



Methodist Women in Britain

Darlington District

Autumn Newsletter

A question I am often asked is
‘Who are Methodist Women in Britain?’

Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) is not an organization, it is a movement and every woman in the Methodist Church is part of this movement.

Our Aims

- To bring women together, in order that we can encourage one another to know Christ and to make Him known.
- To encourage, resource and train women in the Methodist Church, to equip them to participate more fully in the world church and in society.
- To connect women in this country with women overseas, working in partnership with others to raise awareness of and to act upon issues of social justice around the world.

These Aims are achieved by:

Providing opportunities to meet and worship together with Christian women, times of fun, learning and fellowship. Hosting training events, varying from one day to residential conferences locally and nationally. Producing various free resources and publications to help churches and the community, e.g. dementia, hearing loss and visual impairment. Highlighting areas of need at home and overseas, raising awareness of social justice issues, climate justice as well as raising funds to support our partners and other agencies.

Organizational Set-up

At national level we have two Co-Chairs, **Ruth Parrott** in the North and **Maggie Woods** in the South, together they seek to co-ordinate the work and the outreach of MWiB and work closely with the Executive Committee. Recent changes in the organization mean that instead of using the 21 Methodist Districts there are now 12 new AREAS, each one has an appointed Trustee and several Ambassadors. Trustees, together with the MWiB Executive come together twice a year at FORUM. New ideas, new initiatives and new information are fed to the Ambassadors, who seek to disseminate information, act as a go-between and an encourager.

Darlington District has been grouped with Cumbria and Newcastle Districts as a new Northern Area. I am honoured to represent the three districts as their Trustee, a role I began in February when I was appointed at Forum. Our Ambassadors are Pamela Stenson - Darlington District; Claire Middleton – Cumbria District, and Rev Judith Oldroyd – Newcastle District. Please let any of us know your thoughts and ideas of what you would like us to plan as activities and meetings going forward to strengthen and grow this wonderful sisterhood and movement in our area.

I am excited to tell you that Barbara Easton has accepted our invitation to lead us at our first planned new Area Event at Minsteracres in March 2025. Well, you must plan ahead to reserve the best people and accommodation! You will remember Barbara was Vice President of the Methodist Conference 2021–22, and then in August 2022 she took up the dual roles of World Church Representative for MWiB and President of the Britain and Ireland Area of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. It’s quite a scoop that we have managed to book her, so make sure you have the date in your diary, 14-16 March 2025.

Debs Coggrave
Area Trustee: debscoggrave@gmail.com

October 2023

Save the Date 19 -24 April 2024
Methodist Women In Britain Residential Conference

Swanwick Conference Centre in Derbyshire

What's in a word?

Keynote Speakers: Rev Jenny Pathmarajah and Becca Byass

Worship & Workshops, Fellowship & Fun

Cost £185 Bursaries & Zoom options available

Booking opens on our website 15th January 2024



Save the Date
14-16 MARCH 2025



• **New Area Retreat**

- Minsteracres
- Facilitator
- Barbara Easton
- Vice President of Conference 2021-22
- WFMUCW President Britain & Ireland

Our friend Helen Weighell



As we are about to print this newsletter we have been told about the death of Helen Weighell (Saturday 30th September) peacefully at home in Stokesley. Helen was known and cherished by many as a long-standing member of Network and MWiB and their predecessors, faithfully playing her part in the everlasting "Line of Women". She held various offices, including District Network President 2005-2007, quietly and without fuss undertaking work behind the scenes to ensure women were welcomed and encouraged. Below is a poem written by Celia Shires that celebrates Helen. In the next edition of the Newsletter we will pay tribute to Helen more fully; for now please remember Helen, her husband Alan, family and friends in prayer.

There will be a service of Thanksgiving for Helen at Stokesley Methodist Church (High Street, Stokesley. TS9 5AD) on Thursday 12th October at 11:15am

Safe in the arms of Jesus

Heaven's arches, they're ringing,
And the Angels are singing.
A new choir has been started today.
With the gift that God gave her,
She is praising her Saviour,
As Helen, God's piano does play.

For the joy that she brought us
and the songs that she taught us,
It's with love we'll remember Helen.
For her life and her witness
We thank God for his goodness.
Goodnight. Helen, till we meet once
again.

