

LET IT SHINE!- PRESIDENT'S LETTER SEPTEMBER 2018

Dear Sisters

I hope you have all had a lovely Summer, the weather has been fantastic hasn't it? It has been so good for holidays and getting out and about and enjoying the outdoors. We spent a week in the Eden Valley following the wedding of our oldest son, Ben on 4th August. The Eden Valley is a very peaceful place and was a good place to be to walk, relax and enjoy the beautiful scenery after the hectic preparations for the wedding.

Before we went away, I was privileged to present the MWA Memorial to Synod. The Memorial and the work of MWA were well received by Synod.

So now back to work! We now begin another MWA year with the theme of "Let it Shine!" Sr. Diane Thornton will explore this theme in greater detail throughout the year and I am sure we are all looking forward to her papers.

I would like us to consider what this theme might mean for us as an organisation. I believe, and my belief is supported by the results of the survey MWA undertook a few years ago, that there is still a role for a women's organisation in the British Province. Unfortunately, the membership of MWA is decreasing. Since we conducted this survey, I have been reflecting on what MWA might do to increase participation. The words of Jesus from Matthew 18:20 – When two or three are gathered, I am with them - kept going round in my mind. It occurred to me that according to the survey, the main barrier to participation in MWA was time. It can be difficult for busy women to commit to a regular time slot every month and with a large group altering the time slot on a monthly basis to accommodate everyone is impossible. It occurred to me that smaller groups of women could manage this more easily. At the same time I was made aware that a group of women associated with the Provincial Youth Committee were meeting regularly via Skype and were using the MWA Devotional paper as a resource for their discussions and prayers. They decided to form a new MWA Circle called "The Seedlings" and so although number-wise our membership has decreased, we do in fact have a new Circle.

This has lead MWA Executive to put together an "Introduction to MWA" pack to try to encourage women in our congregations to form MWA Semi-Circles. These groups are free to meet when they can either face to face or via Skype. The pack encourages women to join MWA and to participate in fundraising with existing congregation Circles. These packs should appear in your congregations shortly and there will hopefully be an article in the Messenger in the next couple of months.

I want to emphasise that it is not the Executive Committee's intention to replace existing Circles with these smaller groups. There is real value in having a regular meeting time and place for those Sisters who are able to attend. MWA provides an important social gathering for women. However, I think we do need to acknowledge

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that this established way of being MWA is not going to work for many women and this, I think is a possible new way for women to join what I think is a great organisation.

Our original thought was that this would appeal to younger, working women, but on consideration, it might be something which could be used with those who find it difficult to get out.

If any of you have any questions about this initiative, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am also happy to come and conduct an MWA themed service in your congregation.

Our 2018-2019 theme is "Let it shine!" – I hope we can let MWA shine and that this initiative is one way of that happening.

Yours in Christ

Sr. Janet Cooper