

WORLD MISSION COUNCIL

May 2017

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the report.
2. Give thanks for the life and witness of Mission Partners who have died, acknowledge with gratitude those who have completed their period of service overseas, and uphold in prayer all who continue to serve.
3. Encourage members to prayerfully consider offering for service with the world church.
4. Encourage congregations to read and study the report, use the worship service and resources, and learn more about the life of churches in other parts of the world, and the links with the Church of Scotland.
5. Give thanks for 500 years of witness in the Reformed tradition, and the opportunities for women to exercise all forms of ministry within it.
6. Give thanks for the ordination of women in the Middle East and encourage the Council in its support of other churches considering ordaining women.
7. Encourage congregations and members to engage with, support, and promote the work of Christian Aid, especially in its work on gender justice through the Side by Side movement.
8. Urge attendance at the Duff Missionary Lectures 2017 to engage with Professor Kwok Pui Lan.
9. Welcome the Council's plan, with the Church and Society Council, The Guild, and Christian Aid, to organise a conference on September 16, 2017 with international partners on the theme of Women in the World Church, and encourage congregations to send a representative.
10. Encourage congregations with twinnings to invite a woman to visit at the time of the Women in the World Church Conference or to purposely have a bias to women being part of group visits in 2017/18.
11. Encourage congregations without a twinning to consider building a relationship with a congregation of one of our partner churches.
12. Celebrate the ongoing contribution of women across the worldwide church, and encourage Councils, Presbyteries, Kirk Sessions and members to continue to challenge any theology that is used to persecute and discriminate against women.
13. Welcome the engagement with South Sudan, and encourage the Council to continue its commitment to the Presbyterian Church there, and its work in conflict resolution and mediation and to encourage the whole church to pray for the people of South Sudan and for a lasting peace.
14. Encourage the whole church to take part in the Thursdays in Black campaign.
15. Encourage support for the Church of Scotland HIV Programme.
16. Agree that the McKean Bentinck Fund be used to support Christian Witness in Southern Europe. (*Appendix V*)
17. Pass an Act amending the Act anent the sale of Deaconess House, the application of the proceeds of sale, and the Mrs MacGregor (Batterflats) Endowment Fund (Act XIV 1963) as set out in *Appendix V*.

REPORT

WOMEN IN THE WORLD CHURCH

1. Setting the Scene

'In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female...we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.'

Galatians 3:28 (The Message).

Jesus took delight in welcoming those who were often relegated to the margins. He valued everyone, and throughout his ministry he welcomed those who had been silenced and disempowered by the society of the day. This year the World Mission Council (WMC) is celebrating and drawing attention to the voices of our international friends and partners in relation to the role and status of women in the world church. Poverty, injustice, unequal wealth distribution, ecological devastation caused by climate change, human development, education, child protection, trafficking, to name a few, are all pressing issues that the Church cannot avoid if it is to take seriously the Good News of the evangel that we are called to embody and proclaim. Whilst each issue is important in its own right, this report seeks to highlight the vital role women have in all of these domains, as agents bringing about positive change, but also as victims of discrimination and structural injustice. The WMC offers this report to the whole church, hoping we will be able to listen to, and learn from, women who know and have experienced the challenges of living out their calling in a diverse array of contexts, many of whom have stood up to deeply ingrained cultures which have not recognised the contributions and ministries of women. One of the aims of the report is to offer a better understanding of the impact that gender inequality has had across the world. In presenting this report we are all too aware that our own Church is, in places, far from inclusive of women's full participation in the life of the Church.

2017 is an historic year for protestant churches, offering an opportunity to review 500 years of commitment to the ideals of the Reformation – seeking to be a church which is not stuck in its history, a church which is not atrophied, a church open to the fresh stirrings of the Holy Spirit. The opportunities for women to be at the heart of the work, worship and witness of the Church has been a struggle from the earliest days.

Dr Isabelle Graesslé is Director of the International Museum of the Reformation in Geneva. She is also the first woman to have served as Moderator of the Company of Pastors and Deacons of the Church of Geneva (2001-04) – an office first held by John Calvin. In 2002, at the celebration marking the addition of the first woman's name - Marie Dentière - to a plinth beside the Reformation Wall in Geneva, she remarked: 'Marie Dentière's reputation has evolved to that ... of one of the leading intellectuals of this religious movement: an historian, educator and shrewd theologian.'

Marie Dentière, a contemporary of Jean Calvin, was a fiery original thinker living in Geneva and fiercely committed to the ideas of the Reformation. Having been abbess in Tournai before her move towards Reformation principles, she was well versed in Scripture and used her knowledge in an attempt to open up the church to women in terms of preaching and teaching. Calvin and others tried to marginalise her because she was a woman. But she was not cowed, and wrote powerful letters and treatises, and asked pertinent questions: '...did not Jesus die as much for the poor ignorant people and the idiots as for my sirs the shaved, tonsured and mitred? ... Isn't [the gospel] for all of us? Do we have two gospels, one for men and one for women? One for the wise and another for the fools?'

Rev Carola Tron Urban, from the Iglesia Evangélica Valdense de la Plata, Uruguay, is a modern day original reformed thinker engaged in pastoral and educational

work. She reminds us that, 'Our Reformed theological identity means that we are called to always reform [...] The way in which we do theology, the way in which we ask ourselves questions and engage in our thinking about God, should be an ongoing activity that should always relate contextually to the world in which we live. Theology cannot be allowed to fossilise, because the world which it is responding to is dynamic and in flux, with multiple dimensions to it and encompassing many different views and vantage points'. Carola Tron believes that theology and the gospel call us to embody lives lived out in the service of others, and that as Reformed Christians we should always be standing against systems 'that promote unrestrained capitalist consumption, gender inequality and poverty'.^[1]

As the Church of Scotland is in a season of celebration that recognises the breadth and depth of the contributions women of God have made, and continue to make, to the life, work, and witness of the Church, the WMC seeks to widen the scope of that celebration beyond the bounds of our own nation. In so doing, it aims to recognise the challenges, as well as the opportunities, that women in the church face, both at home and abroad. The report focuses on the different roles women play, and raises up the work and witness of women in our partner churches and organisations in different parts of the world, especially in relation to the WMC's aim of attentively accompanying churches and faith communities internationally.

Within our own church, the WMC shares and cooperates in its work with many different bodies, other councils and committees of the church, The Guild, Presbyteries, congregations, organisations, and individuals. One particularly close connection is with the Church and Society Council. The key aims of challenging poverty and seeking an inclusive society broadly chime with the hopes and aspirations of our partners internationally. The WMC supports international partners to bring their voices and concerns to the Church of Scotland's social justice agenda. Issues such as economics, wealth and poverty, caring for creation, and building global friendships all appear in the

Church and Society Council's new Speak Out agenda. The United Nations echoes these concerns, and emphasises:

'Equality between men and women is more than a matter of social justice – it is a fundamental human right. But gender equality also makes good economic sense. When women have equal access to education, and go on to participate fully in business and economic decision-making, they are a key driving force against poverty. Women with equal rights are better educated, healthier, and have greater access to land, jobs and financial resources. Their increased earning power in turn raises household incomes. By enhancing women's control over decision-making in the household, gender equality also translates into better prospects and greater well-being of children, reducing poverty of future generations'.^[2]

All these issues affect and impact on the lives of our partners around the world, a world in which remembering our global interconnectedness, especially through the Christ who calls us to love one another, is imperative. It is particularly helpful in the context of this report to have ongoing work within the Church and Society Council on gender based violence, where there is a dedicated staff person working with the Violence against Women Task Group, engaging on this issue within a Scottish and UK context. Our own churches and communities at home are not immune from the injustices and discrimination faced by women across the globe. The Church of Scotland has not been silent on these issues, and for those interested in reading reports from previous General Assemblies, they are noted at the end of this report.

