



Autumn Newsletter



Greetings!

It's hard to believe that it is time for me to say "Goodbye"! It doesn't seem five minutes since I was standing on Leeds Station, wondering what I had just let myself in for. Never could I have imagined the turmoil Covid put us all through, and the way it would impact on how Methodist Women in Britain operate! It is difficult to put the last four years into words but here goes:

I spent invaluable time working with and learning from Hilary Evans, the previous President. As the pandemic took its hold, we had to change our ways of working; our face-to-face meetings had to be held online. I learned new technological skills and became friends with Zoom. Of course, speaking visits stopped though I was able to speak to several groups via Zoom, but we carried on with a positive attitude, planning for the future.

We quickly realised the impact covid was having on MWiB and that it was important to adapt and improve our communication system, so we began to hold planning restructuring meetings. Not able to meet inside anywhere, Hilary, Nina and I met in the courtyard of Baddesley Clinton to plan. Areas and Trustees were reduced to twelve and now each District has at least one Ambassador. The role of President was split into Co-Chair North and Co-Chair South to make the role more manageable. Maggie Woods (Co-Chair South) and I have worked closely together.

The demise of Touchstone, was a real disappointment, which together with the hostilities between ethnic groups, prevented us from completing the Inter-faith project, 'Whose Bag is it anyway?.....', sponsored by the Swiss and Spanish World day of Prayer Committees. We still have the packs which could be used when inter-faith relationships have settled down.

I have been privileged to represent MWiB at a number of events. The World Methodist Peace Award, when Rev Inderjit Bhogal, received the award for his work with Churches and Cities of Sanctuary. I was privileged too to be invited to meet the World President of the Methodist Council, "J.C" Park. I attended the closing service of Methodist Church House, and I spoke at 'Daffodil Day', on two occasions.

As trustee of Epworth Old Rectory, I have been able to keep an eye on our MWiB Exhibition and I attended the reopening with Bronwen and Nina. The exhibition highlights the work Methodist Women have done in the past and as time goes on, it will be added to.

It has been great to travel around the country and to visit the Isle of Man, to speak and meet with you all, especially at Swanwick, to get to know you and count you all as friends.

My visit to Colombia, was a life changing experience. During my role I have focused on Education, Gender Equality and Climate change. We have raised money for young women in Malawi so that they have the opportunity to continue their education, whilst their children are cared for. We have given Empowerment gifts to indigenous communities that I visited in Colombia. The visit of Sister Santusa from Bolivia, was a real blessing and even though we cannot speak each other's language, we have become firm friends with the help of Google Translate and What'sapp, and I am pleased to say that the Bolivian Methodist Women have now received the money we sent for the furnishment of the kitchen at Tabitha House! The European World Federation Seminar in Porto was a real blessing, when we were able to meet Methodist women from fourteen different countries

Much of my time has been spent in writing articles and reports for the Methodist Recorder, Connexion and our Newsletters as well as Prayers and blogs for our website, chairing committees and representing MWiB on our partner committees.

None of this would have been possible without a dedicated Exec team so I want to say a huge thank you for all the support and friendship, especially when the unexpected has landed in my Inbox! Thank you too to Hilary and Maggie; it has been great to work with you. Thank you too to all the Trustees and Ambassadors and for the way in which you have adapted to our new structure. I will continue to pray for you all and I wish God's blessing on all the future work of MWiB.

But now life will take a different direction and as Lewis Carroll wrote in Alice in Wonderland:

'The time has come,' the Walrus said,
'To talk of other things:
Of shoes – and ships - and sealing wax –
Of cabbages - and kings-
And why the sea is boiling hot –
And whether pigs have wings.....'

I hope to catch up with you all at Swanwick

Love and Blessings

Ruth



Introducing Leonora Wassell, our new CoChair

As the daughter of a soldier, I travelled the world, including Wales, Germany, The Netherlands, and Singapore. From a young age I was given an understanding of what it meant to belong to a worldwide family. This was reinforced by my mother's teaching that we are all made by God and loved equally. I attended Sunday School in a variety of places and within a variety of strands of the Church, from small Welsh Chapels, where I danced as a daffodil leaf in the Eisteddfod to Garrison Churches where I went in a ten-ton truck. It was never dull.



My faith has always been central to my life from my earliest memories. I remember helping the teacher with school assemblies age 9. Prayers were also very important to me as I fervently prayed for my dying grandmother and events happening around me.

At 16, during my confirmation service in Singapore, I had a profound calling to serve God. I had no role models and thought the only way I could do so was to become a nun. However, 8 months later I met my future husband, and that idea flew out of the window.

I trained to teach Middle School Science, got married, had my two daughters in the next 10 years, with faith taking a bit of a back seat. I collapsed after the birth of my 2nd daughter, and it was that event which made me look at my life and search for God again. Another turning point in my life.

This shy 28yr old joined the Women's Group, who encouraged me and helped me come out of my shell. I became heavily involved in church life, Youth Group, Parish Clerk, Sunday School teacher, and more. Within 4 years I was on the trail to Ordination. It was a long journey of 4 years before I was accepted to train as a Deacon (women not being accepted to train for the Priesthood). That changed during my training, and I was ordained Deacon in 1994 and Priest in 1995.

