

## London District Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) Sunday 2013

### Theme: Women as Disciples

#### Introduction:

London District MWiB (formerly women's Network) presents this resource as an option that can be used for Women's Network Sunday, whether or not each church choose to celebrate Women's Network on the chosen Sunday - **4<sup>th</sup> March 2013** or another date that can fit in each respective church's calendar.

A Sunday devoted to MWIB, is but one aspect of our discipleship role.

This resource is formatted so that it can be adapted to fit in with a varied Order of Service and can also be used for Junior Church.

The New Testament portrays a number of women, who were Disciples of Christ. Some were named by the Gospel authors, however, it can be safely assumed, that a greater number have remained unknown and unnamed.

We are told that those women had listened to Christ's teaching, professed their faith in Christ, helped to finance His ministry and like the twelve Disciples, they too had followed Him on his journeys. Some, were among those who, witnessed Christ's crucifixion and were first to spread the good news of His resurrection –

*Mark 15:40-41*

Women Disciples were not only confined to the Gospels. This resource explores the roles played by some of these women who

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were introduced in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. These women include: Dorcas, who did much good works in her community- Acts 9: 36-43; Eunice the mother of Timothy and Lois his grandmother- Timothy 2 1:5 and Priscilla, the Theologian- Acts 18:2-3.

#### Blossom Jackson

#### Call to Worship

**Leader:** Almighty God we come to worship you. We pray that when you speak to us through your word, that we may have guidance for our lives through your grace. Gracious Lord we pray that you will bless all who are engaged in your service as disciples.

**All:** Amen

**Leader:** This is the day that the Lord has made

**All: Let us rejoice and be glad in it**

**Leader:** Lord open our lips

**All: And our mouths shall proclaim your grace**

**Leader:** God our Father and our Mother,  
We worship you in wonder and in love  
Our minds cannot contain you, nor do our words express you,  
But in Christ we see your glory,  
and hear your word, and know your love.

**All: Open our hearts and minds we pray,  
That we may see and hear you more clearly.**

**Love you more dearly.**

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**And follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen**

*(Source: Iona community)*

**Hymn- Teach me my God and King StF 668**

**Bible Readings: Mark 8: 34-38; John 13:1-8**

**Hymn: There is a line of women**

*(Text. John L. Bell (Tune - "The seven joys of Mary"))*

There is a line of women,  
Extending back to Eve,  
Whose role in shaping history  
God only could conceive.  
And though, through endless ages,  
Their witness was repressed,  
God valued and encouraged them  
through whom the world was blessed.

So sing a song of Sarah  
to laughter she gave birth;  
And sing a song of Tamar  
who stood for women's worth;  
And sing a song of Hannah  
who bargained with her Lord;  
And sing a song of Mary  
who bore and bred God's Word.

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There is a line of women  
who took on powerful men,  
Defying laws and scruples  
to let life live again.  
And though, despite their triumph,  
their stories stayed untold  
God kept their number growing,  
creative, strong and bold.

So sing a song of Shiprah  
with Puah at her hand,  
Engaged to kill male children  
they foiled the king's command.  
And sing a song of Rahab  
who sheltered spies and lied;  
And sing a song of Esther,  
preventing genocide.

There is a line of women  
who stood by Jesus' side,  
Who housed him while he ministered  
and held him when he died.  
And though they claimed he'd risen  
their news was deemed suspect  
Till Jesus stood among them,  
his womanly elect.

So sing a song of Anna  
who saw Christ's infant face;

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And sing a song of Martha  
who gave him food and space;  
And sing of all the Marys  
who heeded his requests,  
And now at heaven's banquet  
are Jesus' fondest guests.

**Story / Monologue**

**Prayers of Confession**

**Leader:** Heavenly Father; we thank you for your goodness, mercy, faithfulness and love towards us. We thank you for calling us your children and sending Jesus to die for our sins. We pray that the love you showed us through Jesus would be manifested daily in our lives as individuals and as a church. We pray that we will truly be filled with your Spirit so that this love would be evident. We are weak but Lord you are strong and we are able to do all things through Christ that gives us strength.

