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President's letter

Healing leaves

The prophecy of John in the Book of Revelation tells us that in the city of God, we again have access to the Tree of Life. We can enjoy the fruits of this tree and benefit from its leaves which are for the healing of nations. How greatly these spiritual healing leaves are needed now! For many, the world is a dangerous place, with individuals in conflict with others, and nations divided against nations. Leaders flex their military muscles at each other to show their strength and ordinary civilians watch and wait in fear. Women and children suffer from the trauma of violence. Many need spiritual, emotional, and physical healing.

For us as World Federation women, the Tree of Life serves as a reminder that God's purpose will not be thwarted. The creation that was lost in Genesis will be restored. Therefore, we can look to the future with great confidence and hope in our God amid hardship. There are many

instances of leaf symbolism in the Bible where God gifts prophets and chosen individuals with leaves as symbols of peace, love, and hope. For example, Noah received an olive leaf as a sign that the great flood was finally over. Green leaves are known to depict hope, renewal, and revival.

The leaves will heal nations, the tree secures the health of the nations. The vision of Ezekiel is exactly parallel to the present: "On the border of the river there were many trees on both sides, every kind of tree; its leaves wither not, its fruit ceases not; all months does it ripen; its fruit serves for food and its leaves for healing". Thus does the Almighty's wisdom feed His people with food convenient for them. This tree was an emblem of Christ, and all the blessings of His salvation, and the leaves for the healing of nations mean that His favor and presence supply all good to the inhabitants of that blessed world.

- Sipiwe Chisvo, World President





For us as World Federation women, the Tree of Life serves as a reminder that God's purpose will not be thwarted. The creation that was lost in Genesis will be restored. Therefore, we can look to the future with great confidence and hope in our God amid hardship.

Editor's word: Immutability

In times of hardship and despair, we often feel as though God has abandoned us, that He has forgotten us amidst our struggles. However, it is precisely in these valleys of life that the doctrine of God's immutability—His unchanging nature—becomes a cornerstone of our faith. The Bible consistently affirms the immutability of God. In Malachi 3:6, God declares, "I the LORD do not change. So, you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed." Similarly, Hebrews 13:8 states, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." These verses reassure us that God's character, purposes, and promises remain constant despite our fluctuating circumstances.

Our faith is most profoundly tested during times of difficulty. It is easy to trust God when life is smooth, but true faith is revealed when we remain steadfast in adversity. Likewise, our character is often unveiled during such trials, exposing both our strengths and weaknesses.

The book of Exodus provides a powerful illustration of God's immutable nature during times of distress. The Israelites, despite being God's chosen people, frequently doubted and complained during their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. They witnessed God's miraculous interventions, yet their faith wavered in the face of adversity. God led them step by step: God took presence in a cloud during the day and in a fire during the night, so all could see Him and follow Him. This is my prayer, that God would lead me because He knows better where should I go, what area should I avoid, and the best timing. When the Jews found themselves in great danger, when they were followed by the Egyptian army to be killed, an exceptional thing happened. He changed His position from front to behind, God Himself standing between His people and their enemy. Can you imagine

God standing between you and your enemy? What a great God we have! Not only that, but He has not used the form of fire anymore because the fire would show the people, would reveal their position, but He used the cloud, thus hiding His people from His enemies in darkness. "Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so, neither went near the other all night long." (Exodus 14:19-20)

The lesson that they had not learned was to trust God anywhere: in the desert wanderings like in Egypt, in the hard times like in the victorious times, and in times of

need like in the times when they received help. Even though their circumstances changed so much, one thing has not changed.

They had the same God. The God they met in Egypt was the same God that was with them in the

desert and the same God that helped them establish the Land of Milk and Honey.

