



# Ann-Marie Wilson

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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.



**Empowering** people pushed to the edges of life to release their God-given potential

Dear friends,

Wishing you a good 2025! I hope you managed some rest over the festive season. I'm aware that economic/financial circumstances and war/natural disasters have been depressing globally, affecting every household/church congregation I know. I hope the New Year has offered some positive hope among the current overwhelming news, including the shocking revelations of more abuse in the Church. I pray for peace, and guidance for world and church leaders.

On a positive note, I spent three days with different friends locally over Christmas, and then flew to Egypt. Egypt is a country where the prevalence of FGM is 87 per cent, and numbers are high due to its population of almost 120 million. When we researched FGM in Egypt, an Arabic speaking Egyptian colleague launched our findings.

From my experience this visit, it is still a highly conservative country, where women's heads are mostly covered, requiring conservative dress and with women preferably speaking through men. This makes it difficult to do FGM advocacy. Yet I spoke extensively about FGM, mostly to men, and believe I have made some impact, although 100 per cent of my subjects denied FGM happens.

I met a young Muslim couple from Chad who were visiting Cairo to have a first attempt at IVF treatment. Having talked to the couple, who were highly educated, it is likely that FGM was heavily linked to the reason for being unable to carry a safe pregnancy. They were very interested in my work and I prayed for them.

When I did my academic doctoral research into FGM, I was aware that it was practised at the time of Pharaohs. Visiting Egypt's Mummification Museum has expanded upon what I learned from the British Museum, London. We can see evidence of FGM under the mummified wrappings in the sarcophagi that have now been x-rayed. This confirms, as we believed, that FGM came from either Sudan, calling it Sudanese circumcision, or from Egypt, calling it Pharonic circumcision, and was extensively done to women and girls thousands of years ago. Regarding male circumcision, I was interested to observe the ceremony on a "Stelae" (wall carving) found at the entrance in a tomb, showing before and after male circumcision. I had extensive conversations with over 25 men about the presence of FGM, all of whom denied it occurred "now" or even "ever". Yet statistics do not lie.

While I was in Egypt, other colleagues from the Orchid Project research team were training professionals in Asia. Our research shows that "Asian countries account for over a third of global cases of FGM/C". Here is the link to our recent report on Indonesia: <https://www.fgmcri.org/country/indonesia>



*With the sphinx in Egypt, where I travelled for anti-FGM advocacy work.*

**Support Ann-Marie Wilson:**  
[churchmissionsociety.org/annmariewilson](https://churchmissionsociety.org/annmariewilson)

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



My time in Egypt also enabled me to see Cairo and Alexandria, the seats of Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Alexandrian (Christian) cultures, which allowed time for sharing my faith, and talking and listening with people of other faiths and none. FGM conversations also enabled some book sales where people were really interested in my story.

Moving into wider ministry, I was delighted to feature in an extensive media interview on the last twenty-plus years of my anti-FGM and wider advocacy work to a group of Texan podcasters. The context of my work was considerably easier for me, until the question they asked at the end: "What impact do you think our new president will have on your work"? I briefly shared that we have 120+ reports across Africa, Asia and the Middle East, including the diaspora, and thematic reports, including some touching on the US. Once the recording was over, all five of us spoke more openly on politics!

Finally, I have done some interesting work speaking against the Assisted Dying Bill. I was part of a panel of four doctors, two medical and two academic, who spoke to Barnet voters with our MP, Dan Tomlinson. I talked extensively about my own, and parents', cancer journeys and stories from my 11 years as a palliative care chaplain. Also at that time I was asked "if I would like to end my life"; I said an emphatic "NO"! It ran really well and after hearing our arguments against, Mr Tomlinson changed his stance, voting against the bill in the Commons. Small steps!

In order to maintain balance with the edgy work I do in anti-FGM and end of life palliative care at hospices, my spiritual disciplines include following a Benedictine life of three daily "offices" (mini services) and four annual retreats to Malling Abbey, Kent, where I am a lay sister. I visited in early November, around the time of Remembrance Day. These visits give me time to rest, recuperate and recharge and a chance for prayer, and supervision from my nun supervisor, who supports my spiritual journey.

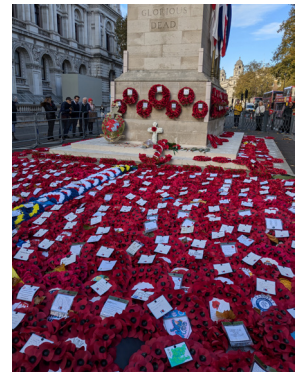
At the beginning of Advent, I went to a service at St Paul's Cathedral on my birthday evening. I had a good conversation with Bishop Sarah, our London bishop, talking about upcoming Christmas events and training courses. I also attended several remembrance events as, tragically, I have had ten very close friends and spiritual leaders in my life die this year. As a believer I do believe I will see them again, yet it did take some of the edge off Christmas, especially as one close local friend died, unexpectedly soon, on Christmas Eve.

The Advent season included the usual mix of Christingle, carol services and communion services at church. I had two lunches with a dozen of the single, senior lunch group, where I have taken over the coordination/leadership. We met in December for a shared Christmas lunch at a local carvery – my first Christmas dinner of the season!

#### In the coming months, my commitments include:

- ▶ 4-17 February: trip to India to collect anecdotal research into FGM across the country
- ▶ 28 March: Chrism Service, St Paul's Cathedral, London
- ▶ 5 April: Precious Women Lunch
- ▶ 10-15 April: retreat to Malling Abbey

Blessings and warm wishes,  
Ann-Marie



**Photos from top to bottom:** With Barnet MP Dan Tomlinson at a meeting about the Assisted Dying Bill; Remembrance Day wreaths; with Bishop Sarah at St Paul's; Christmas lunch with the lunch group from church.



## Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

I've been encouraged to hear recent mission stories from around my wider area of work. In South Sudan, communities have taken steps towards peace as pastors from different tribal groups reconciled, and my colleague Joan has shared a growing vision of a new tribe of peacemakers. Read more at [churchmissionsociety.org/empower](https://churchmissionsociety.org/empower)