



# *The* TREE - of LIFE

*Success in any  
stage of life*

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# President's letter

The vine and the branches form an inseparable unit in order for the branch to bear fruit. Our emblem as World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women is The Tree of Life. Our handbook says, "It is an evergreen tree, signifying continuous life and vitality. Its branches stretch upward and outward, symbols of our thought and action reaching upward to God and outward to our neighbours."

Revelation 22:2 states that the tree bears twelve fruits: "On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

The Tree of Life represents Jesus Christ, who is the Author of our life, the natural, spiritual, and eternal life. Jesus says in John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." In proclaiming that He is the vine, Jesus is indicating that He is the source of sustenance for His followers. The branch continuously receives nourishment from the vine. Believers are connected to the vine and produce fruit, which represents both good deeds and spiritual development. These outcomes stem from their relationship with Christ, who is the vine. If the branch is severed from the vine, it will wither and perish. Thus, it is crucial for us to

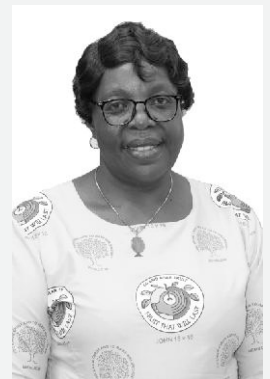
abide in Jesus, much like a branch remains attached to the vine. This necessitates a daily commitment to cultivating and strengthening our bond with Him. By doing so, we will experience abundant growth, deepening our knowledge of Him and enhancing our love for Him. Consequently, we will bear a plentiful harvest of fruit in our lives.

The comparison made by Jesus in John 15:5 reflects a close and intimate relationship. Jesus desires to be as closely connected to us as the vine is to the branch so that we can bear fruit. As Federation women, as we carry out our action plan, may God assist us in expressing the fruits and spiritual blessings of grace that come from Christ. One of our goals is to reduce poverty in our communities, as it hampers spiritual, social, and economic growth. It is important to recognize that without Christ, we are unable to accomplish anything.

Thankfully, the opposite is also true: with Christ, we are capable of doing everything because He provides us with strength. The power of Jesus is available to us. However, it is essential to acknowledge our dependency on Him and to understand that without Him, we are powerless. If we choose to remain in Him, He promises that we will bear fruit—fruit that not only endures but also has a lasting impact.

May we be deeply attached to Him as the branch to the vine, so that we bear much fruit!

- Sipiwe Chisvo, World President



# Editor's word:

## Success in any stage of life



I know each one of us, as Federation women, is trying to do something meaningful with her own life. For many people, a successful person is a very wealthy person, or a very beautiful model, or a very good singer, or a prolific actor. For me, the true definition of success is the one that Ralph Waldo Emerson talked about:

“Success means to leave the world a little better; ... to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived.” Success should extend beyond personal achievements or material gains and encompass the well-being and uplifting of others.

Success is when you concentrate not on your own personal needs, but on others – making an offering of change for the world you live in, a sacrifice or a work of repair, as the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam* teaches us. You have this opportunity and honor that was bestowed upon you to be a coworker with God in making the world a better place. By striving to make someone's life a little easier, you contribute to the collective progress and betterment of society as a whole. And these are the deeds made in secret – as we are told: “May your left hand not know what your right hand is doing”. (Matthew 6:3) The simple deeds of helping are not seen – the world will not applaud you for feeding a child or dressing a needy person. The world would rather applaud a good singer, for sure. But it does not matter, because this is the real success that God applauds.

If you ever think of success as something that is for young people, I must stop you right now. At any stage of life, you can do something with your life and make an impact on the world. Stephen R. Covey and Cynthia Covey Haller, in their book *Live Life in Crescendo*, are talking about a concept that is present in music. In music, the term ‘crescendo’ is used as a dynamic marking to indicate a gradual increase in volume or intensity. The word itself comes from the Italian word *crescere* meaning ‘growing’ or ‘increasing’. Starting from this, the authors explain that all of us should look at our lives as a fragment of a music piece that is in crescendo – the things that we

will do in the future will be bigger than anything we did in the past, and our impact will be greater. We cannot limit our success to our youth, but we have to believe that greater things will come, and no matter the age we are, we must start working for those things to come alive.