Within two years I took up the post of Children's Worker within the Pateley Bridge Circuit. At the Covenant Service I once again heard God's voice, this time telling me that I was to join the Methodist Church. By 1 April 1998 the Church agreed, and I was received into Full Connexion. I had been diagnosed with fibromyalgia and the combined physical stress of ministry and the psychological stress of hiding the secret of my sexuality meant that I became too ill to continue in ministry and took early retirement in 2003. For the next 13 years I was registered disabled and became increasingly unable to do anything. At this point I went on Retreat to ask God "what was the point of my life".

For the third time in my life, I heard God's voice, this time telling me that I was made as I am and to just be me. So that is what I did. I came home, sewed a rainbow around my clerical shirts and gave my testimony. Within a week I no longer needed my wheelchair. I felt as the first disciples did on the day of Pentecost, full of the Holy Spirit, and feeling capable of achieving anything. I went back into part time ministry in 2017 until 2022 when I retired again.

In my Theological Training I pledged myself to work for all the marginalised in society, knowing the feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, despair, unworthiness, rejection, and discrimination. All of this inhibits our spirituality and we become diminished. Many women around the world live diminished lives because their voices are not heard whether because of cultural norms, patriarchy and misogyny, or sexual, physical and emotional abuse. I pledge to work with all within MWiB to continue the work of justice for women through the love of Christ. Everyone deserves to flourish and become the person God intended them to be.

I am mum to 2 daughters, and Grandma to 3 grandsons. I love crafts of all sorts, writing, walking, and having fun. Humour is a great healer and I enjoy making people laugh. So, here's to having fun as we work together.

I look forward to the challenge before us and to getting to know you all. Thank you for the privilege of taking on the role of Co-Chair.

Lee



Saturday 28th September, 3pm at Wesley Methodist Church, Harrogate



**Commissioning service for Rev Leonora Wassell
as CoChair of Methodist Women in Britain**

God sees, God hears, God cares



Preacher: Rev Gill Newton, Past President of Conference

Join us for fellowship & refreshments after the service



Wesley Methodist Church, 28 Oxford Street,
Harrogate HG1 1PP
Nearest car park: 1 minute's walk away, £3.40/2hrs
Jubilee, Union Street, HG1 1DJ

Live streamed via Zoom – contact cochairs.mwib@gmail.com for the link

Methodist Women in Britain Resources

Many of you over recent years will have been purchasing our resources from the lovely Elaine Banks who has looked after them so well. Elaine has handed over the resources mantle to the equally lovely Caroline Fillery so **Thank You Elaine** and **Welcome Caroline**.



World Federation Day Saturday 19th October 2024

You Put Your Whole Self In

at Stamford Methodist Church, 11 Barn Hill, Stamford, Lincs PE9 2AE from
10am to 4pm

Come and share a day of thinking about what it means to belong to a world-wide community of faith. We will gather in Stamford for our once-a year celebration, as part of the World Federation of Methodist & Uniting Church Women.

The theme for the day is '**Embodied Worship**', reflecting on Paul's words in Romans 12, that we bring our whole selves to our life of faith. We will be **led by Dr Nancy Day** – a Kenyan musician and British worship leader. Nancy brings together her African heritage, British experience and spiritual depth – so we can expect a day of deep thinking and joyous celebration!

And, of course, there will be the chance to meet and share with other Methodist Women from across the country, renewing old friendships and making new ones. Looking forward to seeing you all.

Please note three things:

EATING: *On a Saturday, Stamford Methodist Church hosts 'Second Helpings', which provides a meal from 'rescued food' from supermarkets and other suppliers. (The local equivalent of Food Cycle). This is a fabulous green initiative. They have offered to host a meal for us on our World Fed Day, but we have to let them know numbers. The alternative choice is to bring a packed lunch. Second Helpings try to accommodate dietary requirements but they are working mainly with whatever food is given to them... Paying for the meal is on a pay-as-you-feel basis.*

PAYING: *The cost of the day is £10. For ease of payment, we request that you bring this with you to be collected on the day.*

BOOKING: *please reserve your place by emailing*
mwibworldfed@gmail.com *telling us:*

How many places you want

Whether you want to join the Second Helpings meal

If you have any dietary needs.

Reports from Maggie

The Mary Bosanquet Lecture 2024

After a full day at Methodist Conference I must admit I was not at my most alert going to the annual Mary Bosanquet Lecture. Chine MacDonald, the speaker, is a well respected theologian, author and broadcaster as well as leading a think tank so I was really looking forward to hearing what she had to say. To my shame and despite my best intentions I had started to read her latest book but had not been able to find the time to finish it. It was good to see that the lecture was very well attended.



Chine spoke powerfully with a focus on two stories from Luke's Gospel...The Magnificat and the parable of the persistent widow....offering a challenging and alternative perspective on the power and potential of women. Some of it was not easy to listen to. Stories of the impact of colonialism on China's home country of Nigeria were particularly hard to hear. Chine was calling us to continue to fight for justice and change.

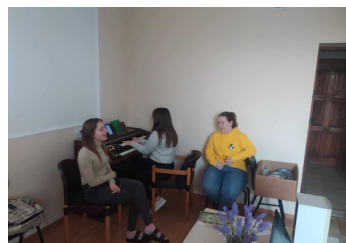
The lecture generated a robust question and answer session and we were all left with food for thought.

The annual Mary Bosanquet lecture is a gift to the Methodist Church and aims to raise the profile of female theologians. It is available on our website and on youtube.

