



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.

Dear friends,

November started with another tick off my bucket list: a tour of Highgate Cemetery with a friend. I'm enjoying slowly working through the list and the pleasure each item brings me.

Early in November I had the privilege of speaking at Purley Baptist Church, where I was able to distribute my book and meet many old and new friends. It was wonderful to see the plans for their new church growth project at the same time.

Continuing my work with Noah's Ark children's hospice, I led a remembrance service for 30 grieving families – a very emotional and touching experience, yet very beneficial for the families and siblings to have that time with each other, while remembering in a safe space.

Later in the month I was very happy to attend my first Algerian wedding and to embrace a new culture. A joyful occasion indeed, later exchanged for an Algerian birthday dinner to decorate my Christmas tree, with shared understandings of Christian and Muslim customs. I also loved my visit to the platinum jubilee of the Royal Ballet. Such a treat to see wonderful dancing that has been enjoyed by so many for 60 years, and a perfect beginning of my new platinum decade!

November saw me reach a special birthday and I was very lucky to have many celebrations with different groups of friends and family. These included an afternoon tea at Blenheim Palace on my actual birthday. Then over the next few days, I went out for cocktails, birthday cake, lunches and received such lovely flowers and gifts. I must admit I was thoroughly spoiled. Thank you to all of you!



Marking a significant birthday with afternoon tea at Blenheim Palace.

At the beginning of **December** I attended the Lights to Remember service at Hampstead Church, where I have been a Marie Curie chaplain for the last five years, and received my five year long service award badge.

In the run up to Christmas, life became a flurry of Christmas tree decorating, carols, food and visiting friends and family. I also loved helping with the seniors Christmas tea, Advent church service, Christingle and Nativity with all the interpretations of the costumes present at that famous birth! In December I was also able to visit a dying friend in hospital daily until he passed and this gave me a great sense of calm and peace. Hopefully it was a blessing to his family when I could help with the complex NHS pathway of palliative care.

I had a lovely trip to Dorset before New Year, but unfortunately I developed a toe infection after a visit to Kew Gardens, which led to cellulitis in both legs and sepsis, for which I have received eight courses of IV and oral antibiotics. After a brief Christmas day celebration with my bubble family, who sadly fell ill over the holidays, I am now being looked after by podiatry and my GP's nurse and hopefully I am over the worst. I felt very fortunate

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

to share wonderful evening meals with my neighbours for seven weeks during this time. Good nutrition makes for good healing!

Back from Christmas leave I was incredibly excited and blessed to receive an MBE for my work over the last 12 going on 20 years working against violence against women and children. There are so many people behind the scenes that have been instrumental in me receiving this award and I am truly grateful for all the support I have had and the team at 28 Too Many. A busy time has followed with radio interviews from UCB and TWR and articles to follow.

In **January** I attended a CMS people in mission conference in Northampton and then travelled to Malling Abbey retreat for five days. Before that I got to have a spin in my cousin's new Corvette car! A real adrenaline fix and looked impressive in the West Lodge, Cockfosters car park for tea!

Over the last eight years, since my diagnosis, I have completed 96 bucket list items(!), so I am now "just" left with 60 things to do in this new decade. I have a short trip to Iceland in March to hopefully see the Northern Lights with a friend. Then a visit to Lacock Abbey and Stonehenge (and taste Retsina wine!) with Mandy and Simon in Dorset as the last trip was cut short. I also hope to go to Glyndebourne in the summer with some friends. This helps me celebrate five more treats!

I am approaching the last few months of my study sabbatical and am scoping the study element, with Noah's Ark children's hospice and North London hospice. I will be producing a multi faith calendar for Noah's Ark, and a description of faith/spiritual practices for different religions. I am also producing a list of ministers of each faith across nine counties from which families access services.

My sabbatical will end sometime after Easter, by which time I will have clarified with CMS (employer), Bishop Rob (LPM/licence), St Barnabas (sending church), Orchid Project (merged with 28 Too Many), donors and ministry hosts (Noah's Ark, Marie Curie, St Barnabas pastoral team) to agree the funding and time allocations for this next season. I have had two significant meetings with St Barnabas and also CMS. Others will follow, so please do pray for these for this season of transition and adjustment post sabbatical.

Prayer points

- ▶ My health, which has continued to be a challenge post my hip surgery in May
- ▶ My toe infection will be cured and my walking will be less painful
- ▶ Wisdom for this season, in preparing for the next
- ▶ Financial security in a time of challenge for many.

Praise points

- ▶ A time of rest, reading, reflection and pilgrimage since April 2022
- ▶ Three bereavement services and a death cafe I recently attended, that will help people discuss mortality
- ▶ Hospitality given by my bubble family, next door neighbour and school friend in Dorset who gave me a good Christmas
- ▶ Non-believers I talked to at St Barnabas seniors' tea

Ann-Marie xx



Photos from top to bottom: The last few months have included a mix of speaking (at a church in Purley), engaging with bereavement events (including Time to Remember at Cherry Lodge with Theresa Villiers, MP for Barnet), study about faith and spiritual practices, and ticking some fun items off my bucket list!



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