

# uf GRAPEVINE



*Our fellowship is with Christ and one with another*

**Summer 2025**

No. 212



# Fun, Faith and Fellowship

- We are an ecumenical fellowship for Christian Women.
- Our activities are spiritual, intellectual and social. Whatever we do, we uphold and share the Christian ideals of fellowship and family life.
- We meet in local branches, regionally and nationally, with programmes consisting of church services, talks on a wide range of subjects, parties, outings, coffee and chat.
- With shared interests and common values we become friends.

## Women in Fellowship Prayer

Lord we beseech Thee, watch over our Fellowship;  
exalt its purposes, bless its undertakings and fulfill  
its prayer.  
Grant to its members to be of one mind concerning  
its aims.  
May the Father's power govern and sustain us,  
the energy of the Holy Spirit renew and quicken us,  
for Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen

**Women  
in Fellowship  
welcome you**

[www.womeninfellowship.org.uk](http://www.womeninfellowship.org.uk)



Medway teaparty

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Front Cover: Amongst the Bluebells, Cheltenham III  
Back Cover: Wall tablet, Launde Abbey



Newbury 70th Cake



Stour Valley walking group

## Dear Members

**What an amazing spring it has been and how joyful it is to be out in the sunshine again and enjoying nature. All those who were at Wintershall recently were treated to a magnificent and uplifting day and (as many commented) the beautiful weather was the icing on the cake.**

In March Weybridge branch celebrated their centenary with lunch at St George's Hill to which I was delighted to be invited. And Amanda, Anne and I were included in perhaps the youngest branch, Truro's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary day. Both days were very special and photos and reports are on the WF website.

There have also been visits to branch meetings at Guildford, Twickenham, Chelmsford, Harrogate and Bury St Edmunds. It is always very enjoyable to join branch meetings and to meet so many of the members. It is true that most branches are reliant on a few stalwart members to run them but certainly I sense an increase in support and determination to keep individual branches going for as long as possible.

More visits are planned for June and the rest of the year. These are the perks of the 'job' for me and others on Executive!

But all good things come to an end and as I am writing this the forecast for the Whitsun weekend is for heavy rain and gusty winds. And we cannot ignore the likelihood of hosepipe bans. Likewise with the Fellowship. Whilst branches are continuing to provide members with

interesting and varied meetings the future of the national body continues to be in doubt. We continue to seek volunteers to join Executive. I have written to those eligible and have had several one-to-one conversations. Despite this no-one has agreed to take on the role of Chairman or the other key roles on Executive.

The term of our editors Jane Powl and Dinah Taylor ended at the AGM in April. Thank you to them both for compiling this edition and especially to Dinah who saw this Grapevine through to its publication in June.

The planning for the 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is well under way and we will be finalising the London event over the summer. We hope that branches will also celebrate the event and please let us know if we can provide some support – financial or otherwise!

Wishing everyone a relaxing and peaceful summer

In love and fellowship

*Alison*



**Central Chairman**  
(2023)



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**Central Treasurer**  
(2023)



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**St Christopher's Charity Representative**  
(2024)



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**Scattered Branch Secretary**  
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Judy Little (Scattered Branch)  
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**Communications Officer**  
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Amanda Roberts (Nottingham)  
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### National Events Secretary (2025)



Anne Tanner (South Trent)  
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## Executive Vacancies

Look on the WF website to see the full details of each vacancy. You **must be signed in as a member** to the website (log-in details elsewhere in the Grapevine) and then look in Guidelines, then select "For Executive" or, again **once signed in**, you can follow the QR Code.

### Website Secretary

You have an easy system to use, so no technical knowledge necessary. This role is open to husbands too! Updating and keeping our website current. Liaising with the website suppliers as necessary. Working closely with the Communications Officer.

The following vacancies can be amalgamated or separated. Executive is working collegiately, so we all help each other.

### Secretary

This is the beating heart of the organisation! The main lynch pin of the Executive. You would be the main contact, organise Executive, run AGMs, record minutes of all Executive meetings, and are a custodian of records.

### Communications Officer

If you are creative and at ease with modern communication technology (or want to learn) then you will be a real asset to WF. Sending out mass mailings like newsletters and organising virtual meetings, helping the Website Secretary if necessary. Making sure that both the public face and internal needs of the organisation are met.

### Grapevine Editor

The perfect position for someone who enjoys writing. Needs to be competent with Microsoft Word, able to create files, organise and edit copy and photos, communicate with members, and liaise with the publisher.

## New Member of Executive Committee

### Anne Tanner (South Trent)

I became a member of South Trent W.F. in 2020 and served as secretary for two years. My husband and I have two sons and three grandsons. My working life was varied, training as a nurse when I left school and then going to university in my 30s. I taught geography followed by several years at the Environment Agency, then port planning (including managing a small port), and finishing as Secretary of the International Harbour Master's Association. I enjoy playing tennis, especially with my grandsons, singing in our church choir and trips in our GoPod.



## Thank You

On behalf of all WF members, we would like to thank those retiring from the Executive Committee. As National Events Secretary, Pamela has provided us with a variety of inspiring, interesting and fun events. Pauline, with infinite patience, has aided us through the wonders and mysteries of modern technology. Jane and Dinah have kept us connected through the pages of the Grapevine.

All have contributed time and suggestions to the Committee that have helped in the development of new strategies to meet the challenges of WF.

We wish you the best of luck and a happy retirement.



*Retiring National Committee members*

## Editor's Message

**Looking at the cover of the 2024 Summer Grapevine with its photograph of the stunning Chavenage Chapel, we couldn't believe that a year has passed so quickly. So many photos are sent to us that it is always difficult to choose just one for the cover, but we thought that a picture of WF members enjoying the fellowship of one another is especially appropriate for what might be the last edition. After all, friendship and support for one another is what WF is about.**

The Grapevine has been an integral part of Wives, now WF, for several decades and has taken many forms. Our colourful magazine, full of news about the branches, is made possible due to improved printing methods and outshines the shorter and simpler editions of the past century. But no matter what the format or appearance, Grapevine has served as a vehicle for uniting all members, no matter how remote. It has been sent to countries far and wide where Scattered members relied on the magazine to keep them connected to our Fellowship. Now, it enables those who prefer a 'hard copy' or those for whom technology is a challenge, to keep in touch. Future events, branch reports, event reports and In Memoriam are all an important part of its content, not to mention the interesting articles submitted by

members.

We have enjoyed our term as editors; it has enabled us to serve an organisation truly devoted to the Christian ethos of 'Love thy neighbour'. Our special thanks go to Sarah O'Boyle who has continued, with her 'eagle eyes', to provide her editing skills before we go to press.

Most of us have developed close friendships with members in our branch and with women we've met at National Events. As members of the Executive, we have had an inside glimpse of the work that is done to keep the Fellowship going and feel sad that no one has come forth to replace us. It is still not too late to volunteer, and we are here to help anyone who comes forward. In the meantime, log into the website for updates and information and send Amanda news of branch events.

For now, it is time to shut down the computer and the printing press, and to say 'Goodbye' to our many readers. It has been a pleasure to connect with you over the past three years.

*Dinah Taylor and Jane Powl*

*Editors*

## Wear your badge with pride!

Badges available from the Literature Secretary for only £2.00



## AUTUMN CONFERENCE - 25<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025

### Life is Stranger than Fiction

Northampton Branch invite you to the newly opened Highgate House Conference Centre in rural Northamptonshire where we will enjoy having the conference centre to ourselves in beautiful surroundings.

Applications now open! The residential cost for two days is £150 pp. Day rates also available.

The closing date for applications is 14<sup>th</sup> August.

## THE RETREAT - 18<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> March 2026

We return to the inspirational and tranquil setting of Launde Abbey in Leicestershire and will be led in retreat by Rev'd Georgina Watmore, former investment banker, enthusiastic Granny and currently Bishop's pastoral chaplain at Chester Cathedral. Husbands / partners are welcome to attend.

## WF AGM 2026

The April date, format and venue to be advised.

## ANNUAL DAY - June 2026

A special daytime event is being planned to celebrate our 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Central London. Further details to follow.

**More information about these events  
can be found on the WF website**

## Treasurer's Report

During the year the Fellowship made a deficit of £8,137. (2023 surplus £4,535).

The Fellowship is in deficit this year largely because of the reduction in the Quota per member from £10 to £5. We are still holding a substantial amount of money so the Executive has agreed that these funds should be used to contribute to expenses and to subsidise events where this is appropriate. The Quota is also set at £5 for 2025 and it is proposed that it will be reduced to zero for 2026.

Every effort is made to budget events on the basis of break-even and the small deficits made on the Annual Days and the Autumn Conference were reasonable given the overall costs of these events. In the case of the Retreat, the Executive agreed to subsidise each place and unexpectedly we had to pay our Speaker's fee and the cost of her accommodation.

Administration has been much easier with more than half of the branches able to pay the Quota using internet banking. Members have been able to pay for events online using a debit/credit card which has made booking and payment easier but there is a small commission to be paid on all such payments which has added to the costs of the event.