And the God who was with the Israelites in Egypt, during their desert wanderings, and as they entered the Promised Land, is the same God who is with you today. He is unchanging and ever-present, regardless of our circumstances. We can take comfort in the fact that

the God who sustains us in our moments of victory is the same God who upholds us in our times of sorrow. He is the same God in our country of origin and the same God

in the countries we travel. As Deuteronomy 31:8 assures us, "The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

God's immutability means that His love, power, and faithfulness are constant. In a world where everything seems to be in a state of flux, we can anchor our hope and trust in the One who never changes.

- Ligia Istrate, Tree of Life Editor

Seasons in the Son

Popular music band, Westlife, crooned – "We had joy, we had fun, we had seasons in the sun" and this evokes a life with mountain peaks and deep valleys.

The last couple of months have been particularly difficult for Indian Christians. We went down on our knees and cried out to God to breathe His peace into our lives. It was just then that verse 21 from Daniel chapter 2 spoke to me. "He changes times and seasons; He deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning."

Our God is the One who changes seasons. The winters are His and the springs are His. The autumn is His and so are the rains. It does not matter what season it is. What matters is Who is with us in all seasons.

The India Unit has rightly selected a beautiful theme for our new quadrennium: Trust—Transform—Transmit Trust God in all circumstances

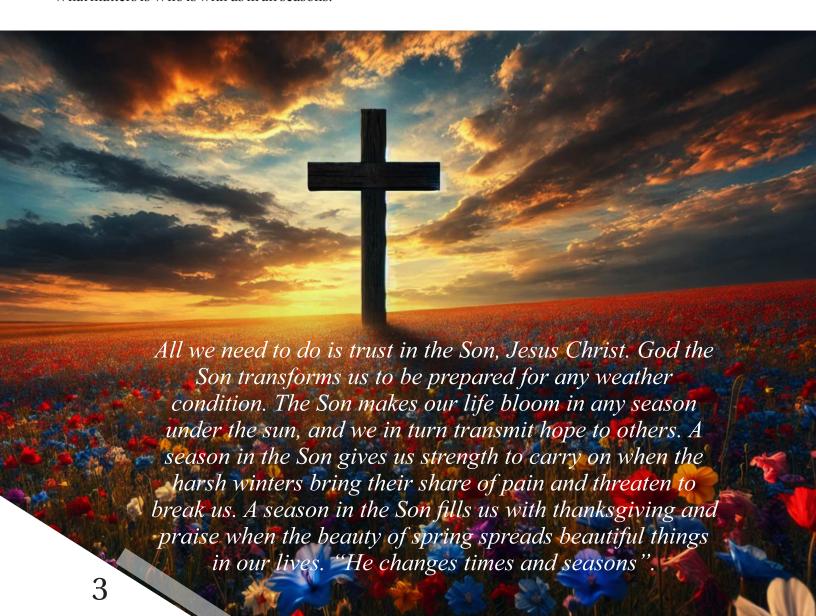
Be Transformed

Transmit it to others

As God changes seasons in our lives, we have the privilege to enjoy seasons in the Son! All we need to do is trust in the Son, Jesus Christ. God the Son transforms us to be prepared for any weather condition. The Son makes our life bloom in any season under the sun, and we in turn transmit hope to others. A season in the Son gives us strength to carry on when the harsh winters bring their share of pain and threaten to break us. A season in the Son fills us with thanksgiving and praise when the beauty of spring spreads beautiful things in our lives. "He changes times and seasons".

Let us trust in the God who is in control of all seasons. My prayer is that we have seasons in the Son!

- Glory George, Vice-President South Asia Area



News

Commission on the Status of Women 2024

Ecumenical Women at the UN. On Tuesday March 19th 2024, the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW) led the Morning the Lay Council, led the prayer. A reflection was given by Rev. Robyn Anderson, pastor from AME Zion Church. Rev. Valarie Manes from the New England Conference made the call to commitment and all sang the closing song, "When We All Get to Heaven".



The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) convened in New York at the United Nations Headquarters from Monday, March 11th through Friday, March 22nd. As is always the case, the excitement was "off the chain" as they say. It is estimated that close to 10,000 participated. Agreed conclusions contain an analysis of the priority theme and a set of concrete recommendations for governments, intergovernmental bodies, other institutions, civil society actors and other relevant stakeholders to be implemented at the international, national, regional, and local levels. The World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women were contributing consultants.