Lord, open our eyes of understanding to hate what you hate and love what you love. We pray for the awareness of the moving of the Holy Spirit in our everyday life even in little and less important things. We pray that Jesus would be seen in us, just like the Son brings glory to the Father. May we radiate the glory of Jesus whenever, wherever and whatever time and place we are. Help us Lord to know you are

**All: Amen**

*(Adapted from Prayer by Ruth Ifere, Nov 6th 2012: MWiB Web Site)*

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**Leader:** Creator God, forgive our moments of ingratitude, the spiritual blindness that prevents us from appreciating the wonder that is this world, the endless cycle of nature, of life and death and rebirth. Forgive us for taking without giving, reaping without sowing. Open our eyes to see, our lips to praise, our hands to share. May our feet tread lightly on the path we tread, and our footsteps be worthy of following, for they lead to you.

**All: Lord hear our prayer**

[www.faithandworship.com/opening](http://www.faithandworship.com/opening) prayers

**Hymn- Called by Grace to be Disciples StF 660**

**Story / monologue**

**Hymn: Show me how to stand for Justice StF 713**

## Story / monologue

Hymn: Master Speak! Thy Servant Heareth *StF 666*

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Address: 'Called to be Disciples'

## Offertory

Hymn: See, Jesus, thy disciples see *H&P 763*

Prayers Of intercession:

*Methodist Women in Britain*

*Trafficked women*

*Women in Position of Leadership*

*Women in Prison, asylum seekers, refugees*

*Women in One Parent families*

*Let us join together in the words of the Lord's Prayer*

Hymn: Forth in Thy name O Lord I go. *StF 550*

*Blessing & The Grace*

## Monologue

**Lydia**

**Denise Creed**

Welcome to my home, welcome, come on in,  
it's good to meet you.

Did you find the journey tiring

there are so many people in Thyatira,  
we really are a crossroads for people,  
cultures and business.

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Do you worship Apollo?

Most who come here come for his Temple.

Oh you follow Jesus,

may God's blessings be upon you sister,

for I too now follow the master.

You have come for my cloth?

The finest purple you will get anywhere.

I know it may seem strange to you

that I am first and foremost a business woman.

Dying cloth is almost as old a profession as prostitution,

in fact the two go hand in hand,

remember Rahab, she dyed red cloth

and kept all her family on the strength of both her professions.

I do nicely with just the one profession!

People come from all over for my cloth

They know it is the best colour and quality.

My roots are Jewish, that's how I know about Rahab!

And despite the demands on my time,

I always found time to go to the river to pray with the other Jews.

It was a good meeting place for prayer

and we would exchange techniques with each other for our cloths.

We first heard of Paul from traders from Philippi.

so when he came to join us by the river  
for our prayer meeting on the Sabbath  
we were eager to hear what he had to say.

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Women are not often given credit for seeking after truth –  
follow your husband, do what he requires,  
think as he thinks, not me!  
I make up my own mind.  
I have done it in business and I run my household as a tight  
knit family,

I am also capable of deciding for myself who the God is I worship.  
So when I heard Paul tell of Jesus,  
I heard the truth and I believed,  
was it like that for you?  
Psalm 119 verse 130 says “Your word is revealed and all is light;  
it gives understanding even to the untaught.”  
That is what happened to me!  
In fact I was the first in my city to publicly proclaim my faith  
in Jesus,

I confessed him as Lord and was baptised in these very waters,  
do you know when I told my household,  
they too decided to follow Jesus and were baptised as well.  
What rejoicing we had as we realised we have a Saviour in Jesus.  
No, it didn’t change my life that much,  
well apart from the fact I seem to get  
even more successful with my business!

Oh, and there is definitely a different atmosphere in the house,  
maid and mistress alike are servants of Jesus,  
and of course the visitors we get.

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I remember the time Paul and Silas came,  
they were in a terrible state, just out of prison,  
bruised and battered, we had the honour of looking after them.  
And even though they warned what had happened to them  
was only a sign of what would happen to us,  
we could not but rejoice as we saw God at work in so many people.

If it doesn’t sound like boasting,  
I have to tell you that my home  
became the first Christian community in Philippi,  
you would call it a church now,  
but we tried to live out the good news,  
in prayer, teaching, worship, breaking bread and caring for each  
other. Some people have asked me,  
“why did you not sell everything, and give the money to the poor?”  
I answer them, because that was not what God wanted.  
My business, my purple cloth provides money to support our  
community,  
to offer hospitality, to send to others to relieve their poverty.  
Surely the gifts I had were used to the best advantage.  
Where would Paul and Silas have gone if I had sold my home.