The cost of Grapevine has increased from £7,798 to £8,125. This was largely because the cost of postage has increased.

With the significant increase in interest rates, we have received interest of £2,444 in 2024 (the 2023 £2,279). This is subject to corporation tax at 19% and we are declaring this to HMRC. Tax is also due on interest received in previous years. A deduction of £1,500 was made in the 2023 accounts to cover the estimated cost of this for 2023 and earlier. There will also be £464 to pay for 2024. We have sought the help of the accountants Courts & Co in making these tax returns.

Many thanks to Mary Coggins for agreeing to carry out the independent examination again on an honorary basis.

I can report that the total amount sent to St Christophers in 2024 by the branches and the Executive was £36,709.

*Alison Nielson*

Central Treasurer, April 2025

## Income and Expenditure

	2024	2023
	£	£
<b>General Fund</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
Quotas (2024 £5 per member, 2023 £10 per member)	9,865	20,719
Sale of Literature (net)	382	628
Autumn Conference 2023 (net)		1,308
Autumn Conference 2024 (net)	-395	
Annual Day 2023 (net)		988
Annual Day 2024 (net)	-205	
Retreat 2023 (net)		283
Retreat 2024 (net)	-1,053	
Bank Interest	2,444	2,279
	<b>11,038</b>	<b>26,205</b>
<b>Less: Expenditure</b>		
AGM expenses (net)	2,856	3,179
Event Executive expenses	3,061	3,088
Travel expenses Executive	2,158	1,630
Sundry expenses Executive	104	171
	<b>8,179</b>	<b>8,067</b>
Postage and Stationery	68	232
Website and hosting fees	1917	1,726
Magazine costs	8,125	7,798
Purchase of literature		360
Literature stock written off		255
Insurance	422	432
Estimate of tax due on interest	464	1,500
Donation to St Christopher's		1,300
	19,175	21,670
<b>(Deficit)/Surplus on General Fund</b>	<b>-8,137</b>	<b>4,535</b>

## Balance Sheet

	2024		2023	
	£	£	£	£
<b>Year ending 31st December</b>				
<b>Current Assets</b>				
Debtors and prepayments	4,640		6,208	
Cash at bank	81,047		85,594	
	85,687		91,802	
<b>Current Liabilities</b>				
Accruals	2,869		1,785	
Creditors falling due within one year	7,185		6,247	
	10,054		8,032	
<b>Net Current assets</b>	<b>75,633</b>		<b>83,770</b>	
<b>Total assets less Current Liabilities</b>	<b>75,633</b>		<b>83,770</b>	
<b>Funds</b>				
General Fund	75,633		83,770	
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>75,633</b>		<b>83,770</b>	

## St. Christopher's Report

**As I write this, in the glorious month of May, I recall the visit to St. Christopher's for our AGM on April 3<sup>rd</sup> when we were able to have a tour around the hospice grounds and the buildings. For many it was their first visit to St Christopher's Hospice and the CARE centre, and it proved to be a good venue for a meeting, with many branches being able for the first time to join us on-line.**

The Executive Committee have just agreed to support the following projects for 2025/26 with the funds we have donated.

1. A conference is to be held at the CARE Centre on July 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 2025 entitled 'What is to become of me? Exploring contemporary responses to total pain and suffering.' This is to commemorate the life and work of Dame Cecily Saunders, Founder of St. Christopher's and a pioneer in the field of palliative medicine, and to consider how her legacy can be developed using the latest learning, both nationally and globally. (We are asked to publicise this amongst our local hospices. A limited number of hospices linked to members' branches will be offered free places to attend on-line.)
2. We agreed to support the Global Fellowship which is a 6-month virtual course delivered across 40 hours a month. It is aimed at aspiring nurse leaders in low- and middle-income countries. 400 apply each year but we understand only 200 can be accepted.
3. Building the Global Nurse Network. We agreed to give urgent financial support to

maintain this free network which offers peer support and professional development to any nurse working in palliative care. There are 1000 members in 80 countries.

4. We agreed to continue to support the bursaries which enable the Multi-Professional Academy to run. In 2019, 40 professionals attended in person. Since the coronavirus pandemic, more courses are being run remotely which means that more people can be reached. An in-person course is still run once a year.

We were told that one student from Rwanda, who we helped to attend training in 2015, is now booked to speak at the Conference.

At St Christopher's, Alex Abie has replaced Tracy Blackmore as Philanthropy Officer. Lorna Hughes is now Head of Professional Learning and Jan Noble the Acting CEO. A new CEO has been appointed but is not yet in post. Heather Richardson, previous CEO, continues to be involved with teaching and running courses.

St Christopher's is grateful for our continued financial support over many years, which enables them to spread learning and expertise across many nations. Our funding has often been used to pump-prime new initiatives such as the Nurse Consultant Programme, which is continuing.

*Helen Wilkinson*

Women in Fellowship Charity Representative.



## Retreat Report – Launde Abbey 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2025

**My first glimpse of the Abbey on a beautiful sunny day assured me that this was a good place to pause and reconnect with nature, friends and God. The rolling meadows full of free roaming sheep added to the feeling of going back to a less hectic time. It was in that tranquil setting that 29 WF members from 15 branches met for two days of renewal and reflection.**

The theme, 'From Ashes to Amen - holding on to faith when adversity strikes', was chosen by the Revd Sharon Grenham-Thompson who led four sessions over two days. Being Ash Wednesday when we arrived it was appropriate that the first, 'Among the Ashes', concluded with a service of Ashing. Day two's topics were



*A session with Pamela*

'Burning Within – faith in sorrowful time' and 'Burning Down the House – faith in dangerous times.' At both sessions Sharon described the courage of women through the ages and today who have overcome tragedies and physical and emotional torment and felt supported by their faith. There was ample opportunity for personal reflection through activities such as writing and crafts and we were asked to think of women who had influenced our life. The final session 'Eternal Flame – finding our own Amen' was a summation of the sessions and asked us to look at things in our life that may challenge our faith.

Between sessions and at mealtimes there was time to chat with fellow WF members and to enjoy the peace of the gardens and labyrinth. A Launde Abbey Community Communion service was held each morning, and in the evening, Compline was held in the historic and beautiful chapel.

It was a privilege to attend the retreat, so ably organised by Pamela Soult, and I hope to



*Friends reunited*

repeat the experience in 2026. I would urge anyone who has not attended to do so, as I returned to my hectic life feeling refreshed and renewed in my faith.

P.S. I especially enjoyed seeing the sheep passing my bedroom window each morning on their way to the meadow!



*The Revd Sharon Grenham Thompson*



*Working on a project*

### **Retreat 2025- A Poem by Barbara Mangles**

From the ashes  
The phoenix rises  
Wings spread to embrace the world  
Hope and renewal from destruction  
Women of faith  
Bonfire ashes feed the garden  
Bomb sites grow London Pride  
Broken buildings lead to new construction  
Women, stand tall, arise.  
Damaged minds and bodies  
Need our love and caring  
Faith is for sharing  
Women, unite.

**Copyright Barbara Mangles**



## Annual General Meeting – 2025

**This year's AGM was held at St.Christopher's CARE building in Sydenham, London. CARE is an acronym for the Centre for Awareness and Response to End of life care and is a relatively new addition to the Hospice.**

For the first time a hybrid meeting was trialled in the hope that more delegates would attend, either in presence or via TEAMS. The 60 women who attended in person were warmly welcomed by Abigail Martin, fundraising assistant and Christine Davies, head of finance at St.Christopher's. A further 27 branches attended via the internet which meant that 83% of branches were represented, a big increase on the 2024 figure. Much of the success of the hybrid format was due to the expertise of Amanda Roberts and Pauline Mant, our technical whizz kids!

Chairman Alison welcomed delegates in her opening address and again reiterated

the need for volunteers both at the local and national level. Despite a smaller executive, a full programme of Summer events is planned for 2026, including a celebration of the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary, to be held in the Spring of 2026. All pertinent documents had been sent prior to the AGM and so, following the reading of the Constitution, the accounts were accepted as was the quota, set at nil. Alison welcomed Anne Tanner, the nominee to replace Pamela Soult as National Events Secretary and she was duly elected.

The retiring members of the Executive, Pamela Soult, Pauline Mant, Dinah Taylor and Jane Powl, were thanked for their service and commitment during the past three years.

Barbara Mangles was recognised as she requested to speak under AOB. Barbara said that on behalf of the Sheffield Branch she wished to convey their thanks for the work done by the Committee and expressed their



*Delegates*



*Central Committee*

hope that a 'third way' could be found to allow the continuation of W.F.

Following the formal part of the meeting a presentation was given by Christine Davies who itemised the specific way that WF funds are used. She told us that several projects would not exist without the funds and said that approximately £20,000 of WF funds have yet to be appropriated. She also spoke of the upcoming celebration in honour of Dame Cecily Saunders who founded the hospice.

The food at St. Christopher's is always delicious and plentiful as the photos that



*AGM Delegates at coffee*



*Alison and Christine*



follow will confirm! After lunch, guided tours were offered, and many delegates took the opportunity to see the facilities and beautiful gardens. It was another successful WF event.