The challenges which women face in the world church have their parallels here in Scotland, which is why we will continue to work alongside Church and Society to advocate for a Scotland which models gender justice and is free from violence against women. Participating in the 16 days of activism against gender based violence is an act of solidarity which churches around the world can do to highlight the issues, each in our own context. The WMC participated in the 16 days of activism last year as part of

a broad Church of Scotland commitment, alongside the Scottish Episcopal Church and Christian Aid, so that we could be visible to society in our condemnation of gender based discrimination and injustice.

In numerous areas the work of the WMC overlaps with that of the British churches' humanitarian and development agency, Christian Aid. Their report, Of the Same Flesh: exploring a theology of gender,^[3] emphasises: 'At every level, from the household to the global stage, in politics and in personal life, in economics and in health, in culture and in decision making, people of one gender are poorer, disadvantaged and less powerful than another.'

Christian Aid is one of the founder members of Side by Side, a growing global movement of people of faith who want to see gender justice become a reality across the world. With over 30 churches and organisations already involved, including the Church of Scotland, it draws together faith communities in many different countries, and in each country seeks to work cooperatively to meet local challenges in pursuing justice and equality for all people, irrespective of gender. In Scotland this work is in its infancy; however, over the next few years it is planned, alongside other Churches and Christian Aid, to have a much stronger Christian voice speaking for gender justice in Scotland and challenging Churches to engage more fully with the issue at parish level.

The Guild is a natural ally in our work. The Guild has historic and ongoing involvement in women's empowerment and challenging abusive behaviours. Bold and strong from its inception, the Guild has addressed and tackled many important issues, starting with getting permission for women to preside at meetings (1937); through the Motherhood of God report (1984); to supporting those engaged in prostitution (1987); and challenging domestic abuse and human trafficking today. The Guild has been at the forefront of championing women's wellbeing, developing women's potential, and supporting women's full participation in the church.

Two of the present Guild Projects engage with gender justice. Caring for Mother Earth in Bolivia addresses the challenges of climate change and gender justice. Women very often have to spend hours every day collecting firewood. Through Christian Aid partners, this project will work with over 700 families to provide solar ovens which will enable communities to stay on their land, will mean less forestry depletion, and will free women up to participate more fully in community decision making meetings, or have time for education or their families. In Kenya, Breaking the Cycle of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a Feed the Minds project, is seeking to empower women and girls to stand up against the practice of FGM so they can stay in school and reach their God-given potential. As the attitudes of men play an important role, the project is also engaging with brothers and fathers to encourage open dialogue within families and encourage widespread support for FGM abandonment among communities.

The Council was pleased to be offered the opportunity to invite international participants to the Ministries Council conference on women in ministry in 2016, women who made very positive contributions to the gathering. The Council is also accompanying Priority Areas as it builds connections with the global church; and with the Mission and Discipleship Council, there has been collaboration with the National Youth Assembly, where issues of human trafficking and gender justice have been topics for discussion.

Women in our partner churches, as in the Church of Scotland, are helping to contribute to changing attitudes and practices. They are calling on partners around the world, and particularly in churches which have been slow to stand up against misogyny and discrimination within their own courts, to be clear in opposing discrimination and to highlight and celebrate inclusion. This report is not only about highlighting what is happening around the world, it is a call to look to ourselves - to see ourselves as others see us - and to consider the parallels in our church and society at home, and seek to learn from others as well

as address the challenges of inequality which remain in our church and national life.

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) study document on gender highlighted:

'Gender inequalities have deep historical roots in every corner of the world. Despite differences in culture, nationality or religion, the impact of unequal relationships between women and men means that the majority of women – over half of the world's population – have limited rights and choices in their lives. The historical impact of these social limitations means that women and girls make up the vast majority of the developing world's impoverished populations. It is now accepted that the full and equal participation of both women and men, at all levels of the community, is necessary for sustainable and lasting peace and development.'^[4]

Rev Dr Isabel Apowo Phiri is a member of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, and Associate General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. Writing as a member of The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, she notes, '...because the staff and students in African theological institutions are still predominantly male, and to a large extent the library is full of western theological books due to denominational ties with "mother churches", the theology being taught excludes the realities of Africa, and the male experience is assumed to include the female experience - when in reality it does not. This challenge is what motivated a call for mainstreaming gender as a tool of analysis in the theological curriculum. A gendered approach to theology refers to exposing the injustices that exist in the church, the culture, and the Bible in the relationship between men and women. It acknowledges that human beings construct culture; therefore cultural practices in the Bible and in our own cultures should not be confused with the will of God. It highlights the importance of acknowledging that both men and women are created in the image of God. The process of change required an analysis of the African worldview and how people's identities are

constructed.' Indeed, Dr Phiri's observations can apply to any worldview and every location: cultural practices should not be confused with the will of God. How it has 'aye been' is not necessarily how it should be.

The report highlights four key areas, and seeks to:

- Celebrate the contributions and place of women in churches and communities;
- Highlight the role of ministry and how women are increasingly participating, despite difficulties;
- Look at the impact of discrimination and violence and the challenges which face women in church and organisational structures;
- Accompany our partners, especially women in the churches, to help give voice to women engaging in different ministries and advocating for gender justice.

The areas overlap and interweave, and so some stories from our partners might highlight challenges, but ultimately become a celebration as an individual or group make a breakthrough which leads to greater inclusion and gender justice.

2.

2.1 Celebrate

"There is no gender in God's eyes, we were all made equal."

Rev Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan, Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago.

In agreeing to ordain women as elders and as ministers in the late 1960s, The Church of Scotland was ahead of some of its partners and behind others. The United Church of Canada ordained women in 1936; The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan in 1949; the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren in 1953; the Waldensians in 1963; The Church of North India in 1974; The Presbyterian Church in Korea in 1995; The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Blantyre Synod (Malawi) in 2001; The Church of Christ in Thailand in 2015; and in February 2017 The National Evangelical

Synod of Syria and Lebanon was the first church in the Middle East to ordain a woman. Numerous partner churches report increasing numbers of female students for ministry. The Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren notes: 'There is a higher and higher number of women who decide to study theology. Today there is almost the same ratio of men and women at the faculty.'

In the Christian Church in Sumba (GKS), one of the large islands within Indonesia, the first woman was ordained in 1989. Today 55% of the ministers (245) are women. Nearly 90% are serving in local congregations. Among the other 10%, one is General Secretary of the Church, four work as hospital chaplains, and eight as lecturers. Our partners in the GKS have emphasised that despite the increase in women ministers, Sumba is still a very patriarchal society and women continue to face many challenges. The culture in Sumba still underestimates women, rates of domestic violence remain high, and women and children are largely the victims. Poverty is a gender issue, especially where women, because of pay discrimination, cannot earn enough to keep a family, meaning households depend on men for the main income. Additionally, there are sanitation, health and water problems which particularly affect women and children, such as a high rate of maternal and infant mortality, cervical cancer, difficulties in accessing sanitary products, and others. Marlin Lomi, the present General Secretary (and first woman to hold high office in the GKS) told us: 'Ministers who are women gather together at least once a year in a working group to encourage younger women to enter the ministry and to discuss issues. They train in all sorts of things including agriculture and micro-economics so they are equipped to serve their congregations. They also look to the bible for new insights in the ministry of all human beings.'

Dr Jessie Mughogho Chihana is the Director of Ekwendeni Hospital in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Livingstonia Synod. She studied and practised in Malawi, Britain and South Africa before returning to Ekwendeni Hospital in 2012. It has not been an easy five years. Dr. Jessie notes: 'Working in a church setting in

which value systems are to a great extent highly influenced by respect for culture also presents a challenging setting. In addition, the hospital is located in a semi-rural area, which makes it subject to cultural influences.' She is grateful that her education and international exposure has played a major role helping her find her place in a male dominated society. However, 'The major challenge has to do with decision-making, especially where men won't take you seriously. The men have learnt that they don't have to contradict the guidance given to them simply because they are men. I have tended to insist that they do their assignments in the proper way or risk discipline from management.' Dr. Jessie finds her job both exciting and challenging: 'As a gynaecologist, my major passion is to assist women as best as I can to preserve life and restore health by the help of God. This job helps us get in touch with village women who also get influenced as they see that a woman can head an institution and do a good job. By not giving in to pressure from the men..., men have learnt that they have to follow the right way.'

