



For women, for justice, for Christ

Spring Newsletter 2023

Greetings!

As I am writing this letter, the sun is streaming through the window and there is an air of spring, heralding new beginnings. We too are having a 'new beginning'. Maggie Woods is joining me as Co-Chair and she will be looking after the Southern half of Britain and I will be looking after the northern part. We will be in constant touch with one another and with the new Trustees, who, in turn, will be in touch with the Ambassadors in their region. This should improve communication between us all and help to encourage the sharing of ideas.

There are signs that there are new groups showing an interest in the work of MWiB and it doesn't matter whether the groups are large or small, we are all still part of MWiB! Meeting together for coffee on Zoom once a month is a way of staying in touch and sharing news with your Ambassador. There are bound to be adjustments in the way we work as we trial our new way of working and we will need your feedback.

Forum, in February, was Hilary's last. Hilary's term of office was during covid and she led us through that time and kept us together through Zoom! She has worked tirelessly as President and Vice President and has been instrumental in the planning of our new structure and the birth of the MWiB You Tube channel. She has gone beyond the call of duty by extending her term of office to see the new plans through, so thank you Hilary, we are really going to miss you.

Our annual Conference at The Hayes, Swanwick, 'Voices in Harmony' will soon be upon us and this year we are delighted to welcome Pam Rhodes, the TV presenter, who will talk about 'Hymns and Her'. Dr Paula Gooder, will give the Mary Bosanquet Lecture on Tuesday 27th June at the Connexional Conference in Birmingham. We have also planned a Creativity Day entitled 'Take a Fresh View', on Saturday 15th July at Stamford, when there will be an opportunity to use your skills of photography, weaving, creative writing and craftwork, so watch out for the booking forms on our website.

The future looks exciting so let's go forward together to work 'for women, for justice. for Christ'.

Blessings, Ruth



Looking back and looking forward

As I come to the end of my term with MWiB Executive, I must give thanks for the opportunities it has given me. I have met so many wonderful people, been able to travel in reality as well as on Zoom, and had experiences that I had never dreamt would be possible. The pilgrimage to Rome stands out. It is such a rich and amazing city, and we walked a good many of its streets trying to keep up with Rev'd Tim Macquiban who filled us with awe and wonder, not least with his knowledge of the history of Rome.

Then the opportunity to visit Mexico, both the North East and the North West to meet with some amazingly dedicated people applying their faith as well as their practical skills to supporting the migrants on their doorsteps seeking a life of safety where they could access steady work, feed their families and be sure that there were opportunities for education and learning skills. The determination, and faith of the Mexican Christians was so humbling as well as inspiring. Many whom I met had been involved in the work to help migrants for many years, and were determined that they would continue for as long as necessary, even though many of them were not materially wealthy. Issues of human trafficking were highlighted, as the migrants are very vulnerable to being exploited, young unaccompanied children being particularly at risk. So, some of the work focusses on training youngsters to be aware of the dangers and help them develop skills for survival. I travelled with Rev'd Felicity al Hassan who translated from Spanish for me so that I did not miss out on anything. We did not know each other before the trip, but I am so grateful to her for her support and friendship as we shared highs and lows over the days.

Much of my term fell in the pandemic. At first it was 'OK, so what do we do now?' Like many other organisations we discovered Zoom quickly and so learnt new skills and were able to carry on the work of MWiB, albeit in different ways to previously. I wrote a blog virtually every week as a way of keeping in touch with as many people as I could. Often when I sat down to write I was unsure what I would say, but somehow something always came into my mind. I can only think God was at work. The volume of work was maintained, the Trustees Forum meetings happened, and even new partnership formed. The face to face talks and travel across the country was largely replaced by Zoom talks and meetings.

One regret was in having to cancel the 'Swanwick' conference with Jill Baker and Fiona Kendall in 2020 as it was scheduled quite soon after we went into lockdown, and almost everyone was uncertain and wary at that point. However, for MWiB's tenth anniversary in 2021 there was determination to do something and to find a way to celebrate MWiB's first decade, recognising its roots and influences. I was delighted that Sister Imelda Poole was able to lead us, and inform us about the incredible work to reduce human trafficking in Europe from her base in Albania, via Zoom. When I came into the role of President I hoped to raise awareness about the scourge of human trafficking, and the immense suffering that it causes. I have given a number of talks on the subject, but Imelda's work is truly inspiring. I am honoured to be able to call her a friend now.

I am grateful to those who have been colleagues in the Executive team. It really helps when one has a team with whom to share ideas, plan activities, and support one another through the challenges.

