers.

Response: We thank you that you are with us always, even to the end of the age.

Prepared in the Creative Liturgy Workshop at the Joint European Area Seminar.

Exploring the Psalms... By Joan Stott

PSALM 96*

"Singing a new" song -
for the Lord is coming..."
(For the Christmas Season)



¹Sing a new song to the LORD! Let the whole earth sing to the LORD!

^{2a}....Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.

^{3b}.....Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.

⁸Give the LORD the glory he deserves. Bring your offering and come and worship him.

13b.....For the LORD is coming....

The psalmist encourages you to sing a "new" song - a song which proclaims your praise and thanks to God arising

out of your new experiences of God's loving grace and mercy. However, if you are unsure of choosing the right word for your personal "new" song; or you are concerned about risking sharing your song with others what should you do? Do not be discouraged, because you could use other people's words, so long as your "borrowed" song expresses your beliefs and experiences.

Following the visit of the angel Gabriel when Mary sang her song of praise to God, it was not an original song! Mary "borrowed" several Old Testament words and used words of several matriarchs; the prophets; words from five Psalms; and from a conversation between God and Abraham. Mary used words of praise, thankfulness, faith and trust that expressed other people's experiences of God but she re-invented their words so that they became her own "new" song of praise to God.

How will today's personal experiences of our amazing God be reflected in your "new" song? Are you open enough to new experiences of your life-giving, life-enriching God to allow God's creative

powers free rein in your heart and mind, so that you can offer "new" songs and new commitments to God every day?

As we celebrate this Christmas season, let us all sing a "new" song about the coming of the Lord amongst us, arising out of our new experiences and understandings of God; who dared to risk coming amongst us, using a human being like you and me as the God-bearer. Mary became her own singer-of-new-songs as she celebrated the fulfilment of all God's promises for humanity. As we are each ".... called to proclaim", let us each day joyfully sing our sing of praise and thanks to God.

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<http://www.thetimelesspsalms.net/>