In Trinidad and Tobago, the Rev Annabell Lalla-Ramkelawan, of the Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago (PCTT), brings together many of the issues women face around the church, whether at home or internationally, in her reflection on her journey to ministry. She notes some of the challenges which confronted her, a woman of East Indian descent and unmarried, as she sought to live out her calling to ministry in Trinidad and Tobago. Having finished her studies, she was appointed to serve the five congregations of the Pastoral Region located in the central part of the island, where she got a rude awaking as to the social and cultural norms of a people. She continued: 'I still vividly recall that Tuesday when the elder from the Felicity congregation came into my vestry and in a loud and angry tone said to me, "I will never take communion from you! You should not be in the pulpit! It is not the place for a woman!" I was in a state of shock! In response to his harsh criticism I responded, "All I ask of you is to see me as your Minister and give me that due respect. When I leave this Pastoral Region you will

cry." I served that Pastoral Region for seven years. The last Sunday I conducted worship, words of appreciation for my ministry in the community and the church were expressed. The membership of the congregation confessed that they never believed that a woman minister could have done the work I accomplished and give the pastoral care they received during my ministry. On this occasion, the same elder who had denounced me embraced me and cried because I was leaving the Pastoral Region.'

Rev Annabell also found challenges in the institutional church structures, but through an inner strength gained from her faith persevered and found ways through: "Serving on the many Boards and Committees of the Synod was also no easy journey. I was made to feel that I did not know what I was saying or my contribution was nonsensical. At one Synod meeting, the Moderator would not allow me to speak on a matter concerning women in ministry. He allowed all the men to have their say. When I could no longer sit still, I called the then Moderator a male chauvinist and threatened to stand on the table if I was not allowed to speak. At the end of the debate my contribution was able to sway the votes in favour of women in ministry." Rev. Annabell helped change the PCTT, and noted, 'One of the high points in my ministry was the day I was selected to serve as the Moderator. I felt that my service to my Lord and Master had not gone unnoticed. Today, the PCTT is able to see women as persons whom God has called and chosen. There is no gender in God's eyes; we were all made equal.'

In addition to the ordained women in our partner churches, many women in the world church, outside formal ministries, provide a structure and support to ministry in their denominations. Much of their work goes unrecounted, yet it forms a pillar within the life of the church which, if removed, would be detrimental. One example is the women of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba who continued to keep churches open, Sunday by Sunday, in the years after the Cuban revolution when the majority of the clergy migrated to the USA. The women bravely ensured that worship would continue, and

other areas of church life could thrive. It is heartening to hear them recount their story of strength, faith, and optimism. Today, as the church in Cuba grows again, and many more women and men are training for ministry, the women of the church have not taken a step back but have continued to be in the forefront of church life at local level, while loving and supporting their new ministers.

The established women's organisations in many of our partner churches are further examples of dedication to church witness and church life. Also, many wives of ministers are trained to work alongside their husbands, with a particular focus on developing women's work or supporting women's groups. The Wives Group of the ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria supports widows and their children through various means, including provision of crèche facilities, paying school fees, and psychological counselling. In the CCAP Livingstonia Synod, the 'Umanyano', or Women's Guild, can be seen throughout the community in their distinctive white and black uniform as they seek to support the needy, the vulnerable and the bereaved. Their twinning link with the Church of Scotland Guild is an excellent opportunity for mutual learning. In many ways this is diaconal service.

Twining links offer enormous opportunities for congregations to enhance and develop their understanding of, and appreciation for, the realities of life faced by our partners in other places. Visits back and forward also bring a new and questioning eye to our own ways and practices. It is right to celebrate the encouraging developments within the life and witness of our partners around the world, and equally important to continue to walk together to share all our opportunities for celebration as well as our frustrations and challenges. It is a two-way street. It is a pilgrimage of justice and peace. We have as much to learn as to share.

2.2 Ministry

'This is what I believe the ordained ministry is about: loving as we have been loved.'

Rev Johanna Boitumelo Gaborone, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.

It can be argued that one of the factors which led to the missionary movement of the Churches flourishing in the 19th and 20th centuries was the number of women who, excluded from opportunities to minister at home, lived out their calling by serving Christ around the world. 'Scottish women had the chance to do overseas what their home church would not allow them to do in Scotland. The church at home debates whether women may rightly serve as deacons while the church abroad thrusts almost the whole office of ministry upon them. Scottish missionaries were therefore pioneering new roles, both pastoral and ecclesiastical, for their compatriots as well as for women in mission fields throughout the world.'^[5]

Some names across the years from the Scottish Church resonate still: Mary Slessor in Calabar, Nigeria; Mary Scott in Sikkim, India; Annie Small in India, then as Principal of St Colm's College; Jane Haining in Budapest, Hungary; Elizabeth Hewat in China and India; Betty Walls at the Women's Foreign Mission Committee and only woman General Secretary of World Mission (then the Overseas Council); Anne Hepburn in Malawi; Margaret Forrester in India with her husband Duncan, then as Minister in Scotland and first woman Convener of the World Mission Council. Women found many roles in the world church. They also found many able, determined, strong local women with whom to share faith and life, and with whom they could work and witness.

These women put their remarkable intelligence, energy, imagination, and commitment to proclaiming the Christian gospel in many places, whether as missionaries themselves or as the wives of missionaries, the infamous asterisks. A male missionary who had a wife accompanying him had an asterisk beside his name in the General

Assembly lists to denote such. Anne Hepburn, who died last year, recalled her fury that on marrying Hamish she was forced to give up being a missionary in her own right and become an asterisk. Hamish agreed, but would honestly and amusingly respond: 'I always thought of you as a star.' The pioneering spirit of many of these women, obscured in our own records, finds contemporary resonance in the experience of women in our partner churches today.

The Rev Johanna Boitumelo Gaborone, of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, tells of her journey to ministry: 'I became aware of God's call on my life, for the ministry of word and sacrament in 1990 while I was still in Grade 11. When the minister announced during the intimations that the Presbyterian Church received women into the ministry, it was like the news I had been waiting for all my life and didn't know it. I felt that he had made the announcement especially for me. My life finally had a direction. I guess you could say I benefited from the suffering of my sisters before me. [After studying and training], I was placed in a congregation that had been vacant for five years. The leadership of the congregation were not happy to have me. As one elder elegantly put it: "Presbytery has really belittled us, they could not even send a woman, they sent this little girl and expect her to minister to us." Throughout my ministry I have had to deal with people, from the pulpit to the pew, both male and female, who felt I had to be put in my place because I was black, female, single, and in a world I don't belong in. I didn't know my station and had to be set straight. Somehow I wasn't black enough to know my place with the whites and how to behave around them, nor was I gentle enough as a woman, and I was in desperate need of lessons in "respecting" the male species. I was considered incomplete as a woman, because I was single and had opted to stay that way. I was a hopeless case, too proud, too outspoken. Never just right; always too much; yet never enough.' Ms Gaborone concluded, 'I need every little girl to have the experience of having seen or at least heard of a female minister. I believe I was created just the way God wanted me to be. I have responded obediently to

God's call to be here. God is capable and I don't need to do battles on God's behalf. Besides I have a lot of work to do. My calling is to shepherd God's flock. This is the thing I have a passion for and I believe I'm best suited for it as a woman, for women have been taught to love without shame. And this is what I believe the ordained ministry is about: loving as we have been loved.'

The bravery exhibited by Rev Johanna Gaborone is in keeping with that of many of the women in the Bible such as Mary Magdalene, who remained by the cross when many of the male disciples had fled out of fear, and after Peter had denied Christ three times. Being a witness to the resurrection was once a criteria for apostleship; Mary was there at the crucifixion and the resurrection (Matthew 27:56 & 27:61). Women were there at key points in Christ's life; that the gospel writers deliberately include this information is interesting and worthy of further reflection.