DORA UPDATE

I have had a progress report and photos from the DORA project in Ukraine. The project supports young people, mostly girls, who are seen to be vulnerable because of the war. The project is based in an area between the sub Carpathian mountains in Ukraine and the border with Hungary. The churches in the area aim to provide a safe environment for people fleeing the war or seeking to cross into Hungary. The Dora project provides support in terms of education and life skills for young people, mostly girls, whose family life and education have been disrupted leaving them vulnerable to traffickers. False offers of jobs in the UK or America or presents of designer clothes are often used to tempt young people away. The photos show the young people at a weekend event.

Dora sends a big thank you for the money that has been sent. There is a district afternoon at Battle Church in Sussex on Sept 21st to raise funds for DORA.



An overview of the German Frauenwerk Seminar in May 2024 by Liz Marriott

Unterwegs mit Rut und Noomi (Journeying with Ruth and Naomi)

This was the title for our Frauenwerk Seminar at Haus Höhenblick, in Braunfels which is situated in the centre of Germany. The Seminar is the German equivalent of a Swanwick Conference, but on a much smaller scale, this year there were just 16 of us travelling to Braunfels from mainly the South and Centre of Germany with just two of us who had travelled by different routes from Berlin in the East.



We all arrived during the Thursday afternoon and enjoyed the sunshine until our evening meal after which we assembled for our first session which had the title *Unterwegs – miteinander* (Underway with each other), this was a session of getting to know each other, our leader for the evening, Cornelia, had printed our names in different scripts from around the world and we had to choose a badge, then find out from printed sheets whose name was on it then identify the person it belonged to. At the end we all had our name badges and wrote our names in normal script on them, we also had a sheet telling us a little about the script our name had been written in. After a day of travelling most of us were ready for bed following evening prayers.

Friday morning following breakfast we assembled together again, this time led by Pastorin Raphaela Swadosch, our first session was titled *Unterwegs: Wider Willen* (Under way against ones will). We looked at the reasons Naomi and Elimelech had travelled with their sons to Moab then the turn of events that led to Ruth and Naomi making the return journey, to put the book of Ruth into context Raphaela open it up with references to the old testament books that form the Tora, giving us insights into the laws of the time, that governed the way people might be expected to relate to each other.

Friday afternoon was free, a group of us went on a walk and were treated to a wonderful flying display by Red Kites circling over a newly mown field, then on to an park area, which was a former mine, a natural spring provided pool where we could walk through and enjoy the water, it was lovely to take shoes and socks off and enter the fresh spring water walking round the central rail. The water contained some minerals as it left your skin feeling soft and refreshed.

Friday evening we were back together again this time with the title: *Unsere Wege - wie sehen sie aus?*



Weg ausgestalten (Our paths - what do they look like? design the path) in this session we compiled a worship focus with dolls, plants fabric and other items depicting the journeys we had considered earlier in the day, we also selected a postcard or picture from those scattered on the way and wrote our names on it, then returned it to the way. We ended the evening with prayer, then enjoyed time together in the coffee bar.

Saturday followed a similar pattern, joining Ruth and Naomi as they journeyed back to Bethlehem in *Unterwegs: Zurück zu den Wurzeln* (Underway: Back to the Roots),

then in the afternoon *Unterwegs: In eine neue Zukunft* (Underway: Into a new Future) as we concluded the story of Ruth and Naomi, with Ruth's marriage to Boaz and the birth of Obed and a brief look at the genealogy that follows through to David and Jesus. In the evening session we revisited the focus we had making slight alterations, then picking a card that we had not selected for ourselves and writing a blessing or message on it, for the person whose name was on the back of the card, these were then returned to the display. The evening then took on a bit of a party atmosphere as we celebrated our time together. The weekend concluded on Sunday morning with a reflective Worship, farewells and lunch.



What do you get when you bring together a hundred Methodist women from all over Europe for the Quinquennial European seminar of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women? That was a question in my head as I landed in Porto – even though I was part of the planning team... Fortunately, my colleagues had done this before. As my Portuguese colleague said reassuringly, in faultless English, ‘Don’t worry. This is not my first rodeo!’ And what a rodeo it was. Women arriving from all over Europe – from countries with big Methodist communities like Ireland, and countries with tiny Methodist communities, like Serbia. Because the world executive attends every seminar, there were also women there from Hong Kong, Chile and Zimbabwe. And, lots of friends from Methodist Women in Britain. Women of all different sorts and from many different backgrounds; young women and older women; ordained and lay... even a few men!

The event lasted from Thursday night to Sunday night. The programme was shaped by worship, with a service of Holy Communion at the beginning and a Love Feast at the end. As you may expect, there’s a wide variety of worship traditions across the churches of Europe, so the challenge was to bring these together with sensitivity and integrity. Our watchword was Paul’s message to the church in Colossae – ‘bear with one another and so fulfil the law of Christ’. We did this very well!

The title of the seminar was ‘Rooted and Grounded in Love’. This was developed out of the World Federation quinquennium theme from John 15, ‘Go and bear fruit. Fruit that will last’. Each of the three days took the theme in a different way, looking at roots of faith, the shoots of new growth and the fruits of our growth, developing as we go back to our everyday lives. The highlight was our guest speaker, Deacon Kerry Scarlett, then the Vice President of the British Methodist Conference. She developed her presidential theme of ‘Hidden Treasures’, talking about the ways in which faith has grown and steered her life. This, of course, has led her into specialist and high-level work with people who have endured human trafficking – as well as many other desperate situations. Kerry was inspirational, and great company over the week.