Let me tell you about the incredible life of George Foreman, born on January 10, 1949. Foreman's boxing career began in the late 1960s, and he quickly rose to prominence as a powerful fighter. One of Foreman's most notable achievements came in 1973 when he became the heavyweight champion of the world by defeating Joe Frazier. However, his reign as champion was cut short in 1974 when he faced Muhammad Ali. Following his defeat, Foreman experienced a spiritual transformation and retired from boxing in 1977. He became an ordained Christian minister and dedicated himself to his faith. Remarkably, Foreman made a glorious comeback to boxing at the age of 45 in 1994, defying expectations and inspiring people worldwide. Have in mind that it has been almost 20 years since he retired, he was overweight, and he was believed to be very old for this career. He started to run, eat healthily, and train in order to achieve his goal, which was beyond him. He needed a comeback also to financially support the disadvantaged youth whom he helped.

In 1994 George Foreman regained the heavyweight title by defeating Michael Moorer, becoming the oldest heavyweight champion in history! He helped many people and he also established the George Foreman Youth and Community Center in Houston, Texas, which provides various educational and recreational opportunities for underprivileged children, and he managed to support this ministry with his own funds.

When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus responded, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39, ESV). In these words, Jesus highlights the inseparable connection between loving God and loving people. In another case, Jesus told His followers, “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12, ESV). Living for others is the success we are called to achieve. Success focuses on the intangible, yet immensely valuable, aspects of improving the human condition and fostering a sense of interconnectedness.

-Ligia Istrate, *Tree of Life* Editor

# Childhood experiences. A memory.

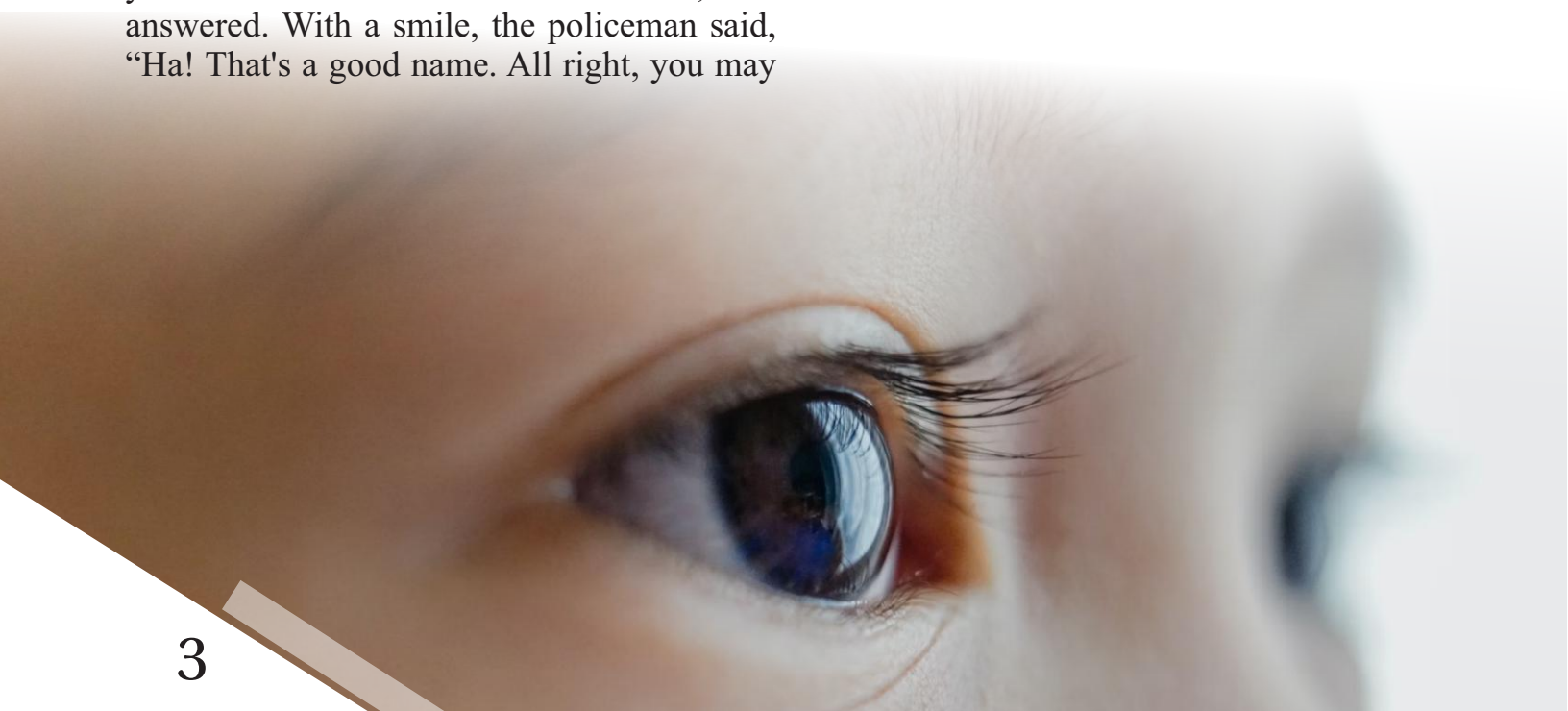
In the last week of February 2023, I and my family went to visit my daughter in Yangon, which is about 400 miles from my hometown Mandalay. We went there in our car and my husband, Kenneth, drove all the way. We came back after a week. There were checkpoints from time to time. Whenever there was a checkpoint, we had to open our windows for the soldiers and policemen with guns to check inside the car. We didn't have any problem because I was in the front seat and we're just elderly people. But at one checkpoint, a policeman took a look into the front seat and nodded his head, and went to the back seat side. He knocked at the window and said, "Open it!". My granddaughter, Suzannah, was in the back seat. She is seven years old. She put down the window and looked up with wide but bold eyes. The policeman laughed and said, "Oh! It's only a little girl" and asked, "What's your name dear?" "I'm Suzannah", she answered. With a smile, the policeman said, "Ha! That's a good name. All right, you may

