

## Methodist Women in Ireland

***The Aim of Methodist Women in Ireland is  
“To know Christ and to make Him known”.***

1. This has been a very exciting and challenging year for Methodist Women as our new organisation has evolved. We have prayed for and received God's guidance in all our decision-making and arrangements. The year began with our Inaugural Service on 13 September 2003 in Thomas Street Methodist Church, Portadown, when our President, Mrs Louise Wilson, was installed by the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland. 700 people shared in praise, prayer and fellowship and we are thankful to God for the great blessings received at that service. Since September, we have been privileged to attend several committees within the Methodist Church in Ireland and to be invited to various events outside the Methodist Church. For example, in March the MWI President was privileged to attend the Simon Community's launch of a resource for churches about homelessness in Ireland, along with the President of the Methodist Church and representatives from the Council on Social Responsibility.

2. Methodist Women in Ireland seek to fulfil our Mission Statement:

**(a) To enable members through fellowship with each other to deepen their personal commitment to Jesus Christ.**

As we meet regularly with our sisters in our local women's groups we enjoy love, friendship and support and we are developing this aspect of MWI, as a 'body ministry' of women in ministry to women, so that it will include all women in the Methodist Church in Ireland — not just those who attend a regular meeting in their local society.

Through circuit and district women's events and our connexional services, fellowship weekends and quiet days we are already ministering to the needs of Methodist women. It is hoped that such events will be developed and organised to meet new and differing needs faced by women in today's changing society. The area of training for women is being investigated and to this end we have been in consultation with Evangelical Ministries and will be contacting other organisations, such as Care for the Family. As well as offering spiritual support, we hope to be in a position to offer practical support to enable women (who otherwise would not be able to do so) to attend fellowship or training events.

**(b) To relate the teaching of Jesus Christ to life in the home, the church, the community and the world.**

Although we recognise that initially most of what we organise will be attended by our own Methodist women, our prayer is that over time more women from the local communities will also participate. It is the vision of the General Officers that each year we might help to raise awareness of a particular problem, which concerns people (especially women) throughout our local communities. This could be related to the Resolution being adopted that year by the World Federation of Methodist & Uniting Church Women. For example, in 2003/2004 HIV/AIDS is the adopted issue and in 2004/2005 it is Violence against Women.

MWI has representation on the following women's bodies, which represent women from all areas of life — not just the church:

- The National Women's Council of Ireland — a national organisation representing 165 women's groups in Ireland, approximately 300,000 women, whose vision is the creation of a society where women can participate equally in all aspects of social and economic life.
- Women's Forum (NI) - an 'umbrella body' for women's organisations in Northern Ireland, representing a broad range of 22 organisations and hence 100,000 women across Northern Ireland, which "seeks to enhance the role and influence of women in the life of our society, to empower individuals to achieve change and to promote equality of opportunity for women."

**(c) To share in the mission of the world church.**

Along with the whole church, MWI continues to support mission throughout the world. Our members encourage all congregations to contribute to the Easter offering and to use mission boxes, which are facilitated by local branch treasurers. In 2003 MWA and then MWI sent £123,500 to the Fund for World Mission! We are also actively involved in supporting our Mission Partners through prayer and by communicating with them directly.

**(d) To provide a link with the women of other churches in Ireland and throughout the world.**

The following are two Christian bodies on which we have representation:

- Women's Link - formed to help various church women's organisations to work more closely together on their shared aims; the committee is made up of representatives of member churches of the Irish Council of Churches.
- Women in Faith - set up following a gathering of women at Hillsborough Castle, at the invitation of Lady Mayhew, to acknowledge and celebrate the work of women from Churches in Northern Ireland, both overseas and at home, and to challenge women of faith to examine whether or not there are initiatives that they might jointly undertake to help build a more harmonious society in Northern Ireland.

Under the guidance of the Methodist Reconciliation Development Officer, Olive Bell, MWI has been involved in building relationships between the leaders of the women's organisations within the three main Protestant Churches. As a continuation of this, we are currently participating in an informal pilot scheme — Engaging women in the healing of society — which will culminate in a women's conference in October.

A major role of MWI is as the Irish Unit of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. This is an international body which has nongovernmental status at the United Nations and has UN representatives both in Geneva and New York. Britain and Ireland together constitute one of the nine World Federation Areas. Each quinquennium a number of Resolutions are adopted by World Federation and throughout that period each Area is required to raise awareness of these Resolutions both within their own Units (countries), the Area and throughout the world. To this end MWI has a standing committee which oversees the work related to World Federation.

**AGENDA**

1. The Conference receives the report.
2. The Conference re-appoints Mrs. Maureen Edgar as General Treasurer.