People have asked me whether I regret not being able to travel in the ways that previous MWiB President's had done, and it would have been good to see more groups in their own settings, and meet them face to face, but I have no regrets. My Presidency was different, but certainly not worse. So, I thank God for the opportunities it afforded me, the stimulus for learning and finding ways to share. There are some adjustments being made to the ways in which MWiB operates in the future to make it more sustainable, and to encourage all involved in the movement to work more closely together for mutual benefit, as well as reaching a wider audience.

I pray God will continue to guide and inspire women across Methodism, that we work for a world where women have opportunities to be the best that they can be; that we work to fight against injustice wherever we find it, whether that is from positions of quiet actions in our localities or in finding a bigger voice together.

Above all let us continue to follow Christ's example to the best of our ability, and to joyfully share the gospel.

Hilary



Easter Offering 2023 No Borders to God's Love

Primarily written by Hilary Evans this service is gifted to the whole church. It is an opportunity to raise our awareness about the migrant and refugee situation, to learn how churches are responding, to hear from some individuals, and for us all to respond in prayer and, where possible, offer practical and financial support.

Monetary collections made through the Easter Offering envelopes and the sharing of this service across the country will support the work of Mission Partners and the churches they serve in many parts of the world; and it will contribute to emergency funds that enable the Methodist Church in Britain to support our global partner churches and organisations as they respond to crises when they occur.



Reflections for Lent related to the Easter Offering service can be found on our website: www.mwib.org.uk and a recording of the Easter Offering Service made by members of the exec team will be on our You Tube Channel soon.

Easter Offering materials can be downloaded from: methodist.org.uk or ordered from Methodist Publishing: www.methodistpublishing.org.uk

Empowerment Gifts Report

Methodist Women in Britain distribute Empowerment Gifts each year to groups that will make a difference to the lives of women and children across the world.

In 2022 three Gifts were awarded:

- 1. Uganda** - supporting women with disabilities to start businesses to support themselves - 40 ladies and teenage girls in total
- 2. Kenya** - supporting women to train in tailoring including making re-usable sanitary pads and school uniforms - 70 ladies in total
- 3. Kenya Methodist Hospital Kitchen Garden Project** - teaching women to garden and maintain a kitchen garden to provide food for themselves -30 women to be supported

Below are some of the comments we received from the groups:

1. 'Words cannot express our sincere appreciation to Methodist Women in Britain for your trust and support in entrusting and giving Concern for Neighbours and Community Empowerment (CONECE) with funds and giving us the privilege and opportunity to reach out to disabled women and teenage mothers through enhancing their well-being and creating an enabling environment where they can realize their potential to be able to deal with pressing socio-economic issues that affect their day-to day wellbeing and participate in community development in the communities of Iganga and Kamuli districts.

Your kindness and generosity will remain with CONECE forever but most especially in the lives of the disabled women and teenage mothers that will be supported. At CONECE we cherish working together through partnerships to build the kingdom and share God's love in a needy world.

We have identified all the beneficiaries for our project in the targeted communities, carried out validation and verification to ensure that those selected are those that need the support most. We have also conducted a community awareness workshop to sensitize communities on the needs and rights of people with disabilities so that the community can give support.'

2. 'This is wonderful news. Many thanks for the kind gesture and how grateful we are for the support that MWiB have extended to Friends of Kianjai.'

3. 'This donation will be used for kitchen garden project which involves visiting the family by a member of our staff, buying the gunny bags, the seedlings, and the water. It is particularly relevant at the moment as we are facing the worse drought for 40 years and people are really suffering. Animals are dying because of lack of grass to eat. We can offer some help through this project to the poorest of the poor.'

If you know of a project that might benefit from an empowerment grant this year look for the application forms for 2023 which will be available from the MWIB website from the 1st April. Completed forms need to be received by the 31st July.

Sylvia White



With the support of Rev Inderjit Bhogal the remainder of the money raised by MWiB for India has now been used as you will see in this report from Bishop Somantaroy Pradeep, Diocese of Amritsar.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT REPORTS

The Socio Economic Development Project of the Diocese of Amritsar has been working with women from the marginalized communities in the India-Pakistan border areas of Punjab, India, with support from Methodist Women in Britain. These efforts are mainly channeled through the formation and promotion of groups of ten or more women known as Self-Help Groups. The women are sometimes provided with a seed amount which they can utilize, in addition to the pool of their monthly savings, for starting a small business or meeting their needs. For example, the wages of a person who cleans cow dung and takes care of the animals are tiny. But when the women participate with SHG, they can earn up to an additional Rs. 100 per day. This enables them to contribute between Rs. 2000 - Rs.2500 to the family income per month. The project has not only helped the women increase their household income, but has also improved the overall wellbeing of their families, themselves and the whole village community.

