



# THE TREE OF LIFE

July – September 2011  
Issue No. 3

WORLD FEDERATION OF METHODIST AND UNITING CHURCH WOMEN

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*New Version of the  
Tree of Life logo.*

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## The World President's Message

To my Federation Family

Greetings in the name of Christ who is our Hope!

The past month has been a time for me to reflect on events of the 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly and the future role I'll play as your World President. As I said in my response after the Installation, this position was not on my agenda. I went to Johannesburg hoping to become South Pacific Area President, but was invited to put my name forward as World President. Two sleepless nights and much prayer later, I agreed that God's plans are not always our plans, but if God calls, God will equip. So here I am – your President!

Paul tells us hope involves things unseen. Sometimes God calls us into an unseen future – and hope sustains us.

This certainly has been true in my life. Left fatherless at 2; called (with 48 hours' notice to make a response) to serve alongside my husband, John, with the Methodist Church in Tonga; suffering from chronic depression for over 10 years, it has been the hope found through my faith, the support of the church family and the willingness to serve with all my being in each area of ministry that has got me through tough times.

Your new Executive met immediately after the Assembly and made these decisions:

- Dorothy Kumar (India) invited to be Tree of Life Editor for another quinquennium with congratulations and thanks for a superb job done over the past five years.
- Emmy-Lou John (USA) invited to be our Archivist, following the great work of Pamela Klimcke 2006-11.
- Nicholas Connan, my elder son, invited to take over the web-site from Ken Milan, Chita's son. We thank Ken for his work and especially for the Assembly material now available for all.
- the adoption of a new version of the Tree of Life logo which will make photocopying easier.

As I wrestle with the changes this appointment means in my already busy life, I ask for your prayers as I offer prayers for you, your families, your churches, your countries and our wonderful Federation family. Bambelela!

Shalom.

*Ann Connan*



## *Editorial*

Bambelela – Christ is our Hope - Always

Holding high their Banners, the women entered the Banquet hall of the Indaba Hotel happy faces, smiling and greeting one another all dressed in beautiful traditional attire. The banquet hall resounded with the sound of percussion instruments and soulful singing as Alison Adams led us to the rhythmic chorus, 'Bambelela - never, never give up'. Cameras clicked capturing the historic moment. Yes my friends, the 12th World Assembly of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women was officially inaugurated on the 10th August, 2011.

The spirit of the Assembly filled the spacious Indaba hotel grounds. Kgotla, Injabulo, Ndaba, Chief Boma's, Epsom etc etc were names of venues we tried to get familiar with and finding our way to these venues was another story. Soon some were able to rattle off the names and found short cuts to reach the sessions on time. I presume eventually everyone knew their way around – but soon our bags had to be packed all ready to go!!

The six eventful days, whizzed by. The joy of meeting old friends, making new ones, lively music, the colourful traditional dresses of women, the sumptuous food, inspiring messages, and practical workshops was overwhelming. Yet the spirit of the World Assembly will stay in our minds for a long time.

We have returned to our homes, to the mundane, to situations, to challenges, disappointments, doubts and circumstances that confront us. Lest we get drawn into negativism, justification and compromise may we no loose sight of what God expects of us. It is His desire and that we press on and "..... abound more and more, ..... you (we) ought to walk and to please God; ( I Thessalonians 4:1 & 3NKJV). It is in the place God has placed us, right where we are, in our homes, workplace, school or college, that we are required to 'abound more and more', for His grace, guidance and strength is available at all times. He is counting on us and will never give up on us so we need not give up either, even when we may not feel like, or the going not too conducive. Remember - Bambelela – Christ is our Hope – Always.

On a more personal note, it would be in place to record my feelings. I am grateful to God and the Executive Committee Members for inviting me to continue as your Editor again!! I feel humbled at the appreciation, acknowledgment and confidence the Executive Committee members have placed in my work. I have been blessed as each issue passed on to you, be it hard or soft copies. Pray with me please. It is my prayer and desire that the Tree of Life will continue to enrich and bless you as you allow Jesus the LIFE – into your hearts and homes.

*Dorothy Sampath Kumar*

The Twelfth World Assembly: Johannesburg, South Africa

## *A Report*

Introduction:

Located almost half an hour from OR Tempo airport Johannesburg, South Africa, the 12th World Assembly met from 10th -15th August 2011 at Indaba Hotel and Conference Centre, Fourways, Johannesburg, South Africa; Hosting over 585 registrants, 102 day visitors and approximately 42 non-residents making a total of 729 women from around the globe.