go."

We all closed our windows and drove on. On the way, a question came to my mind: "What if Suzannah was a teenager or a young adult?" Well, she might have to step out of the car. She might be asked questions. She might be searched. If they had been satisfied, we probably could move on, but what if they hadn't? However, Suzannah will always remember the two different expressions on the face of the man and that memory will linger on beyond that small experience of her childhood. Another question came into my mind on that long way back to Mandalay: "What about the children in the war-torn areas in many parts of our country?" Children who have lost their homes and loved ones, children who have to flee their villages, to find a place to hide when warplanes come to bomb, children who have to cross the rivers and streams to hide in the jungle to survive, children who have no opportunity to learn or to go to school? What will they tell others about their childhood experiences? Or will they even survive?

Think of them and pray for them.

- Irene Khin San Myint, Methodist Church,  
Upper Myanmar



## Continuous prayer

*“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.” (Acts 6:4)*



We are facing many problems, such as instability in politics, the pandemic, inflation, natural disasters, and many other problems over the last three years. There are times when nothing seems to go right and because of all these inconveniences, people become weak and depressed, and everyday life becomes a struggle that is hard to handle.

Sometimes, we don't even know how to pray, or what to lean on, because we become weaker and weaker. Sometimes, we feel that our prayers are unanswered and that our voices are not heard. But in the Bible, St. Paul said, “Pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). He encourages us with those words. Although the disciples had many difficulties, they never stopped praying. Speaking and listening to God was what they did, every day, any time.

Dear friend! Do pray, even in the midst of difficulties and chaos, or when you are sad, lonely, and depressed or nothing seems to go well, and you feel a downfall when the light around you seems to dim and fade away. Pray at all times. Pray as St. Paul told us. Preach the Gospel and be a witness of the living God. Jesus said that birds don't sow seeds or gather or harvest, yet God feeds them. We are worth more than birds. We only need to have faith in our prayers and God will provide for us in His own ways. Therefore, even things that we think are the worst will change into the best when we put things in God's mighty hands. Have faith, have hope, and always pray.