*Lunchtime*



*Amanda and Pauline, AGM Tech Experts*

## Annual Day at Wintershall

**The 2025 WF Annual Day was held on 14<sup>th</sup> May at the Wintershall Estate, south of Guildford in Surrey. Wintershall is a working farm that also puts on plays of the Life of Christ, and offers day retreats, particularly to schools. Over 20,000 children and young people visited during the last year. They are also the team behind the Passion play that takes place in Trafalgar Square every Good Friday.**

Our day began with coffee and tea and a lovely time catching up with friends old and new. We were warmly welcomed by the Wintershall staff and volunteers, who were marvellous throughout the day, making us welcome, showing us where to go, providing lifts around the site, and a wonderful lunch and home-made biscuits, cakes and hot drinks.

The first event was a welcome from the education officer, and a moving piece of drama featuring a young woman recounting the story of Jesus feeding the poor. There was then a question-and-answer session with the daughter of the founders of Wintershall, who is now a trustee and the producer of the plays.

At noon we broke into three groups. One stayed in the opening venue where there were a selection of props and costumes from the plays, another group went to the second large barn, which is the main theatre space, for 'encounters with Jesus through drama', and the third group, of which I was a part, went on a guided walk through the estate, pausing at four of the fifteen artistic stations of the cross. The stations are all interpretations by different artists and craftsmen, who had been commissioned as students. The reflections at each station were given by a retired vicar who regularly volunteers at Wintershall. It was a wonderful quiet and thoughtful time, and we were able to appreciate the beauty of the site and see the places where the Life of Christ play is acted out.





Lunch was the usual joyful WF event with good food and great company. At 2pm we gathered in the main theatre for a closing act of worship led by a wonderful member of the local clergy. She introduced us to the story bags that the children are often given on their visits, which contain several objects to tell of God's great love for us. The reading was another drama piece, a monologue by Mary at the feast where Jesus turned water into wine. The actress introduced us to Jesus through a recap of his early days followed by a retelling of the miracle story. It was very powerful, both visually with the costumes and props and in the way it made us see the story afresh. The service finished with us sharing the bread of Communion.

I would like to thank Anne our new Events Secretary for her organisation over the last month, and Pamela for arranging the day in the first place, and the members of the Guildford branch who helped with registration and other

jobs on the day. Also, a huge thank you to everyone at Wintershall.

### Jackie Heaton Scattered Branch



### Truro Branch Celebration



Truro WF gathered on a glorious Cornish Spring Day in April at Epiphany House to celebrate 25 years as a branch. We were joined by past and present members and three from Executive (Alison Osborne, Amanda Roberts & Anne Tanner) and enjoyed a marvellous day of celebration. The Revd Jeff James, husband of our member Vicki, led a thoughtful and spiritual service of thanksgiving. Lunch followed, after which we enjoyed an interesting talk on the history of Epiphany House which has had many iterations including as a vicarage, a Bishop's House, part of Truro Cathedral School, home to the nuns of the Community of Epiphany and now a place for retreats. We concluded the day with a delicious celebration cake and tea. Throughout the day, there was the constant sound of laughter, warm conversations and enjoyment in our fellowship together for which we are blessed.





### Birmingham — 52 Members, 10 Honorary Members and 3 Associate Members

We began our year with a lovely coffee morning, just what we needed to lift the spirits in a dreary January. We moved on swiftly to our quiet half an hour and AGM where our speaker reminded us that in this seemingly ever fractious world, we have much to be thankful for, not least the fellowship, concern and support within our group.

Our chairman had cause to reflect on this fellowship, concern, and support shortly after the AGM when she broke her arm just before the Pancake Party! Everyone present at the event lamented the lack of our leader and wished her well; the rest of the committee kept calm and carried on but were very grateful to welcome her back after just a few weeks.

As part of the season of Lent we had a talk from one of our members about the Sikh faith and a visit to a Sikh Temple was arranged. All those who went were amazed at the number of people the Gurdwara kitchens feed each day.

The highlight of our year was the coach trip we organised to The National Arboretum, as written about in a previous edition of The Grapevine. We thought we had chosen the wrong day to visit, as it was the day before the formal 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations but it turned out to be the very best day.

*Lunch*

The Autumn brought our book meeting, followed by the ever-popular Ploughman's Lunch, (see photograph). A talk by Irene de Boo on Louisa Ryland, a big donor to the City of Birmingham, was hugely informative with several surprises thrown in, e.g. Louisa didn't live in Birmingham. This brought us to our annual Carol Service, where we could sing with gusto our favourite carols and the year finished with a 'standing room only' Christmas get together.

Many thanks to our supportive membership which continues to be stable. Sadly we noted the death of Sue Wright, a loyal branch member, who had been ill for a while. Other members joined our team of honorary members as they were no longer able to attend meetings, but still enjoyed hearing about activities and remaining part of an organisation that has been part of their lives for many years.

**Linda Caswell**  
**Secretary Birmingham Branch**



### Bristol III — 32 Members and 1 Honorary Member

We have enjoyed a varied programme of talks, visits and social events during the year and are grateful to all our hosts for their generous hospitality.

Coffee mornings at the start of each term offer a great opportunity for chat and a catch up with one another.

We have had interesting talks on a variety of topics, including climate change, from a Bristol University professor, a job talk from an ESOL training facilitator, "The SS Great Britain from Launch to Re-launch" with slides, and a skincare and make up demonstration from an Elizabeth Arden representative.



*Tyntesfield tree walk*

We have made visits to National Trust Tyntesfield, where we had a guided tree walk, to Ilford Manor Gardens, Wiltshire, in midsummer with the roses looking splendid. We did a Blue Plaques Walk around Clifton, led by a member of the Civic Society and visited Oakham Treasures Museum of Retail and Farming Memorabilia. On each occasion we have enjoyed a lunch or coffee together.

Our service this year took place in Bristol Cathedral and was held by WF Bristol II, while our Lent Meeting was led by Rev. Sam Hackett, University Chaplain. Both were held together with other branches and scattered members.

### Canterbury — 32 Members and 2 Honorary Members

As usual, our programme has been a lovely variety of formal and informal meetings and visits. Early in the year we enjoyed an interesting talk about a local river with a fascinating history. The next month we visited the local gardens of Goodnestone Park and were shown around by the head gardener who amusingly explained the ethos of their work. Our Guest Drinks Evening was held in a local village hall which had the added advantage of space and comfort. Some of us travelled to London to spend the day at the house of one of our members who spoilt us with a wonderful lunch. A windy and wet

Our summer evening party, with husbands, took place in a member's country garden on a beautiful June evening, while our winter party took the form of a soiree (wine and canapés) at a local Art gallery to enjoy a private tour of their winter exhibition. Both were much enjoyed by everyone who attended.

A long-standing special date in our calendar is the Christmas carols and readings meeting, always at the lovely home of one member, followed by a convivial soup and cheese lunch.

A number of our members have attended National events: Autumn Conference and, this year, the Annual Day at Chavenage House.

The Book group and Walking group continue to thrive and we are grateful to the organisers who run them for us.

This year we have been very saddened to say good bye to two dear members: Caroline Dunn and Ann Jell. They will be much missed and are often in our thoughts.



*Goodnestone gardens*

day affected our summer tea party – fortunately there was no shortage of cake and cups of tea, so we were content to remain inside and share our news with each other. The Autumn service was held in Littlebourne Church when we were led by the Revd. Lesley Hardy with an address on Pilgrimage. At our Advent meeting, we were encouraged to

### Cheltenham III – 38 Members

2024-2025 was another active year for Cheltenham III, despite our declining numbers. We meet approximately every 2 weeks, now in a church hall rather than in private homes, but our sense of fellowship is still strong. We enjoyed an excellent guided tour of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Tewkesbury Abbey with its stunning medieval stained-glass windows and were enlightened by a cinematic presentation on Gloucester Cathedral. We listened to stimulating talks including one by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, another on Holbein the Younger and also one on Gardening without Peat. We blushed at the amusing Tales of a Midwife, brushed up our CPR skills, envied the Bourton Hill House Gardens & celebrated Christmas together at the Hatherley Manor Hotel.

Our book club continues to discuss a wide variety of books at their regular meetings and our walking

think about the life of St Joseph and his place in the Christmas story. Christmas Lunch as always was a happy occasion and a fitting end to 2024. Since then, we have enjoyed a talk on the work of the Kent Gardens Trust and our annual Lent meeting, led by the Revd Sarah Brimson. We look forward to our programme of meetings during the rest of the year.

group is thriving. A gorgeous Spring walk through bluebell carpeted woodland and pastures full of playful lambs was so uplifting in May 2024, that we hope to repeat it again this year.



above: Bluebells



left: Christmas

### Haywards Heath – 28 Members and 9 Honorary Members

Following our AGM we held our regular 'In House' meeting in February when two members presented illustrated talks – one very recent pilgrimage to Jordan two days before the Hamas atrocity in Israel, the other 50 years earlier, a three-month journey

from Vancouver including 9 weeks travelling overland by bus from Katmandu to London.

