



Methodist Women in Britain **10** 2011-2021

For women, for justice, for Christ

Newsletter Summer 2021

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Dear Readers,

Since I last wrote a newsletter in February, the situation in Britain has changed, and we are all beginning to have access to a wider everyday world, as the pandemic appears to be under control in the UK at least. There is a range of emotions evident when I talk to different people: a longing for more freedom; a hesitancy about mixing in company; a strong urge to hug loved ones; and a fear that opening everything could be too much too soon. Whatever our personal reaction and fears, we need to recognise that we still need to take care to keep the virus at bay.

There is much talk in organisations across the board about the future. So many of us have had a steep learning curve for social and IT-driven media in the past fourteen months. What would we have done without Zoom style meetings? They have been a boon for keeping in touch, keeping things moving, and keeping people up to date. It seems that although there are pluses and minuses, loves and dislikes to this way of communicating, many organisations are looking to go forward with a mixed package of online and face to face meetings. The time and money saved, not to mention some reduction in polluting the planet as we travel less, are all motivators for this change. I have no doubt that new patterns of working will emerge as we all go forward. Let's try to ensure that we continue to support one another, and enjoy one another's company, whatever the future holds.

Many Methodist Women have risen to the challenges of the past year plus in many different ways. The MWiB Forum and Executive group joined the 'Zoomers' for our meetings, and our recent conference, 'Together, with Hope on the Way', was conducted online for the first time. If you missed it at the time, or would like to listen to some of it again, you can find the key edited elements on our YouTube channel at [Methodist Women in Britain Swanwick Conference 2021 - YouTube](#). The fourth of this series of videos highlights MWiB's tenth anniversary year as we celebrated together online. Our hopes of celebrating have been constrained by lockdowns, but we have a few more ideas in mind, so do look out for news.

You can also find a version of the Easter Offering service on YouTube which you are free to use individually or in groups or church gatherings as you are able. We hope you will support the World Mission Fund of the British Methodist Church through the sharing of the service in whatever way is appropriate to you. Please donate as an individual using the Just Giving facility on the Methodist Church website, stating that the donation is for 'Easter Offering 2021', or if you are able to give as a group or church your treasurer can pay the money to the fund in the same way as in previous years. Please remember that MWiB does not deal with or benefit from any of the Easter Offering donations; they go directly to the World Mission Fund to support our partners' work across the world.

A number of our MWiB District groups have also ventured into online meetings and events. It has been a delight for me to join some of these meetings or to catch up with them via my computer if they clashed with other things. As my time as President nears the end, I look forward to supporting Ruth Parrott as her Vice President through the coming year. My presidency has been somewhat different to previous ones, but no less busy. There have been some wonderful opportunities, and I have learnt a good deal. I'm sure that MWiB will continue to support and enable women in so many ways as the women of the Methodist Church have always striven to do. As for me I hope that I may, in time, have opportunities to actually meet many of you whom I have got to know via a screen. You are in my prayers.

I send my good wishes to you all as we go forward together into whatever God may have in store for each of us.

Hilary





World Federation
of Methodist and
Uniting Church Women



Methodist Women
in Britain 2011-2021

Are you passionate about knowing Christ and making Christ known?
Do you want to work with others on issues of equality and social justice?
Do you want to develop your leadership skills in your church and community?

The

Helen Kim Memorial Scholarship

is a leadership development program for young women aged 18–30
offered by World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women.

Acquire skills from other young women leaders
Participate in community building amongst young women from around the world
Build relationships with women of all generations from around the world
Work on issues of social justice with the World Federation and Methodist Women in Britain
Encourage other young women to become involved

Further information and application pack available to download at: www.mwib.org.uk
or request by email from: admin@mwib.org.uk



Methodist Conference, Birmingham 2021

As you may already be aware, this year's Methodist Conference is not taking place in its usual form. The venue has been changed, and the Conference will take place both in reality and virtually—though of course this may change again as the Government 'Road Map' for lifting or lowering restrictions evolves.

MWiB Fringe Event

Because of these changes, there will be no Fringe events and no market-place at the Conference, which has rather curtailed our plans for commissioning Ruth Parrott [*pictured right*] as our new MWiB President, and for celebrating MWiB's Tenth Anniversary [*see back page*].

Commissioning of new MWiB President

Instead, the commissioning will take place at Wesley Place Methodist Church, Alsager in Ruth's home circuit, Cheshire South, at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday 10th July. Depending on what is allowed, it may be possible to have a small congregation, or there may just be a small number taking part; either way, we plan to live-stream the event so that you can watch it with us online, and to record it for our YouTube channel. Look out for further details later in June, in mailings and on our website and social media.



EXECUTIVE MEETINGS: Wednesday 9th June (via Zoom) and Wednesday 8th September 2021

FORUM MEETING: Friday 8th–Sunday 10th October 2021

If you have any issues to raise or questions to ask, please speak to your District Forum Rep.