*with love from
Celia Shires*

Hello Ladies,

As I take over from Lesley as District MWiB Treasurer, I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce myself to those of you who don't know me, although there are a fair few who do!

I was born and bred in the South, just to the southwest of London, and attended a Methodist Church from the age of about six. I became a full member of the church in 1978. I belonged to a Circuit youth group based in Teddington, where I met Steve whilst he was working down there.

Once married we moved to Teddington, then Reading and finally, 37 years ago, to Guisborough. I still live in the same house, with my husband and 31-year-old child, but worship in Danby, where I am the Senior Steward and Safeguarding Officer. I have another child (37) who is married and living in Middlesbrough with my wonderful two-and-a-half-year-old grandson – well not always so wonderful as he is in the 'terrible twos'!

In Guisborough, I help to run Women's Fellowship on Monday afternoons, where we have 15-18 ladies each week. I am currently both Chair and Treasurer of this meeting. I am also secretary for the Circuit MWiB Committee, not a particularly onerous task as we only meet twice a year these days.

I have been a member of a ladies group here in Guisborough since 1987 and an active member of Network since 1995, being on the District Committee as the younger women's representative – ah, those were the days! I also came back onto the Committee as Secretary for a year, but it was at a difficult time personally, so I retired gracefully.

As you all no doubt know, Lesley has been trying to retire from her post for some time now and I have often wondered whether it was something I could do. At our District MWiB meeting at Bishop Auckland in June last year, I finally got the nudge that I had been looking for to say I would take over from Lesley. At the time, I was due to have a shoulder replacement, so we agreed it would be after that. Once Lesley has finalised the accounts for 2022-2023, I will be your new Treasurer. Please bear with me as I take on this responsibility, I know I can count on you all to support me in this office.

I know you will all join with me in thanking Lesley for all her work over many years keeping our finances in order. I wish her a very happy retirement but know I can turn to her if I need any help.

I look forward to getting to know more of you as we journey together as Darlington District MWiB.

Sheila Jones



Introducing the Darlington District MWiB charity Sept 2023 – Aug 2024 *Bake for Ukraine*



Bake for Ukraine is an international charity based in Berlin that does what it says on the (baking) tin – playing a crucial role in providing affordable basic food via local bakeries for Ukrainian communities facing the most difficult circumstances because of the ongoing war in their country.

As stated on the charity’s website *“Bread is a fundamental and sacred food, an everyday product that everyone can relate to”*; as Christian women we recognise bread as central to our faith *“Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Luke 22:19*

The concept of sharing food is of course found in the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, *“And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.” Luke 9:16-17*

The charity states that *“through the taste of Ukrainian bread we want to remind people all over the world of the ongoing war and the effect on the people of Ukraine”*.

So we encourage you to bake and provide bread and pastries and cakes for congregations and neighbours and your own local communities as you help us to fund-raise for this year’s charity. Ukraine is known internationally as *“the bread basket of Europe”* that previously supplied a significant proportion of the world’s wheat. Their national flag represents the blue sky above and the yellow grain fields below.

For the expert bakers amongst you, you can find a recipe for the traditional Ukrainian Palyanytsya bread online.

<https://www.bakeforukraine.org/>



MWiB

Gisborough Priory Walk



Pamela Stenson, Darlington District MWiB President arranged for a Prayer Walk for the district around the Priory grounds.

Steve and Sheila Jones helped to facilitate this as Steve is a custodian of the Priory grounds, and was able to enhance the evening with a little history.

It turned out to be a beautiful tranquil evening and 20 people assembled, some local but others from the Darlington District. Pam had written prayers and used Bible passages for each area of the Priory and the hymn 'Dear Lord and Father' was used singing a verse from time to time around the walk.

On speaking to a number of people on the walk almost unanimously they spoke of the beautiful, peaceful evening and in particular when we reached the East End Arch and looked to the fields and up to the hills and sang 'O Sabbath rest by Galilee, o calm of hills above, where Jesus knelt to share with thee the silence of eternity, interpreted by love'. This was followed by silent

prayer and there was a really powerful feeling of God's presence

After a walk around the Monks Walk and gardens and the Cloisters we returned to the Pavilion for final readings, prayers and an Irish Blessing.