Another key session was when a panel led discussion on the life of churches in the various different countries. This was a theme that popped up often through the week. It was fascinating to learn, at first hand, about the joys and tribulations of church life across the world. We learned of huge congregations in Hong Kong and small churches in many places. Some of the challenges were common: recovery from the disruption of covid and the changing nature of church attendance. Some were struggling with contradictory convictions around attitudes to human sexuality. This is particularly important for European Methodists who are part of the United Methodist Church, navigating division. The World Federation is keen to be a place where all sorts of Methodist are welcome, whichever Discipline their church has decided to follow.

Language was not the issue it might have been for the Seminar. The World Federation works internationally in English. Many of the European women speak English with a skill that puts my O’ level German to shame! However, we did try to incorporate other languages as we could. Singing the Faith blesses us with hymns in Spanish and several African languages, and these were much enjoyed. The second biggest language group at the Seminar was German speakers, but I remembered that ‘The Day Thou Gavest’ is very popular with German Methodists. I hadn’t previously understood that ‘How Great Thou Art’ is a Swedish hymn, written by a minister watching a terrific storm break of the Baltic Sea. It was great to see the enthusiasm with which our Swedish contingent led us in that!

The Seminar came to a climax with the Love Feast. Despite this being a deeply rooted Methodist tradition, it was unfamiliar to most of the people there. But, in a spirit of ‘bearing with one another’, the room was willing to give it a try. This turned out to be the most profound and moving part of the trip. People laughed and cried. They held each other and prayed deeply with and for each other. They shared their Christian story and talked about what God was doing in their lives. One woman in my group began, ‘After my mother was sent to Treblinka...’ It was powerful stuff... Roots, shoots and fruits indeed. And, with the Love Feast, we were fed for the return home. We have re-charged our spiritual batteries, we have learned new things and made new friends across the whole of Europe. We are blessed indeed!

Barbara Easton President Britain & Ireland WFMUCW

(an edited version of her Methodist Recorder Article about the Porto seminar)



Helen Kim Memorial Scholar Report – Madeleine Reed

In preparation for writing this report, I went back through my calendar to make a list of the things I wanted to address – bear with me, folks; there are six items, and I have a lot to say about all of them. I’ve even given them headings to make it a little easier to read.

Swanwick Conference

The very first thing that has happened to me since my report in the Summer Newsletter was of course the Swanwick Conference in April. The theme was *Words Create Worlds*, and as an avid fan of language and its uses, I was extremely excited.

The keynote speakers were Rev. Jenny Pathmarajah, who is a longstanding member of Methodist Women in Britain, and Becca Byass, who works for All We Can. Becca spoke very powerfully about the ways in which the words we use to label others and ourselves can change who we are, and I know that during her talk, I wasn’t the only one who became misty-eyed. Jenny, meanwhile, spoke about the problem of translation, and the impossibility of translating accurately. For the Sunday Bible study, she gave us the Lord’s Prayer in the original Greek and lead us through making our own translations – the recordings of the weekend are all on the MWiB YouTube channel, and the booklet of Lord’s Prayers translated by the attendees can be found on the website – I would highly recommend reading it.

Of course, one of the main appeals of the Swanwick Conference is the fellowship we share with one another. I always love the gentle and understated intimacy of breaking bread with siblings in Messiah, so events like this where we all sit down to meals together are very precious to me. It was wonderful to see friends who I only get to meet once a year, and to share worship and conversation with others who I only usually see through a computer screen.

Porto Planning Team

Of course, throughout the spring and early summer, I was also attending several planning groups, and watching other things slowly come to fruition. One of these planning groups was for the Joint European Area Seminar in Portugal. If you have managed to get so far and not heard about the Area Seminar, then I admire your talent – everyone was buzzing with excitement. For me, who has only ever been abroad twice – to Brazil with the other Helen Kim Memorial Scholars, and to Ireland to join with Methodist Women in Ireland at their Killarney Conference, both in the Spring of 2023 – I was very eager to take my first steps onto the continent. Before we could go there, though, we had to plan the event, and I can’t deny that, as soon as it was suggested to me that I might run one of the workshops there, I broke out in a cold sweat – more on that in a moment.

East Anglia District Day

Before Portugal, I had two other events to attend. I had been booked to speak at two District Days, one in May and one in June, the week before I flew to Porto.

On a pleasant midweek morning, I jumped in my little car, whom I call Jadzia, and zipped off with my music, and my satnav, blaring out the open windows. I was as nervous as I was delighted to be invited to the East Anglia District Day as keynote speaker, although I was rather unnerved, as a Wiltshire lass, by how level Norfolk is – as I crested one hill to discover that it was the last for a while, I called out to God, ‘Lord, what did You do? It’s so *flat!*’

In Diss, Norfolk, I was given hospitality by one of the local women, who showed me welcome beyond anything I had been expecting. I was introduced to my host's friend, and the three of us had a wonderful time as they took me out to dinner, and gave me a tour of the beautiful town with its historic churches and its lovely mere.

My talk was called *Welcome and Hospitality*, and I spoke about how those two things differ from one another, and times when they contradict. I was a bit quiet and hesitant, I think, as it was the longest talk I had ever given, but everyone was so kind to me, welcoming me in, providing me with a packed lunch, introducing me to people – it became quite difficult to maintain my nervousness. In the afternoon, I gave them an activity, which was to break into pairs and to interview one another, then to join larger groups and, instead of introducing themselves, to introduce the one whom they had interviewed. I had a lot of fun planning this activity, and a lot of fun running it, so I sincerely hope they had fun doing it! I was so blessed and lifted by my time there that I was walking on air for over a week afterward.