Women from around the world gathered together with a lot of expectations and exuberance of making new friendships and renewing old ones, of experiencing vibrant time of fellowship and worship.

No doubt assembly was an over whelming experience of vibrant time of worship, early morning prayers, meditations, all night vigil, Bible Studies, key note speaker's address, President's address and so on. Women learned a lot from MDG workshops, creative spaces and cultural tours. Each day Area reports and cultural presentations marked the highlight of the day which was indeed over whelming, enriching and powerful.



CULTURE

Indaba hotel and conference centre had a beautiful African ambiance, and had rich essence of African cultural setting and beauty.

Local arrangement committee was headed under the able leadership of Lorraine Solomon and her team of committed women not forgetting Muriel Abrahams and Marsha Griffins who worked tirelessly to make assembly a real success. With their spirit of dedication and commitment they took care of even minor details.

Welcoming teams with World Federation cards were posted at OR Tempo airport to welcome participants from all over the world. The World Federation is extremely grate full for their care and attention prior to, during and after the assembly.

Translation was available in main languages during assembly and business sessions through the able services of Mr. Don Reasoner of GBGM.

Worship has always been an essential and vital part of the Assembly. The opening ceremony and worship was very moving with children performed with their drums led by Mara Louw, a renowned singer in South Africa.



Rt. Rev Ivan Abrahams

Ms. Renate Bloem was honored and recognized for her commitment and service of 25 years as UN representative with the World Federation. In appreciation for her dedicated and long services she was presented with a symbol of tree of life by the World Officers. During the opening service words of greetings were shared by Rt. Rev Ivan Abrahams chairperson of the World Methodist Council, eminent Church leaders, Bishops and government representatives in South Africa also shared greetings. Dr. Chita Millan gave a



Ms. Renate Bloem

spirit led message. Opening banquet was hosted by Indaba Hotel management for all the participants and guests.

*Thanksgiving and Memorial Service* was led by Dorothy Kumar. Flowers were placed in a vase by each Area President in memory of the deceased brothers and sisters of Federation. Soul lifting reflection was shared by Renate Bloom, former UN representative who took us on a journey of 25 years sharing her valuable United Nations and the women who tirelessly carried the vision and mission of the Federation forward.

*Sunday Worship Service* was led by Eun Young Choi. Dr Fulata L. Moyo, who is the Programme Executive for women in the World Council of Churches, preached at the Sunday service.

*Closing Worship* and ceremony brought the five days of the assembly together. It was led by Greetje Van Der Veer and the communion was celebrated by the African clergy women.

Ms. Harriet Olson, Deputy General Secretary, Women's Division, GBGM gave an inspiring reflection and message.



Ms. Harriet Olson

Closing ceremony included the induction of newly elected officers and area officers who were welcomed to the office with stoles. It was also a time to say thank you to the outgoing World and Area officers. All the speakers, resource persons, facilitators, workshop leaders, musicians, were recognized with a token of love and appreciation.

Bible study was another important feature of the World Assembly which was led by Dr Fulata Moyo.. Her study was on the theme: "Christ for the helpless". She brought in her own style of presentation of the study. She elaborated the theme by sharing the story of women from the bible. (Available on World Federation website [www.wfmucw.org](http://www.wfmucw.org))



Bishop Joaquina

Key note speaker Bishop Joaquina Filipe Nhanala the first African women bishop from Mozambique delivered a spirit led speech. It was a privilege to have her as a key note speaker. She shared her story of determination, faithfulness and commitment to her calling which exalted her to the position of Episcopacy. She emphasized how Hope sustained her.

Exhibition and display area in foyers of Injabulo where the main assembly took place was

Market stalls: It has always been a great time for women who are selling and shopping at the market place during free times. It provides opportunity to women to bring various forms of crafts to support their projects or raise travel money. The World Federation had its own stall where pins and pendants were on sale.

Millennium Development Goals: The Plan for Action for 2011 to 2016 is the focus of MDG goals which were launched by the United Nations in 2000 and set to be achieved by 2015. In 2006 to 2011 quinquennium these were the main focus also but realizing that still a lot has to be achieved the assembly adopted it as its action plan under the leadership of Meleana Puloka who coordinated the action plan which is available on the World Federation website.