*- Grace Lal Zo Puii, Methodist Church, Upper Myanmar*

## Wounded Healers

The concept of Wounded Healers was introduced by a psychologist to describe individuals who, through their own personal experiences of trauma, have gained the ability to support and aid others. These individuals possess valuable qualities such as active listening skills, compassion, acceptance, and resourcefulness. They view every experience as a chance for growth and transformation. In particular, women often bear invisible burdens and unexpressed suffering in their daily lives. Despite facing exclusion and stigma in various physical, mental, and emotional circumstances, they embrace their responsibilities with the right mindset, accept their situations, and extend help to others. In doing so, they embody the essence of being Wounded Healers.

The Bible and our society provide many examples of such women. I will just take the example of Hagar – an Egyptian slave. Hagar was Sarah's handmaiden, her servant, someone with no social standing. Poor, perhaps. She was an object to be utilized as a surrogate for Sarah's unborn child. And she became Abraham's concubine. Sarah was jealous of her pregnancy and treated her severely, causing her to flee.

What would drive someone to flee her home, her refuge, her comforts, and her people? What mental anguish would she have gone through before deciding to flee? We know that mental uncertainty leads to depression, and despair causes people to do unthinkable things like fleeing or committing suicide. In the desert, she met an angel who asked her where she was going and told her to go back. (Genesis 16:6-2). Hagar, though hurt, fulfilled her role.

Such stories remind us that pain and suffering come to us in life. In our modern society, we still encounter women who face similar challenges to those of Hagar. These women are often marginalized, stigmatized, and excluded, both physically and emotionally. Despite their circumstances, they demonstrate remarkable resilience, accepting their responsibilities with a positive attitude. They can be seen as Wounded Healers, as they navigate their own wounds while also offering healing to others.

In anguish, the promise to remember is that God's eyes are always on us, and He will never leave us. (Hebrews 13:5) What a Great Big God we have, who loves and cares for us. ALWAYS.



*- Dorothy S. Kumar, Tree of Life Editor 2006-2016*

# News



## Methodist Sarah Home in Sri Lanka

In February last year, the All-Island Methodist Women's Fellowship Sri Lanka received \$ 8 , 0 0 0 . 0 0 as a empowerment grant from WFMUCW. The money has been utilized to maintain the Methodist Sarah Home for abused women in Batticaloa, which is situated in the East of the country, to meet expenditures related to food, sanitation, staff salaries, and utility bills.

At present, a warden, two helpers, and nine young women are residing in the home. We express our gratitude to the Almighty for the opportune extension granted by the WFMUCW, which has enabled us to deliver crucial services to the most marginalized and disadvantaged members of our community.

*-Rajini Jegasothy, South Asia Area President*

## Commission on the Status of Women CSW67 Update Extracts from representative Joan Capel's report



The 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) convened at the United Nations from Monday, March 6th through Friday, March 17th, 2023. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world are invited to contribute and attend the session.

CSW is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW67 priority theme was Innovation and technological change and

education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

There are two categories of participation for CSW67: side events that take place at UN Headquarters, which require obtaining a temporary UN Grounds Pass, and Parallel Events organized by NGO CSW NY, which are totally open to the public and do not require registration or a UN Grounds Pass.

The Bureau of the Commission plays a crucial role in facilitating the preparation for, and ensuring the successful outcome of, the annual sessions of the Commission. Bureau members serve for two years. In line with the ECOSOC decision 2002/2004, the Commission holds the first meeting of its subsequent session immediately following the closure of the regular session to elect new members of the Bureau if needed.

Another component of CSW67 is the Ecumenical Women's (EW) Orientation Day held on the Saturday before the start of CSW67, March 4th, 2023, and the daily

Morning Worship conducted by the faith-based members of Ecumenical Women at the UN (EW). The World Federation of Methodists and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW) is an active member of EW. Each day, one of the members conducts the Morning Worship. EW also has two Parallel Events, Girls on Fire, and two Advocacy Events.

One of the major things that result from CSW is the Agreed Conclusions. Agreed Conclusions contain an analysis of the priority theme and a set of concrete recommendations for governments, intergovernmental bodies, other institutions, civil society activists and other relevant stakeholders to be implemented at the international, national, regional, and local levels.

