



Ann-Marie Wilson

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Contact details:
annmariewils@googlemail.com



Location: Britain



What I do: Working to end FGM and violence against women and girls across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the diasporas



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

Dear friends,

As 2025 draws to a close and I step into a new year, I find myself reflecting on the blessings, encounters and meaningful moments that have shaped the past three months. This season has brought opportunities for learning, advocacy, fellowship, worship and celebration – each reminding me of God’s steady presence and gentle guidance in every step.

Between July and December, the Orchid Project made significant progress in its mission to end FGM through advocacy, research, youth leadership and global communication. With continued support of partners and donors, we strengthened the visibility of FGM as both a human rights violation and an urgent public health issue.

A major breakthrough came with our co-hosted, first-ever FGM-dedicated session at the World Health Summit – an important step in integrating FGM into global health discussions. The session gathered survivor leaders, medical associations and global institutions to highlight the need to embed FGM prevention into medical education, health policy and clinical practice.

In October, our team played a leading role at the FIGO World Congress in Cape Town, launching new regional evidence on South East Asian FGM medicalisation. Alongside partners, we released a Joint Statement Against Medicalised FGM, endorsed by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and other major bodies. This reinforced a clear global message: medicalisation does not reduce harm.

We approached this via knowledge-sharing. A bilingual dialogue in the Horn of East Africa supported our efforts integrating FGM prevention and care into healthcare systems, now informing emerging regional plans in West Africa. We strengthened youth leadership through our launch of a Youth Advocacy Toolkit under the Africa-Led Movement to End FGM. Complemented by webinars and a new vlog series highlighting passionate young advocates, these have driven change within their communities.

Research continued to be a key part of Orchid’s work, including landmark reports on FGM in Indonesia and Malaysia – evidence that Asia accounts for at least 35 per cent of the global burden. Advocacy around Indonesia’s historic ban on FGM, the first of its kind in Asia, was an important achievement. My travels last year have also contributed to research, and deepened my prayers for India. I hope a future ban may come for the Bohra community, and in Turkey, where conversations with many men left me praying that seeds of awareness and change will take root, as misogyny is high.

These achievements reflect Orchid’s continued focus – driving evidence-based advocacy, elevating survivor



With Bishop Anderson, Bishop of Edmonton, at our study day

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



voices and working toward a world free from FGM. Please continue to pray for Orchid's work and all who are striving to end FGM.

In November, I spent a peaceful and reflective few days at Malling Abbey. Surrounded by its beautiful ninth century Benedictine heritage, I was grateful for the stillness and spiritual rest. Joining the community in prayer helped me listen more deeply to God. I look forward to returning in January to renew my oblate vows with my four oblate sisters.

Later, I attended my Edmonton Bishops' Study Day – rich teaching, discussion, and reflection on the Church's mission in these times. It

reminded me of the ongoing need for learning, spiritual growth, humility and courage as we navigate a world marked by discord and division.

My November involvement with the Diocese of London's Disability Working Group reaffirmed my commitment to ensuring that churches are truly accessible, inclusive and welcoming. Listening to lived experiences challenged and inspired me, as I remain dedicated to supporting practices that honour every person as a precious member of the body of Christ. Please give thanks for the work of the group as we continue advocating for improvements for those with disabilities.

One of the joys of the season was attending my church's Learning Circles, which I attended weekly for the last three themes. We explored literature; poetry and art, and our final session ended with a cosy fireside "wintering," where we shared our stories and reflections.

I also supported the North London Hospice Light Up a Life Celebration – an interfaith, musical and deeply emotional gathering of around 1,000 people. As lights flickered gently in the night sky, we remembered loved ones and held space for grief and hope, as I co-led a resource desk.

December brought the beauty of Advent and Christmas preparations: carol services, concerts, gatherings and community celebrations. Each moment gently pointed back to the heart of the season – Christ, entering the world in humility and love. I had just returned from a profoundly moving trip to Jordan the day before Advent began. It was humbling to stand at the site of Jesus' baptism, to float upon the Dead Sea and to bring home water from the River Jordan, which I shared with fellow church leaders and patients.

As January began, I found myself filled with hope and anticipation for the year ahead. A significant moment was attending the farewell service at St Paul's Cathedral for Bishop Dame Sarah Mullally as she prepares to become the new Archbishop of Canterbury – the first woman in history to hold this role. Many are praying for change within the Church of England regarding gender equality, disability inclusion and representation of specific groups. Bishop Sarah's leadership in London has been a blessing to me, and I hold her in prayer as she steps into this historic calling. Please join me in praying for Archbishop Sarah.

As I move into the year ahead, I carry the peace, joy, companionship, learning and worship which has shaped this season. I pray that God continues to guide my steps, strengthen my spirit and open opportunities to serve faithfully, especially at the edges where his light is most needed.

Please pray with me that my funding increases so that I can continue to serve God in the ministries he has laid before me.

Blessings, Ann-Marie



Photos from top to bottom: At the summit of Qasr al-Bint, on to the stairway to the monastery; conversations with local male leaders about ending harmful practices (FGM); at the North London Hospice Light up a Life service; with Fr Francesco, my church rector, at the leaving service of Bishop Sarah Mullally



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

It builds my faith when I hear stories from other CMS partners working with people pushed to the edges of life. I hope that you're inspired as you read about Elise and Jon in Thailand who are working to keep families together and children out of care. And about Makol in South Sudan whose life got dramatically saved during a peace rally. You can read their stories, and others, at churchmissionsociety.org/empower

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