



MORAVIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

HOME AND OVERSEAS

FEBRUARY 2021

World Day of Prayer Service on Friday 5th March 2021

(written by the Christian women of Vanuatu)

Theme: Building on a Strong Foundation

'See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.' Isaiah 28 :16

Heavenly Father you provide the raw materials for us to work with.
With the sand and cement we produce the binding for the bricks,
producing the solid foundation for our construction.
With your word, and following your instructions, we can produce
the solid foundations for our life and your work here on earth.

Our trust is in you, Lord, the house-builder. Amen.

Mary Judd



After many years of service, Sr Wendy Hopcroft retired from her role as Moravian Representative on the National Committee of the World Day of Prayer. For a while there was no one to replace her, possibly because she had BIG shoes to fill. We heartily thank her for all that she did and all that she achieved for the sake of the British Province of the Moravian Church.

In March 2020 I attended a WDP service at Wyke along with Sr Diane Thornton who suggested that being the representative might be something I would like to do. My initial response was a categoric: 'No!' But after thinking about it for some time I felt that it was possibly something I could do, and so applied to the PEC. Well, here I am - and what a baptism of fire it has been! All meetings since June have been on Zoom, which is traumatic enough when you live alone in lockdown without technical help. Eventually I sorted myself out and have begun to interact with experienced ladies on the Committee who have given me enthusiasm for the organisation and a friendly hand to hold when I have felt overfaced.

Onto this year's chosen country: Vanuatu is an archipelago of 80 tropical islands approximately 2000 miles north of Australia in the Pacific Ocean. The islands, 65 of which are inhabited, form a Y-shape extending 560 miles from north to south (slightly less than the distance as the crow flies from Land's End to John O'Groats). The country seems idyllic with its white beaches, colourful flora and fauna and coral reefs, but there are many dangers from earthquakes, volcanic activity and cyclones, the last of which, Cyclone Harold, happened this year whilst the country was fighting the threat of Covid-19. Rising sea levels and pollution also threaten the environment.

The islands were discovered in 1606 by the Spanish explorer De Quiros. Later Captain Cook arrived and named the islands the New Hebrides. Once discovered by Europeans along came traders and 'blackbirders' who tricked or kidnapped the islanders into slavery. This practice continued until 1904. Missionaries arrived and built schools and churches and changed the whole organisation of society and culture previously known by the Ni-Vanuatu (as they call themselves).



In 1906 the islands were jointly governed by France and Britain. The native people had no rights and were stateless in their own country until 1980 when they were granted independence.

Today the Vanuatu economy depends upon agriculture and tourism. Young people move to the cities to find work but often end up without food or housing as jobs are scarce. Many travel to Australia or New Zealand to find seasonal work harvesting crops.

Women, although promised gender equality, rarely find it and many are vulnerable to poverty, illiteracy and a lack of work opportunities. Domestic violence is common and infant mortality is high.

The national language is Bislama which has a high percentage of English vocabulary but Melanesian grammar and pronunciation.

Missionaries arrived in great numbers in the C19th. Catholics went to the south, Anglicans to the north and Presbyterians and Seventh Day Adventists to islands between. Missionaries still arrive from charismatic churches. Today 83% of the population count themselves to be Christian with the rest belonging to other faiths or traditional beliefs and cults.

Please keep the people of Vanuatu in your prayers over the next month and beyond.

In 2021 may I encourage you all to participate in one of the WDP services in your area - information can be found on the WDP website. In the event of the service being cancelled, because of Government restrictions, please contact the organiser for joining details of an online Zoom service. Remember that donations are still needed to support the work of WDP and the charities it supports, so WDP would appreciate it if you could either purchase items from the 'shop' (online or back of the Together in Prayer magazine) or send a donation to the local branch secretary.

Thank you.

Maureen Colbert
Moravian WDP representative