



THE WORLD FEDERATION OF METHODIST AND UNITING CHURCH WOMEN

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The TREE *- of* LIFE

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President's letter

Communion with God

Just as a deer thirsts for water, David declares in Psalm 63 that our deepest thirst goes far beyond anything this world can offer. David longed for God's presence in his life, and so do we. He wrote this psalm while fleeing from his enemies, expressing a profound desire to experience God's presence and fellowship, even in the midst of fear. He compares his yearning for fellowship with God to an intense hunger and thirst.

We all, at times, flee from things that chase after us—sleepless nights, family challenges, poverty, drug abuse, addiction, and the pain of children in abusive relationships. These and many other trials keep us awake at night. Amid his fear, David called out to God, declaring, "You are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you." Like David, we also long for God in our pain and misery, and we should call on Him. Our longing for God is as intense as our thirst for water when stranded in a hot, parched, and weary land. He is the God

who saves us from our sins, and He is also the God who gives us His Spirit to dwell in our hearts, empowering us to live for Him and to become more like Him.

God has given us a land flowing with milk and honey. His creation is good and we are responsible for caring for it. God brings forth bread from the earth and creates fruit from the vine. While our physical hunger and thirst can be satisfied by His creation, it is our soul that thirsts for God, and only He can satisfy it. Thus, the soul clings to God.

If you are truly thirsty for God, seek Him with a sincere heart. Just as we cannot ignore the thirst of our bodies, we cannot ignore the thirst of our souls. To feel this way about God—to long for His presence in your life—means that you will have a living, intimate relationship with Him. Will you not seek God again and renew your communion with Him, bearing fruit that will last?

As Federation Sisters, let us go forth and bring justice, healing, and hope to all. Let us continue to know Christ and make Him known.

- Sipiwe Chisvo, World President



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Editor's word:

The Ark from the Holy of Holies

The Ark of the Covenant or the Ark of the Testimony is one of the most significant and sacred objects in Israel's history, if not the most. It was a gold-covered wooden chest constructed under God's direction to Moses and represents His presence, a covenant between Him and Israel, and also guidance. It often led Israel in their journeys and battles, symbolizing God's leadership and assurance of victory when they followed Him.

The Ark of the Covenant housed three important items: the stone tablets of the Law, manna, and Aaron's rod. Very interesting, at this very place where God meets His people. Exodus 25:22 says: "There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites."

First, the law is the meeting point between you and God. Without obeying Him, there is no personal meeting with Him. The stone tablets represent a guide, the moral and ethical laws given to Moses on Mount Sinai and they provide the foundation for Israel's relationship with God. Based on them, the covenant between God and Israel takes place. This was a reminder that their identity as God's chosen people was tied to their adherence to His law.

Second, the manna symbolizes both tradition and care. It served as a memorial of God's faithfulness and provision because when they did not have anything to eat in the desert, God gave them food. Manna was the miraculous bread from heaven that God provided to the Israelites during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Manna put in the ark of the covenant functioned as a reminder of that specific part of the Jewish History and the tradition of the Jewish celebration of victory in this case. It also suggests that God not only is a spiritual provider for His people (in terms of Torah, guidance, of laws that are given to help you), but also, He is a God that meets your physical needs.

So, God meets you in the law, He meets you in tradition, but He also meets you in your ministry, in your divine aim on this Earth, which was given miraculously to you by God. Aaron's rod was a staff that miraculously budded, blossomed, and produced almonds (Numbers 17:8) as a divine sign of Aaron's legitimate priesthood. It served as a reminder that God establishes and legitimizes leadership according to His will. He chooses each of us for a specific purpose, not because we are extraordinary or the most intelligent, but because of His divine plan. At the same time, the rod was a symbol of life and resurrection, pointing to God's power to bring life from what was dead. In His hands are life and death, and He can work miracles.

