



THE WORLD FEDERATION OF METHODIST AND UNITING CHURCH WOMEN

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The TREE — of LIFE

**Yahweh and Immanuel:
Where the Infinite Meets the Finite**
Editor's word
page 2

President's letter *page 1*

Culinary Treasure *page 3*
from Johnston Methodist Church

News *page 4*

President's letter

Reflections of Gratitude and Hope: A Year-End Letter

“As 2024 ends, I cannot help but thank God Almighty for His wonderful love and care. David said in Psalms 115:1 “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name we give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness.” God has been with us throughout the year 2024. The World Officers can testify to the goodness of God as He cared for us when we traveled to five Areas for Weaving Together Program and Area Seminars: Latin America in Curitiba, Brazil in April; Britain and Ireland, and Europe Continental Areas had a joint Area Seminar in Porto, Portugal in June; West Africa Area in Ganta City, Liberia in July; South Pacific Area in Apia, Samoa in September; and North America Area in Atlanta Georgia, USA in October - November. How inspiring it was meeting women from these many different countries displaying their uniqueness in language and culture, yet, bound into one by their faith in that baby born in a manger on that first Christmas Eve. Knowing what they are doing for others and God's creation through the action plan was amazing and a milestone for the World Federation.

While celebrating Thanksgiving and Christmas, some of us usually recollect events of the past year. There may be pleasant moments and experiences that cause us to praise and thank God, but also there has been much grief too. Many have experienced pain, sickness, financial problems, and loss of loved ones.

The situation in our society and the world is rather grim. Today the world appears to be spinning out of control with violence, injustice, exploitation, war, and political unrest. In all these troubled and tumultuous times, the message of Christmas is our hope. The angels announced to the Shepherds, “Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people.” (Luke 2:10) The Apostle Paul also reminds us that “Jesus Himself is our Peace.” Peace is not something we can achieve, rather it is what God gives to us no matter what our circumstances or situation may be. May God fill us with hope, peace, and the confidence that we belong to a loving God who cares for each one of us.

Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year!



- Sipiwe Chisvo, World President

TODAY THE WORLD APPEARS TO BE SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL WITH VIOLENCE, INJUSTICE, EXPLOITATION, WAR, AND POLITICAL UNREST. IN ALL THESE TROUBLED AND TUMULTUOUS TIMES, THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS IS OUR HOPE.



Editor's word:

Yahweh and Immanuel: Where the Infinite Meets the Finite

Exodus 6:2-3 marks a significant turning point in the biblical narrative. God tells Moses, "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, but by my name Yahweh I did not make myself fully known to them." This statement presents an intriguing paradox, as the name Yahweh—often referred to as the Tetragrammaton (YHWH)—appears already in the first pages of Genesis. However, what is being revealed here is not the mere name itself, but the deeper understanding of who Yahweh is in His intrinsic nature.

In Jewish tradition, the name Yahweh is sacred and it is replaced with Adonai or HaShem, meaning "The Name." Yahweh is known as **Shem Havayah**, the name of God's existence. This speaks to an essential truth: God is not only the Creator of existence but the Existence itself. He is the ultimate reality, as every Jew declares every day through the Creed, Shema Israel, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one (and only - the Hebrew meaning)" (Deuteronomy 6:4). God is the ultimate reality and also the exclusive reality, the infinite being who holds all things together, transcending time, space, and human comprehension.*

God makes known to Moses that God will reveal Himself to the people with His proper name. And this name is a verb in a future form, because Yahve means "I will be", a short name of "Ehie

SheAni Ehie" (I will be Who I will be). Now the Jewish people have the opportunity to see God act in His own mightiness. His work will no longer be confined to the natural order. The supernatural will now take precedence. The ten plagues—or wonders—against Egypt are manifestations of Yahweh's divine power, transcending the laws of nature.

Yahweh's presence is not static; it is dynamic, active, and encompassing past, present, and future. In this way, God reveals that He is the Eternal Now—a truth that brings together what appears paradoxical to the finite mind: the finite and infinite, the human and divine, the past, present and the future all together.**



The revelation of Yahweh as the Eternal Now brings comfort to God's people. In Psalm 121:5, it is written, "The Lord is your shade on your right hand." (the message of my Facebook cover photo for several years) This verse emphasizes God's immediate and intimate presence. Yahweh is not distant or detached; He is the ever-present reality that walks with me every moment of my life.

