

Articles for the next Newsletter by  
Sunday, 30th May, to Liz Stuart

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**Manchester &  
Stockport District**  
Spring Newsletter 2021

**Manchester & Stockport District**  
**MWiB Summer Meeting**  
**Induction of MWiB District President**  
**Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2021**  
**2.00 - 4.30 p.m.**  
**at St Mary's Methodist Church**  
**Wilmslow Road,**  
**Handforth,**  
**SK9 3JX**  
**Speaker: Rev Katy Thomas**

*Tea tickets will be available nearer the date*

**All**



**Welcome**

### **President's Letter**

Dear Friends,

This year, perhaps more than any other, I have been looking out longingly for the first signs of Spring. Coming back from the post-box I avidly scanned the patch of muddy, trampled grass for the first shoots of the daffodils, which transforms into a golden carpet by the side of the road - and realised that even in late January I was being a trifle over optimistic! So out for a walk a couple of weeks ago I was thrilled to discover a patch of snowdrops in bloom, and now those daffodil leaves have appeared, along with splashes of orange and purple crocuses. We all need something to look forward to, and in a year when hopes have been raised and dashed so many times it is surely even more vital.

But now, with death and infection rates falling, with the roll out of the vaccine, with brighter, warmer days on the horizon and some restrictions beginning to loosen, perhaps we can justify a little bit of optimism. So I wonder what you are looking forward to? Meeting up with the family, a haircut, eating out, a holiday maybe - all those things we used to take for granted have become so much more important! For over this last year we have missed such a lot, not least our District gatherings as a MWiB family - little did we realise when we met in Buxton last February

that this would be our last get-together for so long. Then there was our Annual Conference at Swanwick, seeing friends from across the country and beyond, sadly still not possible this year, but planning to be on-line. How much we shall value these events when they become possible again!

But on a positive note, and in the not too distant future, we are making plans for our Summer Meeting in June, when we will be inducting Chris Gregory as our new District President, albeit a year late. What form this will take is still in the balance, depending on Government and Church guidelines, but with the recent announcements ringing in our ears, it is beginning to look more possible for it to be a proper, in person, celebration. Watch this space!

Over the last months all of us have gone through a lot, some, we know, more than others, but the one constant in it all has been the certainty that God has been present with us in the struggles, the distresses and the difficulties. For, perhaps above all else, our God is a God of hope, a hope which Paul tells us in Romans 5:5 'does not disappoint us', for at its very centre is the love 'poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit'. We have had to face so much insecurity, and the future will not be without its anxieties, but our God will see us through it all, for God is faithful and we can, with absolute confidence, put our trust in this promise.

Every Blessing

Liz Stuart

interested in MWIB and Gail was encouraging her (as she did with many



others) in the hope of her being interested in the role of MWIB's Helen Kim scholar. Her interests were widespread, she keenly supported the work of 'ALL WE CAN'

Gail was the sort of friend, who, although contact was often minimal, you were able to catch up with, feeling as if it was only yesterday that we had met previously. Clearly Gail was very ill and was on a ventilator in Salford Royal, prior to this she was a patient in Tameside Hospital when we exchanged messages via email, she said at the time 'this is very hard and is going to take a long time'

*Jenny Went*



Gail was a Magnet enthusiast and one of a team of volunteer Magnet Representatives who undertook to promote Magnet magazine after we 'went independent' of the Methodist Church in 2008. She was a local preacher who made use of Magnet orders of service, articles and stories in her preaching and also set up Magnet displays and prayer corners in her local church. She helped to source the white cloths and turquoise table runners to complement our distinctive 'have you been magnetised?' turquoise branding and wore the informal uniform of a white t-shirt and turquoise scarf at events.

I valued her energy and creativity in the drive to make Magnet more widely known to an ecumenical audience of men and women between 2008 and 2012.

*Lynne Ling*

**Tributes to Gail Shepherd, who sadly passed away recently.**

I met Gail around 8yrs ago when she was the Speaker for a fellowship group meeting in the home of one of the ladies. It was an enjoyable evening and Gail led us gently into a spiritual reflection about journeying as we grow older. I found this particularly helpful as I had not long retired and moved house to a new area. We had a common interest as we were both local preachers. It was good to meet Gail at MWiB events and renew our friendship and most recently with emails from her hospital bed. She felt very encouraged by the many people thinking of her and amazed by the many messages of prayerful support.