Yorkshire West District Day

The week before the Area Seminar, I had another District Day – I and Heidi Hogan, the Helen Kim Memorial Scholar in Ireland, had been invited by the Yorkshire West District to their Zoom event to talk to them about the things that we have been getting up to since we were appointed in 2022. They invited us after one of their women read an article I had written about the workshop Heidi and I had lead together at the Methodist Women in Ireland Killarney Conference in April 2023. Our talk was an hour long – from worrying that I wouldn't talk for long enough at East Anglia, I now worried that I would talk too much, but again, as I now recognise as the norm for MWiB women, we were received with gentle lovingkindness.

On a side note, I really think we should bring the word 'lovingkindness' back into common use – it describes perfectly the vast majority of the women I have met during my time with MWiB and the World Federation.

Joint European Area Seminar

Now we come to Portugal.

The planning meetings had served to whet my appetite and make me very eager to meet Lilla and Filipa in person. Lilla Kardosné Lakatos is the Europe: Continental Area President, and Filipa Teixeira is the Vice President. The event was overseen primarily by these two wonderful women and our own Area President, Barbara Easton. We were very sorry that our Area Vice President, Wanda Hogan, was unable to attend.



The title of the Seminar was *Rooted and Grounded in Love*, taken from the song that was written especially for the last World Assembly, which ushered in this four-year term under the theme 'Go and bear fruit, fruit that will last' from John 15:16. During the Seminar, we sang this song every day, and I think we were very good at it by the end.

Before the Seminar proper, the World Officers gathered for the Weaving Together Programme. It was such a lovely thing to have the World Executives with us, leading us in worship and sitting with us at meals. It was easy to feel a little shy of Sipiwe Chisvo, when she sat at the head of the table and was referred to as Madam President, but the heart of our faith has always been humility, and when she sat down with us in the dining room, she wasn't frightening at all – she was our sister in Messiah.

Pictured on previous page: From left to right: Alison Judd (President Emerita), Heidi Hogan (HKMS Europe: Britain & Ireland), Ivonne Pereira Diaz (World Vice President), Louise Wilson (World Secretary), Sharon Schuler (HKMS Europe: Continental), Sipiwe Chisvo (World President), Verena Glück (HKMS Europe: Continental), me (HKMS Europe: Britain & Ireland), and Mrs Ngui Ting (World Treasurer).

The Weaving Together Programme was a wonderful opportunity for me and the other three European Helen Kim Memorial Scholars to see what other Units in Europe are doing – such as the protests against domestic violence in Italy, the fight to remain as members of the World Federation in Bulgaria, and the offering of resources and wisdom from the Methodist women in Switzerland to their sisters in Serbia during a time of hardship.

This was also the first time that Sharon Schuler, one of the two Europe: Continental Scholars, was able to meet us – Heidi Hogan, Verena Glück, and myself had all had the pleasure of meeting in Brazil last year, so it was a real delight to finally welcome Sharon into our arms – the four of us became comfortable together very quickly, and it was such a pleasure for me to be among other passionate young Christian women – a luxury I have not been able to indulge in regularly until very recently, since two of my three siblings have come to Christ over the last 18 months.



After the Weaving Together Programme, the Seminar finally began – woman after woman came pouring into the Ipanema Hotel, donning the bright pink lanyards with the Seminar logo on them, laughing and embracing, and occasionally trailing a vaguely shy husband.

Each day was a different part of a plant – on day one, we spoke about flowers and gathered a basket of the national flower of each unit that was present. President Sipiwe Chisvo gave the opening address, and we shared in Holy Communion.

Day two was based around the roots of the plant – we spoke about being grounded in love and heard a beautiful Bible study on prayer by Ana Almeida, a Portuguese preacher. We sang a great deal of songs in different languages, and went sightseeing in the afternoon. The evening devotions were given in a very moving way by Ivonne Pereira Diaz, the World Vice President, through a translator.

On day three, we thought about healing leaves, and heard our own Ruth Parrott talk about the origin of Thursdays in Black. The keynote speaker, who took the stage at midmorning, was Deacon Kerry Scarlett, lately the Vice President of the Methodist Conference in Britain. Kerry has worked a lot with survivors of modern slavery, so you can imagine the tears that were shed while she spoke. Afterward, we all joined different sharing groups all named after the different fruit of the Spirit, which was a lovely way to get to know a small number of women very well and see how God is working in the different Units around Europe – I was blessed to be in a sharing group that help a woman from Sweden – who was very patient with my broken attempt at Swedish – and a woman from Macedonia.



After lunch, we had the workshops. This is what I had been dreading. I had never lead a workshop that went on for an hour and a half before, and I was very grateful to our Co Chair South, Maggie Woods, who was leading it with me. The title was *Embracing Neurodiversity in the Church*, and it seemed that all of my autistic traits which I am usually moderately good at masking all came out to play for the duration of the workshop – I couldn't sit still, or make eye contact with anyone, and I think that, every time I opened my mouth to talk, I started up a staring contest with the tabletop – but God is good, and delivered into the room a small number of people who told me that they had benefited greatly from what Maggie and I had told them.

That evening, the devotions were led by Irish Scholar Heidi Hogan, whom I adore. She spoke about how we can believe the names that people call us, instead of listening to what our Father has called us. I actually cried quite hard during that talk – it struck a place very deep in me.