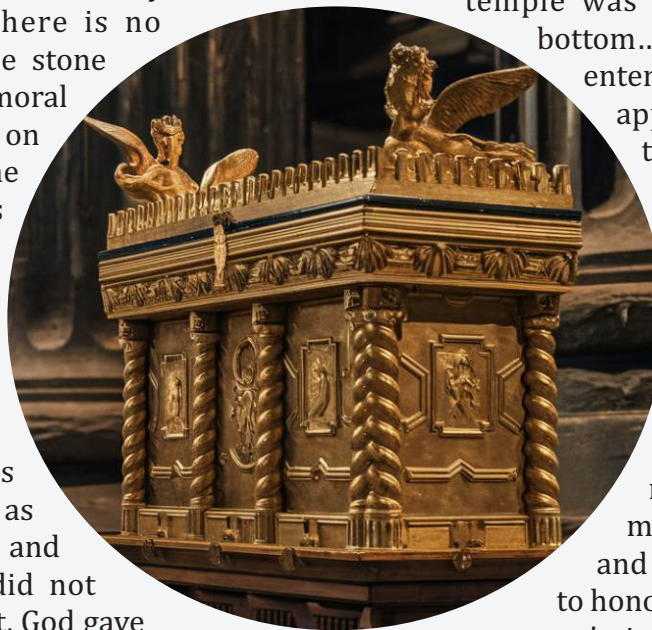
The Ark of the Covenant was the only thing in the Holy of Holies, the innermost sanctuary of the Tabernacle (and later the Temple), and only the High Priest could approach it, and that only once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, a day of fasting and repentance. Through the death of Jesus Christ, this separation between the people and the Holy of Holies was removed. "At that moment the curtain of the

temple was torn in two from top to bottom..." (Mathew 27:51) You can

enter now the Holy of Holies and approach the Ark, exactly like the High Priest. Close your eyes and imagine. Touch the tablets of the law and decide to obey. Embrace them with your heart and mind, knowing the covenant is based on them and on Jesus Christ, Who is the Law. Look at the manna and remember the miracles that God did for you and all the traditions you keep to honor Him. Put your hand in the manna's jar and play with the small

beans. They are a reminder. Take the rod in your hand and think of what God wants you to do for Him and for people. Believe in the future miracles of your God-given ministry.

Thank Him that you can enter there and stay in His presence. It is a great honor given to you.



- Ligia Istrate, Tree of Life Editor

The Study Day Program

The Study Day Program for 2024 has been provided by our sisters in the North America Area, and we are especially grateful to Rev. Dionne P. Boissière, United Women in Faith Chaplain of the Church Center for the United Nations, for her work, supported by Rev Nicqi Ashwood of the World Council of Churches. The resource is available from your Area President or on our website: –[Day Study Program World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women \(wfmucw.org\)](https://www.wfmuw.org)

The following additional material was contributed by Dr. Lois Grant-Hector, Area President of the North America Area.

MEDITATION: Bearing Fruit to Feed Humanity
–Reducing physical and spiritual poverty

Read the story of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17:7-16

"As long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality exist in our world, none of us can truly rest." Nelson Mandela.

"Fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation." —United Nations, 1998

Poverty exists everywhere in the world, in some cases worse than others, with absolute poverty leading to starvation, abuse, and eventually death. Issues such as political instability with war, inflation rates, austerity budgets, high decency ratio, climate change,

COVID 19 and unemployment have been contributing factors to poverty. Thank God for those who were resilient in maintaining and finding other means to improve their standard of living during COVID 19 when they lost their main source of income.

Isaiah 1:17 reminds us to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, and plead for the widows. Deuteronomy 15:1 states, "Since there will never cease to be some in need on Earth, I therefore command you to open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land."

Proverbs 19:17: "Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full."

1 Kings 17:7-16: Elijah the prophet obeyed God and travelled to Zarephath. The widow obeyed Elijah and prepared the last meal she had for her son and herself to eat and die and shared with Elijah. Her kitchen was blessed with food so they had more to eat and would no longer fear dying of hunger.

We are called to "Bear Fruit" to feed others with both physical and spiritual food. I call on you, my sisters, to join me in the mornings as you feed yourself with spiritual food for devotion. Have your breakfast after for your physical food, and as you ask God's blessings on the food, pray to our omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God to fill the people of this world who are starving for spiritual and physical food. I pray that their stomach will be filled as I consume the food and that they will experience the presence of the Holy Spirit the Comforter with them, giving them hope.

