

By the time you read this, many of us will have met on Saturday 3 May in Hall Green for our annual MWA Away Day. Certainly we will have been Sisters together meeting up in our 75<sup>th</sup> year and I am sure that over those years much has been achieved. I often hear stories from MWA and congregation members of how their mum and aunties were so involved with the MWA. Over 75 years so many Sisters have come together for fellowship, fun and to raise money for charities

It was the MWA achievements in supporting charities that came to my mind as I reflected upon the Church World Day of Prayer, when we shared the prayer: *We pray for women and girls who are vulnerable in our societies. Create the conditions so that elderly women can live with respect and dignity. Give our young women the education, aspiration and vision to develop promising futures. Provide strength, courage and protection to all women experiencing domestic violence.*

So often our donations are to support the vulnerable in different situations. It is worth reminding ourselves that in 2024 two schools were helped: Binnakandi school received funds towards a replacement school bus and Fairfield school in Birstall got a donation towards a bed for those with special physical needs. We also supported young carers through Barnardo's, the homeless and Alder Hey Cystic Fibrosis (CF) Charitable fund.

A contribution was also made to flight costs for delegates to the Unity Women's Desk conference. By supporting them we can ensure that the conference is truly global and that voices are heard from the many corners of our worldwide church. Sadly, the planned conference in the USA has had to be cancelled but work is already under way to ensure it goes ahead early next year.

The focus of the conference is advocacy for girls and women in areas such as health, education and domestic abuse. It is vital that we pick up on lessons from this conference and help to carry forward this important work. When we look around our own country we can see that many women and girls need support in a range of ways.

Over the past twelve months each Circle has contributed: I am sure many cakes have been baked, coffees sold and other imaginative ways found of raising funds. Thus, you have each played a part in enabling donations to be made to women and girls locally, nationally and internationally. For the coming year I am sure many of you have proposed worthwhile charities that hopefully we can reach out to with financial support.

In Herrnhut in the 1730s Anna Nitschmann started the first Single Sisters Choir that brought together sisters who I am sure enjoyed the support, fellowship and one hopes fun of life together. Although we live in very different times, sharing being sisters together can still hopefully bring us support, fellowship and fun. So, I will end by saying that I trust that all able to attend enjoyed the MWA Away Day and came together as sisters together; of course, if you were unable to attend we thought about you, talked positively about you and prayed for you. Sorry though, we ate your piece of cake!

Sr Mary Holmes