Every day started with Morning Worship at the Church Center for the United Nations (CCUN) by one of the members of

Worship. The opening video that was played as worshipers entered the Chapel was "Every Praise is to our God", by Hezekiah Walker. This was the theme song of our worship. Rev. Dionne Boissiere led us in the singing of the chorus. The introduction was done by Ms. Joan Capel, and the prayer of confession was led by Mrs. Dorian Carson, the First Lady of the New York City District



AME Zion Church. The Scriptures were read by Ms. Kathy Manes from the New England Conference, and then Mrs. Carolyn Humphrey, the New England Conference President of

There were so many workshops to choose from including the Side Events which are held at the United Nations as well as the Parallel Events which took place in different locations, for example: "Faith Actors United to Address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence". On Wednesday March 13th, Ecumenical Women presented its first Advocacy event at the Church Center for the United Nations. A highlight was the attendance of the entire CSW68 Cuban Delegation and the Cuban Ambassador to the UN. On March 14th was another Parallel Event at the Salvation Army: "The Role of Media in Preventing Violence Against Women." Each panelist had a personal story to share about how they were personally involved in tactics that undermined their ability to report the news concerning gender-based violence against women in many countries throughout the world.

- 1 in 10 women have been victims of domestic violence since the pandemic
- 1 in 4 women feel unsafe at home
- Every 35 seconds a woman is a victim of violence in Romania

• Gender apartheid must end Other Parallel events were "Amplify Her: Centering Girls"



Voices in Decision Making" (March 19th), and "Empowering Families for The Future: The Role of Faith Communities" (March 21st). An event about Gambia's situation regarding female genital cutting had in attendance the First Lady of The Gambia, Fatoumatta Bah-

sponsored a Virtual Parallel Event at CSW68. Dr Xellex Z. Rivera was our presenter. All the World Officers participated in this event. Topics included:

- Fighting against sexual harassment in the religious communities
- Serving in public offices from underreported religious communities
- Leading advocacy for immigrants and refugees
- Be a change agent
- Be a mentor
- Empower women and girls
- Ensuring clean water for better lives

There was a chance for open dialogue and sharing which turned out to be a highlight of the workshop. There were insightful comments, honest

> sharing of information, and sharing tips so that we can be front and center with leading change.

On the last day, Friday March 22nd, a unique event took place: "When Viruses Have More Reproductive Rights Than

Women: A Comedy Guidebook", a disarming and fresh approach to women's reproductive health.

- An extract from Joan Capel report

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

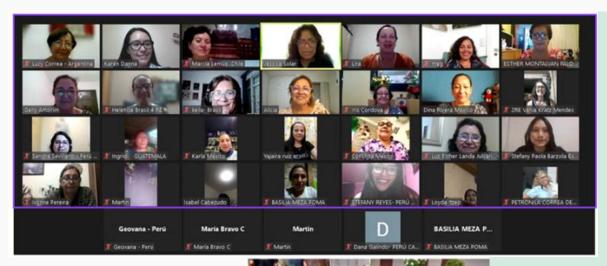


Two events stood out: between March 21 and 28 a valuable training session was held online using the Canva platform, specifically aimed at women belonging to the community of Methodist women. This meeting focused on strengthening digital skills by carrying out two practical projects: the creation of a virtual birthday card and an invitation for women's meetings in churches. The fundamental purpose of this initiative was to empower Methodist women in the region, recognizing the crucial importance of digital education in this context.

