

Do you know what Millennium Development Goal 8 is? It's all about developing global partnerships for change. I've just been down to Stoke-On-Trent for an excellent study day which will be the basis for developing study material and activities that can be used all over the world by Methodist women and churches.

The British Unit Day of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women for 2009 was held at Broadway Methodist Church in Stoke-on-Trent. It was a fully booked up meeting with about 100 women attending.

Able led by Jill Baker, Kathleen Pearson and Ann Baarda, we began with worship in a church that has been open for less than 12 months, with great audiovisual equipment that was then used to show photos from the recent Area Seminar held at Erskine Bridge Hotel near Glasgow in May. It was lovely to meet up again with many of those who attended the seminar and the energy and enthusiasm of Methodist women in Britain was refreshing and encouraging.

Alison Judd has recently returned from serving as a mission partner in the Caribbean and took us on a whirlwind tour of the islands and introduced us to some of the women she became friends with there, who were strong and determined in their faith and their ability to make a difference in the world. Alison led a short bible study based on Acts 16.9, where Paul has a vision of a man calling him to come over to Macedonia. We were challenged by Alison's words calling us to preach good news. The MCCA's constitution includes as part of its mission that we are to spread spiritual holiness. Paul and Silas's faith had a profound effect on two women they encountered in Macedonia- changing Lydia, the dealer in purple cloth, and a slave girl who they healed, and consequently upset her owner who could no longer exploit her for monetary gain. We were challenged to think what impact our faith has on those around us, and how our values influence those we deal with daily at work or in the community, and how we treat others.

After lunch we could choose between various activities exploring MDG 8 in a creative way. These included bible study, writing prayers, exploring lifestyle issues/ideas for action, designing visual displays on themes of justice, and creative writing. We came together for a final act of worship led by Alison Judd, incorporating some of the material that had been created just minutes beforehand.

I would encourage everyone to get involved in putting into action the MDGs, created by the United Nations, and to which the UK government has signed up. Time is running out and we need to pressurise politicians into implementing their promises and making the world right side up, as well as putting our faith into action locally. In 2011 the next World Assembly of WFMUCW will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa. Preparations are well underway for this event which should be another inspiring and life changing few days to which all Methodist women from all over the world are welcome to attend. So if you want to be encouraged, equipped and enabled why not sign up for this, or if you don't want to cross the channel you could come to Swanwick in Derbyshire next April for a joint WFMUCW and Network weekend seminar entitled "Journeying On".

Build hope

Share stories

Work together

A force for change.

A child plays in the dirt.

Her toys are old plastic bags

Stranded together

To form a skipping rope.

What I throw away

Is precious for her.

Of the value of each life

In our consumerist society?

Can we make a difference,

Give a voice to the voiceless,

Speak out for those on the margins,

Empower those who can't or daren't change?

Yes we can do all things in Christ.

God will build hope.

He has written our stories.

He shares our lives.

He works through us.

We are the force for change.