Who would have cared for my servants?  
What would the community have done for a base to meet  
if it had been sold.

No I was using the money and goods in the right way for me  
to serve the kingdom of God.

You know, I find it fitting that I sell purple.

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A royal colour, a rich colour, the best,  
for do I not serve the King of kings,  
is he not worthy of the best we have,  
does he not put colour into our lives?

How thankful I am that Jesus is the one we Jews were waiting for.  
How amazed I am that God chose me to continue his work,  
how humble I am that even I can make a difference  
when I act in God's name.  
And in opening my home,  
you never know I may even have entertained angels unaware!

Next time you come down by the river, under the shade of the tree,  
say a prayer for me, this is where I was baptised.  
Dying to my old way of life into a new and living way.  
When you see the sun catching the water and sparkling,  
remember how the Spirit bubbles up within  
and transforms our lives,  
and when you see the waters dark and murky,  
pray for the martyrs, the ones whose lives were cut short because  
they refused to deny the truth.  
And if you should go down into the water,  
may the God, whose love is new every morning,  
fill you afresh with his grace and mercy.

As a fellow believer you are part of our family here  
and are welcome to my home,  
and if by chance you would like to buy my purple cloth,  
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well I have the best there is, come and see.

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**Stories:**

**Joanna**

**Blossom Jackson**

*“And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him, And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance” (Luke 8:1-3)*

With these verses we have the first reference to women who accompanied Jesus Christ and partook in His earthly ministry. Unlike the “twelve” there is no narrative of the women's call to become disciples, or of their being sent on any mission. There is no record either, of how they first came to know the Lord Jesus. All that is preserved is that some of them had been healed of devils and infirmities.

Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, like most biblical women, is identified by her relationship to a man. As the wife of

Herod's steward, Joanna enjoyed a certain degree of wealth, status, and influence. She is named again in Luke 24:10 as one of the Pa

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Women with Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb, along with Mary, the mother of James, as well as a number of other nameless women.

The canonical gospel accounts are not explicit about the miracle wrought by Jesus upon Joanna, wife of Chuza. She is mentioned as being among some women who had been traveling with Jesus and the twelve disciples and that some of the women had been healed by Jesus of "evil spirits and infirmities." The passage in Luke states that among them were, "...Mary Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, Joanna the wife of Chuza- Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered unto him of their substance" *(Luke-8:2-3)*.

Joanna's name means "God's gift." Some sources suggest that it's simply a variation of Anna- a name that means "favour or grace." Joanna like the other women who followed Jesus is reported by Luke, to have 'financed his ministry of their substance' *(Luke 8 1-3)* What is portrayed in this story, is that these women used their money to help fund Jesus' ministry. Without financial support their ability to travel would have been impeded and it appears that, the majority of those who were active donors to Jesus and the other disciples' ministry, were women.

In the patriarchal society in which Joanna lived, it can be deduced that Chuza must also have embraced Jesus' teachings, or he would

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have refused to allow Joanna to use their money and her time for Jesus' work. He also did not prevent her from traveling with Jesus.

According to Luke, Joanna had walked with other women believers who discovered the empty tomb on the morning after the resurrection of Jesus. There they had found Two men stood by in shining garments, had asked the women why they were searching for the living among the dead. These men reminded the women of the Savior's words, when he had spoken about being delivered into the hands of sinful men to be crucified, and that he would arise from death, on the third day.

The men went on to remind the women of Jesus' prediction of his resurrection on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day after he was put to death. The women remembered Christ's words, as they returned from the sepulcher, to tell the eleven disciples, what they had seen.

*(Also sourced from the internet)*

**Lois**

**Abbey Springer**

The only Grandmother mentioned in the Bible, was a fine Christian woman named Lois. Lois was the maternal grandmother of Paul's

young friend Timothy to whom he wrote his final epistle (while in prison in Rome awaiting execution).

Lois was a Jewess who lived with her family in Lystra among a

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people, who worshipped the Gods of Greece, yet she managed to remain true to her faith and taught her daughter the scriptures who in turn, was able to pass this on to her son Timothy.

There is no doubt about this Grandmother's influence upon the lives of both her daughter and grandson. She was a woman with great strength of character and wisdom. She had great resolve, so did not allow herself to be swayed by the attraction of another culture. She is praised by Paul as the one who passed on the 'mantle of faith' to her family.

