

ANNUAL DIOCESAN HOLIDAY & GENERAL MEETING EDINBURGH **SEPT 25th -OCT 2nd, 2017**

What a memorable time we had in Scotland with grateful thanks to Elizabeth Reay for all her meticulous planning and to Barry our coach driver from Barnes Coaches who showed consideration for his passengers.

The Festal Evensong, the day before the General Meeting, with magnificent singing by the choir and large congregation was attended by our Worldwide President, Lynne Tembey. As we left the cathedral it poured with rain. How fortunate we were that our coach was just outside!

The General Meeting was held at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre a spacious modern building with easy viewing and access to eating and information areas. How special it is to meet members from all over the country, to hear their stories, different ways to fundraise and to attract new members.

Lynne welcomes us, quietly spoken and sending out a feeling of calm as she said we are making a difference, standing up against gender based violence and using literacy skills as a tool for peace.

The theme this year is 'Peace & Reconciliation'. Our Chief Executive Bev Jullien said we'd responded well to crises - London Diocese has offered AFIA Holidays to Grenfell Tower victims. We're building community adhesion, connecting church and community with practical support. We are working with other charities The Children's Society and Comic Relief and Lambeth Palace.

Our keynote speaker Canon Sarah Synder called for a ministry of reconciliation. Women in the frontline of South Sudan are the heroines of war; they are the peacemakers. The cross-border work by Jews and Palestinians are seeds of hope. Reconciliation is a long and painful journey. We can dehumanise people by what we say or do not say, so that they can be made to feel faceless. It was an inspiring day. Non-members explored Edinburgh during this time.

Travelling from Gloucester we stopped at Quarry Bank Mills in Cheshire before stopping at Lancaster for the night. Then to the Lake District - Dove Cottage Grasmere, William Wordsworth's home and Hilltop Beatrix Potter's house, both wonderfully preserved. From here to Stirling, our base, where we explored the castle, home of the recreated Unicorn Tapestries. In Edinburgh, walking in the sunshine and on the Royal Yacht Britannia. How the Queen must have missed her special refuge.

We received a friendly welcome at the harvest service in Dunblane Cathedral, as well as a talk on the history of the building, followed by refreshments in the hall next door. The Scottish scenery seen on sunny or more menacing on cloudy days in the Trossachs and Glencoe is always superb.

During our journey home we stopped at Lockerbie Cemetery - a very moving experience - and at Preston Garden Centre. Our days were full of different experiences and emotions, of fellowship, fun, laughter and memories while enjoying the company of MU friends.

Sylvia Dennish - Lechlade branch