We heard from Carole Bourne about how the World Day of Prayer is organised from an office in

Tunbridge Wells. Pat Brier paid 'Tribute' to Joyce Grenfell, the all-round entertainer, which had us reeling with laughter. Richard Talman, the Repair Shop jewellery expert revealed that no presenter has any knowledge of the incoming restoration items before an episode.

Borde Hill, a local garden, provided a guided tour by the enthusiastic newly appointed gardener. Our planned August friendly walk was cancelled because "it was too hot"! Lunch at our chosen pub was aborted due to an electricity failure when, of course, there would have been no air conditioning!

Our Summer Lunch was great fun in the shelter of a marquee in a member's garden. Members from several local branches joined us. Our autumn service, always well attended, on this occasion was at The Church of the Ascension. The theme was "All Will be Well" and this was followed by an excellent

### Lancaster – 47 Members and 3 Honorary Members

Lancaster's one concession to members' advancing years is to hold all meetings during daylight hours. This was brought in a few years ago and has been successful in keeping up attendances. The average attendance in 2024 was 22 members. Last year we held three out of six meetings in members' homes.

Our first meeting in 2024 was the small group coffee mornings held in members' homes. This meeting and the small group lunches in October/November are always popular. In April we held our annual coffee morning to raise money for St Christopher's Hospice. Through the year we listened to speakers on British Prime Ministers, The Influence of Music on Life's Journey, and 200 Years of Shopping in Lancaster. The summer garden meeting was held on a particularly wet July day. Members did manage to walk round the hostess's beautiful garden during one of the brief dry interludes.

tea provided by the committee. Andrew Glasher of Marston Barrett, a long-established jewellers in Lewes, brought a collection of gold and silver items. We learnt about repairing jewellery before he challenged us to value or date the pieces. Margaret Watson, the harpist, deftly manoeuvred her magnificent instrument from her car to our small village hall and had us spellbound as she played a splendid variety of pieces.

Christmas lunch was served at our "local", The Cock Inn at Wivelsfield, where the young staff looked after us magnificently and so brought to a close 2024 Women in Fellowship in style.

We are grateful to our Pastoral Care committee member for keeping in touch with members who are unwell and particularly our significant number of Honorary members.

We welcomed a prospective new member of our Branch as the guest speaker at our members' and guests' lunch in November. Our Christmas meeting was a mixture of readings, a quiz and ended with carol singing.

Our Lenten Quiet Hour (my daughter never understood what a Choir Tower was!) was held in the stark and peaceful chapel of the Monastery of Our Lady of Hynning. St Thomas's Church in the centre of Lancaster was the venue for our September service.

We have two book discussion groups in the branch, and they have enjoyed monthly meetings throughout the year.

During 2024 Lancaster members attended the Retreat at Launde Abbey, the AGM in Rugby, Annual Day, the Iona Pilgrimage and Autumn Conference.



### Lemington Spa & Warwick I — 52 Members and 7 Honorary Members

Lemington Spa and Warwick I is still going strong, our excellent programme secretary planned a wide variety of speakers this year, and meeting in a village hall has ameliorated problems with parking, hosting at home, showing presentations, and having room to move!

We have learnt about Fire Safety at Home, Recycling in Warwickshire, Rotary Christmas Boxes, and even the Sex Life of Plants! Perhaps our stand-out

speaker was Anne Harrison, speaking of her life in care and finding her mother. The Lent talk - The Garden in Jerusalem- gave us food for thought, and our Lent and Advent services, shared with Warwick II were well attended.

Our branch is active and engaged, and will surely continue, even if, sadly, the National Committee of Women in Fellowship ceases to be.

### Medway Towns — 30 Members and 3 Honorary Members

Our very varied programme set up by our Chairman during the past year has had something for everyone! Meetings are held in the homes of our members and our tea rota includes supply of cakes and sandwiches for the most part. We have welcomed some very interesting speakers. Talks on the wider Darwin family, the Great Storm, Fingerprints and Murder, and A Year in a British Woodland, with a wonderful array of pictures, have entertained our members. Apart from that we held a Garden Meeting in our Treasurer's delightful garden. The abundance of flowers took our breath away with its beauty.

For our outing this year we had a private tour of Cobham Hall, one of the most important and largest



Tudor houses in the South East, now run as a boarding school. Our guide was our Secretary who regularly guides tours on open days. This visit was complete with a delicious cream tea in the Gilt Hall provided by the catering staff there.

For our guest lunch, with partners and friends, we returned to Bartellas in Meopham for their usual lively ambience. Brilliant food and service was enjoyed by all.

Our Church Service in October was at St. Peter and St. Paul at Upper Stoke, with the service led by our own Chairman who substituted because of illness. Well done for stepping up! The church was beautifully decorated for Harvest Festival, including honey produced by one of our members. Our Quiet Morning was held in a "Tin Tabernacle", the St. Mary's Church Room in Sole Street, followed by a visit to Luddesdown Church and lunch in Meopham at the Cricketers Inn.

We rounded off the year with our usual December meeting of Pâté, Pies and Punch at the home of Rozel, with a charge to cover costs and donation to St Christopher's. It always has a great turnout and an opportunity to say "Happy Christmas" to all our Fellowship.

### Newbury — 30 Members and 2 Honorary Members

In 2024 the Newbury Branch of Women in Fellowship enjoyed a varied programme of events. Items of particular note include, a meeting given by a new member, Gay Smith, about jewellery making in which she showed photographs of some that she has made and handed around some jewels to a rapt audience.

The Annual Day, organized by Scattered Branch, was split into two days and 10 Newbury members attended a visit to Chavenage. This was a wonderful day out which included, a service in the private chapel, a lunch provided by the Chavenage family, and a visit from Queen Elizabeth I or Katherine of Aragon, both ably portrayed by Lesley Smith. Groups were shown around the wonderful old manor house by Chavenage family and friends.

The Summer Lunch was held at The Furze Bush which proved to be a popular choice. We were also treated to more dazzling jewels when Maureen Hudd gave an illustrated talk about the Cheapside Hoard.

Then in November, under the guise of "Something Tasty", we celebrated our 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a cookery demonstration that provided tasty nuts and cheesy biscuits to be handed around. We were fortunate to be joined by two members of the Central Committee, Judy Little the Scattered Member representative and Alison Neilson, Central Treasurer. Margaret Foulkes, the daughter of Mary Garton and daughter in law of Ray Foulkes, who were founder members of our branch, attended the celebration and was quite moved to see her mother's handwriting in minute books that were made available to read.

We visited The Red House at Marsh Benham for our winter lunch and enjoyed pancakes at Philippa's on Shrove Tuesday. Our Advent Tea was at Inga's

and some members also met up for pub lunches together on the first Sunday of the month. There was also a garden visit to Malverleys and a Bring and Buy with coffee and mince pies at Barbara West's to raise funds for St. Christopher's.

With two church services and an interesting talk about Educate, a drop in cafe which aims to bring together and support diverse communities in West Berkshire, we really have had a wonderfully busy year.



cutting the cake



### Northumbria — 19 Members and 1 Honorary Member

In January, amazingly without any major issues weatherwise, we were able to have our first meeting of the year when we had a very interesting talk illustrated with wonderful photographs of the Island of Skye, given by two members who had taken a holiday cottage there. This was followed by a meeting in which those present contributed memories of snow, which proved great fun. Some from childhood, others from skiing trips or of huge storms and the aftermath. One member from Singapore who, never having experienced snow before, found it frighteningly cold and treacherous underfoot, and couldn't believe that many of the rest of us had fond memories! Another of our talks was given by a member, who with her husband, having just arrived to visit their daughter and son-in-law who were stationed at the time on a game reserve in South Africa, were invited to join them on a special trip, organised by the vet and rangers, to check up on a pride of lions. As it had been a very scary experience, those listening said they found even the talk to be nail-biting, but nevertheless fascinating. Everyone said that they felt as though they were going through the experience themselves. Another of our members gave a very interesting talk about the history of one of the very old Tyne Valley villages. It was illustrated with maps and photographs of remnants of the past, about which none of the rest of us had any knowledge.

Some other meetings were less formal and just gave everyone a chance to chat with each other

to catch up on news and enjoy a cup of tea and some scrummy cakes. We had both an excellent Lenten Quiet Afternoon, lead by a local Methodist Deacon, and our annual service again led by one of our members, a Curate at a local parish church. Our monthly discussion group is still active and though small in numbers we have had some very lively sessions. Over the past few months we have been enjoying a very different kind of book, "Heaven in Ordinary" by Malcolm Guite, a well-known poet, writer and lecturer of theology and literature. He points out how one can unexpectedly find a glimpse of heaven if one just takes time to stop and really look at and enjoy something.

Once again, we had a lovely summer lunch to which husbands were invited and to which we all contributed a savoury or a sweet. An amazing variety of dishes appeared, and I'm not sure many would have wanted anything else to eat later in the day!