Following lengthy negotiations that continued into the night, the Commission on the Status of Women concluded its 67th session, approving a set of Agreed Conclusions focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the context of innovation, technological change, and education in the digital age. "Faith-Based Organizations" were included as part of civil society organizations in paragraph 90. This is something that EW has advocated for in the past with some degree of success but had not been seen in recent

years. The outcome document is comprehensive, 31 pages long.

Ecumenical Women contributed a joint written statement comprised of statements submitted by the members. The statements included comments, concerns, and information about the priority theme based on how it impacts their geographical area. WFMUCW contributed to the Joint Written Statement.

The approval of the Agreed Conclusions is a major accomplishment. The real accomplishment would be seeing results from all the hard work and negotiations and recommendations towards a real end to gender inequality and empowerment of women and girls all over the world in the area of technology and education.

## Girls On Fire



On Thursday, March 9th, 2023, the Ecumenical Women Parallel Event, Girls On Fire was convened in the Church Center for the United Nations (CCUN).

A panel of young women and girls advocates was assembled

to discuss and explore the themes of accessibility, education in the digital age, and the human rights, safety, and security of women and girls based on the CSW67 priority theme "Innovation and the technological change and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls."

All of the panellists were able to share information on problems that exist in their areas and what attempts have been made to mitigate the problems.

### Extracts from representative and World Federation Vice President Ivonne Pereira's report:

The digital age is creating new and unprecedented opportunities to improve the lives of women and girls around the world. Digital technologies are rapidly transforming all spheres of life, including our economic, social, and political systems, thus

establishing new access points and platforms for historically marginalized groups.

However, they are also creating unprecedented threats to our well-being. Online spaces provide new arenas for violence against

awomen and offer offenders greater anonymity and impunity. Discrimination in the technology sector and the biases of the automated systems themselves perpetuate and further entrench gender inequalities. In addition, the lack of global laws and regulations causes a greater exposure of vulnerable groups to suffer violations of their rights and privacy. In the context of Covid-19 and many other intersecting global crises, access to online spaces has taken on even more crucial importance. As we move into the future, we must ensure that we do not leave women and girls in the past.

CSW67 offered a unique moment to improve our digital future. Over the two weeks, governments, civil society organizations, activists, and experts from around the world came together to address the challenges that technology brings to the empowerment of all women and girls and to foster their enormous potential.

Examples of the panels:



The event titled “Digital empowerment of women in conflict situations: why is it important” drew upon the collective experiences of war and conflict in the O S C E

(Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) region and its partner countries. During this side event, participants gathered to underscore the significance of utilizing digital tools as a means to effectively empower women residing in areas affected by war.

#TodasConectadas was another debate about the experience that transforms the digital inclusion of women in Latin America. This panel discussion shared the experience of the Latin American and Caribbean region with #todasconectadas – a platform that enables people to access multiple tools to develop their digital skills and explore new economic and employment opportunities.

“A feminist manifesto of digital justice for Generation Equality” event launched a statement of feminist principles of digital justice that a global working group of more than 25 feminists from Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean and Africa has developed after a year of deliberations and dialogues, presenting a new vision for reclaiming the power of platforms, data and technologies for gender equality.

The “Innovative and digital solutions for gender equality through comprehensive sexuality education” event provided a space for multi-stakeholder dialogue on how comprehensive sexuality education can help promote gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence and harmful practices through digital technologies. In addition, it looked at examples of the use of digital tools to reach a large number of young people and protect their safety online.

### **Extracts from the CSW67 Statement from Ecumenical Women, to which WFMUCW contributed :**

Ecumenical Women at the United Nations, a coalition of Christian denominations and ecumenical organizations, represents over 550 million persons worldwide. We welcome the opportunity to address the 67th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women on “Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”. Over the last century, the world saw exponential growth in innovation, technology, and digital communications. These tools enable us to connect, engage, advocate, and improve communications. They can advance opportunities for women and girls worldwide and tackle systemic injustices and inequalities. While these advancements are potentially universal, opportunities are not felt equally worldwide. Inequalities in



access and gender equity persist, undermining progress and protections for women and girls and their human rights, as well as in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Recognizing a spiritual component of care for all peoples, we affirm the dignity and human rights of every individual. Made equal in the image of God, our Christian love informs our curiosity, learning, and teaching. We are committed to enabling the full and equitable participation of all in society's decision-making processes and programs.