The Book of Genesis tells us that God created us in God's image, male and female. The Gospels reveal that the ministry of women was valued, respected and encouraged by Christ; however, over the centuries that have followed women's ministry has not always been valued, and has often been seen as secondary or inferior to that of men, or, at worst, rejected. Nevertheless, women have been engaging and continue to engage in ministry of various kinds in seeking to follow God's call within their own male-dominated societies and religious structures.

Achol, a Deaconess in the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, also shows this grit, persistence and love. Highlighting some of the key factors limiting women's ability to respond to God's call to ministry, she emphasised the role of patriarchy as one of the greatest challenges faced by women. 'Men ask, "what is missing that we need a woman?"' she said. The women would have meetings with the men, and ask them to show them how the Bible supported the male view of the marginalisation of women, and if they could put together a convincing argument the women agreed to listen, 'but they could not. Equality will come in time, but it is a long process here,' said Achol. She

added, 'My call is from God, you cannot stop that. Many women are trained and ordained in South Sudan, but after graduation they stop.' She would like to see more women working formally within the life of the church.

Achol also spoke of the trauma of the civil war in South Sudan and how she and others were seeking to offer a Word of Life in a situation of destruction and death. She and other deaconesses visit the displaced camps, where people who have fled the front line of the civil war find food and temporary accommodation in tents, and pray and fast with people to bring the hope of Christ. The people are highly traumatised and a long process of healing is needed so that people can speak, cry, share and hope. This is one reason the council is supporting work to train leaders of the Sudanese Church, both women and men, in mediation and reconciliation skills.

In the Middle East, the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches – the protestant church family – agreed in 2010 that there was no biblical or theological impediment to the ordination of women, but that there were cultural issues which each church could address in its own context. Many women preach and provide pastoral care in the congregations, and also teach in the seminary or work in executive positions in the churches. It was with delight the Council welcomed the news that the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon had agreed to ordain its first two women pastors in February and March this year. The Rev Rula Slieman and Rev Najla Kassab have both been preachers in the denomination and this is a welcome recognition of their dedicated ministries.

Since starting work with the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (ETSC) two years ago, our Mission Partner, Rev Colin Johnston, has been working with Anne Emile Zaki. Anne teaches courses in preaching, communication, psychology, spiritual formation, international relations and worship. She laughs that she is trusted to teach future pastors, but not to be a pastor herself. Anne is constantly trying to break the glass ceiling which restricts the advancement of women in Egypt,

especially within the Church. Both her father and her grandfather were ministers, and the Church has been central to her life. After studies in America, where she met her husband, Naji, she enrolled in a PhD programme in Christian Education. Having grown up in the Presbyterian Church in Egypt, which did not ordain women, Anne had never considered ordination. As she became more and more immersed in church work, leading worship and preaching, it was Naji who eventually challenged her, asking whether she felt herself called to be a pastor. Anne began a period of discernment and came to the conclusion that biblically there was nothing to hinder her from seeking ordination. She studied and was awarded a Master of Divinity degree, and after the Revolution, when many other Egyptian Christians left the country, Anne, Naji and their family moved to Egypt. Suddenly her Church could not ignore her anymore. The issue of women's ordination had to be addressed.

The Rev Refat Gergis, General Secretary of the Synod of the Nile, notes that Egyptian culture is highly patriarchal, and that, so far, it has not been a biblical argument but rather a fear of a cultural clash with their Orthodox Christian and Muslim neighbours that have inhibited the Synod from officially ordaining a woman. At the last Synod meeting (the equivalent of the General Assembly) the argument became very heated and it was proposed, and accepted, that it depart from the issue (and not even discuss it) for ten years. This has been contested, and it may be that the issue will be re-opened. 'As long as the discussion is on the table, I am fine,' Anne says. Anne combines her role as a mother in her own family with the wider role of being right in the centre of the ETSC family, supporting and affirming all the students, male and female. She has also been invited to preach in many congregations across Egypt, and, while she inevitably faces criticism, she also has many women approaching her to say that they too feel called to be pastors. Only time will tell whether Anne will be ordained or not, but she is certainly preparing the way.

Lydia Adajawah was the first woman elder to become Presbytery Executive (one of the three senior roles) in the

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana (EPC,G): She was entreated not to stand for election, with people, mostly men, discouraging her. She would be told: 'it is not yet time for women to ascend that throne', 'the terrain is rough, do not attempt it', 'the work is difficult, you cannot do it', 'how can people vote for that woman?'. Although she was elected, the official accommodation was not available for a year, the official vehicle was kept by her predecessor, and the constitution was changed so she could not be re-elected. Nonetheless, Lydia enjoyed her experience, and although she had to work much harder than her male predecessors to gain the same level of respect, she feels she proved women could excel. She went wherever she was asked, worked under difficult conditions, and earned respect. She was called names such as 'Strong woman', 'No nonsense woman', 'Iron Lady', and 'Yaa Asantewaa' (a Ghanaian Ashanti Queen mother who led her subjects to war against the British in 1900). Perhaps her favourite was from a Clerk of the General Assembly who always referred to her as 'Obatan Pa' meaning a mother who is trustworthy, dependable, respectable, empathetic, in fact a mother who goes the extra mile to fend for others.

However, Ms Adajawah sees the challenges which still limit women's ability to reach higher positions and wants to challenge the structural deficiencies so that all women may be ready to flourish in any role in the Church. 'In our part of the world, the literacy rate for women is lower than that of the men (women: 71%, men: 82%), and even as the ladder goes up, female ratios drop, so to get an equal number of men and women with the same level of academic qualification is a mirage, at least for now. One of the qualifications required for the position of Presbytery Executive is that the candidate for the post must be a consecrated Presbyter of not less than 10 years standing and that he/she must hold at least a University degree or its equivalent. Women outnumber men in the EP Church (59,882 to 36,757) and many have been consecrated presbyters for more than ten years, thus meeting the first qualification. But the second qualification brings challenges, since the majority do not have degrees. Currently, there are some female degree-holding

presbyters, but they do not yet have ten years of experience.'

It is clear that women play a significant role in every church we engage with. Not all churches have permitted women into formal ministry roles, some for theological reasons, some for practical, cultural reasons, but in every place women are key participants in the life of the church.

2.3 Discrimination & Violence

"There is no way in which the churches can speak credibly about violence in society at large as long as they are not willing to deal with it within church walls."

Rev Dr Margot Kässman.

Regrettably, throughout history, women have suffered violence, mostly at the hands of men, and often with little challenge from the churches, despite Christ's command to seek life in fullness for all. German Protestant Church leader Margot Kässman claims, 'Few church leaders see violence within the churches as a major question to theology, a threat to the very being of the church; and some male church leaders still legitimise it... There is no way in which the churches can speak credibly about violence in society at large as long as they are not willing to deal with it within church walls.'^[6]

If we seek a theology which truly affirms the equality of every human being as made in the image of God, and believe it is God's will for every individual to live life in fullness, then we must address the application of the theologies of our forebearers - abroad as well as at home. We have a responsibility to try to understand the complicated challenges faced by women, and the ways in which women have sought, and seek, to solve problems and develop different kinds of ministries, as well as being accepted into traditionally male leadership roles. Churches working together in partnership must seek to challenge the injustices which have been inherited and which continue to be perpetrated in every country. The church must be honest about its contribution to the gender

inequality present in the world, but it must also be a part of the solution, remembering that in Christ there is no male and no female, but one common humanity where all are equal in God's sight.

We heard from ministers, lay people, theologians and mission partners working with women who have suffered domestic abuse, sexual violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), and human trafficking. Sadly, these things happen to women in Scotland just as they do to women in other parts of the world. We have a job to do at home as well as to support our international partners. We have also been encouraged to hear from women at home and across the world engaging in ministries that challenge and seek to end discrimination, exclusion, violence and exploitation.

In preparing the 2015 Gender Based Violence report we learned that it is essential to take cultural context seriously, making it crucial to meet with women, to walk alongside them, and to begin to understand their experiences. It became clear that we can no longer assume that our theologies and experiences are universal. As the report revealed, the deep gender inequality in the world that women must contend with is often inseparable from issues of class, caste, colonialism, religion and race. The Christianity of colonialism has been criticised by theologian Kwok Pui-lan (who will deliver the Duff Missionary Lecture in September 2017) for developing patriarchal understandings of women which complemented patriarchal, traditional, and religious philosophies. While Church and faith are clearly important to those in the churches we relate to, there is also a web of traditional practices and customs which interweave with faith and church life.