In Lois' story, we are told, that when her daughter needed help with tasks bigger than she could handle, she knew that she could count on her mother. She was never too intrusive, helpful without being controlling and most of all she lived and taught by example. She certainly received one of God's greatest blessings, the gift of a God fearing child in Timothy.

**Eunice**

**Abby Springer**

Eunice according to Paul's second letter to Timothy was like her mother Lois, a devout Jewess. Her name in Greek means 'Conquering well' and was an expression of a good victory.

By all accounts, Eunice lived up to her name and raised a devout son, Timothy. We know from scripture that she married a Greek who was, a Gentile.

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Lois committed herself to teach their young son Timothy by word and example, the truth and wisdom of the scriptures, even though she was brought up in the Jewish faith.

She remained loyal to her marital vows despite her husband's unbelief in the Christian faith

She did not have their son circumcised and when her husband would not support her in the teaching Timothy the Scriptures; she enlisted the help of her own mother, Lois.

Eunice is a Biblical character of some obscurity, having been mentioned by name in only once Bible, yet she was able to raise a son who was hailed who was a fine preacher of the Gospel of Christ

**Phoebe:**

**Jacqueline Fowler**

Some women in the New Testament Church were apparently ordained as deaconesses, but this is not always clear in the various translations of Greek into English. Of all New Testament women, Phoebe might be the most hotly debated in terms of her role in the early church! *Romans 16:1-2 states: I commend to you Phoebe our sister, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for indeed she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well. (NRSV)*

The Greek word *diakonos*, used to describe Phoebe in Romans 16:1, is both the masculine and feminine accusative form of the noun,  
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which could be translated into English as *deacon* rather than *deaconess*. Phoebe was a deacon of the church in Cenchrae, according to a strict translation of Romans 16:1. While the word *diakonos* is translated in other portions of the New Testament as some scholars maintain that Paul restricted the office of deacon to men but others dispute that! For example, when describing the qualities that office holders called 'deacon' must possess -Paul writes in *1 Tim 3.11* that the women 'likewise are to that women deacons are to have similar qualifications to the male deacons (*1 Tim 3.8-10*)

Paul uses another word to describe Phoebe: *prostatis*. The normal translation is "helper" or someone who has helped. The basic and most obvious translation of the word from classical Greek is "patron" or "benefactor," and women in this role, are well attested in the Roman world. In the Greco-Roman world wealthy women sponsored the arts, philosophers, writers, and politicians. They paid them and gave them the social standing they needed to succeed. Phoebe was a wealthy woman who served the church out of her means as the women in Luke 8 served Jesus out of theirs. For Paul to say that Phoebe was a benefactor to him meant that she had probably helped to support his missionary travels financially.

It is also very likely she was known in Rome, and that she had the appropriate social status and clout to introduce Paul to the churches  
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in Rome. Churches Paul had not had any dealings with, nor had he helped plant them. It is believed that she was on her way to Rome and that Paul entrusted his 'epistle' to her care for safe delivery

Whatever the conclusion we draw about her title and 'office' Phoebe was a woman who had her own means and served the church in a leadership role. Paul comes very close to commanding churches he had no hand in planting, and Christians, most of whom he had never met, to welcome her and provide anything she needed. She was not only a deacon and a benefactor in the church, but Paul himself had also benefited from her generous leadership.

## **Priscilla**

***Olufemi Cole-Njie***

**Priscilla** was a woman of Jewish heritage and one of the earliest known Christian converts who lived in Rome. Her name is a Roman diminutive for *Prisca* which was her formal name. Priscilla was married to a Jewish man named Aquila

Priscilla was a team player and was never mentioned alone. Seven times they are named in the New Testament and Priscilla is listed first in five of those times, suggesting to some scholars that she was the head of the family unit. Some suggest the reason for this as being the probability that Priscilla came from a Roman family of high

social rank. It may also be suggested that perhaps she was the one gifted in Bible teaching. In this case her name may well be the first to spring to mind when writing about the couple.

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Priscilla and Aquila were among the earliest known teachers of Christian theology. **Priscilla and Aquila**, according to **Acts 18:2-3**, were also tent-makers, it was their common trade as tent-makers which brought about Priscilla and Aquila's meeting with Paul in Corinth. Priscilla and Aquila made a great team. It is most likely that Priscilla worked with her husband in the business as Luke refers to them both as tent-makers. The business prospered. Teamwork enriched their business lives. As they worked with Paul their interest in missions grew to such an extent that when Paul left for Syria eighteen months later, they accompanied him as far as Ephesus.