Meet a Mission Partner

Our Woman in Japan



At Home

Sheila Norris writes:

These days in Japan, one's own home is about the only socially acceptable place for taking a photo without a mask. So this is me, at home in Nagasaki—and yes, the cupboard behind me is bare. This is an old, wooden, Japanese-style house, and as carpenters will soon be coming to replace an increasingly weak dining room floor, I'm getting ready to move all the furniture. The question is, is the problem just the age of the floor supports, or do we have termites... again? We won't know until they take the floor up.

In the days when the chemicals used to exterminate termites were strong enough to be effective for ten years, they were also effective for weight loss, as the smell tended to reduce my appetite for quite a while! Now, however, at best the effect is five years, and only two isn't unknown. Unfortunately, termites operate on the same principle as viruses: you may not have any in your own home, but if they're in the neighbourhood, they're just waiting for the chance to move in.

So with floorboards as with the rest of life, I'm praying for grace to stay calm and deal with the situation as it evolves!



Anne Baldwin, recently returned from Sri Lanka where she served as a Mission Partner 2017–2021, shares her thoughts on being 'back home':

Life in Lancashire!

My return to the UK after two years as a Mission Partner in Sri Lanka was always going to bring challenges, but as I arrived just before the first lockdown in March 2020 there were additional ones. It was all very strange as folk were busy buying toilet rolls, pasta, flour etc—and no hand sanitiser to be found anywhere!

The greatest difference has been the isolation during the lockdowns. Having lived on a college campus, I had been surrounded by students with whom I interacted very frequently, in addition to my formal commitments. People would call at my flat, and I had only to go outside where there would be students, lecturers, spouses and children around, who would use the opportunity to practice their English.

I found being back in my own home strangely quiet, almost eerie, but unpacking my belongings (which had been in storage) kept me busy for a while. There was comfort being among familiar objects and furniture—and no need to keep an eye out for snakes!

I miss my many friends in Sri Lanka and hope to visit when we are able—but I thank God for the opportunity to serve overseas and live among people who have such enthusiasm and commitment to their Christian faith.

Anne is pictured here with the tea pluckers at Tillyrie Estate, Central Province—waiting to have their bags weighed after a days' work



A new exhibition at Epworth Old Rectory:

For women, for justice, for Christ

telling the story of the first ten years of Methodist Women in Britain

20th May—31st October 2021

Advance booking essential to ensure everyone's safety and well-being.

For further information and to book your visit, email:

info@epwortholdrectory.org.uk or telephone: 01427 872 269



MWiB Merchandise

* NEW FOR 2021! *

POLO SHIRT

- ~ Features MWiB logo with dates
 - ~ Colours: mint green or white.
 - ~ Sizes: medium or large
- Price: £14.00



Logo on shirt:

 Methodist Women
in Britain 2011-2021

CANDLE

- ~ Features MWiB Anniversary logo
 - ~ Height: approximately 7cm
 - ~ Makes an ideal gift!
- Price: £2.50 each



* Free postage and packing *

Order by email from:
resources@mwib.org.uk

ALL (WELL, SOME) CHANGE!

We are pleased to announce that after interviewing in March, we have appointed a new Communications Coordinator for Methodist Women in Britain.

Irene Hayes has served the Forum previously as World Day of Prayer representative, and we look forward to working with her in this new role, from September 2021.

We also hope very soon to interview and appoint someone into the new role of Website and Social Media Coordinator, and from September we hope to be working with a new website host.



RESOURCING AND ENABLING WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD

In the DR Congo...

The Butoke project, a small NGO working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, received an Empowerment Gift of £2,500 in 2020 after being nominated by Yorkshire West MWiB. The money was a contribution towards the equipping of a new purpose-built maternity unit at their existing clinic. The *Friends of Butoke's* February newsletter reports on their work:



“We and Butoke’s Canadian supporters have raised the necessary funds [for the building work]. We should particularly mention the Methodist Women in Britain who have very kindly donated £2500 towards the cost of equipping the clinic. The beginning of the building work has been delayed by COVID-19... We hope that the work on the Maternity Unit will certainly be begun and perhaps will also be completed in 2021.”

We look forward to hearing further reports as work progresses.

...and in Romania

In September 2020, we discovered that the Cornatel Orphanage in Romania, which is overseen by Methodist minister Christian Istrate and his wife Ligia (editor of the World Federation’s *Tree of Life* magazine) was being threatened with closure unless urgent renovation work could be carried out. Ligia told us how hard they were working to prevent this, as it would mean that the children would be split up and sent to other facilities around the country, disrupting not only their education but also breaking the ‘family’ relationships they have built together at Cornatel.

Ligia says: “The septic tank is broken, so there is always a bad smell, and when it rains heavily, the drains back up into the kitchen sinks... so unpleasant and unhealthy for the children!”

We felt that this ties in with SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, a focus of our 2019 World Federation Day, and as a practical response we were able to give a gift of £5,000 towards this specific piece of renovation work.

The accommodation at the orphanage has now been completely renovated, and a new septic tank will be in place soon.



Above: One of the renovated bedrooms, before... and after

Right: The children celebrate Christmas in their newly renovated common room.