Doreen Bassett

Twenty Methodist women and a couple of Methodist men, plus one dog from around the Darlington District, enjoyed a wonderful mid-Summer's evening Prayer Walk at Gisborough Priory on Wed 21st June.

It was a perfect couple of hours walking around this beautiful sacred space in the centre of our town and learning more about its history from Steve and Sheila Jones as well as stopping to pray and sing and listen to Scripture and reflect at various places on our journey together.

Pamela Stenson

Do you want to come to a Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) Conference?

(Each District is offered one sponsored place every year)



All my preconceptions rose up, but curiosity killed the cat and Pam Stenson was persuasive and I thought I would give it a go. So on the 14th April, on a wet Friday afternoon we set off, a little bit late, the traffic was awful and the rain was worse. There seemed to be a lot of cars and roadworks and the time went quickly through our fingers. We arrived at Swanwick, in Derbyshire, just in time for tea.

One of my fears was quickly allayed as I discovered I was not the youngest there! We had supper with a girl called Madeleine Reed who was a Helen Kim Scholar. I had never heard of this, it's a scholarship for aspiring young women in leadership

where they are sponsored and supported for 5 years to travel, study and co-ordinate with women across the Methodist, United and Uniting Churches. This was also news to me, as I had never heard of this group before. So much to learn. The people who had been before all seemed to know this which also amazed me.

The title for the conference was *Voices in Harmony* and the first evening we heard about Methodist Women in Britain's presidential visit to Colombia. Learning about poverty, education, climate action and other social issues. Followed by night time options, marketplace craft and book stalls, circle dancing or coffee. I opted for an early night. Partly because I was tired, and everyone else seemed to know exactly where to go.

I live in the country side, but it was so quiet it was deafening. No gentle snoring, no dog, nobody to bother me. But I couldn't sleep without them all. I went to Morning prayers and found the room and found we were locked out. We decided to have prayer in the foyer when someone came and opened the doors. Then followed a hearty breakfast.

There was then news of the World Federation Day later this year on 14th October in Congleton. Porto in Portugal is the next destination in June 2024 for the World Federation's next European Seminar. I discovered that Methodist Women in Britain are part of the World Federation of Methodist & Uniting Church Women (WFM&UCW) - it is not entirely Methodist women, as we are included within many United and Uniting Churches all around the world. I have spent thirty years, over half of my life, in Methodism and have never heard of them, how can this be?

After a lovely coffee break, a quick trip to the loo meant a surprise encounter with our keynote speaker, the very lovely Pam Rhodes, whose talk was entitled *Hymns and Hers*. She was very friendly and so lovely, and it was such a girly moment applying lipstick in the Ladies. Pam talked about 62 years of *Songs of Praise*, and she has been participating for 36 of those years. She spoke about hymns for or by women, mentioning Fanny Crosby, Bernadette Farrell and Charlotte Elliot which included the songs 'To God be the Glory,' 'Christ be our Light' and 'Just as I am.' She told us of the nurse Edith Cavell, who was executed by German firing squad, and the vicar who was permitted to visit her, gave her communion and sang the hymn 'Abide with Me.' There were a few jokes and Pam had books to sell and sign and a long queue of people waiting for a hug or a photo. She sold all the books and joined us for lunch before heading home.

Afternoon workshops provided lots of different options, with enough time for two choices. After dinner and evening worship more circle dancing, shopping or coffee. I opted for coffee and an early night.

Sunday Morning's '*Rock and Roll's relationship with Worship*' with Jenny Pathmarajah, a Minister in the Cambridge Circuit currently studying for a master degree in music. Jenny talked about changing styles of worship, people in popular culture who were Christians and how the church has sometimes kept secular and religious life separate.

Reflecting on the weekend it was a beautiful house that has once been a private home. It is built on a hill and I am sure I did at least 5,000 steps. The rooms were modern, clean and lovely. The food was very good although you had to be quick for a pudding. You didn't know little old ladies could eat so much cake did you? The chef on the first night said he would make more tomorrow. There were people from all over the country, old and young, working and retired, black and white, friendly and not so friendly, kind and not so kind. At a cost of £180 would I go again... maybe.