Let us be **Bold** in Educating others, Always to **Remain** faithful, **Fertilizing** forgiveness, **Reaching** others in righteousness, **Uniting** the unreachable, **Igniting**, and inspiring the poor, and **Trusting** God with tenacity to bear fruit that will last.

- Alison Judd,
World President Emerita

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News

West Africa
Area Seminar
in Liberia in
July.



World Secretary (Louise), the West Africa Area President (Muriel),
& the World President (Sipiwe), July 2024.

South Pacific
Area Seminar
in Samoa in
August.



The World Officers with some of the other participants

Reflections from the 22nd World Methodist Conference

humanity, and that the mission of God is defined by the movement of people (Genesis 12). Migration nowadays is a result of:

and allowing the two parties (those coming in and those receiving), to find a middle ground of understanding that we will call the third space. This third space is occupied by the blend of Christians who at some stage had to forgo some attributes in order to fit or in order to be accommodating. As Christians, we preach that we are all equal in the eyes of God, as we are all created in God's image.

This migration of Christians creates an opportunity to develop a new religious and social environment where people of different identities can meet at the altar of grace. This hybrid Christianity allows the redefinition of the order of worship, by coming up with new ways of preaching the gospel from different life settings.

My interactions with fellow believers from different countries left me convinced that the church must keep moving, embracing inclusivity as the new way of defining the running order. Inclusion is a critical value that must be embedded in our church mission statements. It highlights the strengths and weaknesses of both parties, for example, it was discussed that migrants from Africa bring the numbers, energy, and family faith whilst the destination has the resources, calling for a give-and-take scenario.

Hybrid Christianity presents an opportunity to embrace the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor. Diverse theological differences are engaged with in the same space by redefining the theology produced by the new-found space.

This lecture ministered to me and I hope it ministers to you too. Let me conclude by these questions going



World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women was very well represented at the World Methodist Conference in Gothenburg, Sweden by the World President Sipiwe Chisvo and women from South Africa, USA, Korea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Philippines, Zimbabwe, and Sweden.

I attended the 22nd Conference of the World Methodist Council (WMC) meeting in Gothenburg, Sweden, on 14-18 August 2024, under the theme: *On the Move*. Daily themes focused on Migration, Pilgrimage, and Guiding Lights.

I was inspired by the rich diversity of the global family of believers rooted in the Wesleyan tradition as 80 countries were represented. The teaching through sermons, bible studies, workshops, and fellowship were so powerful and challenging, imploring the church to adapt to the demands of the 21st century.

I would like to share my learning on Human Migration, a lecture that was presented by the General Secretary of the Africa Methodist Council, Rev. Dr. Martin Mujinga (GS).

Human Migration

It is the movement of people from one place to another, with the intention of settling, permanently or temporarily, at a new location. In his presentation, the GS stated that migration is as old as

- Divine call, where people respond to God's call to move, like the call of Abraham
- Economic issues as the migrants seek greener pastures in foreign lands
- Social issues, migrants running away from their poor conditions or abusive environments
- Political issues as some migrants seek political security in the new destinations
- As a time of divine encounter
- Reverse evangelism

With this definition, what intrigued me most were the results of this movement, which I will share as I challenge us to be introspective: are we doing what God expects of us in relation to migration?

Results of Migration

Migration puts pressure on the receiving country, welcoming and accommodating those coming in, embracing them to fit into the receiving country's culture, embracing their way of worship,

through my mind, so that we can start developing sustainable strategies that will ensure the church remains relevant to the 21st century and beyond.

1. Is the church welcoming immigrants and creating the neutral/third space for them to flourish?
2. Are you, if you are immigrants, accepting the new order of service or are you starting your own churches outside the third space?
3. What is your church doing to close the gap that has been created by this movement to greener pastures?
4. Is the church's doctrine strong enough to withstand this movement that even after the blend, the church will still be rooted in the Wesleyan tradition?