Jumpers, Umbrellas and Plastic Bags: material culture and women's everyday experiences of Methodism since 1945

Since November 2019, Dr Ruth Slatter and Dr Hannah Worthen from the University of Hull have been working on the 'Jumpers, Umbrellas and Plastic Bags' research project. Funded by the British Academy, the project has been undertaken in close partnership with the Methodist Women's Collection at Epworth Old Rectory and would not have been possible with the support of Methodist Women in Britain.

The project's data collection phase has had three components. Firstly, Ruth and Hannah explored the everyday material things that have been donated to the Methodist Women's Collection. This included objects like ribbons made by Methodist women for the Over the Rainbow vigil in 1990, service booklets and prayer cards, and a blue knitted jumper with the Network logo emblazoned on it. Through these objects, Ruth and Hannah have been able to gain insights into the history of Methodism and stories of everyday faithfulness of ordinary Methodist women.



Sunday School prizes, contributed by Sarah Friswell, 2020

Secondly, Ruth and Hannah conducted a series of virtual interviews with Methodist women across the UK. In these conversations, participants discussed various ways in which Methodist women meet and support each other, make and use objects as part of their worship practices, use objects as reminders of special moments in Methodist women's spiritual journeys, and how they have made and used material things to advocate for social change. Participants were asked to specifically identify one object that played an important role in their

**Together,
with Hope
on the Way**

**Watch on the MWiB
YouTube channel!**

Keynote sessions, follow-up information and resources, and our online Tenth Anniversary Celebration are now available for you, your MWiB group, or your whole church to watch.

Follow the link in 'President's Letter', page 1.



Methodist practices, and photographs of some of these objects are included here. Ruth and Hannah are hugely grateful to all the women who participated in these interviews, the transcripts of which will be deposited in the Methodist Women's Collection.

Finally, Ruth and Hannah have looked at the entire run of *Magnet* magazine, from the late 1980s through into the 2000s. This hugely valuable resource has provided further insights into the ways in which material things have been incorporated within Methodist women's spiritual and fellowship practices, and their engagement in social action.

The data collection phase of this research project is now complete and Ruth and Hannah are beginning to reflect on the vast amount of data they have collected and the insights they can draw from it. They are currently exploring three initial areas of interest. Firstly, they are considering the importance of faithful friendships that women create through their Methodist networks. While material things are not necessary for these friendships to thrive, these friendships have often been and continue to be effectively expressed through gifts, strengthened by participation in collaborative making projects, and – on occasion – cemented by dressing up and participating in talent contests, performances or soiree. Secondly, Ruth and Hannah have become very aware of the role that making material things has played within Methodist women's engagement in social action. Methodist women have made objects to raise awareness of social injustice (e.g. banners for the Over the Rainbow event) as well as providing practical support for those in need (e.g. teddy bears and blankets). Finally, Ruth and Hannah are interested in the continual presence of merchandise related to groups of women within and connected to the Methodist Church and how they highlight how these material things have served to make space for these female communities, highlighting their presence and importance.

Ruth and Hannah presented some of their initial findings in the University of Hull's Department of Geography, Geology and Environmental Science lunchtime seminar in March 2021, and a recording of this seminar can be watched here:

<https://recordings.reu1.blindsidenetworks.com/hull/93dfc9052aadd0e79d0314e5ca59448e781fe4-1615984287393/capture/>



Janice Clark wearing her 'Thursdays in Black' campaign T-shirt, 2020



Crosses, contributed by Anne Morgan, 2020

Forthcoming Events



World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women

Three events coming soon—save the dates!
BOOKING INFORMATION AVAILABLE SOON



13th–14th August 2021

A global online event on climate change, planned and hosted by World President Alison Judd and Rachel Allison, British Unit Helen Kim Scholar.

Just Living: Being Faithful with God's Resources



World Federation Day Event
based on SDG 12:

Responsible consumption and production

Saturday 23rd October 2021

Central Methodist Church, Chippenham, Wiltshire

14th World Assembly
**Go and bear fruit—
fruit that will last**

2nd–7th August 2022
Gothia Towers Hotel,
Gothenburg, Sweden



Methodist Women
in Britain  2011-2021

Tenth Anniversary Celebrations

After much thought and discussion, the MWiB Executive has decided to curtail this year's Tenth Anniversary celebrations due to the coronavirus situation and the ongoing uncertainty and change.

As you will have read on page 2, our plans for the Methodist Conference—our Fringe event, our stand in the marketplace, and plans to share birthday cake at the opening session tea break—are now not able to happen, and Ruth's commissioning as President has moved to another venue.

There is still uncertainty—and anxiety for some—about meeting together in the coming months, and so we have taken the decision to postpone our remaining celebrations until 2022.

So... the Garden Party at Epworth Old Rectory, planned for August 2021, will now take place next Spring (date to be confirmed), when the current MWiB exhibition (see page 3) will be repeated for a second year. An excellent opportunity for a visit—why not consider arranging a minibus or coach for your whole District MWiB group?

We will also plan to 'make a splash' at next year's Methodist Conference, with a Fringe celebration event, and cake. Definitely cake. After all, it's our tenth birthday—plus one!

We look forward to you joining us and celebrating with us next year.

MWiB Executive Team

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