To guarantee the success of the program, we had the support of the World Vice-President, Ivonne Pereira, and some m e m b e r s o f t h e confederation's board of directors. In addition, seven young volunteers from Peru joined, who served as trainers



Barrow. Because he has two wives, President Adama Barrow decreed that because she was his first wife, she would serve as First Lady. Also, the Queen Mother participated. On Tuesday, March 19th, 2024, the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women



in each room, while Rev. Andrea Reily provided support in the translation into Portuguese. Despite some challenges, such as the lack of access to computers by some participants, this activity was

Charle virtual
BIOHUERTOS

-Compartiendo experiencias
Lic. Julieta Salgueir

ARRAINA

Rev. Roberto Loiola

BRASI

Ing. Rodrigo Teixeir

Brasi

Uruguay Brasil Chile

Margarita Itten

ARRAINA

considered of the greatest importance for the development of digital competence in women, an aspect highlighted by ECLAC as essential for their empowerment.

In addition, on September 13, a virtual talk on bio gardens was held, with the participation of leading specialists on the subject. Graduate Julieta Salgueiro addressed the importance of the interaction of microorganisms with the environment, while Engineer Rodrigo Teixeira provided valuable information on the appropriate seeds to germinate in bio gardens, as well as the care necessary for their cultivation. Additionally, Rev. Roberto Loiola and Sister Margarita



Itten shared their experiences in Brazil and Argentina, respectively, related to growing bio gardens in their communities and churches. This talk, which combined theoretical and practical aspects, had as its main objective to promote the generation of food resources in

churches and communities, thus promoting selfsufficiency and solidarity. The board of directors oft h e Confederation of Latin America and the Caribbean broadcast the talk through its social network on Facebook, expanding its

reach and contributing to the dissemination of this important information among a broader public.

- Karen Danna, former HKMS

Latin America Area Seminar, Curitiba-Paraná, Brazil, April 2024: Intertwined in Christ

For five days in the month of April, a group of more than 90 women were together at the Latin American and Caribbean Area Seminar and were blessed that the Board of Directors of the World Federation was present. Presidents of the units from Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay, as well as one of the Scholars of the Helen Kim Program, were also present.

A beautiful and unique aspect of this time was the Weaving Together Program. While Officers of the Unit, the World, and the represented



countries shared inspiring updates, another group of participating

our Seminar.

Our Closing Worship was extraordinarily beautiful. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Madame President Sipiwe, and we deeply appreciate the support of Marta Ida, President of the Women's Society, along with the

local church's praise group for their willingness to help. Although most participants spoke only Portuguese or Spanish, we are grateful for the translation support from Andrea, Vera, and other sisters who spontaneously joined in. It was wonderful to see messages shared without language barriers. We also thank God for the support of Bishop Hideide Torres and Debora Corsi in the Conferences, as well as Iris and Silvia for the Workshops. Special thanks to our youngest missionaries, Nina

and Arthur, who shared in our final time of Communion, making it a truly special moment of worship and dedication.

We are grateful to God for this beautiful time, which helps us appreciate and love life even more, especially life in and with Christ.

> - Jessica Solar Latin America President

women engaged in Conferences and Workshops. As the sun began to set, we reunited, continuing to share the work of the Area.

The Thursday in Black Campaign made its presence felt at the Seminar, followed by a meaningful celebration of the Lord's Supper.

On the final night, there was a special session with Louise, the World Secretary, that was both lively and meaningful. During this time of worship, small groups were formed, each expressing in unique ways the meaning of being "Intertwined in Christ", the motto of

The 11th Joint European Area Seminar: Europe: Continental and Europe: Britain and Ireland

The 11th Joint European Area Seminar was held in Porto, Portugal in June and was organized with the help of Lilla Lakatos (Europe: Continental Area President), Filipa Teixeira (Europe: Continental Area Vice-President), and Barbara Easton (President of Europe: Britain and Ireland). Before the seminar, the Weaving Together Program took place from June 11 to 13, involving the Unit leaders, the Presidents of the two areas, and the World Officers. The Opening Service on June 13 marked the first day of the seminar. Barbara Easton led the worship, Sipiwe Chisvo, the World President, delivered the sermon, and Margarita Todorova, former President of Europe: Continental Area, officiated at the Lord's Supper. On the second day, June 14, the theme was "Roots in Christ". Lilla Lakatos explained that the word "seminar" comes from Latin and means "to put seeds in the ground". The Bible study was conducted by Ana Almeida, a Portuguese youth leader and future minister. Her presentation, titled "Prayer, a study made through the Gospel of John" taught us that the focus of prayer should be on God rather than ourselves and our desires. While God will fulfill our desires, there are conditions: "that the Father may be glorified," "if My words abide in you," "if you bear fruit," and "that your joy may be full." These conditions are also the purposes of



