



# Ann-Marie Wilson

Link Letter no. 54 | February 2024

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**Location:** Britain



**What I do:** Working to end FGM and violence against women and girls, specifically across Africa and the diaspora where FGM is practised.

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year!

The last few months have seen some exciting developments for Orchid Project, with a highlight being the launch of the second regional (Europe) office in Berlin, opened to have an EU presence. I attended the three day event, where I was the key speaker, sharing on our research across Africa and a taster of our new FGM research in Malaysia and Indonesia, launching in spring/summer 2024. It was lovely to meet up with colleagues as the team continues to expand. Forty per cent of staff are based in Africa, all helping to overcome FGM. Visiting Berlin also gave me the chance to catch up with my cousin, who lives there, en route to the airport. Please pray for our Orchid team, that our work continues to make an impact in helping girls and women remain safe from FGM.

Under Orchid's name, I contributed to a quarterly meeting with the Metropolitan Police's Violence Against Women Expert's panel, helping shape their next three year strategic priorities plan.

My anti-FGM work was celebrated with others when I was invited to a special thanksgiving evensong for award (MBEs etc.) recipients at St Paul's Cathedral. It was a moving, special celebration, as I sat next to Alimatu, who was also awarded an MBE for anti-FGM work in Sierra Leone. A week later I returned to St Paul's for a sung Eucharist to celebrate Licenced Pioneer/Lay ministers in the Diocese of London.

My more local work has also continued through volunteering with Noah's Ark, where I am chaplain at this children's hospice. The building, The Ark, won an architecture award, and is set in a seven-and-a-half-acre nature reserve. Recently I have been involved in preparing for the Winter Wonderland family events and am being trained as a front line volunteer for home and event based family work. Going forward I am excited to be part of their plan to offer a drop-in listening service for staff who work in tough circumstances. Examples of circumstances include working with a mum and baby, born at twenty four weeks, who spent six months in hospital. I also prayed with a Muslim lady whose consultant stated that her child, five years old, would only live for one more year. I talk with staff, volunteers and families to help avoid burnout and compassion fatigue, to develop resilience and to offer an outlet and "just listen".

My studies at St Mellitus College on an intense pathway programme have continued, with a couple of residential trips in recent months: a week in Derbyshire in November, sitting in an ancient chapel studying



*Finchley Synagogue with  
rabbi Miriam.*

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**With Jesus  
With each other  
To the edges**



sacraments. Although the weather was chilly, my friend Sister Pat and I walked to Alfreton for a cream tea on our afternoon off! I was then back in Derbyshire for a weekend in January. It was good to re-connect with the others and this time to cover pastoral care. January–March will cover Biblical studies, and I was able to cover my intercultural “practical” studies through a visit to my old synagogue, Finchley Reform, on an intense pathway programme.

In my personal news, as I mentioned in my September letter, I experienced healing in my paralysed leg after prayer at a lunch with Iranian new believers in Jesus. The latest situation is that I am walking without an orthotic brace for much of the time, and attending a neurological physio class weekly that is building my strength.

Alongside work and studies I have been on two retreats to Malling Abbey, to mark the remembrance season when I was involved in the memorial service and to review our Oblate rule. This is always a good time for personal reflective re-charging. Please do pray for two of the much-loved sisters at the Abbey who have health issues. One has returned to the US and another remains at the Abbey, where she has lived for 60+ years.

I also celebrated my birthday in November painting pottery with friends and eating cake with family. The Christmas season was filled with many celebrations – gatherings with friends, carols, Christingles and an “alternative nativity” at church, lunch with my PAs, theatre visits and time with my bubble family. A highlight of the festive season for me was that on Boxing Day I flew to Lapland, Finland, arriving on 27 December to experience all of the things they had to offer, including a reindeer sleigh ride, leading a husky pack and ice karting on a frozen lake! Yes, it was cold, with temperature falling to -30°C for the last few days! Following a New Year celebration with other guests, I was blessed to see the Aurora Borealis again, a huge highlight! I give praise for these beautiful created places globally that I am lucky enough to visit.

As our old vicar retired, 2023 concluded 23 years of my mission membership at St Barnabas, with eight years as a lay pioneer minister and five as a staff member. As all serving roles (mission, LPM and staff) have come to an end, please give thanks, praying for what God has next.

Ann-Marie Wilson



*Photos from top to bottom: Thanksgiving Evensong at St Paul's; service at St Paul's for lay ministers; Lapland!; Noah's Ark Hang a Star tree.*



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