*Sheila Tonkin*

Gail was a radiographer, very dedicated to her work. She was a very competent local preacher, well liked and well received. She was very creative, even designed posters for her church in Stalybridge. Gail always gave her 'all' to tasks she undertook.

Gail was always very calm and capable (I remember falling at our Buxton meeting, she very confidently sorted me out, got me back on my feet and lovingly kept an eye on me, even getting me some lunch!!) I first met her when she was the 'Magnet' magazine rep for the North West area of Methodism, a task she fulfilled with enthusiasm and devotion (this being in the time of 'Network') She lovingly cared for her family. When her mother she was failing due to dementia, Gail brought her to her home in Stalybridge.

I remember too, at Jo Richard's inauguration as District President at Bramhall, Gail was there with her niece, who was

### **What has kept you going through the lockdowns?**

Here are some thoughts from around the District:

From Marguerite Hall (Secretary Stockport District)

My husband and I have kept sane watching our wonderful birds and 3 naughty squirrels and listening to fabulous music. I have tried to keep fit on my exercise bike and go for short walks. It was wonderful to attend church for a little while but sadly we have closed down again. I missed it especially on Christmas Day as I have attended for years. So glad to see the back of 2020 and optimistic for the vaccine to be rolled out.



From Chris Gregory:

I've enjoyed my daily walk with a good friend, I'm usually in too much of a rush to walk and opt for the car! Between us we have lived in this area for more than 100 years and have discovered streets and pathways we have never ventured down before. Getting lost on some occasions but always finding a friendly face to put us straight! I have noticed other people are enjoying this activity and never fail to smile or chat - obviously socially distanced. We have decided that when THIS is finally over we are never again going to be too busy to walk.

Others have mentioned their gardens, attending Worship on Zoom, and while it was quieter (which is not so much the case now) being able to hear the birds singing. Personally, I would have been lost without my allotment, and the joy of chatting to people, naturally socially distanced across the plots!

From our Chaplain, Rev Ros Murphy

Greetings for 2021

Perhaps, like me, you wonder what lies ahead of us as we move from the old year, into the new, but the words of one of our newer hymns can reassure us, as we face what can only be the unknown. 'From the old, into the new, keep me travelling along with you'.

As we read the recorded memories of those early Jewish people, we might well notice similar feelings to our own, as they undertook various journeys into the unknown: with Abraham into what became known as The Promised Land, down into Egypt in a time of famine with Jacob and all his sons, back from what had become slavery into their beloved homeland, only to be dispersed yet again as they were overcome by the Assyrians and then the Babylonians. No wonder the psalmist writes of them sitting by the waters of Babylon, weeping. It was in some ways worse for them for they believed that their God was centred in Jerusalem and so they were bereft of godly guidance in foreign countries.

By the time of Jesus though, and his flight into Egypt to escape Herod's wrath, belief seems to have moved on with the assurance which Jesus certainly preached in his ministry, that God is with us, wherever we are, not anchored in a particular place. But the sense that calamity was inflicted by God on those who disobeyed his rules, lingered on and is still how some people view affliction. Some also expect miraculous intervention if they pray hard enough, especially for forgiveness for wrongdoing. That though leaves unanswered the question addressed in a 1981 Book by a

**Swanwick 2021 'Together, with Hope on the Way'**

As some of you will already know, we are not able to hold a weekend conference 'in person' at Swanwick this April. Instead, we will be having an on line Zoom event on Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup>. It is entitled, 'Together, with Hope on the Way'. The main speaker, a lady from Albania, will be speaking about her many years of work in preventing young people being trafficked. On Sunday morning there will be some input from Helen Kim scholars, Bible study and Worship. The afternoon will be a time for fun and fellowship as we celebrate our 10 year MWiB Anniversary. Please go onto the MWiB website for more information, register your intention to join in the weekend activities and make a donation of £10.

#### **Next MWiB President**

Hilary Evans will finish her 2 years as President in June. The new President will be Ruth Parrott who has served as Vice President for the past year. During her 2 years in office she will be concentrating on Quality Education, Gender Equality and Climate Change and its Impact.

The following Agenda items were mentioned and are for us as MWiB members to consider and see if we as individuals or with others can commit to any of them: Raising money for the Mexico Appeal and 'Gifts for Gothenburg' appeal, awareness of climate change and what we can do, consider supporting a young woman to go to the Conference, 30<sup>th</sup> April to 2<sup>nd</sup>. May, Empowerment gifts, 31<sup>st</sup> July last date, forms are on the website.

