



## SMILE

Home and Overseas paper: October 2025

Recently I had plenty to smile about. A trip with folks from Gracehill to Christiansfeld. Then John and I went to Copenhagen and visited the Happiness Museum, where we saw the smiley face.

The smiley was created by Harvey Ball in the 1970s and he introduced the annual World Smile Day, first Friday of October each year, a day he encouraged smiling and acts of kindness. Set up in his memory, the World Smile Foundation is a non-profit charity to support children in need. Plus, there is the International Happiness Day: next year it is 20 March, 2026.

The Happiness Research Institute produces many publications based on research across different nations. They propose that happy people live longer, are more healthy, productive and more social. All this leads to more sustainable societies. Their report on healthy living states that loss of quality of life is due to many factors, including loneliness and physical inactivity. I mention these two because in our communities we can look around, smile and do something about both of these.

What is the link between a smile and happiness? The physical act of smiling engages the brain and releases certain hormones that create a feeling of happiness. It has to be a real smile, one felt from the heart and that shows in the eyes. This week I have tried smiling more at folk in shops and that I have met briefly. Sure enough, it results in a smile back and often a lovely conversation.

It can sometimes be difficult to smile when there is so much sadness, trauma and distress in our world. As I sat down to write this paper I received a letter from the UNHCR<sup>1</sup> explaining that over 12 million people in Sudan have been displaced over the last two years by war. All this at a time of major cuts to global aid, meaning charities struggle to provide care. At home and globally, there is suffering and tragedy. We are called to care but we must guard against being drawn into a feeling of despondency, hopelessness and even fear. Let us take the many world crises to God in prayer and find actions that enable us to offer some help, however small and local. And let us do it all with a smile.

At the MWA Retreat recently there was plenty of fellowship, smiling and laughter. I encourage you to ensure your Circle always has plenty of smiles. Why not share what really makes you smile? Go on, have a smile. I will leave you with a quote from the Bible. "A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit". Proverbs 15:13.

Sr Mary Holmes

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations High Commission for Refugees.