We ended the day with a Cultural Evening – listening to traditional Portuguese live music while Filipa, in full traditional dress, showed us some traditional dances. I would speak further about this evening, only I don't know how many times it would require me to write the word 'traditional'.

Day four was based on everlasting fruit, and we heard a panel of women discuss *Visions of Growth: are we ready for change?* Before lunch, the Helen Kim Memorial Scholars had some time to stand up and address the room – the planning we did together involved much laughter, but when we came to introduce ourselves, we found ourselves becoming very vulnerable and honest. We also touched briefly on who Helen Kim was and why the Scholarship is named after her.

Pictured : Helen Kim Memorial Scholars with the Area Presidents. From left to right: Verene, Sharon, Lilla, Barbara, me, Heidi.



The main point of our talk was a thing called the Wheel of Life. It was a picture on a sheet of paper – everyone got one – of a disc broken into several different segments, each called something like *Relationships, Service, Hobbies, or Finances*.

Each segment also had the numbers 1-10 listed inside, and we gave everyone several minutes to fill in their wheels with how fulfilled each area of their life felt to them – I think I had 7 or 8 on Relationships, but Relaxation only came to 4 or 5. We then challenged everyone to think of one practical thing that they could do when they got home to add another number to a segment of their wheel. For me, who decided to focus on my Spirituality segment, it meant downloading an app to help me pray more regularly.

In the afternoon, we met in our sharing groups again, and in the evening Barbara Easton lead us in a very moving Love Feast, which left many of us feeling very tearful and touched. Over the whole event, there was almost as much crying as there was laughter, I think, but they balanced very well, and we were encouraged as much as we were challenged.

Southampton District Day

There were four people from the Southampton District who had attended the Area Seminar in Porto, and I was pleased to be one of them. We planned our District Day at Romsey Methodist Church in July around the topic of the Seminar – *Rooted in Love* – and each of us took a turn on stage, talking about something which had particularly moved us. I also had the pleasure of bringing my twin, Bear, to their first ever MWiB event, and I'm excited at the prospect of perhaps introducing them fully into the warm, life-changing, and *world-changing* community that is the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women.

Conclusion

From April to July, this has been my second summer as Helen Kim Memorial Scholar, and I'm left breathless at what the Lord has done and is doing in my life. I give thanks to Him continuously for bringing me into this role – and my prayer is that I will be able to bless all of you, even if it comes to only a fraction of how richly you have all blessed me.

(I was going to say I was speechless, but that is too blatant a lie after this – the longest report I have yet written.) So, where to next, Lord? Show me, and I'll follow. How good You are! **Madeleine**

Grounded in Love Joint European Area Seminar 13th to 16th June 2024 Liz Marriott

Imagine the scene, as approximately 90 women from across Europe gather together for their Area Seminar, we are greeting friends, some of whom we have not seen for several years, we are joined by the World Federation Executive Officers adding yet another international dimension to the gathering. Eventually the noise and excitement of greetings quietens as we prepare for the opening service and holy communion.

The overall theme of the Seminar is Rooted and Grounded in Love and over the course of our time together we will delve into different aspects of this theme. We even managed to learn some words of Portuguese, taught to us by our hosts, at the beginning of each day.

14 June: Theme for the day – Roots in Christ

Each day began with a video that demonstrated the theme of the day, these were fascinating and insightful clips, giving an good idea of the way nature operates. Today's activities included international worship and a bible study based on chapters 14, 15 and 16 of John's gospel, looking at the repeated expressions, as Jesus prepared his disciples for the future. There was an update from each of the World Officers, following which we all went our separate ways for the afternoon to enjoy the delights of Porto.

We gathered again in the evening for devotions led by the World Vice President.

15 June: Theme for the day – Healing Leaves

Following the international worship, we heard the story of the Thursdays in Black movement, and how it had been adopted by the World Council of Churches to highlight the plight of many Women across the globe.

Following a powerful and interesting address by Kerry Scarlett our keynote speaker, we moved into a time of discussion in small groups, some based around a common language spoken others in English with a mix of participants.

In the afternoon we participated in our selected workshops, these included Modern Worship, Craft, Liturgical Dance and Neurodiversity. Each area then held its own Area meeting to discuss items directly related to their circumstances.

Evening devotions were led by Heidi Hogan one of the Helen Kim Memorial Scholars and we were then entertained to a wonderful cultural evening by our Portuguese hosts, with singing and dancing, local delicacies and a lot of laughter.



Cultural evening



16 June: Theme for the day – Everlasting Fruits

Following worship we engaged in a panel discussion asking “What will the future of the Church look like?” do we see visions of growth and are we ready for the changes that are needed to keep the church relevant to future generations.

After this the Helen Kim Memorial Scholars led us in a session, reminding us of the history and telling their own stories; are these young women the future?

We again spent some time in our sharing groups before enjoying some more free time coming together again to celebrate a Love Feast as our closing worship. Then all too soon it was time to bid our farewells and go our separate directions, with the hope some of us will meet again in 2026 in Auckland for the World Assembly.



(Thanks to Liz for these photos, and those on the bottom of page 10 — Editor)

Gifts given to those moving into circuit ministry for the first time—Bronwen Braidell

This year it was decided to give a small gift pack from MWiB to students leaving Queen’s to move into circuit ministry. This was not only a sign of encouragement for them but a way of reminding them of the work that Methodist Women in Britain do across the connexion. The gift bags contained a copy of our Annual Review, a wooden MWiB Cross, a pack of post it notes and an MWiB pen, chocolate and a letter of greeting, including a promise to pray for them as they begin their circuit ministry.