Europe and worldwide events sound exciting and lively. It's good to realise our small individual groups, Circuits and Districts are not the whole picture. I also learnt that the WFM&UCW is part of the United Nations and campaigns for LGBTQ+, economic issues - 2030 Agenda, climate issues, education for all and gender equality.

During the weekend I found the same groups sat together, I know we are friends with each other but, to a visitor, it can feel unwelcoming so perhaps we should mingle a bit more. There were some people who looked quite sad and they needed some love, this included some of the team. Over coffee I found each one of us carry our own issues: family, church, health, illness, surely we can share our burdens as I know my sister would speak freely if she needed help.

My closing hymn would be "Brother, sister let me serve you" by Richard A M Gillard.

As I am writing this on Friday, I am not wearing black (as I was yesterday). If this means nothing to you, please talk to the leadership of the MWiB.

*Love from a swanky first timer
Penny Coates x x x*

An unexpected journey



I think by now many of you will have heard about my unexpected trip to Bolivia last December.

It did come as rather a surprise when I realised my last-minute application (a response to an email from MWiB) to represent the British Methodist Church at The Evangelical Bolivian Methodist Assembly to be held in La Paz had been accepted (only because there was no one else available to go).

So, I departed on 12th December to return on the evening of the 22nd, giving me two days to recover from jetlag and food poisoning, which I unfortunately picked up in the airport on departure, before celebrating Christmas.

Some of you may have read about my adventures in 'The Worm', our Darlington and Teesdale Circuit Newsletter? You may have even seen the article in the MWiB Spring Newsletter or the Methodist Recorder?

But if you haven't heard or seen any of the former and my story and experiences are of interest you will have your chance if you join us at Redcar for our District Advent Service on 1st December at Zetland Park Methodist Church when I will be showing photographs and telling stories about 'My unexpected Advent Journey'.

*Hoping to see you there?
Debs*

MWiB Darlington District Project

Since September 2019 I have served on the Darlington District Co-ordinating Committee with special responsibility for the Project. Over the last 2 years we have lived through exceptional circumstances, and I feel it is right that I try to explain why the way we have chosen and supported our charities has changed.

Traditionally we have supported an overseas project and a home project alternately for one year. In January of each year we asked the District Reps to nominate their church's chosen charities to be considered by the District Committee at the March meeting for us to support from the beginning of September. In March 2020 it was decided that DKMS would be our next charity from September 2020.

After that March meeting our lives changed as we were confined to our homes, our meetings cancelled, and we were unable to meet. The Committee managed to keep in touch through the magic of Zoom which was a learning curve for us all. We did manage to raise money through 'Count Your Blessings' etc., for our current charity 'Coco' but it was decided that 'Coco' be carried forward for a second year until August 2021 as the lockdown had meant that groups had been unable to meet and fundraise as usual.

The next time we managed to meet was our Autumn Day in October 2021 at Peterlee where we presented a cheque to 'Coco' and introduced our new charity DKMS. Unfortunately, we were restricted again on meeting and in January 2022 because of a lack of fundraising it was decided again to make DKMS a 2 year project to run until 2023

The co-ordinating Committee have continued to meet on Zoom which made it extra difficult when it came to voting for the next overseas charity to start in September. At our meeting in February this year it was a unanimous decision that our President should choose the next charity. Pam will give us all the details when she has researched her chosen charity thoroughly. It was also a unanimous decision to revert back to each charity being for one year only.

I have decided to retire from the Co-ordinating Committee at the end of August. I have enjoyed my time working on the Committee, but I would like to try and take things a little easier having reached a milestone birthday recently as I don't seem to work as well or as quickly as I used to. If anybody feels they can fill my vacant place, it isn't a big job. It has been a pleasure to work with Louise Clague our contact at DKMS and with June McCleave, Pete's Mum who has been a big help in so many ways.

There are other vacancies on the Committee that also need filling. Please consider if you could fill one of these. Without the Committee, none of our District meetings would happen. It is a fact of life that we are all getting older and can't do the work we used to. I have belonged to a Methodist Women's group since I first joined Young Wives as a new Mum in the late 1960's. They have sustained me through the bad and good times in my life and I have friends near and far because of MWiB who I know I can rely on.

Please hold MWiB and especially our District Co-ordinating Committee in your prayers as they plan for our future.

*Love and prayers
Christine Ridgeway*

Darlington District MWiB

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