This understanding points to a deeper mystery: Yahweh's infinite nature meets the finite experience of humanity. He is within our reality, yet beyond it. He transcends time, yet chooses to dwell within time. This paradox - the union of the infinite and the finite - finds its perfect fulfillment in the name Immanuel. In Matthew 1:23, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means 'God with us')." The name Immanuel encapsulates the essence of Yahweh revealed in Exodus. Just as Yahweh declared His presence with Israel, Jesus,

Immanuel, declares God's presence in a new and tangible way. The infinite Yahweh takes on finite human form, entering time and space to dwell among us.

Jesus, as Immanuel, is the intersection of the eternal and the temporal, the divine and the human. In Him, the Eternal Now becomes visible, tangible, and personal. God does not merely declare His presence; He lives it, breathes it, and embodies it. Through Jesus, the promise of Yahweh, "I will be with you" becomes flesh and blood. The eternal God is not only transcendent but also immanent. Meditate upon the paradox of this amazing divine love: the infinite chooses to embrace the finite, and the eternal chooses to live among the temporal. The shadow on your right hand. Yahweh. Immanuel.

For more information, see

[*https://link.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/3374462/jewish/Decoding-G-Ds-Name.htm](https://link.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/3374462/jewish/Decoding-G-Ds-Name.htm). Also, see ****Rabbi Chaim Richman, "Parashat Shemot 5782: I Shall Be,"** Weekly Torah Portions, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgVYfTTYptM&t=20s>.

- Ligia Istrate, ToL Editor

Delightfully Divine: A Culinary Treasure from Johnston Methodist Church

In South Carolina, the women of Johnston United Methodist Church (founded in 1876) have cooked up something truly special—a cookbook aptly titled *Delightfully Divine*. This cherished collection of recipes has become more than just a local treasure; it's a testament to the spirit of community, creativity, and culinary excellence. Compiled by the Margaret Cox Women's Circle, the cookbook has earned a reputation so widespread that it's even available for purchase at local pharmacies.

Each recipe in *Delightfully Divine* reflects the rich traditions and hospitality of the Johnston community. From hearty Southern classics to innovative new dishes, the cookbook offers something for every palate. The illustrator of the book is Anne Rauton Smith, an artist whose passion

for the arts and commitment to the community has had a lasting impact. For those who value both good food and community, *Delightfully Divine* offers a little slice of Johnston's history and a whole lot of heart. Be sure to grab your copy if you visit South Carolina and taste the love poured into every recipe.

Prayer that opens the book:

*God bless my little kitchen,
Bless its every little nook.
And bless me as I do my work,
Wash pots and pans, and cook.*

*And may the meals that I prepare,
Be seasoned from above,
With Thy great blessing and Thy grace,
But most of all, Thy love.*

Amen.

- Ligia Istrate, ToL Editor



FROSTY NUTS

By Anne Rauton Smith

Ingredients:

- 4 cups pecan halves
- 1 cup sugar
- 5 Tbsp. water
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 1/4 tsp. vanilla

Instructions:

Toast the 4 cups of pecan halves in a moderate oven for 8 minutes, no more. Set aside. Then mix the sugar, water, cinnamon, salt, and vanilla. Cover and bring the mixture to a boil. Uncover and boil to soft-ball stage (when tested in cold water). Since there is so little syrup, be careful not to cook it too long. Add nuts and stir until the syrup coating covers the nuts. They will look real frosty.

News



Empowerment grants 2024

Each year, funds are set aside to provide Empowerment Grants to enable women to start initiatives that empower women and girls in their community. Applicants are invited to apply for a grant only if the strict criteria are met and with the agreement of their Area President. Full details and an application form are available from the World Secretary.

This year the Finance committee of the WFMUCW was pleased to receive several imaginative and interesting applications before the deadline at the end of May. After much deliberation, two were selected as successful and each received a grant of \$5000.

The Community Sewing Training Centre in Zimbabwe and the Arms of Hope project in Romania were each commended for their application that demonstrated clear planning, identifiable outcomes, and a comprehensive budget.

At the sewing training center, led by an experienced teacher, groups of women enroll in a short course giving training in clothing design and

construction. They are then able to generate income from sewing activities, thus empowering themselves and their families. They are supported after training and can join local sewing circles for mutual encouragement. Skills development, community building, sustainable practices, and social impact were all identified as achievable objectives.

In Romania, Arms of Hope aims to make a substantial impact on the lives of Ukrainian refugees by providing essential support for fifteen families and creating a sustainable network for their well-being. Integration with Romanians is a high priority, providing space and opportunities for building healthy relationships, particularly between Ukrainian refugee children and Romanian children living at the local orphanage. Opportunities for worship, provision of school supplies and clothing, and also help with coping with trauma and managing stress are all made available in partnership with other local agencies.