Some details of each of the Self-Help Groups, engaging with entire villages are given below:

- 1. Mehak Self Help Group, Singhpura** - All the members are involved in bag stitching and pickle making work and marketing their products in local markets. They were able to procure a bank loan. Now they have enhanced their income through these works and are living a happy life, less dependent on loans.
- 2. Ekta self Help Group, Dujjowal**- They are also fully involved in bag stitching work and marketing their products at local markets, setting up stalls in the different Diocesan level programmes and also diocesan institutions are helping to sell their products.
- 3. Sukhmani Self Help Group, Bhalapind**-They are involved in bag making and pickle making work. They are selling their products at local markets. It has strengthened the group and attained the maturity to have linkage with the bank.
- 4. Nari Shakti Self Help Group, Abusaid**- The group is involved in making pickles, knitted items, and washing detergent. They have started this business at a small scale and marketing their products at local markets. Now their family income has increased and they are sending their children to schools regularly.



Cotton work



Training on pickle making



Pickle making

Above: pictures of some of the Microcredit Project activities

WORK WITH DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

16 Leadership Development Training Centres(LDTC)for Rural Children are running in 14 villages. 490 children who are studying in the local government schools attend these centres in the evening. Children are also taught good habits like washing hands before and after meals and also after going to toilets, respect in relationships, to be punctual, to take bath every day, teeth cleaning in the morning and before going to bed etc.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

The community is involved in the programmes. Women Self Help Groups are very active members of the education committees. They regularly keep in touch with the schools as well as with centres.



Painting competition at LDTC



Study material distributed to the children

What is difficult to ascertain from the report is that the four village projects involve whole villages. I have seen this on visits. It is remarkable work.

Ordinarily the women receive something like 50p a day from picking/cleaning cow dung, and forming this into cooking fuel packages. The Diocesan projects support them to also make mango/lime pickles, and to learn stitching and making clothes. The Diocese projects also buy sewing machines for households to become more self reliant.

This is regular ongoing work. The MWiB support is invaluable. The Diocese is truly grateful.

The Diocese of Karimnagar continues to work with refugee women and children, again another entire village. The Diocese also runs a school for refugee children. Again, I have seen this work when I visited the area with a Youth Exchange group visit from the UK funded by Global Relationships. It is truly impressive.

Again, the MWiB support is invaluable.

Blessings and Peace.

Inderjit

MWiB is seeking a new Finance Officer. Could this be you?

The position is a worthy calling and gets right to the heart of MWiB and how it works. It involves paying in cheques, making payments for services and expenses incurred and creating a monthly bank reconciliation. The job is a voluntary role, is not a full time position, but can be busy at certain times i.e. the Swanwick Residential weekend and year end. I am more than happy to answer any questions you might have.

Please consider prayerfully if you or someone you know could take on the role.

I can honestly say that I've enjoyed my time as your Finance Officer and sincerely hope a replacement can be found to take over in September 2023. **Nina Rawlins Finance Officer**

MWiB Resources

These are always available by contacting Elaine at: resources.mwib@gmail.com

We now have some quite lovely greetings cards/notelets – all come in packs of 6 for £3.

The choice is : 3 flowers [2 of each]; freesias & butterflies [3 of each]; 3 animals [2 of each]



The Dementia-Friendly Churches Packs have now been updated, and MHA and MWiB are pleased to offer them for a suggested donation of £5 [and although postage, as always, is free, a small donation towards that would also be welcomed....]

An important message from our Finance Officer

It has come to our attention that the wrong paying-In slip has been used for CFB payments to MWiB resulting in a substantial amount not being credited to our account for 6 months.

Can everyone please ensure the correct slips are used so we can maintain regular receipts.



Don't forget to wear Black on Thursday's in solidarity with women around the world who suffer injustices

Upcoming Events

Swanwick Conference Friday 14th— Sunday 16th April 'Voices in Harmony'
with Keynote Speaker Pam Rhodes from BBC TV; music led by Rev Jenny Pathmarajah;
Signs for Worship Choir; a range of workshops; Faith, Fellowship and Friendship

Places are still available at this residential conference—see our website: mwib.org.uk to book

In Sickness and in Health 11th May Webinar hosted by Barbara Easton - the first in a planned series of seminars 'Bodies of Faith'. Details of how to access this event will be on our website

Mary Bosanquet Lecture Tuesday 27th June by Dr Paula Gooder at Methodist Conference

Please keep an eye on our website for details of how to book for this event in Birmingham

MWiB Creative Day Saturday 15th July 10am—4pm at Barn Hill Methodist Church, Stamford PE9 2AE

Organised by a National MWiB task group, your support is requested to make it a success.

Create a collage; Photography; Historic walk in Stamford; Weaving; Creative writing; Lunch

This event is open to everyone, so please book the date and see our website for further details

World Federation Day Saturday 14th October at Trinity Methodist Church Congleton CW12 4BA

Again please book this date in your diary and look out for further details in our next newsletter

Contact us:

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