*Jo Richards*

date does not matter. The aim is to raise money for World Mission Fund. Giving directly on line is available. Resources will be available on the MWiB web site and video prepared and emphasis on desperately needed funds for World Mission

World Federation Event on line 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> August 2021, organised by Alison Judd, theme: 'Caring for our Climate'.

Prayer Request: we are asked to pray for the millions of Christians who are persecuted for their faith. Women are doubly likely to be targeted. We are all part of the body of Christ.

Touchstone Resource Centre, Bradford: we received an update on Touchstone which is a Resource Centre for the Methodist Church. The area served by Touchstone is very diverse and much good interfaith work is being done. We saw photos of various community activities that draw women together from many backgrounds. With such a huge increase in hate crime this work of sharing experiences, engaging in social action and outreach into the community is so important. We need to pray for all who are involved as they work at 'Making Peace'.

Epworth Old Rectory Jude Simms spoke of the ongoing research into the stories of Methodist women in the past. There is also work being done by the Curator on 'Women for Justice' covering our areas and includes the collection of artefacts. The story of 10 years of MWiB will be covered and there will be souvenir booklets.



traditional Jewish Rabbi, Harold Kushner, 'When Bad things Happen to Good People'. This is not an issue confined to any one religion but confronts us all. Another Jewish leader, also in the last century, wrote this prayer. It doesn't answer the questions completely, but it does give us guidance for our daily living.

*God does not wave magic wands to remove hardship; God works within human suffering to transform it, usually through the help of others, so we share this prayer from the Jewish tradition.*

**We cannot merely pray to you O God,** to end war and violence, for we know that you have made the world in such a way that all must find their own path to peace within themselves and with their neighbours.

**We cannot merely pray to you O God,** to end starvation and homelessness, for you have already given us the resources with which to feed and shelter the entire world, if we would only use them wisely.

**We cannot merely pray to you O God,** to root out prejudice and hatred, for you have already given us eyes with which to see the good in all people, if we would only use them rightly.

**We cannot merely pray to you O God,** to end disease and ignorance, for you have already given us great minds with which to teach others and to search out cures and healings, if we would only use them constructively.

**Therefore we pray to you O God,** for strength, determination and will-power, to do instead of just pray, to become instead of merely to wish. Amen.

*Likrat Shabbatt by Jack Riemer*

There is excellent guidance here, not just for Jews, but for all people. I think that it sums up much of what our MWiB organisation teaches us to do. May we be strengthened and guided to live in this way, whatever the future holds for us.

With prayerful love,  
*Ros Murphy*

### **The Four Homes of Mercy in Bethany Palestine**

My name is Chris Gregory, and on June 12<sup>th</sup> 2021 I will be inducted as the President of the MWiB in the Manchester and Stockport District. As part of that role I am able to choose a charity to support. I have decided that charity will be The Four Homes of Mercy in Bethany Palestine.

As some of you know, in January 2020 I travelled to Palestine to volunteer for 3 months working with the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem. Whilst there I learned of the marvellous work undertaken by this charity. Unfortunately before I could visit them I had to return early due to the Covid pandemic. In this article I would like to introduce you to this charity and the work they do. Here is Josef's story:

When 11 year old Josef came to the Homes, he was totally dependent. Now, 27 years later, despite the cerebral palsy which prevents him from walking, he can care for most of his own needs, including manoeuvring his wheelchair at will, and painting. He brightens the lives of all at the Homes with his ready smile and infectious laugh.



Clearly, the Wellspring Service has been deeply affected by the Covid pandemic. However, it is still open daily, attempting to meet the need of Street Homeless folk. The service is open 8.00am - 4.00pm daily. Hot drinks, takeaway breakfasts and lunchtime meals, as well as snack packs are being prepared and given to homeless people. Access to clothing, sleeping bags and rucksacks is still available. The future, post pandemic is entirely unknown, but it is envisaged that due to the economic crisis which will inevitably follow, there will be a large increase in folk who will require the advice, love and support which Wellspring is known for providing in abundance!

*Jenny Went*



### **MWiB Forum Report, Spring 2021**

**World Day of Prayer: Friday, March 5<sup>th</sup>** Prepared this year by the women of Vanuatu. There will be a presentation on Zoom. Reminder that W.D.of P. March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022 will be prepared by women in England, Wales and N. Ireland. All streamed Services this year will be advertised on MWiB web site

**Daffodil Day: Saturday March 6<sup>th</sup>** The Meeting will be on Zoom and Hilary Evans will be interviewed by Tony Miles. More information on MWiB website.