Senior Friends of the Federation: 13 new senior friends were recognized during the closing ceremony and were also hosted to a lunch during one of the lunch time. A number of senior friends were present and being able to meet with them and share information was a great value and interest.

Women enjoyed cultural tours, organized by the local arrangement committee to various historical sites in Johannesburg. Coaches were organized by Local Arrangement Committee (LAC) free of cost and lunch packs were provided for each person. The Federation thanks Lorraine Solomon & LAC for providing this tremendous opportunity and exposure of African heritage & history.

Business Sessions: Five business sessions were held, the first session was an open session where as the last session was a full plenary session. All sessions were open for observers if they so wished. Units are entitled to delegates according to number of members and these delegates in addition to the Area Presidents, Vice Presidents and World Officers made up the business meeting membership.

*Shunila Ruth*

*World Secretary 2006 - 2011*

*(To access and download messages of resource persons, Key Note and Worship service speakers, please log on to the World Federation website)*

## *Cherished moments at the World Assembly...*

Memories are made of these...

The 2006 World Assembly at Jeju was when I got 'connected' with the World Federation. Memories are still fresh. Then the fond thoughts of the First Joint Asian Seminar at Medan Indonesia are unfoetable. To add to my string of memories is the 12th World Assembly at Johannesburg.

It was a delight for me to experience the joy of 'making melody in our hearts', making 'a joyful noise unto the Lord' with my sisters from all over the world.

The expertise with which Alison Adams controlled the audience introducing us to songs which was the first time we sang, yet the hall resounding as if it were well rehearsed. With the gesture of her hand going up and down it was so easy to catch up on! Alison efficiently led us to sing harmoniously. Oh! It was so enjoyable and lifted my spirits. Thank you Alison...God used you marvelously and He will continue to use you!

It was a delight and a proud moment for the Indian delegation to have one of our women Dr Adella Paul from India at the Piano.

The time when Dr Fulata Moyo, took the Podium to speak from God's Word was so very appealing citing personal and general experiences that brought tears of laughter and joy to my heart.

Altogether the 12th World Assembly was a beautiful experience for me....so all I can say is .....BAMBELELA...Christ IS our Hope...as women strive to carry the flame to enlighten and enliven the hearts of women.

*Evelyn Mercylin*  
*MDG Workshop Leader*  
*"Hope for the Poor"*  
*Methodist Church in India, South Asia Area*



As much as "Bambelela", "Bambelela" reverberated throughout the days at the World Assembly I was encouraged by the words of Ms Harriett Olson, Deputy General Secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Ms Olsen delivered a challenging message to all Methodist & Uniting Church Women at the Assembly.

*"Critical to United Methodist Women is the combination of spiritual formation, leadership development, personal engagement in mission work and social advocacy, In the spirit of John Wesley and in accordance with our United Methodist self understanding these are independent approaches.*

*Women do mission in a unique way. They are sympathetic on the ground, standing side by side with women, children and youth. Helping women know they are loved by God, empowered by God and equipped to live and work for the new creation to which we are called is close to my heart. This requires a blend of political intervention, practical assistance and loving support that I believe United Methodist Women is well positioned to deliver through active units in local congregations." – Harriett Olson.*



*Submitted by Laureen Ong*  
*President East Asia Area*

Oh it was such a joyous occasion to meet old friends and make new ones.

I was so touched by the cultural diversity that was exhibited, especially when we realize that despite our different cultures and differences, there is one great unifier - Jesus, the Christ! The colourful events will remain with me for a very long time.

Whilst our spirits were dampened with no African woman as one of the World Officers; we accept God's leading and His time when He will bring this happen. For we believe that God will enable the African women keep on making a difference no matter what. The challenge we drew from the World Assembly is BAMBELELA...Never Give up...Christ IS our Hope.