Basically, now our branch is roughly split between two geographical areas, namely in a northern district of Newcastle City or out in the northwest countryside not far from Hadrian's Wall. We rely on each other for lifts as much as possible but, as each year fewer of us still drive, this is becoming a problem. We know we are not the only branch to experience this however, and carry on as best we can, and have a programme ready for 2025.

### Nottingham — 32 Members and 9 Honorary Members

We have enjoyed another year with a varied programme of monthly meetings. Following a well attended AGM in January, with lunch provided by the Committee, one of our members led a craft morning in February. She now regularly lectures and leads classes on cruises, so we were extremely

fortunate to catch her between voyages! In March we held a Lenten Reflection, led by a local vicar, which we all found thought provoking. In April, several members attended South Trent's Fellowship Day. It was an opportunity to join in a short act of worship, eat a delicious lunch and then listen

to Frances Farrer-Brown talk about the work of St.Christopher's and how all our donations matter so much to them.

Summer brought a meeting when we exchanged light hearted stories of embarrassing moments. In June we had lunch at a local restaurant. Our Reports Meeting in July in a member's garden was well attended as was a meeting in another member's garden when we talked about our childhood memories. Thank goodness for sunshine on both occasions. In September, we enjoyed a coffee morning with recipe and book recommendations and in October we visited the Veolia Materials Recovery Facility in Mansfield. It was most

### Sheffield — 19 Members and 3 Honorary Members

We continue to thrive despite a drop in numbers, 2 of our members have moved away from Sheffield to be closer to family and we are happy for them as this is such a good move, but we do miss them.

The committee has gained a couple of members, and other members are supportive and helpful with setting up for meetings – also providing the very important cake! We usually meet in a local community hall twice a month, but occasionally just once. Our Tea and Chat Zoom meetings continue, usually fortnightly, which allows members living further afield to stay in touch regularly.

Our spiritual meetings included an annual service in a local chapel, which is always inspiring, and a Christmas gathering with carols and readings by members; this was in a member's home this time as the church we usually meet in was unavailable – we found it very comfortable and relaxing. We also have Lent and Advent meetings led by church leaders. We had our annual garden party at a member's home, with delicious food and a lovely garden to wander 'round, and lots of chat. A "Treasured Objects" meeting brought some fascinating treasures – our members have had

enlightening, and we look forward to the day when recycling is standardised nationally. At present, even the City of Nottingham and the County have different guidelines. In November we were treated to a fascinating talk by Dr Cathy McAteer entitled "A Happy Un-Orthodox Christmas", about the Russian Christmas, and we completed the year with an Advent meeting of readings and thoughts.

Sadly, two of our long-standing members died last year and three more have resigned. Like many in the Fellowship, we are facing a future with fewer members and are struggling to find officers but, at the moment, we are determined to carry on.

very interesting lives! Recommendation meeting provided us all with a list of very varied titles to add to our "to read" lists. A small group of us enjoyed



a fun Easter crafts session with lots of cutting and sticking, plus a lot of laughter – and some lovely cards and other Easter items were produced.

Coffee at a member's home was a joy, and we have eaten together rather more often than is good for us!

We are looking forward to celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day with afternoon tea (more food!), and to a talk by a stallholder about her silver stall in the Bakewell Emporium.

### **Solihull** — 52 Members, 4 Honorary Members and 6 Associate Members

2024 was a very special year for our branch as we celebrated our 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Alison Osborne and Judy Little joined us for lunch at a local hotel. We reminisced about the history of our branch and the many highlights locally and nationally that we had enjoyed. A member's husband contributed to our day by creating a film of photographs taken over the decades for us to enjoy. One lasting impression from that day is that our Fellowship is still strong and valued.

Our local National Trust properties constantly provide us with opportunities to share time together. We joined the congregation at the beautiful church at Baddesley Clinton for their Ash Wednesday service. Gathering in the N.T. café afterwards gave us time for coffee and a chat!



WF Lunch

Our branch has been represented at several national events and a few of us enjoyed being able to join the National Prayer Hour as a group on Zoom in June 2024.

We all feel that the friendship and fellowship provided by our WF branch is clearly very much needed and must be treasured and supported in the future.

Throughout the past year, we have enjoyed listening to many interesting speakers. We have learned more about how the Coventry Boot Fund, originally set up in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, still supports low-income families in the city today. We marvelled at the dedication displayed from those who volunteer to help at our local Riding for the Disabled centre. Mollie entertained us with her tales of 'Everyone wears a hat'. Her observations as a waitress at weddings and conferences kept us constantly amused. We were emotionally drawn into Anne's story as she talked us through her start in life as a Windrush baby whose childhood days were lived in foster care and a children's home. Recently we have marvelled at the photographs taken by a local expert of the 'Best of British Wildlife'.



Sezincote House and Garden

Following the wonderful contributors at the Autumn Conference in Bury St Edmunds in 2023, we held our own 'My Curious Life' afternoon when a few of our ladies shared some of their career paths with us. It was such an interesting afternoon when we learned so much about our friends.

In a summer of mixed weather, we were blessed with a sunny day for our annual Sylvia's Walk. Our walk was followed by a 'swap a sandwich' in Angela's beautiful garden. As we sat and shared our lunch, we were able to appreciate the surrounding Warwickshire countryside and the flower power on

display in Angela's garden! Another highlight of our year was our visit to Sezincote Gardens in the Cotswolds. Following lunch at Batsford Arboretum we then made our way across to Sezincote where we were given a guided tour of the house. We all marvelled at the external Indian architecture and the beautiful surrounding gardens.

As the festive season approached, we once again gathered for our annual Christmas Lunch. A change of venue this year – a private room in a local pub proved to be a winner and is already booked for a repeat occasion at the end of this year!

### **South Trent** — 43 Members and 5 Honorary Members

At our AGM in January the members celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of our Inaugural Annual General Meeting with a cake and a brief reminder of how this came about by Maureen Fry, one of our founding members.

Led and inspired by Sue Wemyss, a group of Nottingham members formed the South Trent

branch. In due time numbers were sufficient to divide into a Wives and a Seniors branch. After the amalgamation of the Fellowship, South Trent Seniors retained the name of South Trent and South Trent Wives became Trent Branch. Despite the name change we still work closely together holding three church services each year which are organized alternately.



South Trent meet around once a month in various members' homes and enjoy listening to speakers and sharing food and fellowship. The Carol Service and the Supper Party were perhaps the best attended meetings last year but those apart, we would usually expect to see at least half of our members at any one meeting.

We have always taken a lively interest in National Events (5 of our members attended the Retreat this March) and quite a few of our members have served on the National Committee. We are pleased and proud that Anne Tanner will be joining the Executive Committee this year as Events Secretary but sorry that she will be leaving our branch as she will be moving to Hampshire. We wish her well in her new home and in her new role.



### Stour Valley — 25 Members, 5 Honorary Members

We decided to keep the format for our meetings the same as the previous year, having fewer speaker meetings in Village Halls and enjoying small social gatherings in Garden Centres for coffee, near the homes of members who cannot travel the long distances to some of our meetings. We also have zoom meetings to keep in touch allowing our friendships to continue.

We have enjoyed an interesting variety of talks on Buddhism, Religious Pilgrimages and Thames Barges, all three talks held successfully in Village Halls.

Our summer events included a wonderful lunch hosted by our chairperson; Husbands were also invited on what turned out to be rather a chilly day in June. This was followed later in the summer by an afternoon tea party in the delightful garden of one of our members.

A small group visited Thomas Gainsborough's House in Sudbury and had an interesting, guided tour of the house and exhibitions.

The theme for our Lent meeting was "letting go" an interesting topic about children leaving home to pursue their careers, and about relinquishing things we used to do as we get older. The subject produced food for thought and stimulating conversation.

We visited another local Church to hear about its history and artefacts. The visit to a Suffolk church is now an annual event. Our religious meetings culminated with the Carol Service in December with Stour Valley 2, always a joyous occasion to get us into the festive mood leading up to Christmas.

Sadly, last year we lost one long standing and much respected member of our fellowship, Betty Mullis, she is greatly missed by us all.

### Stour Valley II — 27 Members

2024 has been a busy year for Stour Valley II during which time we have enjoyed meetings, visits, walks and welcomed two new members to our group.

In July we had a husbands and wives drinks party which despite the unseasonal weather was well attended and enjoyed by all. Later in the month we paid a visit to St. Edmundsbury Cathedral in Bury St. Edmunds including an exploration of its roof top. The magnificent Millennium Tower was added to this ancient building between 2000-2005 as a millennium project. Twelve of us climbed to the top to admire the glorious views.

On the hottest day of the year, we ventured to the seaside for a treasure hunt around the historic port of Harwich and learnt more about its importance in British maritime history including being the port of entry for the Kindertransport between 1938-1939. In August we also enjoyed a lovely picnic and swim hosted by one of our members.



*Kindertransport memorial, Harwich*

October saw a trip to the Colchester Roman Circus, including an informative tour. The circus (the only such structure in the UK) was uncovered during building excavations in 2004. The tour expanded our knowledge of Colchester's rich Roman history.