Human migration remains a global phenomenon, and as the church is *on the move*, let's embrace this new way of worship, demonstrating that as the people called Methodists, we know no boundaries as we are all children of God.

Blessings!

- Rebecca Matongo, Southern and East Africa Area Vice-President

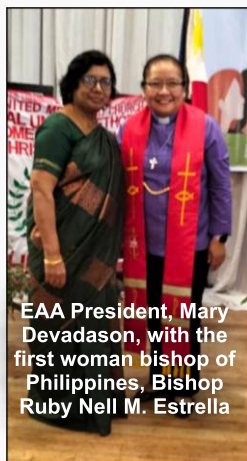
News from the East Asia Area: Visit to Conferences in the Philippines, Taiwan, and Malaysia

Greetings in the precious Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

In the last few months, I had the opportunity to participate in the following conferences:

PHILIPPINES:

The 36th anniversary of ministry was celebrated in Baguio City, Philippines, from



EAA President, Mary Devadason, with the first woman bishop of Philippines, Bishop Ruby Nell M. Estrella



June 26th to 28th, with about 350 women in attendance. The theme was "Faithful Women Reaching Out to Empower Others Through God's Grace."

The event featured a grand opening service with a flag procession and worship symbols, followed by a keynote address by Deaconess Rebecca Kathleen S. Vidal and the official opening by President Mercedita J. Lopez. The gathering included business sessions, reports from various Annual Conference Presidents, and a solidarity night with presentations. The event concluded with elections, Holy Communion, an inspirational message from Bishop Ruby Nell M. Estrella, the first Woman Bishop in the Philippines, and the installation of newly elected national officers, with Mercedita J. Lopez being reelected as president. Attendees left feeling blessed and inspired.

TAIWAN:

The 52nd National Women's Conference of the Methodist Church in Taiwan was held in Sanyi



from 16th to the 17th August, with the theme "God's path." Over 300 Methodist women from across Taiwan attended, along with notable leaders including Bishop Huang Kuan Yu and East Asia Area Officers. The event featured worship, Bible study, testimonies, and a message from Elder Hong Shanqun titled "Live for God." Attendees enjoyed performances, group discussions, and reflections from two young sisters. The conference concluded with the election of new leadership, with Shih Hsiao Hui elected as the new president. The gathering was a time of learning, worship, and fellowship, leaving participants eager for next year's event.



EAA Officers at the Conference

MALAYSIA:

The 13th Session of the General Conference of Methodist Women was held from 4th to 6th July, with the theme "Rooted in Christ". About 110 participants from six conferences, along with invited guests and East Asia Area President Mrs. Mary Devadason, attended the conference. The opening service was led by the President Ms. Evelyn Sim, with Bishop Dr. T. Jeyakumar of the Methodist Church in Malaysia delivering an inspiring message titled "We Must Work Together", based on Nehemiah 3:1-5. The service concluded with Holy Communion. There were reporting

sessions and the key moment was the election of new officers for the 2025-2028 quadrennium, where Ms. Evelyn



Sim, with Bishop Dr. T. Jeyakumar of the Methodist Church in Malaysia delivering an inspiring message titled "We Must Work Together", based on Nehemiah 3:1-5. The service concluded with Holy Communion. There were reporting

highlighting examples like Joel, David, Joseph, and Daniel, who trusted God despite their challenges. The service concluded with the installation of new officers, conducted by Rev. Dennis Raj. Each officer was given a candle and a packet of salt, symbolizing their calling to be the salt and light of the world.