The United Church in Zambia sent us a story which highlights something which is not confined to Zambia:

Violet, a widow, but only 35, has a daughter who is 14 years old. Violet was married at 15 to a Zimbabwean man. She came home from school and the family had already sat and discussed her future, and she was taken by her husband's family and married to an older man. Violet never

went back to school, bore a child and, after her husband died in a road accident, returned home with her son. Violet became a prostitute to support herself and her son. She became pregnant again and had a daughter. Later she found alternative work through the church. After her daughter had her second period, within the traditions of the culture she was eligible to be married. In a small village most people are related to one another and word soon spreads, and one day Violet came home to a group of Namibian men with her daughter and the neighbours (relatives) giving her to one of them in marriage to be taken back to Namibia. Violet shouted, swore at them and told them to go. The Nduna (zonal headman) intervened and Violet still refused to allow the marriage to go ahead, saying that this was what had happened to her and she would not allow it to happen to her daughter. Violet went to the local Court and pleaded with them not to allow the marriage. It was eventually agreed that the daughter would not be married, but Violet was fined the equivalent of a cow by the local Court because of her bad manners and abusive language to the Nduna. Violet sent her daughter to live with her brother, who was married and living in Lusaka, to protect her. She has not been allowed to return to live with her mother in the village. The Community Development and Social Justice Department of the United Church of Zambia, headed by Deaconess Mable Sichali, is trying to address problems like this by gathering small groups of women to work together on income generating activities, such as sewing and gardening, so that they can become financially independent.

In Mozambique, the Evangelical Church of Christ (IECM) Nampula Synod has a Women's Society which identified numerous barriers in Mozambican and church culture to the full equality of women. They told us that while Macua culture is matrilineal, communities are dominantly patriarchal and traditional in nature. Some of the negative practices are shared during initiation rites where girls are taught to accept injustices as part of society norms. The biggest challenge facing the Women's Society is domestic violence. Women's Society members are subjected to

various harassments, mostly in their homes. Many, if not all, cases are not officially reported. It is a result of cultural teachings that women should persevere in the course of life or marriage. There are of course parallels with Scotland, and women being advised that 'love endures all things' or that suffering is good for the soul.

Another challenge that the Women's Society and Christian women members face is the lack of support and encouragement from their husbands. There are also increasing socio-economic related problems at the household level, and these are pushing many women to go out to fend for their daily needs, and this is adversely affecting commitment and attendance levels of Women's Society members. While the women try to support each other, they see the church, as an institution, not adequately addressing the challenges women are facing. Lack of capacity to address such problems could be one of the reasons. However, some of the leaders of the Women's Society blame internalised patriarchal mind-sets and behaviours that largely contribute to the laissez-faire attitude of male church leaders towards gender related injustices. One Nigerian pastor's wife, Jessie Fubara-Manuel, addressed this issue: 'I was expected to be the "woman behind her man" to make him successful. I chose to stand "beside" him instead, so that together, we could be partners and co-labourers in the field of ministry.'

The 2015 Human Trafficking Consultation report^[7] shared the stories and experiences of women around the world who are at risk of and suffering from physical violence, sexual violence and restriction of freedoms, through having been trafficked. It also shared the stories of women serving God as they minister to the vulnerable. The following story comes from that Conference:

'In 2013, 13,000 children and women were trafficked from Nepal, and between 150,000 and 400,000 Nepalese girls are estimated to be sexually exploited in brothels located in different parts of India. Those trafficked ranged from seven to 24 years of age, the average being 16. The United Mission to Nepal (UMN) organised an Anti-Human

Trafficking Programme where facilitators ran monthly literacy classes for women and children and addressed issues of gender discrimination, domestic violence and human trafficking through a range of methods, including drama. One project, in Sundarnagar, a very poor area in the city of Butwal, was organised by UMN's partner, the Lumbini Christian Society. Twenty young girls formed the 'Sagarmatha Adolescents Girl's Group'. They met monthly to discuss a range of different social issues, especially anti-human trafficking. When the girls were approached by a man who offered them promises of a better life-style and jobs in India, they were more aware of the risks, so they had more conversations to decide if he was a trafficker or not. They informed the local women's group, and the women and girls made a plan to trap the trafficker, but he fled.'

One of the criteria in the Church of Scotland HIV Programme is the impact any programme will have on women. This has been an important aspect of the Programme as the virus can bring with it a significant impact on personal, family and community life. HIV is critically connected to poverty: it spreads fastest where people are poorest, especially amongst people who can't access information about the virus, about how they can protect themselves, and amongst women who often can't assert any rights over sexual behaviour including decisions about condom usage. In many parts of the world, promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights can be challenging when this conflicts with cultural beliefs. Today, 37 million people are living with HIV. All of them need access to life-saving antiretroviral treatment, but only 16 million currently receive it. One of the first steps to treatment is knowing your HIV status. At present, fewer than 50% of people living with HIV know their status. Some are unaware of the facts about HIV transmission or treatment. Some don't have easy access to the test. Knowing your status is important for everyone, because HIV is a virus, not a moral condition. Faith leaders and faith communities can make a huge difference in overcoming the stigma surrounding HIV. They have the capacity to reach people from the 'halls' of political and policy-making

power to those at the grassroots level. The General Secretary of the World Council of Churches has led by example and taken part in a poster campaign showing clergy being tested to inspire others to be tested.

The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria's home-based care and support project in Abia State began with one small group of people who were HIV positive; it now has 27 support groups, and there is a bias towards supporting women. The Church of Scotland HIV Programme has supported this project since its infancy and has heard many life-transforming stories from the members of the groups. An example of this is Joyce who, after becoming ill, found she tested positive for HIV. She tried to convince her husband to go for a test but instead he rejected her and spread stories about her, which caused terrible issues for her at her work and in church. She was in a very difficult place when she first came to the project, due to the stigma placed on her by others and the rejection by her husband. With the help of counselling and nutritional help, and through support groups and starting to take antiretroviral drugs, her health improved. Today she is remarried to a man that is also living positively, and together they have a child.

In Nepal, statistically the number of HIV positive people is very low, fewer than 1% of the population. The epidemic is concentrated in key populations such as sex workers, injecting drug users, men who have sex with men, and some migrants. However, the incidence amongst the most vulnerable groups has reduced over recent years thanks to more rigorous education programmes. A continuing major challenge to HIV control is the trafficking of Nepalese girls and women into commercial sex work in India. It is estimated that 50 percent of Nepalese sex workers in Mumbai brothels are HIV positive. Also, HIV infection rates among street-based sex workers in the Kathmandu Valley are around four times the national average. Another group where statistically the incidence is rising is amongst women whose husbands seek seasonal employment out of the country, particularly in India. On their return to Nepal, often infected with the virus, they

then transmit this to their wives. Our partner, the United Mission to Nepal, as part of its ongoing work, has a focus on HIV education and prevention and has been working with churches to reach out into the community to raise awareness and to prevent stigma and discrimination.

2.4 Accompaniment

'We will reaffirm our dignity as children of God, daughters created in the image of our good God. Tumekutana has indeed been a safe space for African women leaders and we intend to keep it that way, trusting that God, our loving Parent, who is indeed to us all things – Mother, Father, Friend, and Companion – will through divine providence bless us with all we need for this daunting but enriching task.'

Jessie Fubara-Manuel.

Following Jesus means meeting him wherever people are. To recognise God's presence with the most vulnerable, the wounded, and the marginalised of society is a transformative experience. Alive in the Spirit, the World of Life helps Christians discover their deepest power and energy for the transformation of an unjust world, joining with other faith communities, and all people of good will, as companions on the way. This is the Emmaus journey: to walk alongside people from the world church - the living stones - and share our stories, our experiences, our faith together, and offer encouragement, solidarity and support to one another on the way. Walking with the women of the world church is a key part of the Churches' support for full inclusion and diversity within the body of Christ, encouraging everyone's gifts to be fully utilised.