Rev Dr Jane Craske, Director of Methodist Formation at Queen’s said: The students were very touched by the gifts. One described this as a ‘survival kit for ministry!’ They talked of it being a good idea to focus the information on people just about to start in Circuit ministry, and this being a creative and memorable way to do it. The photo’s are from the presentations made to full-time and part-time students respectively.

One of the students, Julia, emailed me to say: *‘I have just finished studying at Queen's Foundation and am about to become a probationer minister. I would like to thank you for the thoughtful gift bag that we received. The pen and post-it notes will be put to good use, the cross is the perfect size to fit into my home communion bag and I'm sure will be a helpful prompt for conversations when visiting people and of course, chocolate is always well received!*

It was good to read the Annual Review and learn more about what you have been doing but I particularly appreciate knowing I will be prayed for as I settle in and begin my ministry.’ Please keep these probationer ministers in your prayers as they begin circuit ministry.



Former HKMS, Rach Collins, ordained at Methodist Conference this year

Linda Crossley writes:

I was delighted to attend the ordination service for Rev Rach Collins at Bradford Cathedral on Conference Sunday 2024.

I was a member of the Connexional Forum for the same 5 years as Rach, 2011-16, and was President from 2013-15.

Rach joined the Connexional Forum on MWiB's formation in early 2011. Most of the almost 40 members were anxious or nervous about the commitment and how the new movement would work. For Rach, it may have been even more daunting, joining a group of women who were mostly at least twice her age....

But I always remember her passion and enthusiasm for our work. She was then in her early twenties, and a lay worker on her home district of Manchester and Stockport. As the HKMS, she attended the World Federation assembly in South Africa in 2011 and was delighted to share that experience at many connexional and district events afterwards. Working closely with Alison Judd, then President of the Britain and Ireland area of the World Federation, Rach became a key figure in the MWiB campaign against child domestic labour, now more often referred to as modern slavery.

That memorably culminated in a number of us including Rach taking a petition, in the form of 1300 signed rubber gloves, to the government minister concerned during the Methodist Conference in London in 2013. The minister insisted we took the gloves across Parliament Square from her office where we had met, to the Palace of Westminster, where she intended that the cleaners should use the gloves to give greater profile to the campaign! Sweeping past the security checks with ten or so Methodist Women in pursuit, carrying several clear plastic bags full of turquoise rubber gloves, she said "It's a petition, Bill, just not in the usual format!"

One of the joys of the competencies that ministers are measured against is that it is much more about what God is doing than what I am doing, and also that it has always been about others noticing and confirming that call. Whether it be Steve my university chaplain who was so certain of my call to local preaching that when I eventually found it and told him I thought God wanted me to be a preacher he just laughed and said "well duh", or friends at my testimony service who had never seen me preach before saying that I make sense as a minister when they saw me in context. I've been a Christian my whole life but I really claimed my faith as my own through experiences in my teens at Christian festivals where I was challenged to not be lukewarm but as the modern-day parlance might put it, go big or go home.



Growing up in a very Methodist family, I'm a 6th generation preacher and my Great Great Great Grandad was a Primitive Methodist minister as well as many generations in between, and most recently my Mum, it was almost expected I'd be a minister "like my mum!" Yes there are things I've learnt from her but most of all I hope that I, like her, can follow this call to be the best minister God calls me to be. I am actually a minister, not because of my family, but because some of my peers showed me that someone of my age, my generation, with my shared experiences could be a minister and both in finding my call to preach and my call to the ministry God used my friends to go ahead of me and then God punched me in the stomach and said "you can do that too" so to Nay and to Paul I am incredibly grateful that you followed the call on your lives and let God speak through you into me finding mine. I've now done almost 2 years in Swindon, a place with not a great reputation but a place I've loved since I was sent and God placed it in my heart. I've mastered its magic roundabout, tried over 50 flavours at the ice cream shop, been on the local radio and been round the steam museum. And I'm loved and cared for and challenged by the people who are given to me to do exactly the same back. I've loved messy churches and school assemblies, being chaplain to an MHA Community and the local Pride Hub, journeying alongside people in all the moments of their lives and being invited in to do home communions. *In all the special and the ordinary I have found my place as a minister in Swindon.* I thank God that I get to live this life and serve these people and look forward to all the future holds with the one who holds the future.

(From: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/our-stories/my-ordination-story-rachel-collins/>)



It was both a humbling, and sometimes harrowing experience, to hear the stories of the three women who spoke, and during the hours we spent together, we shared our mutual love for God. Never has the singing of **"Beauty for Brokenness"** had more meaning, there were not too many dry eyes. After worship, the Ukrainian women stepped up and shared their experiences and answered our questions.

We heard from one young woman, who said, with great passion, her duty now was to keep her daughter safe. There was some humour, as she told us, her 8yr. girl was always correcting her English pronunciation... they attend local Churches in the area... and spoke of the welcome they had received, how "thankful" they are on behalf of their country, to have the support of the U.K. and other countries in their fight to remain an independent country. We were also given a history of years of domination and it is quite easy to see how determined they are to fight for justice.

The word **thank you** was expressed so many times in so few short hours... The only real give away to what they have, and are experiencing, were their sad eyes. A 63 yr. old Grandma, telling us, she needed to talk about her Son, formerly a teacher, now a soldier! There were times, when it became almost too much to absorb. But by golly, it made us all realise how many blessings we have.