Both initiatives will produce an interim report in time for the World Executive in February 2025, and a final report at a later stage.

- Alison Judd, President Emerita

Empowered Stitches Project



Some of the students with their director and founder Mrs. Mpambiri



Arms of Hope Project



North America Area Seminar Report from Helen Kim Memorial Scholar Orletta Johna (Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas Women - MCCA)

John 15:16 - "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."

As a recipient of the Helen Kim Memorial Scholarship, I had the privilege of attending the North America Area (NAA) Seminar 2024, themed "Go and Bear Fruit, Fruit That Will Last: Stewards of Humanity and the Environment." This seminar was held in Georgia, North America at the Atlanta Hilton International Hotel. This experience has been both enriching and transformative, aligning with my personal goals and the core values of the World Federation.

Objectives and Goals of the Seminar

The seminar began on the 28th October, 2024 with the Weaving Together Program. I was privileged to sit among the World Officers, Area Presidents, and Vice-Presidents and share in their roundtable discussions on the state of the church and the work done especially for women and girls.

The seminar aimed to foster stewardship for humanity and the environment, with an emphasis on sustainable practices and a focus on impactful, long-lasting contributions. This aligns with WFMUCW's mission to empower women, uphold justice, and promote peace. Each session offered practical guidance on leadership, environmental responsibility, and social justice.

Key Sessions and Takeaways

1. Opening Ceremony and Introduction of World Officers





Final day of the Weaving Together Program – Thursdays in Black

The seminar began with Attorney Barbara Bouknight, who shared her experience on breast cancer. We were introduced to the World Officers, each playing a pivotal role in driving the mission of the WFMUCW. This set a tone of unity



and collective purpose.

2. Bible Study with Rev. Pansy Washington

Rev. Washington led a powerful Bible study that centered on spiritual growth and personal accountability. Her teachings reminded us that bearing lasting fruit requires a strong foundation in faith and commitment to service. This reinforced my dedication to the ideals of the Helen Kim Scholarship—focusing on leadership rooted in spiritual values.

3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Workshops

These workshops focused on key SDGs: Poverty and Hunger (SDG 1 & 2), Good Health and Well-Being (SDG 3), and Racial Justice (SDG 16). Expert speakers guided discussions on strategies to address these issues locally.

Speakers:

- Poverty and Hunger: Dr. Angela Mullings
- Well-Being: Dr. Sandra Gadson
- Racial Justice: Mrs. Emily Jones

4. Climate Change by Avery Davis Lamb

Avery Davis Lamb from Creation Justice Ministries presented two sessions on climate change. He highlighted the environmental crisis and our role as stewards of the earth. This discussion reinforced the connection between faith and environmental advocacy, a topic I am particularly passionate about. The session emphasized practical steps we can take to reduce our carbon footprint within church activities.

5. Tour of Atlanta

The tour offered a chance to explore Atlanta's historical and cultural sites, reinforcing the concept of stewardship by connecting us with the local community and its heritage. As a Helen Kim Scholar,



this experience broadened my understanding of the diverse backgrounds within our faith community and the importance of cultural respect and preservation.

6. Holy Communion Service

The seminar concluded with a Holy Communion service. The service was a reminder of our shared faith and commitment to the WFMUCW's mission, emphasizing unity and spiritual renewal.

Personal Reflections

The North America Area Seminar was a unique opportunity to grow as a leader and as a steward for humanity and the environment. As a Helen Kim Scholar, I felt a deep sense of responsibility to absorb and apply the insights shared by other attendees and speakers. The sessions on racial

justice and climate change resonated with my commitment to fostering inclusion and promoting sustainable practices within my community.

I am inspired to continue to work and to further implement other key strategies discussed at the seminar, especially within my roles in the Methodist Church Guyana District and my ongoing projects focused on youth and community engagement.

The seminar has reinforced my commitment to uplifting and empowering young women, especially within Guyana, where issues of social justice and environmental challenges are particularly pressing.

Attending the NAA Seminar as a Helen Kim Memorial Scholar has been an invaluable experience, offering insights and inspiration that I will carry forward in my work. The sessions provided practical tools for fostering inclusivity, environmental stewardship, and community engagement, aligning perfectly with my aspirations and responsibilities.

This experience has strengthened my resolve to be a steward of humanity and the environment, advocating for sustainable practices and social justice in every facet of my ministry and community work.

To God be the glory, great things He has done!

- Orletta Johna, North America Helen Kim Memorial Scholar

World Methodist Conference in Sweden

session attracted the interest of several women who engaged actively, posing questions and exploring ways to connect further with the Federation's initiatives.