Therefore, we raise these concerns to the Commission:

Enhance accessibility... including access to functional devices, infrastructure to provide stable internet connection, and electricity.

Working with local agencies, we are reaching out to those in under-resourced populations, focusing on community engagement...

Protect human rights, safety, and security of women and girls.

Innovation and technology provide opportunities for protecting the human rights, safety, and security of women and girls. Advances in digital tools, educational and training opportunities, and new apps educate and promote awareness and support groups to build community through social media, investments in new technology, dating apps, online sexual predator lists, and tracking tools to prevent trafficking in persons. These tools are powerful means of countering sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls.

Despite these advances, technology also creates new challenges that impact the privacy, safety and security of women and girls and undermine their dignity, well-being, and human rights. This results in an increase in hidden



violence, gender discrimination, sexist encounters and harassment. Privacy must be safeguarded, age-appropriate controls implemented, and domestic control of access to technology used appropriately. Cybersecurity must counter fraud, disinformation, and hate speech, while increasing reliable information and providing ethical parameters for Artificial Intelligence.

Cyberbullying and abuse of social media can lead to harassment, stalking, and victimization through sexualization (sexting, nude photos or revenge porn), which can endanger mental health. Protecting human rights for women and girls in all their diversity must address discrimination based on race, age, language or other forms of identity. This is presented in online content, generational gaps in knowledge and opportunities, and unequal access to digital tools and platforms. Social media and other communications platforms must take seriously their efforts to prevent harassment.

We also recognize and support the benefits and rights to disconnect from technology for mental health and spiritual needs.

We call upon Member States and the United Nations to:

Foster and nurture collaborations with faith-based organizations...

Fully implement UN agreements, including the Beijing Platform for Action, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Goals 4, 5, 9 and 10, the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women, and the UN's Special Procedures mandate on violence against women.

Increase accessibility by:

Fulfill existing financial commitments and increase investment for women and girls...

Educate, promote and protect the human rights of women and girls relating to privacy, information and online safety and security, and safeguarding against gender violence, harassment and discrimination based on race, age, language or other forms of identity. Use technological tools to protect these rights.

Use innovation and technology advancements to raise awareness of

and address the risk of gender violence by funding programs that educate, train, provide support to local leaders, and address negative concepts of masculinity which can lead to abuse and violence.

If you want to read the full text, please access:

[https://www.ecumenicalwomenun.org/\\_files/ugd/26d14f\\_4753eb42c40d4df792c6b8f5e65b619c.pdf](https://www.ecumenicalwomenun.org/_files/ugd/26d14f_4753eb42c40d4df792c6b8f5e65b619c.pdf)

## 22 April 2023: Earth Day

Earth Day is a commemorative and celebrated day in many countries. Its promoter, US Senator Gaylord Nelson, established this day in 1970. He wanted to create a common awareness of pollution problems, biodiversity conservation, and other environmental concerns. The official Motto for Earth Day 2023 is "Invest in our planet." The best inheritance that we can leave our children is love, knowledge, and a habitable planet.

*The earth does not belong to man, it is man who belongs to the earth.*

*The Earth is not an inheritance from our parents, but a loan from our children.*

Ideas to celebrate Earth Day in the future:

**Remember the "three Rs": Recycle, Reuse and Reduce consumption.**

Change incandescent lamps for low-consumption ones.

Promote renewable energy and reduce the use of fossil energy.

It's a good day to plant a tree.

Play with the children in the street and teach them the importance of taking care of the environment.

Eat less meat and fewer ultra-processed products. You will also

improve your health.

Carry out a social cleaning of the abandoned places in our environment.

Stop using plastic bags and use reusable cloth bags.

Use bicycles and public transport.

Practice sports outdoors and be in contact with nature.

*To know the land is to love it.*

- Ivonne Pereira Díaz, World Vice President

## 25 April 2023: International Day Against Child Abuse

Every April 25 we remember the day of "The fight against child abuse" with the aim of promoting the rights of children worldwide and raising awareness in society about the consequences of child abuse.