of prayer. God is not a genie in a bottle but is present in our circumstances to transform us and equip us with the tools we need to navigate difficult times. Following this insightful study, all the World Officers presented their tasks within the framework of the World Federation. Participants then had a

break for sightseeing. The evening devotions were led by Ivonne Pereira Diaz, the World Vice-President, on the theme "Rooted and Grounded in Christ". She drew a parallel between the biological world of plants and our spiritual lives. Just as roots provide stability, structure, and nourishment to a plant, we need these qualities in our lives, which we achieve through prayer, meditation, Bible study, and openness. On June 15, the theme of the day was "Healing Leaves". The day began with International Worship, and Ruth Parrot

from Methodist Women in Britain taught us about the history of the "Thursdays in Black" movement. She delivered a powerful lecture on how this movement began in Argentina, where the mothers of the disappeared protested every Thursday at the Plaza de Mayo against the disappearance of their children during the violent

dictatorship of the 1980s. The keynote speaker, Deacon Kerry Scarlett, Vice-President of the Methodist Church in Britain, gave a moving speech titled "Ravens, Wild Flowers, and Hidden Treasures", inspired by her personal experiences and her work with survivors of slavery and human trafficking. She highlighted the various reasons people are abducted, such as



housekeeping, agriculture, production, sexual exploitation, and drug transportation. Scarlett shared real-life

examples and small acts of resilience, expressing how she was blessed by these women even though she had aimed to bless them. Following this impactful speech, participants engaged in sharing groups and workshops they had signed up for, which included prayer walks, crafts, liturgical dance, drama, and a session on neurodiversity. In the afternoon, area meetings took place. The evening devotions were led by Heidi Hogan, a Helen Kim Scholar. She spoke about the biblical story of the woman with a bleeding issue, emphasizing how Jesus redefined her from being labeled as "unclean" to being called "daughter". Heidi urged us to discard the labels others or we place on us and to embrace what God says about us. She also drew a parallel with Max Lucado's story of Punchinello. The evening concluded with a Portuguese cultural event, where the Methodist Church of Porto blessed us with dances, songs, and Portuguese food.



On the last day of the seminar, June 16, the theme was "Everlasting Fruits". The day began with International Worship, followed by a panel discussion

about our churches. The panelists included Kerry Scarlett, Heidi Hogan, Ngui Ting (World Treasurer), and Mirella Manocchio, President of the Protestant Women's Federation in Italy and a Methodist Minister in Rome. The Helen Kim Memorial Scholars also had a session where we had the opportunity to get to know them better. After lunch, there were sharing groups focused on the future of our churches. The evening featured a delightful Love Feast led by Barbara Easton, which included sharing groups, prayer, songs, and dance. The event concluded with everyone blessing each other with the Hebrew Priestly Blessing in several languages.

- Ligia Istrate, Tree of Life Editor

Article about World President Sipiwe Chisvo in Teologiese Studies



On 5 April 2024, the author Martin Mujinga published a wonderful article about the World Federation's current President, Sipiwe, with the title: A frican

women, religion and COVID-19: The bedrock of Sipiwe Chisvo's peripherycentre

The title recognizes the vital role that religious African women play in maintaining societal stability during pandemics, using their faith-based identity to make significant contributions. It further explores how these women from marginalized communities use their religious beliefs to challenge historical norms and redefine their futures. The article demonstrates that the peripherycenter model empowers African women to harness religion to shape their destinies. It also highlights Sipiwe Chisvo as an exemplar of African religious women who aided vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to her historic appointment as the first black woman to head the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, representing over 3.5 million women from 71 countries.

