

Minutes of the meeting of the nsw Women's Inter-Church Council held at the Pitt Street Congregational Church on Monday, 14th July, 1975 at 10.30 a.m. About forty women were present, and apologies were received from Mrs. Hill, Mrs. Bragg, Mrs. Chambers, Mrs. ~~W~~dy and Mrs. Down.

Mrs. Bent opened the meeting with prayer, taking the reading from St. John's Gospel Ch. 6

The President welcomed all to the meeting, with a special welcome to Mrs. Gers, a visitor who accompanied Mrs. Stanhope.

This took the place of the monthly meeting, and was planned as a fund raising activity for the Travel Fund of A.C.W.

The next meeting of the Council will be on Monday, 18th August, 1975. At this meeting, the Winifred Kiek scholar, Mrs. Mary Weme from Kenya, will be present. All friends of members will be most welcome.

On Monday, 11th August, 1975 there will be the Executive meeting with a ~~brief~~ briefing of the delegates and observers to the N.C.M. in Adelaide in August.

The City Service for Fellowship Day was announced, to take place in the Pitt Street Congregational Church, Wednesday 23rd July at 11 a.m. A list of meetings to take place at suburban centres was read out.

Correspondence read was from the A.B.C. agreeing to interview Mrs. Weme on Saturday Saints, a programme broadcast by 2FC.

Mrs. Weme will be looked after by the Y.W.C.A and will stay at Deaconess House for some of the time in order to have contact with students. Mrs. Stanhope will offer hospitality at the weekend, and other offers are being solicited.

Mrs. Weme will be in Sydney from 4th to 24th August.

Mrs. Bent then terminated the business part of the meeting, and welcomed Mrs. Heather Stevens, Assistant Secretary of the Federation of Methodist Women and a member of the Department of ^{Christian} Education of the Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist Churches. Not the least part of her importance is that she is also the mother of a grown up family.

Mrs. Stevens reported on the Conference she had attended in Penang in April sponsored by the East Asian Christian Women's Conference. The theme was Christian Family Life.

At the conclusion of the talk, questions were put to the speaker, and a lively discussion followed.

Mrs. Bent thanked Mrs. Stevens for her stimulating and interesting address

In closing with prayer, Mrs. Bent emphasised the need to love one another, that love which should be a sign of our unity in Christ. The benediction was pronounced, and the meeting closed at twelve noon.

Confirmed...18/8/75.....

Gladys M. B. S. President

REPORT BY MRS. HEATHER STEVENS.

On Monday, 14th July, the NSW Women's Inter-Church Council had as its guest at the monthly meeting, Mrs. Heather Stevens, Assistant Secretary of the Federation of Methodist Women and a member of the Department of Christian Education of the Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist Churches. In April, Mrs. Stevens went to the East Asian Christian Women's Conference in Penang as a delegate from Australian Church Women. Forty delegates were at the Conference, twenty-five women and fifteen men. Of the forty delegates present, only eight were not Asian. Subject under discussion was Christian Family Life. Some of the subjects discussed at the Conference were Christian Home and Family, education, the role of women in society, the challenge to youth and parents, population questions. Small discussion groups were formed, and Mrs. Stevens chose to join the one on the Christian Home and Family Life. Of the three papers presented, the one by Nellor Tan on Family Life Education was outstanding. Bishop Sadak, a Methodist from India spoke on the Responsibility of Family Life. He also led the half hour of worship in the morning. A young man from the Philippines spoke on the Challenge to Youth and Parents. The structure of the family and family needs are being diversified. It is necessary to be equipped to cope with the changes and pressures being exerted on the family and have the ability to confront them. The Christian Church has a great deal to offer in this situation.

In the programme, there were many occasions for real Christian fellowship. Free time was offered, and this was an opportunity to explore the island of Penang, which is quite small, being nine miles by fifteen miles, with a population of half a million. 50% are Malays, 40% Chinese and the rest Indian. The Chinese were the early settlers and it was a contrast to see the homes of the Chinese millionaires and those of the poor families. Among those making these tours was an Anglican teaching sister who spoke Malay, and she was able to introduce the group to these poorer families and gain entry to their homes; in this way, they saw how the people lived.

Mrs. Stevens shared a room with a woman from Bangla Desh and another from Thailand. The woman from Bangla Desh lived in a village and belonged to the Baptist Church. She taught crafts and village industries. She said things were much better there than previously. The people were getting more food and they were not quite so poverty stricken as formerly. The future was very hopeful as the village women were learning crafts and were able to sell their goods. The woman from Thailand was a tutor sister in a hospital there. Mrs. Stevens felt greatly privileged to be able to live with these women.

A young man from Sri Lanka was very upset about discussions on the role of women. He thought that women's role was to concentrate on the home and the family. He began to see that a woman need not usurp a man's place, and that decisions should be taken in collaboration.

The youth of South East Asia comprised 60% of the population, and presented great diversity. They were multi-racial and multi-lingual, and this presented economic and environmental extremes. It was stated that the church exists for service, not for its own sake. As the salt of the earth, it must not be inward looking and restricted by its own structures, but active in moves on behalf of the poor and the oppressed. Formation was urgently needed and youth training most necessary. Then youth could be sent out into the community for exposure and encounter. The emphasis now is on technological skills and future employment rather than education for mature living.

On her return to Australia, Mrs. Stevens found the question she was most frequently asked about Penang was, "Was the food good?" Is this an indication that, in our affluence, we are only interested in what we eat? The only answer was, "It was Malay food; we got used to it."

The concern of the Conference was with the family as the basic unit of society. This aspect needs to be developed in order to be a pace setter for society. This submission was made, " we describe the family as that unit of society where people would learn to love and to care for one another through the experience of knowing oneself to be loved and lovable, and therefore capable of giving love in return."

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