During the Decade 'Churches in Solidarity with Women' 1988 - 1998, some 75 teams of Living Letters - small ecumenical teams who visited a country to listen, learn, share approaches and challenges in overcoming violence and in peace making, and to pray together for peace in the community and in the world - visited more than 650 communities. Within the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) 2001-10, the Living Letters provided an opportunity

for many people to have safe encounters in local contexts around the issues related to violence prevention, peace-making, justice and nonviolence. Living Letters teams felt encouraged when those visited were able to affirm 'we are not alone!' Inspired by 2 Corinthians 3:3: 'You show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts' (RSV), the Living Letters demonstrated solidarity among churches and people living in the context of, and responding to, particularly painful experiences of violence. They shared insights and helpful approaches in overcoming violence, and deepened ecumenical contacts among the churches and individuals. It is an approach which is very much part of the way the WMC relates to its international partners today. Encouraging partners to travel to Scotland, and those from Scotland to visit our partners is like a Living Letter, it is about accompaniment on the pilgrimage of justice and peace.

Over the past thirty years, the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW) has brought together women from all the different churches and denominations in Europe to meet, build alliances, and develop ideas in seminars, conferences, and assemblies. After the first ecumenical women's consultation took place in Brussels in 1978, the women realised how enriching and necessary the encounter and discussions were, and how they felt empowered to search for a way to work together in East and West, South and North Europe to strengthen the ecumenical network of women; to help women to find their common European identity; and to challenge women to action, as well as to engage with, and challenge, their denominations and the traditional (mostly male) leadership. Today, EFECW envisions being a living Christian community of sisters, creating a holy and safe space where all women, beyond their differences, are empowered to share their spirituality, and to be a voice of Christian women in Church and public life in Europe.

The Christian Conference of Asia, in their 2015 report of activities, highlight some of the challenges to this: 'For

many churches it is still a challenge to accept women as leaders. They are often denied leadership and decision making roles in the church. The space that is often perceived for women in church is an extension of their home life instead of involvement in mainstream church activities and decision-making bodies. The patriarchal structure, which has dominated society and governed the relationship of men and women for many years, puts women as subordinate, marginalised and oppressed. Life in fullness for all demands that churches take seriously the discussion on discrimination and violence against women and gender injustice, in theology and the church.'

The Presbyterian Church in Myanmar has begun a journey of exploring how it might develop opportunities for women to be recognised in different ministries. In partnership with the Church of Scotland and other partners, the first woman - Ms Van Lal Hming Sangi - has been appointed to a staff position in the offices as Secretary for Women's Ministries. There are many women in leadership positions; these are related to women's organisations, such as the Presbyterian Women Society (PWS), Presbyterian Women Joint Conference (PWJC), and Presbyterian Women General Conference (PWGC). Women also play a major role in Sunday school programmes as teachers and serve as missionaries in remote areas of Myanmar.

In Juba, South Sudan, a country suffering severely with tribal factions engaging in civil war, the churches are still operating, but are also struggling with ethnic tensions. The Rev. Paska Aciya Nimiriano has worked with the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS) since 1989. She has conducted leadership courses in many places, visited Christian Women's Fellowships and preached to them the Word of Life, seeking to promote reconciliation, peace, and unity amongst women. It has also been important to raise awareness for women to know their rights and to practise social justice. As part of the WMC's response to the needs of the PCOSS, John Chalmers and John Sturrock, both trained in mediation and conflict resolution, have conducted training amongst pastors to

help address issues of trauma and to develop skills for mediation and building reconciliation.

Ida Waddell, Mission Partner in Zambia, highlighted some of the attitudes she has faced and how she has sought to empower her female colleagues: 'When it comes to introductions it is normal to be referred to as "Mrs Keith" or "the Education Secretary's wife" - both my husband's name and position despite me having my own name, Ida, and my own equally senior position as Health Secretary. Women present at senior meetings tend to be a minority and often their voices are not heard and meetings are largely dictated by the men present. As a mission partner I do have it easier than most Zambian women. During my years in Mwandi I became referred to, respected, and looked-up to as a mother-figure. This made it easier for my work from a medical point of view as it allowed me to give advice that often culturally is seen as a taboo. In Zambia there are certain topics (eg male circumcision) that women are expected not to discuss freely, let alone advise men on them. However, it was encouraging to see the female nurses use my example and take the lead and discuss such subjects anyway.'

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has, in recent years, addressed issues relating to human trafficking, violence against women and domestic abuse, and instructed the whole church to look at ways to address these issues. The Council has worked with its partners internationally to raise the issues and seek ways it can be supportive of partners as they seek to raise a sometimes delicate subject. The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Livingstonia Synod, Church and Society Programme runs a legal and justice department. The primary focus of the department is to ensure access to justice for the underprivileged in society with particular focus on women and children rights. This project is supported by the Council.

St Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) in Cairo, serves a population of around three thousand refugees and vulnerable migrants every year, striving to enhance the

quality of life for them in Cairo through education, and the provision of psycho-social and legal services. StARS aims to create a safe and inclusive environment regardless of nationality, ethnicity or religion. The programme, as well as providing individual counselling, supports psycho-social education both at St Andrew's and in the community. StARS employ a group coordinator and several part-time facilitators to run training programmes around the city for all refugees, but have some which focus particularly on the needs of refugee women and children, such as: parenting group, budgeting, sewing workshops, teenage mother support group, and gardening on a balcony group. As a result of these initiatives, people are able to cope better with the demands of life as a refugee in Cairo, to earn money by growing plants or sewing clothes, or at least be able to manage better on the little money they have. The skills are also transferable for refugees in the event that they are able to return to their home countries, or be resettled. The Council's St Colm's Fund was able to help support this work.

The St Colm's Fund was set up with proceeds of the sale of St Colm's College, Edinburgh in 2011. Originally the Women's Missionary College, many who passed through St Colm's recalled a place of creativity and energy, of spiritual enrichment and innovative worship, of ecumenical and interfaith encounters with people from all over the world, and of the joys and challenges of life lived in community. The Council uses the fund to support and encourage partners, particularly in innovative ministries with and among women. In recent years it has supported a gender based violence child protection programme in Malawi, Biblical literacy for women in Pakistan, rural girls' empowerment in Sumba, support for Roma girls to escape prostitution in Hungary, women's vocational training in Gaza, supporting refugees in Cairo, and combatting trafficking of women in Myanmar.

The Greek Evangelical Church (GEC), with only some 5000 members, started Dorcas, a refuge for women victims of domestic violence and their children in Milotopos, north Greece. The idea was conceived when an Albanian woman

came to an elder from the GEC in Larissa seeking shelter from her violent partner. At that time, the GEC did not have a refuge house and had to find another solution. Following subsequent requests from women seeking refuge, the Moderator and members of the GEC prayed and found a way to make a real difference. With women increasingly victimised due to the economic crisis in Greece, the Church was able to buy a house in 2012 with the help of donors from within Greece and using the proceeds of the WM Stamp Project. The house has provided a safe haven for women who have suffered domestic violence and their children, such as its first 'tenant', a young woman and her new-born baby. Today it is also being used to offer temporary accommodation to unaccompanied child refugees or families with no male adult.

Ms Alena Fendrychova has made a significant impact on the work of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren (ECCB) and Diaconia ECCB, the social action arm of the Church. The most frequent form of exploitation of persons who are trafficked is that of forced prostitution, with forced labour being the second most frequent. Most people who have been trafficked into the Czech Republic for the purpose of labour exploitation are EU citizens. Diaconia ECCB's Programme 'No to the Violence', funded jointly by the government, and the Swiss and German churches, is intended for people at risk of trafficking and labour exploitation from EU and other countries, but also for Czech people. The Czech Republic will receive about three thousand refugees for relocation in the coming years. The Czech state authorities have no capacity or experience with integrating so many people, and therefore the churches want to play an active role in this process. The ECCB also wants to be involved in the process of receiving refugees and, with support from the Council, has tasked Alena Fendrychova to coordinate the existing church activities, to create new activities and methods, and to support and inform churches. She has created a 'manual' which encourages and advises in which areas congregations can play an active role, primarily in the integration period. After gaining a residence permit a

congregation can cooperate with municipal and local authorities and positively influence the local atmosphere.

