

Wonder Women! – Then and Now President's Letter April 2020

Dear Sisters

I hardly know where to begin with this letter. The world has turned upside down since I last wrote a letter to you all. Everything that was familiar, routine and secure has disappeared and we are all left in an uncertain and to some a quite frightening place.

News

You will all I am sure have gathered by now that we have postponed both MWA Day and Central Committee meeting in April. As a result of this, I will stay as President and Sr Naomi Barker will remain as Home and Overseas Secretary until we can meet and elect new people to these roles. The Irish Retreat has also had to be postponed. I am glad to say that Sr Kathleen Kitson has done a sterling job and managed to re-book this event for the weekend of 16th-18th October 2020. I am also pleased to be able to tell you that MWA Retreat 2021 has been booked by Sr Norma Maynard. This will be at the Briery Retreat Centre in Ilkley from Friday 10th to Sunday 12th September. MWA Executive are trying to fix a new date for MWA Day in September/October of this year and I hope to be able to confirm this in next month's letter. In the meantime please continue to write on and return the labels I have sent out. I have had a response from one Circle already! I will save them all carefully so I will be able to make the display for our day later in the year. Sr Diane Thornton will continue to write her papers on the theme of Wonder Women and we will continue with this theme into the "new" MWA year until Central Committee can meet and decide upon a new theme.

Thoughts from me

When writing this letter, I try to avoid being too devotional as I don't want to tread on Sr Diane Thornton's toes! However, I feel with everything that is going on a few of my thoughts on the current situation may be helpful, particularly as for the foreseeable future our ability to gather together for worship and prayer is to be limited.

In April 1950, the newly fledged Moravian Women's Auxiliary was four months into its launch. Thanks to the enthusiasm and hard work of Sr Eileen Shawe and her fellow committee members, the MWA had begun with its first meetings in January 1950. By April, they had had a 1000 requests for membership cards from across the British Province! Sr Shawe had been inspired by a visit to North Carolina where she saw the work of a similar women's organisation and felt the women of the British province would benefit from such an organisation here.

Sr Shawe and other Sisters created a community. A community of women scattered across Great Britain and Northern Ireland. A community linked by a love of God and a desire to grow in knowledge of the Christian faith and to serve Him in a multitude of circumstances. That community continues today – 70 years later – a smaller community, yes, but still a community of women with a desire to love and serve God.

If the events of the past few weeks have taught me anything, it is that community and a sense of community is exactly what we need right now. Coronavirus can affect anyone, whatever their age, race, religion, gender etc. But it is the most vulnerable in our society who will be the worst affected both in terms of the virus itself but also in terms of the measures the people of our country need to take to combat it.

Thanks to mainstream and social media, I have seen (and I am sure you have too) both the best and the worst humanity has to offer over the past few weeks. There are people stockpiling, thinking only of themselves, but there are also people going out of their way to help those who

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need help most. We read of and see dedicated health and social care staff, teachers, shop assistants, delivery drivers serving our population by caring for those who need to be cared for.

The message we need to take this from this is that **we need each other**. We cannot get through this crisis without each other, but neither can we get through this life without each other.

Jesus knew this, that's why He told us to gather together and He promised that when we did gather, He would be with us.

As you read this letter, there will be other Sisters reading this letter. As you read and contemplate the Devotional paper, other Sisters will be doing the same. This is also a gathering, this is also community.

Perhaps if you are sufficiently technologically skilled you could set up an online MWA group as our younger members have already done. If not, perhaps you could phone another Sister and have a chat about the papers.

Whatever you do, God is with us as he was with Sr Shawe 70 years ago at the start of this community we call MWA.

I am going to end with the words we use to close all our MWA events:

The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another

Take care dear Sisters

Sr Janet Cooper