Methodist Women Center, Ulu Klang, Malaysia



An ideal setting with comfortable accommodation and seminar facilities



The Bishop of the Methodist Church in Malaysia, Bishop Dr. T. Jeyakumar, General Conference Methodist Women President - Evelyn Sim, Secretary - Roslind Yong & Treasurer - Esther Ching



sessions and the key moment was the election of new officers for the 2025-2028 quadrennium, where Ms. Evelyn Sim was re-elected. Pastor Benny Ho, Senior Pastor of Faith Community Church in Perth, shared insights on "A Life to Invest" and also about mentoring. The Closing Service was led by Mrs. Roslind Yong, with Rev. Dennis Raj delivering a sermon titled "Be ready, be willing", based on Judges 4:17-23. He emphasized that God is always seeking willing servants,

The Methodist Women Centre in New Village Ulu Klang, Malaysia, established by the Methodist Church in Malaysia, has a rich history dating back to 1956. The Centre aimed to provide social services, focusing on women, girls, children, and youth. Over the next 20 years, the Centre expanded its services in response to the area's rapid development, offering a range of programs, including for senior citizens, in a multi-racial, multi-cultural, and multi-religious society. To accommodate these growing needs, a new three-story building

was constructed with financial support from the Women's Division of Christian Service, US, and was dedicated on November 30, 1991.

The Center has served as a socio-evangelistic and educational hub, with women playing a significant role in the mission since the early days of the Methodist Church. Building on this legacy, the current generation aimed to revitalize the aging Center. By early 2017, a call for extensive renovation was made, and with God's grace and provision, the renovation project began in 2018 and was completed at a cost of RM 3.2 million (around 735,000 USD). Although the project was expected to finish by 2020, delays caused by the COVID-19 outbreak pushed the completion to 2021. A dedication service, officiated by Bishop Dr. T. Jeyakumar, was held on July 15, 2022. The Centre, set in lush greenery, offers comfortable accommodation and facilities for spiritual retreats, seminars, events, and weddings. However, it lacks a lift, and donations are being sought to install one. For more details, visit their website at gcmw.org.my.



Bishop T. Jayakumar, Bishop of Methodist Church in Malaysia, Evelyn Sim, President, Rosaline Yong, Secretary, Ms Esther Ching, Treasurer

- Compiled by Mrs. Mary Devadason, East Asia Area President, together with Evelyn Sim and other area leaders

News from Southern and East Africa Area



Panelists on Drug and Substance Abuse at the Youth Summit.

WFMUCW-SEA hosted its first Youth Summit in Harare where the target participants were youth aged twelve years and above. There were over 200 participants including young people, youth pastors, and parents. The focus was on Sustainable Development Goal 3, Good Health and Well-being. One of the presentations was on drug and substance abuse. A cross-section of panelists which included a



Pastors praying for a girl who confessed to using drugs

former drug abuser, a Police Commissioner, a psychiatrist, an anti-drugs and narcotics activist', and an administrator of a Rehabilitation Centre facilitated the discussion. Participants were particularly keen to ask the Police Commissioner what the police

are doing to stop drug peddlers. Mentorship relationships were forged between some youths and the Area Executives. One of the panelists, a rehabilitated drug abuser who had trained to do manicures and pedicures, got customers from the people who were at the summit and other referrals.

A young lady confessed to using drugs and requested the pastors to pray for her so that she could stop. The Area assisted a woman who had been struggling with



Before

After

an enlarged thyroid gland (goiter) for the past nine years because she could not afford the medical bills to get it removed. In line with SDG3, the Area sponsored specialist consultations with doctors which culminated in the growth being removed successfully. Glory to God, Sakiner is now healed and able to look after her two children.

- Nyashadzashe Nemacha,
Helen Kim Memorial Scholar,
SEA Area

BIRTHDAY

The World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women celebrate their 85th birthday on Saturday 26 October 2024. It is quite an achievement and we thank God that, inspired by the vision of Helen Kim, we are still seeking to know Christ better and still making Christ known. We are still an influential global movement, working for justice and peace. We are still empowering women to realize their potential. Like the Tree of Life, we reach out, bear fruit, and disperse seeds for the kingdom of God to grow and flourish.

Our World Officers have been busy attending Area Seminars, and are turning their attention to preparations for our next World Executive meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in February 2025. Look out

for news about our next World Assembly in August 2026 and be on the look-out for women of vision and ability who could be encouraged to take our movement forward into the next quinquennium, 2026-2031.

- Alison Judd, World President Emerita

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ROMANIA



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