We were shown great hospitality by the local Methodist Church, with refreshments throughout the day, and this gave us the opportunity to share companionship and catch up with other dear Friends. In the afternoon session, we wrote down our prayers for Ukraine, which we later dedicated and presented to the women, to enable them to share with their Church and Ukrainian Friends.

We prayed together, sang together and at times held hands to support one another, we remembered those Sisters who had gone to glory, and others who were unable to be with us, followed of course, by tea and delicious cake!

The Ukrainian women wrote this prayer for us... this is what they said...

"THANK UP FOR PRAYING FOR US. WE CANNOT EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE VERBALLY, OR IN WRITING, BUT WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO KNOW THAT WE MENTION YOU AND YOUR KINDNESS IN OUR PRAYERS. GOD BLESS YOU ALL. LOTS OF LOVE FROM UKRAINE"

Please keep them all in your prayers.

I could feel how these women benefitted from sharing with us older women. We benefitted also. So often we feel there is nothing we can do, get overwhelmed by different situations, but God finds a way to use us. The young women had spoken openly about missing their family members, but for just a few hours, they seemed to relax and we could feel God's Spirit midst the gathering. Slowly came the smiles.

We ended with this Ephesian blessing:

Be imitators of God, as His beloved children, and live in LOVE, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.



Our new friends –
Ruslana, Maria, Anya, Maria and Sveta

We send our sympathy to the families of these ladies, both active in Methodist women's movements.

Audrey Wells Stanley – 21st March 1931 to 28th January 2024

Audrey (Mum) was born in Croydon in 1931 and educated at St. Anne's College, Sanderstead from where she was evacuated seven times during the war. After leaving school, she worked in the Cabinet Office and did evening classes at John Ruskin College, gaining a place at St Anne's College, Oxford to read PPE. One of her tutors was Iris Murdoch. Whilst joining other Oxford students preaching for Wesley Memorial Church, she met her future husband Peter. They married in 1956, serving in a total of seven Methodist circuits.

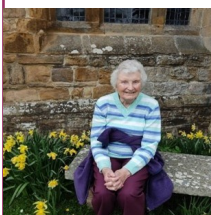


Throughout her life, Methodism remained central to Audrey. She combined family life with three children with local preaching, often driving to small country churches to take services, as well as an active role in the work of Methodist Women which she continued for many decades. In 1996 Audrey joined a peace mission to Belarus to learn about the impact of the Chernobyl disaster, taking greetings from Methodist women as well as practical help, and wrote an article about this for the Methodist Recorder. Another of her articles focused on meeting a certain important lady with Methodist origins – Margaret Thatcher! She also wrote hymns, sometimes to well-known tunes.

Audrey's life bore much fruit. Another of her many other talents was creative writing, which she took up in Leicester in the 1960s, joining a writers' circle with the soon to be famous Carla Lane. She later published two volumes of poetry and won various competitions. Her poem "The Talk of the Town" about the Regent Centre in Christchurch won the local "Quill" poetry competition. In the 80s, Audrey worked in the NHS and studied again, this time a Social Sciences degree with the Open University. Peter and Audrey moved to Bournemouth which became a much loved home for their retirement. She took up golf, playing regularly with a group of lady friends. She also learned basic computing, enabling her to be in touch with a newly discovered aunt in Canada. During the pandemic in March 2021 the Southwest Branch of the St Anne's Society (SAS) wished Audrey a happy 90th birthday via a Zoom meeting! She also enjoyed being part of a U3A Military History group and, aged 92, vividly recalled and shared her wartime experiences – the only group member to have actually lived through WWII.

Audrey lost Peter, her lifelong soul mate, in 2022. She is survived by three children (Rebecca, Nigel and Elizabeth), seven grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Her Memorial Service in Mudeford was attended by many and was a lively and fitting tribute to a life well lived. *Liz Gaere*

Margaret Wearmouth - 24 November 1938 – 25 July 2024



I was honoured to speak at Margaret's Thanksgiving Service on 15 August about her role in the various women's movements within the Methodist Church over the last fifty plus years in the Darlington District: *1976-78 Darlington District Young Wives President; 1980's Secretary Darlington District Women's Fellowship; In 1987 Network was founded and Margaret became Darlington District Network Secretary, ten years later becoming Darlington District Network President 1997-98.*

Margaret always had a passion for Women's Work and Mission becoming the District Money Secretary over thirty years ago. She understood how vital our giving is to the Mission Fund and over the last ten years took the lead in the Darlington circuit planning the Easter Offering Service, to support Mission Partners Overseas. In late February of this year she called a planning meeting & intended to take the leaders role, a fall just before Easter resulting in a broken hip prevented her taking part. Margaret's fall and subsequent operation affected her heart, which sadly did not recover.

Personal tributes were sent by many women from across the district who had worked with Margaret and valued her mentoring and gentle persuasive ways, friendship and Christian love. A local preacher for over 25 years she will be sorely missed not only by her husband John, their four children, grandchildren and great grandchildren but many congregations and our MWiB sisterhood.

Debs Coggrave - Area Trustee Cumbria, Darlington, Newcastle

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Next Trustee meeting: 4th—6th October 2024 at Swanwick Please use communications.mwib@gmail.com

initially to make contact with your area trustee and let them know what's happening in your local MWiB group.

Contact us: PLEASE USE THESE EMAIL ADDRESSES

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