*Araba Ata Sam*  
*West Africa Area: Vice President: 2006-2011*

## *Passing on the Torch of Leadership — Meet the New World Officers*

Chita R Milan, President Emerita



Chita has just completed her term as World President and now holds the position of President Emerita for the Federation. She owns and is the Directress of two schools which offer basic education. Simultaneously, she is an active deaconess of the United Methodist Church in the Philippines, serving as the Coordinator of the Committee on Childhood Education & Development. She holds many positions within the faith community including Vice President of the Board of Women's Work; member-at-large of the Philippines Coordinating Council; Secretary of the Committee on Episcopacy; and Chair of the PPAC Board of Discipleship. Her interests fall largely on guidance and counselling, women, literature and publication, and young children. She has authored several preschool work texts and story books. She is married to Arsenio and has three children: Ken Archie, and wife Val, Khristian Joy and Marc John and a new born grandson, Migo.

World President: Ann Conann



Born in Geelong, Victoria, Australia, 64 years ago, I was raised by my widowed mother following my father's death when I was 2. She was a committed Methodist and the congregation to which we belonged had a strong commitment to missionary service.

I trained as a Primary School teacher, becoming a passionate advocate for young children. I have taught Sunday School and led Children's clubs for 47 years. That developed my abilities as a story-teller.

With my clergy husband, John, I spent 12 years in missionary service with the Methodist Church in Tonga in the South Pacific. My four children, Nicholas - a pilot with the Flying

Doctor Service in Australia; Kirsten - an obstetrician/gynaecologist; Hamish - a Federal Policeman; and Rowena - a Special Education Teacher and former Helen Kim Scholar, were all born in Tonga.

After two years serving the First United Methodist Church in Alhambra, Los Angeles, the family returned to Australia to work in the Uniting Church.

I completed training as an integration teacher for disabled children, as well as gaining a Certificate in Children's Ministry.

I worked with the Council of Christian Education in School in Victoria for 20 years, training over 3000 volunteer teachers from all churches, to teach Christian Education in Government Schools. I currently teach 16 classes per week in one school.

I have been involved with the Uniting Church Adult Fellowship in Australia since 1986, having been State President, 1998-99 and National Unit President 2000-2003.

I have attended three World Assemblies of the Federation and four Area Seminars, serving as South Pacific Area Vice-President 2006-11.

I was one of three Uniting Church members of the World Methodist Council Executive 2001-11.

I am a member of my state World Day of Prayer Committee, serving as President for two years. As part of the National Publications team, I currently prepare the annual Children's and Youth Service/Programs.

I am regularly involved in leading worship, as well as a frequent public speaker for women's groups, service and community organisations. Since John's retirement from active full-time ministry, I have worked with him in Tonga and have lectured in Christian Education at the Tongan church's Theological College.

I am passionate about the World Federation family. I am especially passionate about my South Pacific Federation family and work tirelessly to support the women's work in fundraising and practical assistance. I have been responsible for a project of the past five years which has resulted in 5000 filled school backpacks being sent to Pacific children.

Outside of Church ministry, I am a volunteer with an organization called Legacy which supports widows and children of deceased ex- servicemen. I was cared for by Legacy as a child and it's great to be able to give something back to this organization.

My other passions are singing with one of Melbourne's leading choirs, The Melbourne Singers; minding grandchildren (I have 4) and my garden.

## World Vice President: Regula Stotz



Regula Stotz lives in Basel. Trained as a teacher at the University Basel and Vienna, she has worked for more than 35 years in different schools with children between 11- 15 years of age. Regula has served her local church on several committees and followed an education as a lay preacher. In 2004 a new chapter in her life began when she retired and became the Co-ordinator of the Women's Work of the United Methodist Church of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe. With the political changes in the Eastern European countries in the nineties, women had new opportunities. Regula's position was in assisting for seminars in leadership- training, women's retreats, fund raising and organising language courses of twenty languages. Regula is on the Board of

the Swiss Methodist women's network, mission and social work.

With this wealth of experience and expertise Regula's position as Vice-President in her words, "would mean to be on my way together with four members forming one team to serve the Methodist women in general and to promote the ideas of the WF in special".

## World Treasurer: Leu Pupulu



Leu was born and raised in Samoa. She came to New Zealand with her family in 1989 in support of her husband Reverend Utumau'u Pupulu in their ministry. She studied as a mature student in New Zealand and achieved her dreams. She gave thanks to the Lord for walking, running, falling and carrying her through everything she had gone through.