Child maltreatment is defined as abuse and neglect of persons under the age of 18 and includes all types of physical or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and commercial or other exploitation that causes, or may cause, harm to the health, development, or dignity of the child, or jeopardize their survival, in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Exposure to intimate partner violence is also sometimes included among the forms of child maltreatment.

SOME OF THE KINDS OF ABUSE ARE:

- Physical: any intentional action that causes physical damage to the child, whether visible or not, such as burns, blows, pinches, fractures, among others.

- Psychological: any attitude that provokes in the child feelings of disqualification or humiliation.

- Negligence: the non-protection of

the child against eventual risks and the non-attendance to their basic needs when the parents or caregivers are empowered to do so.

- Sexual abuse: the abusive exercise of power by an adult towards a child that implies the sexual satisfaction of those who exercise it to the detriment and ignorance of the child.

- Indirect abuse: Another way of subjecting children to situations of violence is when they witness mistreatment or sexual abuse by third parties. It is considered that the consequences are similar to those experienced by children who experience the situation of violence directly.

### **What does the Bible, the Word of God, say about child abuse?**

The Bible specifically does not use the term 'child abuse'. What the Bible does tell us is this: children have a special place in God's heart and anyone who hurts a child is bringing God's wrath upon themselves. When Jesus' disciples tried to prevent the children from coming to Jesus, He rebuked them and invited the children to be by His side, saying, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these". (Mark 10:14) Then He took them in His arms and blessed them. The Bible promotes the blessing of children, not the abuse of them.

Children are abused and mistreated in different ways, and all of this is abominable to God. The Bible forbids child abuse in its warnings against undue anger. Many children are subjected to beatings and other physical abuse when their parents take out their anger and frustration on their

children. Although some forms of physical discipline may be biblically acceptable, such discipline should never be applied in a moment of anger. Paul reminds the Ephesians, "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (4:26-27), and Proverbs 29:22 says, "An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins". There is no place for unjust or uncontrolled anger in the life of a Christian. Anger must be confessed to God and dealt with appropriately long before the time for abuse arrives physically against a child or against any other person.

The Bible also prohibits child abuse in its condemnation of sexual sin. Sexual abuse or harassment is particularly devastating, and scripture abounds with warnings against this sin. Forcing a child into a sexual act is a wicked and horrible crime. In addition to committing a sexual sin, the author is also attacking the innocence of some of the most vulnerable people in the world. Sexual abuse violates everything about a person, from their understanding of themselves to physical boundaries and their spiritual connection to God. In a child, these things are so poorly established that the effects are often life-long and without the right help, they cannot heal.

Another way the Bible condemns child abuse is in its prohibition of psychological and emotional abuse. Ephesians 6:4 warns parents not to "exasperate" or provoke their children, but to bring them up in the "training and instruction of the Lord". Hurtful

and unloving verbal discipline, emotional manipulation, or unstable environments take the children's minds away from their parents and portray their instruction and correction as futile. Parents can provoke and exasperate their children by placing unreasonable demands on them, constantly belittling, or finding fault with them, and inflicting injuries that can be as bad or worse than any physical punishment can cause. Colossians 3:21 tells us not to "embitter" our children lest they become discouraged. Ephesians 4:15-16, 25-32 says that we should speak the truth in love and use our words to build others up, that no corrupted words come out of our mouths. We should refrain from speaking inappropriately, especially when it concerns the tender hearts and minds of children.

It is very clear what the Bible teaches on the subject of child abuse. Child abuse in any of its forms is wrong. Anyone who suspects that a child is being abused has an obligation to report it to the proper authorities. Anyone who has been a victim of abuse can find hope and healing in Jesus Christ – and anyone who has abused a child can find not only hope, healing, but forgiveness too. Talking to a Christian pastor or finding a Christian counselor or support group can be a good place to start the journey to wholeness. The position of the Church is that abuse cannot be tolerated in any of its forms and those who exercise abuse will be held accountable before God.

*- Ivonne Pereira Díaz, World Vice President*

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