



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,

February – Along with the cold weather, I took a trip to the newly renovated Battersea Power Station, finishing with a lovely tea at the dogs' and cats' home!

Later in the month I was an invited participant in the World Day of Social Justice – Balancing the Scales event. Here we shaped some research on challenging the conundrum of privilege. This focused on seeing where we started out compared to where we are now, 40 years later in my case! The research findings have just been launched, and will shape future social policy.

March was soon upon me and was a very busy month indeed. Early March saw me take a well-earned break with a rescheduled (due to the pandemic) trip to Iceland. Six days of mountains, fjords, volcanoes, geysers and hot springs – what's not to like?! While there I was exceptionally lucky to see the aurora borealis (northern lights) in all their glory, a truly awe-inspiring experience and a big tick off of my first 60@60 wish list.

On my return it was my pleasure to record a podcast with the delightful and charming Simon Guillebaud, where we talked together about my life and work. As the 100th edition of the podcast it was embraced as a bumper edition. Simon's web quote says, "This is by far one of the most remarkable conversations and women I've ever come across... get ready to be blown away". See link to full podcast: <https://apple.co/3JJzmZI>

I asked to help with the Noah's Ark fashion show – little did I know I would get to strut my stuff on the catwalk for four hours as one of their models! A great experience with a free cream tea thrown in but I can't see Vogue calling anytime soon!

I was lucky enough to see a couple of West End musicals within a couple of days of each other. First I saw Six, the gossip from the deceased wives of Henry the Eighth! A couple of days later I saw the new modernised hit Oklahoma. I absolutely loved it, and would definitely recommend it. "Oh what a beautiful morning" indeed!

March was brought to a close by joining with St Barnabas to attend their Abba-inspired women's event. A thoroughly enjoyable evening with lots of dancing and I even had a go at karaoke for only the second time in my life.

Holy Week was very fulfilling, as I attended the Chrism service at St Paul's Cathedral on Maundy Thursday. It's always such a pleasure to be involved in the procession leading into the service, which is such a spectacle. It also



Ready to speak at HACEY
End FGM Conference in
Nigeria on FGM day.

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To the edges**



offered a chance to catch up with friends and colleagues, reaffirm our vows and collect holy oils. I joined colleagues from St Barnabas for lunch after the service, which was a treat. In the evening I had my feet washed by one of our pastors, which moved me to tears.

On Good Friday I went to the Wintershall performance of The Passion of Jesus, live in Trafalgar Square, where my companion Mel and I had front row seats. After an early night I arrived at St Barnabas for an 8am breakfast before taking part in a pilgrimage walk to St Albans. It took me 11 hours to complete my walk, arriving just in time for most of the Communion service.

After a long restful sleep I enjoyed a wonderful Easter Sunday at church and a family lunch.

April also saw the first anniversary of the merger of The Orchid Project and 28 Too Many – how time flies! It also brings to an end my study sabbatical. One of the ways I am fortunate to be marking this is by spending a week in Kenya with the Orchid and 28 Too Many teams. I am especially looking forward to visiting a couple of their projects upcountry and will be really interested to see what impact they are making on reducing FGM numbers over time.

Update: I had an amazing trip and it was brilliant to get back to my passion of FGM work. I received such a warm welcome from the whole team. While in Kenya, at the launch event for the Kenya office and the new five-year strategy, I was honoured to receive an award for my lifelong contribution to ending FGM. Click here to see the new strategy: <https://www.orchidproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Orchid-Project-Strategy-2023-2028.pdf>

Praise points

- ▶ Six months' study sabbatical which has given time for rest, reading and refreshment.
- ▶ For the first time since December 2020, I now have PA support in a three-way job-share.
- ▶ After a year of contemplation and reflection on retreats and pilgrimage, I am finally feeling some clarity regarding the next steps for my ministry.
- ▶ I have just agreed a new five-year lease for my second Motability car, which will be adapted for driving with my (probably) permanently disabled leg/foot.

Prayer points

- ▶ Hospital appointment on 8 May with the National Orthopaedic Hospital regarding my hip and foot issues.
- ▶ Completion of the last third of the study project for Noah's Ark staff which will help them apply appropriate faith and multicultural knowledge.
- ▶ Transitions and new beginnings, and for these to become clearer over the next few months.
- ▶ The award of my MBE at an investiture on 11 July at Windsor Castle.
- ▶ Sadly the largest organisational donor of my funding through CMS has advised that all funding from them will cease from 1 July.

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Photos from top to bottom: World Day of Social Justice – challenging the conundrum of privilege; giving my founder's talk to the team at Orchid Project; visiting COVAW Project, Kenya with the Orchid Project in April; receiving a Lifetime Achievement award at the new Kenya office and strategy launch event



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Jesus never gives up. Neither should we. We live in a fractured, hurting world. It can be tempting to give up: on hope, on people, on the idea that things can ever change. Yet, Jesus invites us to follow him on a journey to the edges. Find out more at churchmissionsociety.org/nevergiveup

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