With Christmas approaching we visited the world-famous Tiptree Jam Factory, museum, tearoom and shop. We had the chance to buy from their delicious range of jams and other delicacies and partake of a scrummy afternoon tea. Advent was marked with our traditional joint Carol Service (with Stour Valley I) at St Mary's Church in Bures, Suffolk. The service was followed by a fellowship lunch of soup and sandwiches.

As an addition to last year's programme, we now have a monthly walking group. This enables us to explore and discover different localities within our region and enhance our fellowship with one another.



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**Truro** — 21 Member and 1 Honorary Member

In 2024 one of our long-standing members sadly passed away and two moved house to be nearer their families. However, we did welcome a new member to our fold.

Like so many other branches, and indeed our National Committee, we are facing challenges as to how to keep our Fellowship alive. In order to combat these issues, our committee is taking a less formal approach and many of the tasks are being willingly shared amongst the members.

Our annual programme, yet again, contained something for everyone with talks, visits, uplifting services and social gatherings with partners and friends. Topics covered a wide range of subjects including a member's personal visit to Iona, Women in the Church, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Development of Falmouth during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, amongst others.

We enjoyed an outing to Boscastle, the highlight being a visit to the Minster Church which nestles in a beautiful valley above the village. Thanks to one of our members, several of whose family are buried in the churchyard, we learned a brief history of the church, the origins of which date back to 500 AD. Colourful hand stitched kneelers adorned the pews.



*Christmas Lunch, Truro*

Sadly, the church is no longer used as a regular place of worship but kept open for visitors and used for concerts.

The life and work of artist and sculptor, Barbara Hepworth, prompted a most enjoyable and informative day out in St Ives. Her sculptures adorned both house and garden where they sit in almost perfect harmony with the trees, plants a view to the sea. It was no surprise to learn that our next speaker, Charles Francis and his wife, captivated by our beautiful county, moved to Cornwall some years ago to further their careers in photography and botanical art. Charles was involved in capturing the early development of both The Lost Gardens of Heligan and The Eden Project and his wife, Mally, illustrated a book – “Heligan Wild” – with her botanical paintings. We were pleased to welcome Amanda Masters, representative for Children's Hospice South West who gave us a very comprehensive update of the invaluable service provided by the hospice for babies, children and young people living with life-limiting conditions in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset.

Our Christmas celebration lunch was a wonderful, upbeat and joyous occasion bringing our year of fellowship to a close.



*The Minster Church, Boscastle*

**Tunbridge Wells** — 46 Members and 3 Honorary Member

2024 has been a difficult and sometimes sad year, due to the death of four of our long-standing members and 4 husbands. All were committed members who are so sadly missed.

Life of course goes on and our coffee morning in aid of St Christopher's went well, as did our Church Service in Bidborough, which was well attended. This was followed by a look behind the scenes at the Chelsea Flower Show. We visited Long Barn Gardens in the Weald with a beautiful house, pond, vegetable patch, borders and even chickens. Finally, our 'Bubbles and Canapes' were held in yet another stunning garden. What a summer!

Aromatherapy was introduced by an enthusiastic speaker who sold some of her homemade produce such as “Ouch” for arthritis sufferers. The speaker in



*Yvonne Bowman ex Central Chairman enjoying a chat*



*Christmas lunch*

September works for a Wildlife Trust and her latest project has been diverting a small length of the Thames so that fish could spawn but also to prevent flooding, important because of climate change. Life can be a challenge, and we have had a couple of speakers who had to cancel at the last minute. When a speaker had to cancel, the American partner of a member gave a riveting talk on American Presidents and some of their foibles. Interesting, especially now! He rescued us again with a little magic and Houdini as the subject. Our reading group continues with lively discussions and often differing views.

Our Christmas lunch and then our Quiz are always popular and then we were 'Trapped in Tibet'. Many years back China made life difficult for those wanting to leave but times have changed and several of our members have been there.

The last meeting brought our programme to a close with a couple whose relatives had survived the Holocaust; an emotional, serious subject.

At the AGM our Treasurer and Secretary agreed to stay on for another year, along with the new committee and programme secretary, but unfortunately the position of chairman is still vacant. Our treasurer who sets the quiz and has put the booklet together for the last 30 years will introduce meetings so that we can continue with our wonderful fellowship.

### West Sussex — 27 Members and 4 Honorary Member

Last year's report began with reference to the relentless rain and flooding that West Sussex had been experiencing in 2024. What a difference a year makes: sun and heat throughout March and April, and 22C before we turn into May tomorrow.

Looking at our past year's programme it seems that we did a lot of jaunting about. A boat trip on the Wey & Arun canal in May, a visit to the beauties of West Dean Gardens in June and a guided walk through historic Chichester in August. That was on top of our New Year and Summer parties, and some more spiritual moments as in our Lent Service and Meditation at the Poor Clare's Convent in Arundel and the Advent Service which rounded off the year.

We didn't neglect the educational rather than spiritual side of things, with a very interesting talk on the history of Arundel Parish church, which is attached in an Anglican way to the Catholic Dukes of Norfolk demesne, with its shared chancel; and also a talk from a Hell's Angel with lots of black leathers and a large motor bike, expounding on his work for the Blood Bikers of Sussex (SERV) – an excellent charity which transports emergency blood supplies wherever they are needed.

Our numbers seem to remain pretty constant, with 2 members leaving in January and 3 arriving. We also continue to send a contribution to St Christopher's Hospice to support their educational work.

Altogether another busy year.



West Dean Gardens

### Weybridge — 38 Members and 1 Honorary Member

2024 was another busy and enjoyable year with eight speakers and a hugely varied programme of good talks and great social events.

Talks included 'Canaletto Along the Thames', 'Plant Hunters', 'Surrey Search & Rescue', 'Duties of the High Sheriff of Surrey' and many more. We joined Walton branch for our Joint Lent Meeting in March where the WF Charity Representative for St. Christopher's Hospice gave a talk. We also joined them for our Harvest Festival Service in October. Weybridge then hosted our joint Advent Service in

December, followed by 'nibbles and mulled wine - a great way to start the festive season!

We have had outings to 'Ramster Gardens' in Chiddingfold as well as to the 'Watts Gallery' in Compton (followed by lunch at a local pub), both of which we are so fortunate to have on our doorstep

On purely the social front, we enjoyed our annual Charity Bridge Tea at the end of April in aid of St. Christopher's Hospice, where we are known for our superb tea with wonderful cakes donated by our

members. Our Strawberry Tea this year was held in a member's delightful garden and the sun shone down on us (probably too brightly!). At the end of June we had our annual Summer Lunch in another member's lovely garden, where caterers provided us with a wonderful selection of main courses, followed by an incredible array of desserts donated by members. In December we had our Christmas Tea Party, alongside a great quiz which was held in a member's house. We ended 2024 with a Christmas Drinks Party where members and their husbands were able to raise their glasses and celebrate another passing year

We are very sad to report that two very dear members passed away this year, namely Sally Sutton and Beverley Guest – leaving a vast hole in all of our hearts.

### Winchester I — 43 Members and 5 Honorary Member

We began our year with the AGM after which I began my term as Chairman, very much looking forward to a new experience supported by an excellent committee of long-serving, experienced ladies. Our resourceful programme secretaries had planned a year of varied events which included interesting speakers, walks, garden visits, lunches and joint services held in our beautiful local churches.

We are fortunate to have several gifted speakers among our members. In two instances, the daughters of our ladies produced outstanding presentations – one about the 'everyday' events of life working at Christie's and the other sharing her considerable knowledge and passion for Agatha Christie and her houses. In addition, one of our ladies, Joan Ferrer, gave a fascinating talk about her role as a Deputy Lieutenant in Hampshire.

It is a delightful bonus that members from the two Branches of WF in Winchester enjoy attending each other's meetings and several joint events, such as

Weybridge WF was born on 13th March 1925 and to celebrate our Centenary we held a lunch at a local Golf Club on Monday 17th March which was attended by 27 members, including Alison Osborne, our Central Chairman. SGH Golf Club provided us with a truly wonderful three course lunch and the wine was flowing!!



Weybridge anniversary lunch

the services for Lent and Advent, are programmed together each year. Last November WF Winchester III proposed the new venture of a Scottish-themed evening of a traditional dinner and dancing to which our Branch was invited. We all enjoyed it so much that it could well become a regular event.

Winchester being the 'living museum' that it is, lends itself to historical talks and activities that remain popular, like walks following historical trails, particularly around the cathedral and its environs. One such last summer, took us on a tour



Summer Lunch



of Wolvesey Palace, ancient seat of the bishops of Winchester and always a source of fascination. The nuptials of Mary Tudor and Philip of Spain, in the cathedral, become tangible when one is able to stand on the very spot where they made their vows.

We all particularly enjoy meetings that include a delicious lunch or tea. Our Spring lunch to which husbands and friends are invited, is held at the Royal Winchester Golf Course - a beautiful setting for a delightful occasion. As the weather warms up, gardens become inviting and meetings less formal, so gathering in different small groups is much enjoyed. Our Fellowship continues to be a wonderful source of friendship and spiritual encouragement, a happy place for all of us.