Leu is a qualified accountant by profession. She played a lot of financial roles in her Mangere Central Methodist Parish, NZ Methodist Sinoti Samoa Synod and the NZ Methodist Women's Fellowship Unit. They have two children; son Uaina who is married to Erin with two grandchildren to them; Phoenix and Summah, and daughter

Sina. Leu acknowledges the unconditional love and patience of her late parents; Sina and Malagamaali'i Lui Filimoeatu who made her the woman she is today. With regard to her position she is elected into, in Leu's words, "... Reliable and motivated .....proficiency and strong understanding in the areas of Budgeting, Taxation, Economics, Business Communications, reflects the passion I have for the field...to develop... to build....help others....." well said Leu!!!

VIIA IESU! (Praise Jesus!)

## World Secretary: Carla Boyce-Smith



I have been a Methodist from my mother's womb and as a youngster participated in different ministries of the Rio Abajo Methodist Church of the Conference of the Methodist Churches in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA).

After exchanging wedding vows in 1990, I transferred my membership to the Spanish Methodist church, the "Iglesia Evangélica Metodista de Panamá, (IEMPA)". In 1994 my husband Eduardo Smith was ordained presbyter and since then I have accompanied him in his ministry. I am a Sunday School teacher and Sunday School Superintendent, Executive Secretary for the Mission and Outreach Department and involved in camp ministry.

In 2006 I chaired a committee in-charge of the 100th anniversary celebration of the IEMPA's ministry in the Republic of Panama, I am the president of the local Women's Society and the National President of the Women's Federation. As a business teacher taught English as a Second Language and Translator/Interpreter from the Spanish to the English language and vice-versa.

We have three daughters, Sharon, Karen and Carlyn. Sharon and her husband Marino have two year old twin girls, Amira and Allyss. I am desirous to be a servant of God in this new task he has bestowed upon me. I am open to learning as much as I can to function efficiently as the World Secretary.

# Meditation: Climb the Mountain

## The Blessing of the Mountains

*As the MOUNTAINS surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people both now and forevermore.  
Psalm 125:2*

Mountains have always had a incredible influence on the minds of people. Several mountains in Palestine mentioned in the Bible are made forever sacred by significant happenings surrounding those mountains.

Through the pages of the Tree of Life we will visit some mountains and experience again their spiritual significance for our edification.

In the Scriptures mountains are symbols of perpetuity—the everlasting mountains. God's righteousness is compared to the great mountains. By their elevation above the plains and valleys, mountains suggest the lifting up people's thoughts from lower to higher things. The sight of a hill or a mountain, made the devout Jew think of God. The thought evident in the mind of the Psalmist, "I will lift up my eyes unto the mountains, from whence cometh my help" (Psalm 121:1). The sight of the mountains as he approached them brought the presence of God very near to him. He was safe under the shadow of those everlasting hills, because God was there—and was watching him in tender love.

There are several blessings that come from mountains to the plains and to the whole earth. In wisdom and love God lifted them as Cathedral spires, to give beauty, fertility, health and joy to the world. Would it not be monotonous if the earth was a large, vast, flat surface? Apart from that there are several benefits from mountains.

The vast rugged ranges which rise like mighty walls may look scary yet are really sources of happiness and good for our earth. Ruskin Bond, names three great functions of mountains. They give motion and direction to water, determining the channels of the rivers, so that people can build their homes and cities in places where they know the streams will continue to flow. Then they are the great ventilators of the earth; generating continuous currents of air to pour down into the plains. The third use of mountains is to provide for the constant renewal of the soils of the earth. Continually streams carry down the wear and waste from the rocks, and sand and clay from the banks of the ravines, bearing its blessing of rich earth to be deposited in the fields and valleys below, to add to their fertility.

What the mountains are to the earth in benefit and blessing, God is many times more to His people. Similar thoughts may have been in the mind of the Psalmist, as he lifted up his eyes unto the mountains round about Jerusalem. "As the MOUNTAINS surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people both now and forevermore." God who is full of grace and goodness for His people. Robert Grant reflects the same thoughts in his hymn, "Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite?.....it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain, and sweetly distils in the dew and the rain'.

It is God that you and I need. We may all the elements which can empower us, wisdom, positions, possessions, eloquence, goodness, but it is the Spirit of God that can transform and bring beauty and blessing. We have the example of the Disciples of Christ. The coming of the Holy Spirit in their lives made such a difference. From weakness they became strong; their dullness was transformed into vibrant life. The blessing of the hills had been emptied upon them. The blessing of the hills is available to you and me.

*Dorothy Sampath Kumar*

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