

Wonder Women Then and Now!

I start my final paper on 'Wonder Women' with a confession: I struggle with reading. I don't mean that I am dyslexic or have trouble internalising the text on the page, but somewhere over the years the love of the written word has escaped me. I truly admire those who can completely lose themselves in a book at any time of day or night. However, during Covid one of my achievements has been to actually read books!

Two books stand out in particular: one is 'Becoming' written by Michelle Obama, the former first lady of the United States of America. It is a personal, inspirational story in which she tells of her life from her roots right through to her time in the White House. She is a powerful, intelligent advocate for girls and women and through her, many families now pursue much healthier, active lifestyles. Well worth a read!

The other book is entitled 'Remarkable People' written by Dan Walker. Dan Walker is a TV broadcaster and journalist who presents BBC's Breakfast and also hosts Football Focus among other things. He is a Christian and made the decision not to work on Sundays, something he has stuck to throughout his career. In this book he relates extraordinary stories of ordinary men and women that he has encountered during his professional life. These people have uplifting stories demonstrating inspiring Christian values in what many think of as a secular world. Many have suffered trauma, none less than Figen Murray, the mother of Martyn Hett who lost his life in the terrorist attack at Manchester Arena on 22 May 2017. The heartache and suffering that ensued is hard for Figen to release, but she has learnt to put her energies into helping others, bravely and tirelessly campaigning for better security at public venues. She says that she **has** forgiven her son's killer and that if his brother (who has been sentenced to 55 years in prison) were ever to say 'sorry' she would give him a hug, saying that Martyn had compassion for those around him. How can she not share that? Where would we be without forgiveness and compassion? A wonder woman indeed.

There are 'many other women also' who could be added to the list of 'Wonder Women' we have thought about over the last two years. 'Many other women also' was a phrase used as a theme running through the inspirational address given by Sr Sarah Groves as part of our MWA Provincial Zoom Service held earlier this year on 17 April. Sr Sarah's message encompassed many of the women who have featured in our papers, highlighting the way in which they have challenged and changed the ethos of their time, sometimes as a central figure, but often in a quiet unassuming way; from the Biblical figures of Esther, Mary and Pheobe through to the wonder women of today.

'And there are many other women also' said Sr Sarah. Yes, the list goes on.

Many of you receive news and information from The Unity Women's Desk which is based in Winston Salem in North Carolina. They do amazing work throughout the world in financially supporting girls and women in many different aspects of society. In October 2020 their letter highlighted how they help in the field of education. The best way for women to escape poverty is through education. The MWA agrees with that statement and we are, as you know, sending money to support the Maasai girls in Tanzania. Some of you may know that members of our 'Seedling' Circle within the MWA are going through several exercise regimes to raise money for this project. Maybe you can support them in their efforts!

Who could forget our own Queen, Queen Elizabeth 11? Her unfailing attention to duty throughout her life, 'whether it be long or short' as she said at the beginning of her reign can never be disputed. Long it has been and long may it continue!

May I end these two years of 'Wonder Women' by thanking all who have written papers and all who have been and continue to be wonder women in your homes, in your church congregations, in the MWA and as part of the wider world. Have a good summer and see you again when we explore our new theme 'Dreams and Visions'.

Diane Thornton