*Summer Lunch*

**Our Website Manager can be contacted via:  
website@womeninfellowship.org.uk**

### Website Manager Needed

We are looking for a Website Manager with reliable Word and Excel skills who would be willing to help support the Women in Fellowship website. Knowledge of using Dropbox is desirable as is an ability to work with the technical support company. If necessary, training will be offered.

The Website Manager does not need to be a member of Women in Fellowship but will need to understand its ethos and be enthusiastic to help its members and to attend meetings if required.

If not currently able to, the Website Manager should be willing to learn to upload documents and photographs to the website. And some knowledge of using WordPress would be useful.

It is desirable that the Website Manager understands GDPR and how it works in practice and to be aware of cyber security. It would be useful to have access to a reasonable broadband speed and to be able to work with a variety of systems including Windows, Apple and Linux.

Branch	Name	Email	Phone
Abergavenny	Louisa Stafford		
	Julie Cohn		
Bath	Carol Moore		
Birmingham	Caroline Faulconbridge		
Blackheath	Rosarii Sabido		
Bristol 2	Elspeth Davis		
Bristol 3	Barbara Chesney		
Bury St Edmunds	Susan Cockram		
Cambridge	Gilly McKee		
Canterbury	Libby Nichols		
Chelmsford	Joan		
Cheltenham I	Philippa Hughes		
Cheltenham II	Vicky Foyle		
Cheltenham III	Sally Black		
East Cheshire	Tress Attwell		
Eastbourne	Dinah Taylor		
Epsom	Diana Gannon		
Guildford	Katherine Tuck		
Harrogate	Katie Burke		
Haywards Heath	Diana Helme		
Herts	Nicki Pringle		
Lancaster	Vivien Hawksby		
Leamington Spa & Warwick 1	Carolyn Labrum		
Leamington Spa & Warwick 2	Caroline Wilkie		
London (4 extra copies of GV paid)	Madeleine Tattersall		
Medway Towns	Celia Fox		
Middle Thames	Sue Williams		
Newbury	Lucy Hopson		



Branch	Name	Email	Phone
North Cheshire	Ann Goude		
North London	Sylvia MacKay		
Northampton	Lizzy Leroy		
Northumbria	Eilidh Scott		
Nottingham	Sue Foreman		
Oxford	Branch closed		
Rugby 2	Branch closed		
Salisbury Plain	Sally Barker-Dodds		
Sheffield	Janet Loughbridge		
Sherborne	Meriel Carver		
Shrewsbury	Sally Rhodes		
Solihull	Bethia McWilliam		
South Trent	Jane Hill		
Stour Valley 1	Monika Pipe		
Stour Valley 2	Mandy Kerr		
Trent	Heather Goulding		
Truro	Judy Beadel		
Tunbridge Wells	Frances Gibbons		
Twickenham	Jo O'Hagan		
UK Scattered	Judy Little		
Walton on Thames	Caroline Oldroyd		
Wells	Wendy Haslam		
West Sussex	Ann Bush		
Weybridge	Margaret Sears		
Wimbledon	Una Whicheloe		
Winchester 1	Sally Martin		
Winchester 3	Lucy Tew		
Woldingham	Berry Butler		

## In Memoriam

Birmingham	Sue Wright	9 January 2024
Cheltenham I	Angela Wilson	Winter 2025
North Cheshire	Pat Makin	21 January 2025
North London	Sujata Deakin	March 2025
	Sheila Grodzinski	May 2025
Scattered	Shena Jones	
Sheffield	Marilyn (Lyn) Lister	24 April 2025
South Trent	Sally Edwards	January 2025
	Elizabeth Buxton	January 2025
	Rosemary Garratt	6 April 2025
	Liz Bulloch	25 May 2025
Stour Valley I	Betty Mullis	14 April 2024
Tunbridge Wells	Dierdre Cook	Autumn 2024
	Jean Buckland	July 2024
	Sue Rogers	June 2024
	Jo Bartram	May 2024
Twickenham	Tricia Rawson	13 February 2025
Winchester	Eleanor John	17 May 2025
Woldingham	Mona Marshall	February 2024

'And the dust returns to the earth as it was,  
and the spirit returns to God who gave it.'

*Ecclesiastes 12:7*



### Obituary for Eleanor John – MBE, JP - died May 2025 aged 87

Apart from her husband Roy, Eleanor had two great loves in her life; Winchester Cathedral and Wives Fellowship. She joined the Winchester branch in the mid-1960s. Eleanor was born and brought up in Edinburgh and after university and secretarial college she eventually became PA to the architect, Basil Spence. She became chairman of Winchester Branch of WF and was invited onto the National Executive, where she held the positions of Conference Secretary (1977), Vice Chairman (1978) and Chairman (1981).

Her other great love was Winchester Cathedral where she was a 'Holy Duster' and a Cathedral Guide. After her husband died, just six weeks after retiring as solicitor to the Country Landowner's Association, she was appointed the Education Officer to the Cathedral, for which service the Queen awarded her an MBE. It is therefore very fitting that her funeral will be held in the Cathedral in June.

### Psalms

During Lent the vicar of our parish church lead a series on Psalms, the prayers of the Old Testament. As a child, a young adult, I remember the call and response of a psalm as an integral part of the church service. The custom seems less common now apart from the services held in our great cathedrals. I recall attending Evensong at Canterbury Cathedral and feeling the effects of a trans-Atlantic flight as the choir sang a psalm of more than 30 verses! The recent introduction of a short psalm at my church Eucharist has reignited my love of the poems embodied in the words that were written so many centuries ago.

Psalms fall into seven main categories: Thanksgiving, Wisdom, Royal and Prophetic, Lament, Trust and Imprecation, and Praise. The most common theme is deliverance from trouble, reflecting the psalmists' deep reliance on God in distress. There are 150 psalms, 56 are of Lament, most of which become more positive and praise God before their end.

At the beginning of the Lent series, we were challenged to write our own psalm, something many of us did with some trepidation. I found myself reaching deep inside, recalling past hurts and sadness but also times of joy. It was a learning experience and one I will repeat; like a private retreat it made me search and think about my life. I recommend it as an exercise of Faith.

At the last session our psalms were shared by the participants, they will be printed and kept in our church, perhaps to be read by others in years to come. Two are printed below, written by members of WF.

#### ***To You Lord***

To You Lord, my heart cries out  
My Lord, My Love, My Life.  
I praise You for Your goodness  
And for Your Mercy and unwavering love.  
For Your forgiveness I give thanks.  
You give us Your Spirit, Oh Lord  
Open my heart to hear Your Spirit.  
Teach me Lord to love what You love  
And to turn away from what You hate.  
Show me Your thoughts, direct me  
In the right path  
Jesus My Peace.

***Stephanie Westphal- Eastbourne 2025***

**A Simple Psalm**

Lord of Heaven and Earth your hands cradle us as we enter this chaotic world.  
 The confusion of our daily lives is held close by you,  
 Your arms embrace the vulnerable, the sick, the poor, the oppressed, the battered, as our arms fail to do.  
 Lord of Heaven and Earth, cradle us

We turn to you for courage in our time of need, we place our cares into your loving hands.  
 The world turns its back on you, yet your outstretched hand holds ours and shows us the way.  
 Lord of Heaven and Earth, cradle us

Age overtakes us and we live with regret, yet your arm is always around our shoulders.  
 We know our end is the beginning but fear it none the less, we are reluctant to let go,  
 Our slowing heart beats as one with yours  
 Lord of Heaven and Earth, cradle us

**D.T. 2025****Q R Code**

Use this QR code to see the WF website on your mobile phone or tablet without having to type in the web address. Open the built-in camera app on your phone or tablet. Point the camera at the QR code and tap the banner that appears on the camera screen of your phone or tablet. You should be whisked to our website as if by magic!



**W.F. Literature can be ordered from Caroline Oldroyd,  
 tel: 01932-858153 or [literature@womeninfellowship.org.uk](mailto:literature@womeninfellowship.org.uk)  
 Caroline will be at National meetings where possible, but  
 please order anything needed well in advance.  
 Please note that any amendments to the membership list for  
 receipt of Grapevine should be sent by email to:  
[membership@womeninfellowship.org.uk](mailto:membership@womeninfellowship.org.uk)**

**Fellowship****by Mary Roy (Bristol Branch) from Grapevine 141 winter 1989**

I found myself reflecting on the meaning of FELLOWSHIP. Sharing community of interest, companionship, friendliness as defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary. I then went on to consider each letter in turn: -

<b>F</b>	<b>FRIENDS</b>	who we value greatly
<b>E</b>	<b>EDUCATION</b>	topics introduced at meetings lead us to enquire further
<b>L</b>	<b>LOVE</b>	within the branch supports us all
<b>L</b>	<b>LENT</b>	a time set aside for spiritual refreshment
<b>O</b>	<b>OUTINGS</b>	to theatres, gardens, stately homes
<b>W</b>	<b>WIVES</b>	the role which we share
<b>S</b>	<b>SERVICES</b>	sources of inspiration
<b>H</b>	<b>HOSPICE</b>	St Christopher's – our chosen charity
<b>I</b>	<b>INTERDENOMINATIONAL</b>	providing us with the opportunity to worship in many churches
<b>P</b>	<b>PRAYER</b>	at the centre of our Christian lives

The concept of Wives' Fellowship is summed up for me in these 10 words. I hope to gain further depth and appreciation in the future.