In May 2016 three representatives from Community World Service Asia visited Scotland to highlight the situation of religious minorities and women's rights in Pakistan and to understand better the situation for women in Scotland. As well as meeting with representatives of the Scottish Government to brief them on the issues facing women and minority faith communities in Pakistan, they had a series of meetings with representatives of Councils and Committees, including the Violence Against Women Task Group. This led to the Church of Scotland participating in the launch of the Scottish Government Engagement Strategy for Pakistan, and also to a return visit by the Violence Against Women Task Group in February/March 2017 to further develop mutual learning, build connections and share strategies for combatting violence in Scotland and Pakistan. These kinds of opportunities for learning and sharing capture the essence of the Council's aims to help the Church of Scotland build global links and develop friendships which offer mutual support, encouragement and learning. The whole church can walk the Emmaus road with our partners.

'*Tumekutana* began as a dream and it has now become a movement,' said Jessie Fubara-Manuel, its Secretary. It arose from questions asked by Presbyterian women leaders around Africa: 'Are our Presbyterian sisters in other countries facing the same challenges?' 'What are they doing to work against poverty?' 'Do HIV and AIDS look the same in all countries?' 'Are we the only ones suffering?' The first gathering of African women in Kenya in 2007 afforded African women leaders the opportunity of a safe space to meet together, to share stories, fellowship together, learn from one another and in so doing find support, renewal and inspiration to face the common challenges of women of Africa. They met again in 2011, and 2015, with support from international partners, including the WMC. Jessie Fubara-Manuel has seen a transformation. '*Tumekutana* has stayed true to its Swahili meaning of "we have come together" because African

Presbyterian/Reformed women leaders have come together three times successfully in the last nine years... we ask "how can we together as African women confront the violence, poverty and diseases that are ravaging our beloved continent?" We have pledged, therefore, that... we will create support systems that empower women's leadership within our denominations and societies...And we will be careful to speak out against obnoxious practices, abuses and beliefs that dehumanize us as women. We will reaffirm our dignity as children of God, daughters created in the image of our good God. *Tumekutana* has indeed been a safe space for African women leaders and we intend to keep it that way, trusting that God, our loving Parent, who is indeed to us all things – Mother, Father, Friend, and Companion – will through divine providence bless us with all we need for this daunting but enriching task. At *Tumekutana*, we can say that "dreams do come true" for by God's grace, our dream is a living growing reality touching lives and breaking down walls and boundaries in the power of our Triune God.'

3. A Future of Partnership

'Difference should be a source of life for us all, a source of maturity and humility. It should be a place to find the unity within humankind that can overcome separation and find joy in the "other".
Christian Aid.

The stories in our report highlight the benefit and the importance of World Mission's strategy of attentive accompaniment, allowing the Church of Scotland to journey with partners, standing in solidarity and witnessing to the full inclusion of all who are called by God. The mutuality is important. It is about walking together, fully sharing and experiencing each other's reality and seeking strategies which can apply to each particular situation. It is very much a part of the World Council of Churches pilgrimage of justice and peace, a journey to fullness of life for everyone.

The United Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa proclaimed a day of public repentance and encouraged 'all ministers, sessions and congregations to review their attitudes and actions regularly regarding sexism, and to grow in the grace of our Lord.' The Church recognised however that this was only the beginning of a journey towards greater wholeness and there was much still to do. There is still much to do in every part of the world church. As the Council highlights the role and situation of women in the world church, it clearly understands that any change cannot be orchestrated from above, or by one group alone. It is in the partnership of women and men working together that justice and fullness of life may be realised. The Nairobi (1975) assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) document, "What Unity Requires", highlights: The relationship of women and men must be shaped by reciprocity and not by subordination. The unity of the Church requires that women be free to live out the gifts which God has given to them and to respond to their calling to share fully in the life and the witness of the Church.^[8]

Dr Fulata Moyo, the World Council of Churches' programme executive for A Just Community of Women and Men (and a member of our partner church in Malawi: the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian) believes that within religious traditions there are authentic resources to affirm the dignity and entitlement of women to human rights. She is passionate about working to raise awareness and build a movement of gender justice and peace with zero tolerance for sexual and gender based violence. This movement was born during the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998) to challenge domestic based violence in all its forms, most especially abuse taking place during war and conflict. Dr Moyo, outlines the aim of the campaign: 'Thursdays in Black is a united global expression of the desire for safe communities where we can all walk safely without fear of being raped, shot at, beaten up, verbally abused and discriminated against due to one's gender or sexual orientation. Through this campaign we want to accompany our sisters, who bear the scars of violence,

invisible and visible, in Syria, Palestine and Israel, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan and the whole world, where women's bodies remain a battlefield, whether in armed conflict or so-called "peaceful" situations - through this campaign we are demanding a world free of rape and violence! We can all stand in solidarity through the simple weekly action of wearing black clothes on Thursdays.

The challenge lies with all of us. The Church of Scotland and the nation of Scotland have as long a road to travel as many of our partners. With only three female Moderators, and never two in a row, with congregations which refuse to allow a woman to preach or be an elder, with domestic abuse an ongoing issue and with the reporting of rape cases on the increase, it is important not to think of the issues as being only for our partners. The issues in this report remain a concern for us all. Maria Pilar Aquino leaves us in no doubt of the challenge: 'Those who believe that the new era of the reign of God initiated by Jesus implies the end of women's oppression must deliberately include this objective in their theology and make plain that the good news also announces the end of women's current subordination'^[9]

Christian Aid's gender report lays out a positive and uplifting vision of right relationship for the created order: 'A theology of gender needs to find the wisdom to support a way of understanding and living our being male and female that can celebrate the difference, that inspires justice and joy, and resists the distortion of gender difference into a means of oppression. Difference should be a source of life for us all, a source of maturity and humility. It should be a place to find the unity within humankind that can overcome separation and find joy in the "other"'^[10]

Striving towards gender justice, towards just and right relationships among all people based on mutual respect and accountability is a Christian calling. It is about full respect for creation and the right of children, women and men to live life in fullness. As a Church we declare that we

believe in life abundant for all God's people and therefore we must listen to the voices of women at home and from across the globe and support efforts to ensure that there is gender justice for all, for we are all one in Jesus Christ.

Resources

Pray/Worship

- Use the WMC's materials for worship, particularly the service outline and bible studies related to the report 'Woman in the World Church'.
http://churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world_mission/current_focus
- Use the Gender Based Violence report and Bible Studies.
http://churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world_mission/reports_and_resources/gender_based_violence
- Use the Human Trafficking report and Bible Studies.
http://churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world_mission/reports_and_resources/an_anti-human_traffickng_bible_study

Do

- Wear black on Thursdays as part of the WCC call to stand up against rape and violence against women.
- Invite Christian Aid or Church of Scotland to come to your church to discuss Gender Justice, including the Side by Side initiative. www.christian-aid.org
- Hold a Souper Sunday or a Sundae Sunday to support the Church of Scotland HIV Programme.
http://churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world_mission/hiv_programme/souper_sunday
- Attend the 'Women in the World Church' Conference on September 16, 2017.
Email: cfinlay@churchofscotland.org.uk
- Engage with activities celebrating the Reformation anniversary.
- Take part in our 'Word of Life' Instagram and Facebook challenge.

http://churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world_mission/current_focus

- Invite partners from the World Church to share with your congregation and in particular this year, ask that women be the majority of any group visit.
Email: cfinlay@churchofscotland.org.uk
- Become a Fairtrade Congregation.
www.fairtradefoundation.org.uk
- Apply to the WMC to be a long, medium or short term worker.
http://churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world_mission/get_involved

Read

- **Created in God's Image: From Hegemony to Partnership. A Church Manual on Men as Partners: Promoting Positive Masculinities.** World Communion of Reformed Churches, WCRC 2010.
- **Out of the Shadows: Christianity and Violence Against Women in Scotland,** Lesley Orr Macdonald. CTPI, new College, Edinburgh 1997.
- **A Unique and Glorious Mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland, 1830-1930.** Lesley Orr Macdonald. John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh, 2000.
- **In Good Company - women in the ministry.** MacDonald, Lesley Orr (editor). Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow (1999).

