

MMM

'Rooted and founded in love'



MEDICAL
MISSIONARIES
of MARY

Christmas
2024

SUPPLEMENT TO HEALING & DEVELOPMENT - VOLUME 85

Awakening *Peace*





Welcome

Hello Friends of MMM,

You are most welcome to our 2024 Advent Supplement.

As we prepared for this year's supplement, our team in MMM Communications met and discussed what the theme should be as we usually do. The truth was though that as we shared ideas and discussed options we struggled. Amongst news of war, political unrest, global climate disasters and unprecedented food shortage in the world, we realized that so much turmoil resulted in many of us experiencing mental and physical strain that made us feel challenged in agreeing on a theme. This supplement helped us see things in a new way.

In our unrest was the answer to the theme: Awakening Peace. As we worked on this supplement we were reminded of the challenging world that welcomed (or didn't really welcome) the baby Jesus. His arrival was not an easy one for Joseph and Mary and the world they negotiated was

a harsh one. Our world now calls for our Awakened Peace more than ever.


It is alright sometimes for us to admit that the darkness of the world can make our path ahead harder if not impossible without our faith. This year we will focus on awakening the peace within ourselves that is then emitted into the world as a beacon of God's love. We share stories that we hope bring you the gift of peace as you read and reflect.

I will be leading an Advent online Retreat at no cost to our friends if you would like to join us please email us at mmm@mmmworldwide.org. It will be from the start of Advent until Christmas. You can also do it on your own time after then if that is more convenient for you. Videos of the reflection can also be watched on our MMM youtube channel.

Wishing you and your family peace and joy for this Christmas,

With blessings,

Sr. Sheila Campbell, MMM



*“If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all”
(Isaiah 7:9).*

Ways of *Awakening Peace*



Advent as a time of Peace

Advent is an important time of the year, not just waiting for Christmas and preparing ourselves for the arrival of the baby Jesus, but also for awakening peace in the world and in ourselves. Each of the four weeks of Advent have a special meaning: hope, peace, joy and love. Collectively these four experiences allow us to awaken peace within our hearts and minds.

Awakening Peace in Communities:

Sadly, the climate crisis is being felt acutely in Africa. The result of this, coupled with high instances of political warfare and conflict, is that many countries are facing a food crisis. Millions are expected to be at risk of worsening hunger soon due to conflicts, climate variability, economic slowdown and the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the midst of disaster, our MMM Sisters bring hope and hold firm in faith and do whatever they can to make circumstances better for people in dire need.


In the Republic of Benin, our MMM Sisters

are helping a family with two handicapped sons who have struggled, unable to crawl, walk, talk or do anything for themselves since birth.

The children suffered physically and emotionally as they became an object of mockery and humiliation by some neighbours who think it was because of their sins that they are being punished by the gods.

After review at a children’s hospital, they were told that the children need specialist care which is expensive. In the





future they will need wheelchairs and walking aids. More financial support is needed.

Meanwhile MMM provides basic physiotherapy. They can now sit for a while and sometimes crawl. This little effort and care are well appreciated by these children with their beautiful smiles and words of gratitude by their parents.

For now that there is hope, and they feel cared for, the peace of God's love is growing.

Awakening Peace through Joy:

Raising a child in a war-torn area with political conflict is very challenging. Our MMM Sisters in Torugbene, Nigeria were faced with an impossible situation trying to provide clinic services in a remote and isolated area for mothers and children. When the electrical supply was unstable and the area felt unsafe in the dark, mothers would come to the clinic at night, fearful and concerned. Many would not come.

With the construction of a new clinic funded three years ago, the demand

for electricity to facilitate the expanded project activities became necessary. There was no hope of government intervention. Therefore, through a grant from Miseen Cara and MMM resources, 72 solar panels were installed, and 5 lithium-ion phosphate batteries were mounted to provide 24 hour electricity in the facility.