Sipiwe Chisvo was born on 15 November 1957 in Highfield Township, Harare. She was the fourth child in a family of nine children born to Frederick Musarurwa and Easther Sarudzayi Choto. After completing secondary education, she enrolled in a Counselling Certificate course with Connect. She diversified her studies by pursuing a Cake Icing and Flower Arranging Course with Harare Polytechnic College. The last course was a tool to empower her to start her own cakebaking business for different functions. Sipiwe got married to Godfrey Chisvo on 29 June 1974 and their marriage was blessed with five children, ten grandchildren, and two greatgranddaughters (Chisvo Online interview

with Mujinga 05 May 2023).

Chisvo's visibility grew during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the critical contributions of African women. Using the periphery-centre framework, her journey from the societal margins to a leadership role showcases how her faith and community service overcame social barriers. Her story exemplifies how oftenoverlooked selfless acts by African women are crucial to community resilience, especially in crises. The pandemic's impact on Zimbabwean women underscored her leadership, particularly through her soup kitchen for the vulnerable. Her virtual appointment as a leader of the World Federation during the pandemic reinforces the idea that those from disadvantaged backgrounds can rise to prominent positions. Chisvo's selfidentity enabled her to transcend social barriers and despite lockdown challenges and economic hardships, her humanitarian efforts demonstrated the resilience and vital role of African women. Her leadership inspires others from similar backgrounds, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and documenting African women's contributions to society and religion.

To read the entire article, please access: http://www.hts.org.za Open Access HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies ISSN

What's in a Word?

Every April, Methodist Women in Britain meet for a residential in the Peak District, a beautiful hilly area near the centre of England. It is a time for teaching, worship, and fellowship and numbers are doing well, rebuilding after Covid.

This year the theme was, 'Words Create Worlds'. Brilliantly led by Jenny Pathmarajah and Becca Byass, we considered the ways people use words in our relationships with each other and in our relationship with God. We thought of the power of words to build up or to harm, noting that harmful words can stay in our minds for a long time, even if they are only very few words.

We saw that most of the time, the words we use are not 'neutral' – they reflect choices that we make or color the way we, and others, understand a situation. When we are talking about helping others, do we let them speak for themselves about what they want or do we decide that we know what is

best for them?

Under Jenny's expert leadership, we looked at the whole issue of words in translation. She helped us to see that words mean different things at different times in history or, maybe, depending on who is saying them. Sometimes a word can be acceptable at one time, but unacceptable at another. Sometimes the same word has different connotations for different people, because of their life-experience.

Now that we had all become linguists, Jenny took us on to look at the difficult business of translating the Bible. The Bible was written mainly in Greek and Hebrew by people who lived in the world of 2000 or 3000 years ago. The words used described things in the ancient world, some of which we don't have today. They also belonged to ways of doing things and thinking about things in the past – some of which don't translate into the modern world either. In translating the Bible into English (or any other language), the translator cannot do a simple 'like for like'. Often no direct word is available. So, the translator has to make choices about which word best fits what the writer was saying at the time. English is a language with a big vocabulary, so the translator may have many options to choose from. How is a choice made? What role does the translator's gender, politics, and worldview play? And another important question: who is paying for the translation, and what pressures do they bring to bear? On a Sunday morning, we became translators ourselves. Armed with a sheet of possibilities from Greek dictionaries, we developed our own translations of The Lord's Prayer, "Our Father...". This was really exciting as people came to see what choices had been made in the past - and began to make choices of their own. Here's the translation from Maddie, our Helen

"Exalted Instigator,
May your character be put on a pedestal.
Manifest your authority.

Kim Scholar:

Administer our regular sustenance throughout the days of our lives.

Also, omit from your mind our going astray.

Abandon all and every debt of ours. Don't bring us toward trouble."

- Barbara Easton, Europe: Britain and Ireland President

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