While Paul was travelling "throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia strengthening all the disciples," (vs. 23) Priscilla and Aquila remained in Ephesus. It was there that they met Apollos, a Jew who had become a Christian. After hearing him speak in the synagogue they sensed that something was missing in his understanding of the Christian faith. And so they invited him to their home hoping that they would be able to help him understand the (**Acts 18:24**). They must have done a great job because Apollos stood in competition with Paul and Peter I Corinthians 1.

In **1 Corinthians 16:19**, Paul passes on the greetings of Priscilla and Aquila to their friends in Corinth, indicating that the couple was in his company. Paul founded the church in Corinth, including their greetings, implies that Priscilla and Aquila were also involved in the founding of that church

In **Romans 16:3-4**, thought to have been written in 56 or 57, Paul sends his greetings to Priscilla and Aquila and proclaims that both of **Page 19**

them "risked their necks" to save Paul's life.

Priscilla, the disciple was a remarkable woman, a theologian, a teacher, a business woman, a team player, a risk taker, an inspiring example for disciples even in 21<sup>st</sup> century!

*Online Sources*

### **6. Dorcas/ Tabitha: *Mathilda Byam***

Dorcas lived around AD 35, a well beloved lady in her community that had concern for the poor in her society. The people in her church acknowledged her love of good works and gift of charitable deeds; as she cared for others and demonstrated her caring in practical ways, yet, she was neither a preacher nor a prophetess.

'The name Dorcas' in Greek, means gazelle & the name 'Tabitha' in the Jewish language, also means gazelle'. The women in the Christian community, like Dorcas, were models of the virtues advocated by Roman leaders: traditional family values such as good sense, courage, contentment, and fortitude.

Dorcas seems to have been a well-off widow living in the coastal

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City of Joppa. The original Greek text describes this widow-woman, as a female disciple - the only time the New Testament uses this word disciple. So immediately we know that she was a woman of good repute. She is always portrayed in artworks and commentary as a holy woman. A good natured woman who was so generous and well loved by all; this is reinforced by what we learn about her. She spent her time doing good works and 'acts of charity'. She was therefore an admired member of the community and was esteemed by all.

When Dorcas became ill, with an unspecified condition, we may assume that she was nursed by her friends and family. After she had died, her body was washed and then laid out in an upper room, a space that is removed from the hurly-burly of the ground-floor courtyard and public rooms and a relatively quiet place where people prayed.

The church communities were saddened when Dorcas had fallen ill

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and on hearing that Peter was nearby Joppa, they sent two men to fetch him. Peter, who was one of the disciples that followed Christ whilst he was on earth, had the gift of prayer and healing.

When the men met with Peter, they made an urgent request for him to come and minister to Dorcas. But when Peter arrived at the home of Dorcas he found that she had already died and her friends openly grieving. Dorcas' friends told Peter about the wonderful work and the kindnesses that she had done and showed him, the tunics and garments she made. Peter was then taken to Tabitha's body that was laid out in the upper room of her house.

Mourning was not a restrained activity in the ancient Middle East. People showed their grief by wailing, crying, and tearing the upper part of their woven garment. The more noise, the more the dead person was loved.

He then went into the upper room of the house, and asks those who were in the room to leave and knelt down prayed to God for her life

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to be restored and brought her back to life. After praying, Peter called to her by the name of Tabitha which means Dorcas—to arise and she opened her eyes. When she opened her eyes, Peter stretched out his hands to her, lifted her and she sat up. Peter then called to her waiting friends and presented Tabitha to them.

The event was a pivotal time in Peter's life, and helped to change the direction of the early church. There. Peter had responded immediately to Dorcas. Friends for him to go and minister to her. His journey too, was significant as Lydda was a twelve-mile walk to Joppa, and by travelling there Peter had travelled beyond the boundaries of Jewish territory and further away from Jerusalem, which at that time was hostile to the infant Christian church. The journey could also be viewed as a reflection of his inner journey, as he moved away from Judaism towards a new understanding of his mission.

*Source includes internet sources*

*bj/feb/2013*