

World Methodist Conference 2024

This year, over the 13th-18th of August, I attended the World Methodist Conference in Gothenburg, Sweden as a delegate of the Methodist Church in Britain, representing the three Yorkshire Districts. Its hard to put into words how it was experiencing this week, as it was chaotic, intense and exhausting but, it was also full of teaching and worship which has meant that I have come back feeling inspired.

Whilst it is called the World Methodist Conference, its more accurate name would be the World Wesleyan Conference, as some of the participating churches included *The Church of the Nazarene* which follows Wesleyan theology but are not Methodist. It was also interesting to see the number of united churches that were in attendance, where all the protestant denominations in a country have joined together. The host country, Sweden, was a church like that, and had been working in an ecumenical church system since 2011.

The days were filled with seminars, worship and the opportunity to make friends! A couple of workshops that really stood out to me was one titled 'Guarding our souls in times of war: Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Ukraine' and another titled 'What is happening in the Holy Land?'. Both of these were challenging to listen to because they were both facilitated by people who are living in these war zones: A Ukrainian Pastor, and two Palestinians. In both cases, hearing from people firsthand of their experiences in both of these warzones was heart-wrenching but also the most I have learnt on both of these wars. I ask you to join me in praying for the two women from Palestine who travelled to Sweden to share their story at the World Methodist Conference as they were unsure of what would happen to them when they returned. Especially one who was a Palestinian living in Israel who was fearful of being detained for speaking out.

The worship each morning and evening was a definite highlight of this week, mostly due to the musicians who were absolutely outstanding. Whilst there was always a bit of uncertainty of whether to sit or stand when singing, it soon became clear that you should just worship in whatever way felt best for you. Whether that was using songs for prayer or standing and declaring them, it was space that you could use, and that was rather special. But worship was shared through dance, through gospel choirs, through a swing band and tradition Sweden music.

The last evening was the most wacky evening/worship that I have ever and probably will ever experience. It was titled 'Scandinavian Party' and included games (including challenging two people on how quickly they could build an Ikea stool), Swedish pop music, and a gospel choir concert. I can honestly say that I did not go into that service with any energy, but ended up mosh pitting with the other young adults! Whilst I am not

sure that the Secretary of Conference enjoyed it in quite the same way, I think that there should be a campaign for our annual conference to end with a similar party!

The Uniting Church of Sweden held their own conference alongside the World Methodist Conference, which meant that during the final service on the Sunday Morning we participated in the ordinations of their deacons and pastors. This was such a beautiful experience, and it was fascinating to see how ordinations worked in a different church. After the laying on of hands, the ordinands were presented their Stole as a sign of the Yoke of Jesus, before they served us with communion. Whilst communion with 3,000 people was rather chaotic, it was beautiful that the newly ordained pastors were the ones sharing it with us.

I'm so grateful to have been able to go on this trip. Experiencing the seminars, the worship and building better and stronger relationships with other Young Adults has been so transformative, and I look forward to the experiences influencing my preaching.

The next World Methodist Conference will be 2030 – so keep an eye out for an opportunity to attend!