World Peace Day, September 21 The Peace of the World and the Peace of God

Jesus's promise, "*I leave you peace; my peace I give you*" contrasts the peace given by the world with the peace given by God. The peace of the world is fragile and temporary, marked by an absence of conflict or trouble. It often

depends on external circumstances, like the absence of war or personal problems, and can easily be disrupted by minor setbacks.

In contrast, the peace of Christ is a profound, inner peace rooted in the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is not the absence of difficulties but the ability to find meaning and divine love even amidst suffering and challenges. This peace transforms each moment, filling the believer's life with purpose and strength.

Jesus reminded his followers that they would face troubles in the world but encouraged them to take heart because he has overcome the world. "*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*" (John 16:33, NIV) His victory over sin and evil through his faithfulness serves as an example for believers, showing that they too can remain faithful to God despite challenges. This peace does not eliminate problems but offers the strength to endure them through

God's presence and grace. It's as if Jesus were saying: "If I can overcome the world, you can too."

10 TIPS FOR BECOMING PEACEBUILDING CITIZENS

Respect life and reject all forms of violence and their justifications.

Think positively of others, cultivating trust and goodwill in interactions.

Transform the language of war by replacing hateful words with expressions of hope.

Respect rules, understanding their purpose in creating harmonious communities.

Build clear and sincere agreements with others, repairing trust when commitments are broken.

Approach conflicts constructively, seeking understanding and creative resolutions.

Practice empathy, showing care and concern for others' well-being.

Recognize and respect diversity, valuing differences.

Be tolerant, avoiding the imposition of personal views or customs on others.

Engage actively in community participation, fostering cooperation and pursuing the common good.

The 22nd Conference of the World Methodist Council (WMC) was held in Gothenburg, Sweden, from 14 to 18 August 2024, under the theme On the Move, which focused on the sub-themes of Migration, Pilgrimage, and Guiding Lights. This significant gathering brought together Methodist, Wesleyan, United, and Uniting Churches to engage in prayer and worship, reflect and proclaim, listen, and respond to the pressing issues highlighted by the sub-themes. Participants from 80 countries, including men, women, and youth, were deeply inspired to consider their roles in addressing these themes. As part of the conference program, workshops, and lectures were organized to delve into specific topics.

A notable presentation was delivered by our World President, Sipiwe Chisvo, on the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, providing an overview of the organization, its programs, and its activities. This

Here are some questions that can help you reflect on how to be peacebuilders:

1. What does it mean for me to be a peacemaker in my daily life?
2. How can I promote peace in my personal and family relationships?
3. What concrete actions can I take to resolve conflicts in my environment?
4. How can I foster an atmosphere of respect and empathy in my community?
5. What language can I use to transform negative conversations into constructive dialogues?

6. How can I contribute to peace in my workplace or school?
7. How can I be a role model in promoting peace for others?
8. What community peace initiatives can I support or participate in?
9. How can I become more aware of my biases and work to overcome them?
10. What self-care practices can I implement to maintain my own inner peace and help others?

May the peace of the Lord be with you all!

- Ivonne Pereira Díaz, World Vice-President

men. Progress towards ending poverty needs to be 26 times faster to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030."

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gender-based violence." (UN News) We say **NO** to all forms of violence—physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, or economic. There is no justification for such harm. As leaders in our communities, let us:

- Take a stand against violence and harmful practices.
- Demonstrate solidarity through advocacy and outreach.
- Inspire change by boldly proclaiming: *Sisters, if we don't speak, who will?*

Together, we can amplify our voices to create a safer and more equitable world for all.

- Sipiwe Chisvo, World President

Empowering Women and Girls: A Call to Action

85 Years of Service: Celebrating a Legacy

On 26 October 2024, the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women proudly celebrated 85 years of dedication to empowering women and fostering community through faith.

16 Days of Activism: A Global Campaign Against Violence Monday, 25 November – Tuesday, 10 December 2024

As the **World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women**, we stand united against one of the most pervasive violations of human rights: violence against women and children. The **16 Days of Activism** provide a focused opportunity for advocacy and meaningful action.

What you do *does* make a difference. Whether your actions are big or small, the impact lies in effectively communicating the message of change. Activism begins with taking a stand—individually or collectively.

The UN Women-led campaign against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) reminds us of the alarming reality: *"One in three women experience*



This resource was inspired by the **68th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68)**, whose priority theme was: *"Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective."*

According to the UN Women's website: *"The world is at a crucial crossroads for gender equality. Globally, 10.3 percent of women live in extreme poverty today, and they are poorer than*



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ROMANIA

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