**World Federation Day, on 23<sup>rd</sup>. October 2021.** It is hoped that the event will be held at Chippenham Church, Bristol District, Wiltshire. More information nearer the time.

**Easter Offering 2021 Theme: Into all the World.** We are asked to use the materials provided for last year if possible, the

## News from the Wellspring

Clearly the Women's Group has not been able to meet since last March, however one way or another I have been attempting to keep in touch with our members.

This year we were unable to have our usual Christmas party, but our faithful friends still sent us some lovely gifts to share out with our members. The 'Women around the Heaton's' and Stockport Soroptomist group delivered some beautiful gifts, already packed in beautiful gift bags. These gifts are usually given out at the end of our Christmas party! No way was that possible this year! So, Peter and I did a delivery run instead. We arranged for members to meet us outside their homes. On a beautiful sunny December morning, we were delighted to meet with our friends and exchange and deliver presents. All the members we saw looked well and were very anxious to get back to group meetings.

Alex, the Operations Manager at Wellspring says that the dinner collection and delivery went really well. On Christmas Eve, 80 dinners were given out. The meals were presented in a 'tower' of plastic food boxes beautifully tied together with gold ribbon! On Christmas Day, things were busier than usual..... staff and visitors met outside under cover and enjoyed hot chocolate, breakfasts and later enjoyed dinner with presents. Two new homeless people were at the dinner. One man had been driven from Macclesfield by a concerned taxi driver. He stayed for dinner and contact was made with his sister, the same taxi driver came to collect him to stay with his sister until the New Year when he was due to sign for a tenancy.

The Four Homes of Mercy was started in 1940 by Katherine Siksek, a Palestinian Christian who recognised the need for a nursing home for invalids; this was to become the first nursing home in Palestine! Today it works as an independent charity helping the 'poorest of the poor', irrespective of their wealth, needs, race, age or religion. There are 64 residents, all are physically and neurologically challenged with very few being able to contribute to the cost of their care. The charity's mission is to serve people with special needs by providing a loving home where everyone can reach their full potential and live fulfilling lives.

*Chris Gregory*

From Jo Richards



I thought you would be interested to see the Bee panel that my friend Denise has made for our Celebration banner and gave me this morning. I think it is lovely and represents our District and of course reminds us how important bees are and how threatened they are by the use of lethal pesticides.

I have recently signed petitions asking the government to stop the use of them. I think it's important for us to support all attempts to prevent their death.

## Temptation

Jesus, fellow traveller, hold my hand in your firm grasp  
as we tramp upwards into the land of rocks and loneliness,  
aside from the calls and duties of the world.

Pause for me to catch my breath as I try to keep up.

Walk slowly into the place of the unknown,  
the place of temptation.

Be with me through the lonely days of wandering and wondering.  
Be with me as the clamour of the world retreats,  
revealing the still silence.

Sit with me in a hollow, out of the wind,  
the sun warm on our backs.

Loaf-shaped pebbles scattered around.

Is it right to change something permanent and safe,  
a pebble which has seen aeons come and go,  
to a transient loaf,  
eaten today,

more needed for tomorrow?

Am I discarding the reliable  
in favour of the short-term?

Jesus, fellow traveller, help me to  
know your will.



We stand side by side on the parapet,  
a long drop below us,  
so little between us and the plunge earthwards.  
Should I jump,  
leaving the firm grasp of security,

risking the unknown?

Your hand is in mine.

Shall I let go and trust in you when I can no longer be sure,  
fearing the repercussions?

Your temptation to jump.

Mine to stay in the safety of the already known.

Jesus, fellow traveller, help me to know your will.

Give me the courage to follow God's call.

High on the mountain, standing beside you.

Your gaze pierces the distant horizon.

The wind of change wraps its insinuating tentacles around us.

Do we seek fame, recognition, power

in the busy places of your world

or stay in the insignificance on the quieter walks of life?

Do we hasten after the values of the world,

or stay true to the call of God

in humility and obscurity?

Is it the call of the world, or the call of the Father?

As the wind swirls round the nooks and crannies of my mind,

send your Spirit to blow away the cobwebs,

clear the mistiness,

and help me to see the way I should go.

Jesus, fellow traveller, help me to know your will.

Stay with me in the time of temptation.

Deliver me from evil,

that your will may be done.

*Included by permission of Rev Ros Murphy*