The installed Solar-powered refrigerators maintain the cold chain for vaccines, preventing spoilage and also powers clean water and sanitation. The strategic location of the 72 solar panels has multi-functional spaces; It has been integrated into shelters, providing shaded areas for people to gather and rest. It is now serving the dual purpose of energy generation and comfort. Joy has been found in the eco-friendly solution of solar power!

Awakening Peace through Love:

One of the beautiful traits of the MMM Sisters is the love of education and the power of learning that they bring to a community.

Many of our Sisters have not only been

a surgeons but have trained hundreds of surgeons. They have not only been midwives but trained hundreds of other midwives. We have Sisters who are now playing major roles in setting up training clinics or universities to make sure the local people are involved in meeting the needs of their own community.

We have Sisters who also retrain so that they can meet the new needs of the communities they serve. They will take their time and invest their efforts in getting the credentials or skills needed so they can do more for the local people, perhaps as an administrator of a hospital or as a specialist in a certain field that is needed. As we shared already, the Sisters will learn about eco-friendly power solutions or how to fly a plane if the job will require it!



Human Trafficking rings were targeting very poor children coming from naïve and desperate families. Since that time, we have learned a great deal about the ways that children and young people are lured and then trapped. We are working with victims at every stage of this journey. We are making great efforts to educate people in communities about human trafficking and how to recognise it.



Awakening Peace through Hope:

It is hard to believe that there is more slavery in the world today than ever before. Currently, boys and girls are actively being recruited and are sold by family members or are abducted by complex human trafficking rings.

Our MMM Sisters in 2006 recognised that

We are also teaching the students as young as primary school how to counter human trafficking. While our children in Western Europe might be playing sport or a musical instrument or being in a school play after school, children in our missions are learning how not to be taken by human traffickers.

When people are rescued from human trafficking their emotional, physical, mental and spiritual needs





are great. We have to help them to heal from tremendous trauma because of the amount of abuse or sexual assault they have experienced. It requires tremendous effort to renew people's faith in humans after such a horrendous violation of their human rights. We are grateful that we have many success stories in which lives have been reclaimed and faith restored to victims allowing them to live again. We could not do this or support vulnerable people in their hour of need without the help of our donors.

Awakening Peace Through Working Together:

As we reflect on Advent and the journey that Joseph and Mary made into the hostile unknown places where they did not receive support, we know that for many expectant mothers, suffering is still happening.

We understand giving birth in Sub-Saharan Africa is still risky not only for the baby but sadly for the mother.

The rates for maternal death or injury to the mother are still astronomically higher than other parts of the world and we are determined to see this change.



Our MMM Sisters have a strong legacy in providing help to expectant mothers and providing antenatal care that otherwise would not happen. We are also aware that support and resources are essential during pregnancy to help mothers who may be in danger from a catastrophic birth.

In March, our MMM Congregation along with others started a campaign called "Safe Birth 4 All" as we want to find ways to make sure that the suffering of women and girls is addressed as a human right to have a safe birth, which it is currently not.

Remembering Mother Mary Through the Eyes of a Child.



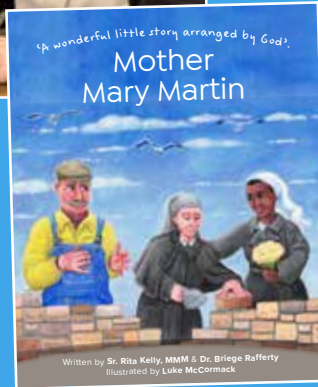
In January 2025, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the death of our foundress Mother Mary Martin. Many people will still recall the elaborate funeral that the town of

Drogheda put on at that time. In an effort to keep the memory of Mother Mary alive, this year Sr Rita Kelly was asked to interview local people and hear stories of their memories of Mother Mary through their own eyes.

As Sr Rita Kelly with the help of scholar Dr Briege Rafferty commenced with the oral history interviews of local people, something very clear started to emerge. The memories they were hearing were stories that the people recall of how

important and memorable Mother Mary was in the lives of many people when they were young.