Thirty-five years on this reflection seems to be as pertinent today, apart from the fact that we now celebrate our inclusivity with all Christian women who are welcomed into our fellowship one with another. I feel it highlights the key factors we need to ensure that our branches can remain strong and active.

**Submitted by Jo O'Hagan****Wear your badge with pride!**

Badges available from the Literature Secretary for only £1.00





### ***The Gift of Silence***

We are busy, Lord, we do not listen.  
The world is so noisy, Lord, we do not hear.  
We do not hear what your Spirit is saying to each one of us.  
We have been afraid of silence.  
Lord, teach us to use your gift of silence.  
Teach us, Lord.

***Women of New Zealand***

### ***The Peace of God***

Jesus, Lord, you come to us  
not as we come to you –  
with excuses, bluster, bewilderment,  
and a million petitions.  
You come to us in peace.  
Lord, let your peace  
be alive in my life, today.

***Dorothy Stewart***

### ***Moving Forward***

Lord, as we see increasingly the closing of branches and the possible end of Women in Fellowship as we know it, grant our committee wisdom and discernment to navigate the challenges and decisions ahead.

Help them to make choices that align with our Christian values and serve the best interests of our Fellowship.

Help us to work together with understanding, compassion, and a shared vision.

Be with our members and guide Branches into a way of ensuring that friendships endure.

***D.T.***

### ***A New World***

Give us, Father, a vision of your world as love would make it:  
a world whose benefits are shared, so that everyone can enjoy them;  
a world whose different people and cultures live with tolerance and mutual respect;  
a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is fired with love;  
and give us the courage to build it, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

***Women of Guatemala***

### ***Teach us to be Careful***

O Father, we thank you  
for the close ties which bind us  
as parents, grandparents, sisters, wives, children and friends.  
Teach us, good Lord, not to be careless of those who are dearest to us.  
Give us the kindness of our Master and develop in us  
a deeper, more tender and sincere love for them.

***Women of Jamaica***

### ***Seeing things God's way***

Father....  
keep us so close to Your heart  
that even our dreams are peaceful,  
and that we may see things....  
more and more from Your point of view.

***Corrie Ten Boom (1892-1983)***

### ***Glorious creator***

My God, I thank thee, who hast made the earth so bright;  
so full of splendour and of joy,  
of grace and light;  
so many glorious things are here,  
of truth and right.

***Adelaide A. Proctor***

### ***Help us to trust***

Thank you, Lord, that beneath the surface of human power,  
chaos and uncontrollable events,  
you can be found,  
quietly working out your deep and far-reaching plans.  
Help us to trust you more.

***Angela Reith***

### ***Gaelic Blessing***

May the road rise up to meet you  
May the wind be always at your back  
May the sun shine warm upon your face and until we meet again  
May God hold you in the palm of his hand

***Amen***

Let us offer to God our thanks and praise for those gifts  
which enrich the life of our Fellowship.  
For the inspiration of music and art,  
For the joy of creation,  
For friendship and laughter.  
For those who lead and those who serve and share their time and abilities to benefit our Fellowship.  
For the traditions of the past and the challenge of the future,

and for the privilege of worship.  
Above all, we give thanks for the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ – for his gift of Fellowship and Service.

***Sanderstead Branch – from 'Life's Journey'***

### ***We pray for all families***

For those who are growing up, that they may increase in wisdom and love.  
For those facing changes that they may meet them with courage and hope.  
For those with heavy burdens that you will help them to carry them lightly.  
For those in the winter of their lives that they may always have your peace.

***Irene Whiting, Bristol II***

### ***Eternal God,***

whose image lies in the hearts of all people,  
We live among peoples whose ways are different from ours,  
whose faiths are foreign to us,  
whose tongues are unintelligible to us.  
Help us to remember that you love all people with your great love, that all religion is an attempt to respond to you, that the yearnings of other hearts are much like our own and are known to you.

Help us to recognise you in the words of truth, the things of beauty, the actions of love about us.

We pray through Christ, who is a stranger to no one land more than another, and to every land no less than to another.

***World Council of Churches***

## Seasons of the Church

Recently, the ancient parish church that I attend, held a 'Festival of Faith and Fabric'. About 15 years ago the then vicar discovered a chest containing an abundance of Victorian vestments and altar fronts, all in very poor condition. They had been replaced with synthetic versions, nothing as beautiful as those he had found. At his request a team of 12 willing and able seamstresses from the congregation, led by a professional embroiderer, set out to repair the fabrics. Some were in such a poor state that the embroidery was painstakingly removed, backed with netting and carefully applied onto new fabric. Funds were raised and the finest fabric, gold braid and spools of real gold thread were purchased. The goal was to restore the altar fronts and vestments to their original condition. It took almost 10 years to complete the project but as each set was finished, they became the vestments used at worship services. The final set, red, was completed in 2024.

There is a set for each season of the liturgical year, purple for Advent and Lent, symbolising penance and preparation. Red for Passion Sunday, Good Friday, Pentecost, and saints who



were martyrs, signifying sacrifice and the Holy Spirit. Green for Ordinary Time, representing hope, life and growth. White for days of celebration, such as Easter Sunday and Christmas, symbolising joy and celebration. Gold is used for some special days such as Easter in place of white.

Prior to the Reformation many types of vestments were used but when Henry VIII left the Roman Church there was a question as to which should be kept. Thomas Cranmer mandated a smaller number but retained the chasuble and cope, amongst other vestments. The reign of Elizabeth I saw a return to many of the vestments that Cranmer had discarded, she was all for a bit of bling! Over the centuries there has been a continued jockeying about appropriate priestly garments. The rise of the Non-Conformists led to a much simpler form of dress for their denominations.



With the revival of the Gothic style by the Oxford Movement in the 1800s Anglican vestments were made of expensive, high fashion fabric, richly embroidered and decorated. Not all followed this trend, and many parishes maintained the simple black cassock and white surplice for the liturgy. Our parish church obviously did not fall into that category.

The vestments and altar fronts on display at St.Mary's Festival are an example of embellishment at its finest and worthy of the long hours dedicated to their renewal. As was originally intended, they will be used to the glory of God for many years to come.

***D.T. 2025***



## All items available from the Literature Secretary

New Anthology of Prayer	£3.00	Prayer Card	20p
Spirit of Wives ( <i>free to new members</i> )	£5.00	Alternative Prayer Card	20p
New Members' Pack ( <i>Information for New Members, brief history and St Christopher's leaflets, Service Book, revised History of WF, Anthology of Prayer and WF Information card</i> )	£6.00	Notelets ( <i>Sold in packs of 5 of one design</i> )	£1.50
Service Book	£1.50	Passionflower ( <i>by Susan Walker, Sherborne WF</i> )	
History of WF ( <i>Revised March 2019</i> )	£2.50	Fuchsia ( <i>ditto</i> )	
Grapevine Magazine	£1.50	Wives at Church ( <i>ditto</i> )	
WF Information Card	20p	Garden of Delight ( <i>by Ros Plumley, Tunbridge Wells WF</i> )	
		Mixed pack of 5 notelets ( <i>one of each design</i> )	£1.50
		Pack for Visiting Priests ( <i>Brief History, Service Book and Information Card</i> )	£2.00
		WF Pin Badges	£1.00

Recruitment Leaflets are available free of charge

The WF prayer can be found on the website and in the service booklets.



### Branches are asked not to send money when ordering literature

The Secretary will send a bill with the order which covers the cost of the literatures as well as P&P and instructions for payment. The Literature Secretary has a stand at Annual Day, Autumn Conference and the AGM where literature can be bought or orders placed. Please pre-order by email at least 3 days before an event and the literature will be ready for collection and payment at Annual Day, Autumn Conference or the AGM. You can email the Literature Secretary with your order: [literature@womeninfellowship.org.uk](mailto:literature@womeninfellowship.org.uk).

## Notelet Designs

**Stop Press:** All Women in Fellowship notelets have been reduced to half price – what a bargain!



The four designs are now £1.50 for a pack of 5 notelets of one design or £1.50 for a mixed pack of five.

To purchase please email your order to Caroline at [literature@womeninfellowship.org.uk](mailto:literature@womeninfellowship.org.uk). There are plenty of each design but do purchase now to avoid disappointment.



Wives at Church



Garden of Delight





Lord, how manifold  
are Thy works!  
In wisdom hast Thou  
made them all:  
the earth is full of  
Thy riches. PSALM  
104:24

High as the sun and stars above  
Are God the Father's plans of love -  
Beyond man's comprehension.  
No human mind could e'er conceive  
The plans by which the Father leads  
His chosen ones, His children. MB

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