Church of Scotland Reports

Church and Society

- Living a theology that counters violence against women 2014.
www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/.../Living-a-theology.pdf
- Domestic abuse report 2012.
www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/.../Domestic_Abuse_2012.pdf
- Domestic abuse report 2003.

Ministries Council

- Report on applications and those in training for ministry with a gender breakdown each year.
- Report on Women in Ministry 2010.
- Gender Attitude Project.

Learn

- Learn about Oikocredit and the way investment changes lives. www.oikocredit.org.uk
- Learn about the work of the Scottish Bible Society and connections with our Partner Churches. www.scottishbiblesociety.org.uk
- Learn about Christian Aid's work on gender justice. www.christian-aid.org
- Hold a 24th of the month event on Israel and occupied Palestine and learn more about our partners in the Holy Land. http://churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/world_mission/get_involved/prayers-for-israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territories

In the name of the Council

IAIN D CUNNINGHAM, Convener
 SUSAN BROWN, Vice-Convener
 VALERIE BROWN, Vice-Convener
 IAN W ALEXANDER, Council Secretary

ADDENDUM**Valerie Brown, Vice-Convener**

The Council records its gratitude and appreciation to Valerie Brown for the time, energy and insight which she has generously shared with the Council in the three years in which she has served as Vice Convener and also in her service as a member and Convener of the Middle East Committee. Val has helped the Council enormously in guiding its work in the Middle East and in taking a full and active part as a Vice-Convener. She has taken a full part also in the Joint work with the Council, Church and Society Council, United Reformed Church, Scottish Episcopal Church and Christian Aid, for whom she works, in

delivering 24th of the month events all over Scotland to highlight the situation of our partners and pray for Israel and Palestine, and the wider Middle East. She has been instrumental in helping build relationships with other Churches and agencies in Scotland in support of our global partnerships and friendships, and for all these things the Council expresses its gratitude.

In the name of the Council

IAIN D CUNNINGHAM, Convener
 SUSAN BROWN, Vice-Convener
 IAN W ALEXANDER, Council Secretary

Appendices (on the web)

- Appendix I** Deaths
Appendix II Mission Partners
Appendix III Faithshare Visits

APPENDIX IV**MacKean Bentinck Fund**

In 1929 the General Assembly agreed that the MacKean Bentinck Institute in Naples could be closed and the proceeds (after any necessary payments) could be used "For the advancement of Protestant Evangelical Religion or Education in Naples in such manner as shall be thought most expedient at the time." (V. p776). On a recent review of the restricted funds held by the World Mission Council it was realised that these funds were no longer being utilised because of the particular restrictions. The WMC therefore requests that the use of the funds be extended to cover Christian Witness in Southern Europe. This would allow the Council to make use of the funds amongst partners in this area.

APPENDIX V**Mrs MacGregor (Batterflats) Endowment Fund**

On 22 May 1963 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland passed Act XIV - the Act anent the sale of Deaconess House, the application of the proceeds of sale, and the Mrs MacGregor (Batterflats) Endowment Fund. As directed by the General Assembly the Deaconess House

was sold and the Mrs MacGregor (Batterflats) Endowment Fund continues to be an endowment held for the purposes narrated in the Act:

"4. Authorise and empower that that as from the date of the passing of this Act the annual income of the said Mrs MacGregor (Batterflats) Endowment Fund together with any accrued income shall be applied as follows:

(1) One half thereof shall be remitted to the said Deaconess Board who shall apply the same in providing holiday grants for Deaconesses, such grants to be of such amounts and be given to such Deaconesses as the said Deaconess Board may decide from time to time; Provided, however, that the Deaconess Board may, if the Deaconesses at a meeting of the Deaconess Council should so decide by a majority of not less than two thirds of the Deaconesses present at such meeting, hold such part of the said one half of the said annual income for such purpose or purposes consistent with the terms of the late Mrs Margaret M'Guffie or MacGregor's Trust Disposition and Settlement as may be approved of by the said Deaconess Board.

(2) The other one half of the said annual income shall be remitted to the Foreign Mission Committee who shall apply the same in providing holiday grants for female foreign missionaries, such grants to be of such amount and to be given to such female foreign missionaries as the said Committee may decide from time to time"

Section 4(1) of the Act operates well, as power was given to the Deaconess Council to make adjustments to the purposes provided they were consistent with the original trust deed. This has allowed the purposes to remain modern and relevant to today's situation. Today holiday grants can be given to deacons, male and female, current and retired.

Conversely, the World Mission Council has encountered difficulties trying to use the funds available in terms of

section 4(2) of the Act. There are a diminishing number of female foreign missionaries who can be beneficiaries. Since 1963 the number of Church of Scotland missionaries has greatly reduced and there is no longer any distinction drawn between missionaries from what were formerly classified as Foreign Mission, Colonial and Continental Mission and Jewish Mission. To enable the funds available to be used the World Mission Council requests that the General Assembly amend Section 4(2) as below. This amendment will allow grants to be awarded to all those who fulfil the criteria agreed by the World Mission Council.

AMENDMENT TO ACT XIV 1963

ACT AMENDING THE ACT ANENT THE SALE OF DEACONESS HOUSE, THE APPLICATION OF THE PROCEEDS OF SALE, AND THE MRS MACGREGOR (BATTERFLATS) ENDOWMENT FUND ACT (ACT XIV 1963)
Edinburgh, May 2017, Session

The General Assembly hereby enact and ordain that the Act anent the Sale of Deaconess House, the Application of the Proceeds of Sale, and the Mrs Macgregor (Batterflats) Endowment Fund Act (Act XIV 1963) shall be amended as follows:

Delete Section 4 (2) and substitute: "The other one half of the said annual income shall be remitted to the World Mission Council, to be applied in providing study, retreat or holiday grants for Church of Scotland mission partners, such grants to be of such amounts and to be given to such mission partners as the World Mission Council may decide from time to time; provided, however, that the Church of Scotland World Mission Council may, if at a meeting it should so decide by a majority of not less than two thirds of the members present at such meeting, use such part of the said one half of the said annual income for such purpose or purposes consistent with the spirit of the Fund's current purpose."

[1] Rev Carola Tron speaking on 'Women and Theology' at AIPRAL (Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina), XII General Assembly, São Paulo, Brazil. 8-14 Aug 2016.

[2] www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/focus_areas/focus_gender_and_poverty.html (accessed 20.02.2017)

[3] www.christianaid.org.uk/images/of-the-same-flesh-gender-theology-report.pdf, p7

[4] *Created in God's Image*: From Hierarchy to Partnership. A Church Manual for Gender Awareness and Leadership Development. World Communion of Reformed Churches, WCRC 2003. p16

[5] Taylor, W Mission to Educate. A History of the Educational Work of the Scottish Presbyterian Mission in East Nigeria 1846-1960. EJ Brill, Danvers, USA. 1996. P135

[6] Quoted in Orr Macdonald, L: Violence In The Church, Echoes, WCC, Volume 18, 2000

[7] Scottish Churches Anti-Human Trafficking Symposium and Conference: Crossing Continents to Combat Trafficking. 15-17 October 2015.

[8] Created in God's Image: From Hegemony to Partnership. A Church Manual on Men as Partners: Promoting Positive Masculinities. World Communion of Reformed Churches, WCRC 2010. Introduction

[9] María Pilar Aquino, Our Cry out for Life: Feminist Theology from Latin America (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 140-141.

[10] www.christianaid.org.uk/images/of-the-same-flesh-gender-theology-report.pdf, p7