As the interviews with local people were transcribed, Sr Rita and Briege had a very visual experience of the way Mother Mary impacted the life of so many local children. Even though the oral history interviews were being done for archival purposes they now had a new future: they became the pages of a children's book celebrating the life and legacy of Mother Mary.



The Children's book is now available for sale and includes photographs, images and original art depicting the inspiring story of Mother Mary Martin through the eyes of a child. This book will now bring the life of our foundress to a whole new generation of young people around the world.

See our website for more details on the book: mmmworldwide.org

To order a copy online please visit:
<https://mmmworldwide.org/bookdonation>

Or scan this link
on your phone >>



The Origins of *Advent*

Advent means "arrival" and signifies the start of an event or the arrival of a person. Around the world now in Christian communities, Advent refers to a four-week season of remembering and preparing for the arrival of Jesus on Earth.

The origins of Advent can be traced back to the church in France. In the 4th century, the church in France used the period before Epiphany as a time of preparation for Baptism.

Advent was originally called "St. Martin's Lent" for the 40 days that started on November 11th, so Advent was originally the same length as Lent!

Advent around the world is celebrated in different ways. A new practice of hanging a devotional image every day ultimately led to the creation of the first known handmade, wooden, Advent Calendar in 1851.

The first chocolate Advent calendars came out in 1958, but when the famous Chocolatier Cadburys created a chocolate calendar in 1971 they started to become popular worldwide.

Traditionally, many churches mark the four Advent Sundays, or the four Sundays before Christmas, by lighting one candle each week leading up to Christmas,

Advent candles have different names and colours each week:



Advent week 1
Hope: **Prophecy Candle** (purple)



Advent week 3
Joy: **Shepherd's Candle** (pink)



Advent week 2
Peace: **Bethlehem Candle** (purple)



Advent week 4
Love: **Angel's Candle** (purple)

First MMM Christmas in Africa

by one of the founding MMM Sisters

Editor's Note: This is an extract from a larger article, written in Nigeria in 1940.

There was to be no midnight Mass at Anua in 1937. This privilege was reserved for the bush stations. We were a little disappointed at first, but imagine our joy when Fr. McGettrick came to wish us a happy Christmas and announced that he would take us in the lorry to the bush station, some fifteen miles away, where he was saying his midnight Mass.

It was a happy and unique experience to be speeding along a sandy road in a lorry in the middle of the night, somewhere in Africa. There was perfect calm and stillness, befitting the night, and it was only broken now and then by the distant sound of drums and tom-toms as the local people danced in the moonlight. Though we did not have to journey along by foot, as did the Shepherds of the first Christmas night, still we could not help feeling one with them as we too went in search

of the Holy Child.

A real Bethlehem it was when we reached it. It was a mud chapel with a palm mat roof, the outcome of local labour. No pains had been spared in decorating this little home for Our Divine Lord in which bamboo, palm branches, gloriosa and lilies played a part. Here was real poverty, but real devotion too. The little church was packed to the door and how they sang that night! It may not have been very musical, but their hearts and souls were in it.

Soon we found ourselves packed into the lorry again and with us were Father and the altar boys, the doctor and his wife, a Mass box, a goat (this being Father's Christmas present which had been dashed to him by a grateful people together with yams, oranges, etc.

As we left the bush station, we could see the local people going in all directions, wending their way along narrow paths to their homes with hurricane lamp in hand and still singing their Christmas hymns. We too were in the mood for singing, but our Nanny goat interrupted our Adeste Fidelis occasionally with a "Ma-a-a" as the lorry sped along. We picked up another Father with his loads at a bush station on the way, so there was a great medley of people and things to be unloaded when we reached Anua.



Obituaries *Entering into the Fullness of Life*



Sr. Mary Ellen Sambuco
MMM, 03 March 1945 –28
September 2024

Sr. Mary Ellen Sambuco died peacefully on September 28th at Sancta Maria Nursing Facility in Cambridge, not

far from our MMM home in Somerville. She was born in Los Angeles but grew up in Irwin, Pennsylvania. After leaving school she studied for Licensed Practical Nursing, graduating in 1965. Through contact with the Benedictine Sisters, she found her way to MMM in Winchester MA in 1968.

From early days her many gifts were appreciated. She had a lovely singing voice and could play the guitar. She was kind and gentle. She also had a good sense of humour and a hearty laugh.

After her initial religious formation, she graduated as a Registered Nurse. This was followed by Midwifery training and British registration needed for her future work in Malawi.

Sr. Mary Ellen went to Malawi in 1978 and began work in St. John's Hospital in Mzuzu. She also worked both in Nkhata Bay and in Chipini. She worked in maternal and child health, and she had special skills and a gift in working with premature babies.

In 1992 she returned to the USA. Her ministry during the following years was divided between assignments of maternal health and childcare, visiting families and community nursing and she had a special gift for working with children with special needs.

In September 2024 she needed hospice care as she was gravely ill. The Sisters in the MMM house in Somerville accompanied and

nursed her during her final days. She died peacefully in Sancta Maria Nursing Facility, Cambridge MA on September 30th 2024.



Sr. Sheila Berthiaume MMM
26.09.1940 – 12.10.2024

Sr. Sheila Berthiaume came from Detroit, Michigan. She entered MMM aged eighteen. Already drawn towards the

healing profession (she worked as a nurse's aide part time during her teenage years), she went on to study Medicine in Ireland at University College, Dublin and gained all her postgraduate training in the International Missionary Training Hospital (now Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital) in Drogheda. She specialised in surgery and had both paediatric and obstetrical/ gynaecological experience.

Her assignment to East Africa began in 1970. Most of her work was in Tanzania, in both Makiungu and Dareda Hospitals, but she also had brief periods of relief work in Uganda. Sr. Sheila was noted for her gentleness and kindness. She loved music and was also very fond of flowers and plants.

In 1996, Sr. Sheila returned to the USA to care for her elderly father, but afterwards returned to Tanzania and was the surgeon in Makiungu Hospital until she finally returned home in 2012.

Sr. Sheila lived for some years with her brother in Chicago, but as her own health needs became more pressing, she returned to Somerville MA and her final years were in the Mary Immaculate Nursing Care facility in Lawrence, MA. Sr. Joanne Bierl MMM and the staff were with her when she quietly slipped away on October 12th, 2024.

Light of the World

Light of the world
Shatters darkness of our hearts,
Touches, deeply, spends itself,
Is melted, moulded, transformed,
Burns itself out
So that others may see the light who is
Life Himself
Who says “you are precious in my eyes,
And I love you.”

Sr. Noeleen Mooney, MMM

Christmas Word Search

Angel King
Shepherd Joseph
Candle Inn
Bethlehem Hope
Jesus Peace
Mary Joy
Birth Crib
Donkey Immanuel
Star Merry
Heaven Grace
Camel

B	D	L	E	U	N	A	M	M	I	B	J
L	E	D	R	E	H	P	E	H	S	O	P
A	R	T	M	B	O	T	C	O	D	H	C
B	E	I	H	V	I	M	H	P	K	E	A
R	S	O	M	L	P	R	E	E	V	A	M
C	T	K	A	J	E	U	C	N	A	V	E
H	P	E	S	O	J	H	A	N	G	E	L
E	B	O	P	Y	R	R	E	M	R	N	S
Y	E	K	N	O	D	A	P	M	A	R	Y
R	C	I	B	I	R	T	H	P	C	S	T
P	A	N	N	I	Y	S	U	S	E	J	O
O	B	G	H	N	E	E	L	D	N	A	C

“But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’”

(Luke 2:10-12)



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- Join us as members of MMM
- Share our charism as an MMM Associate

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Thank you.

