

**** INFORMATION PAGE ****

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The Girls' Brigade	
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CONTRIBUTIONS to Newsette are requested from readers and should be sent to the **EDITOR**:

Mrs Beryl McLaughlin,
2/15 Morwick Street,
STRATHFIELD 2135,
(Tel: 9744.8609).

Changes of Address should be sent to the Newsette **MANAGER**:

Mrs Brenda Dickinson,
14 Mary Street,
JANNALI 2666.
(Tel: 9528 9016)



NEWSETTE

AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN -- NSW UNIT INC

A C W seeks:

- ⇒ to unite Australian churchwomen in their allegiance to their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;
- ⇒ to provide opportunities for Christian women of different denominations to worship, study and serve together.

Mission Statement

Australian Church Women believe that there is one God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit; one God, Three-In-One. We believe that Scripture teaches that salvation is only through faith in the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's only Son.

PRESIDENT: Major Lyn Middleton Tel: 9529 6744

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NOVEMBER 2005

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

My Dear Friends,

As I sit down to write this Christmas message for the last edition of Newsette in 2005, the world, and particularly our corner of it, has once again been shocked and horrified because of terrorist attacks. Suddenly the Christmas message of *Peace and Goodwill to men* seems awkwardly out of place - yet it is not! For it was to just such a world that the angels first brought their heavenly message. Life was difficult then, too. Taxes and unemployment were high, morals were slipping lower and the military State in control meant only an absence of war, not of brutality! To a world in need God sent the only answer - a Saviour in the person of His Son. One who would bring, in and through the lives of those who believed in Him, 'peace on earth and goodwill among men.' Romans 10:17 reminds us that *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing from the word of God.* The Word of God which became Flesh in the manger.

Almost 2000 years later the American, *Edmund Hamilton Sears* published his great hymn, *It Came Upon A Midnight Clear*. Reflecting the social

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climate of a world burdened by an industrial revolution, the lyrics yearn:-

*But with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long:
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong.
And man at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring;*

Midnight was still upon the earth - as it is for us today amid the noises of anxiety, terror and confusion within us and without.

What's happened to the angel's message? Mankind hears not. But for the shepherds and all those like them who have sought the Saviour, the angel's message has been triumphant. Christ's coming changed the course of history and through His teachings amazing peace and goodwill among men has been achieved. And so the hymn delivers this appeal:

*O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
AND HEAR THE ANGELS SING!*

My prayer for you this Christmas is, that whatever the 'midnight' of your soul is just now, in the quiet of the Saviour's coming, you will 'hear the angels sing.'

Sincerely, with my greetings, *Lyn Middleton*

ASIAN CHURCH WOMEN'S CONFERENCE:

A 'VERY PLEASANT' SUNDAY AFTERNOON:

The day, Sunday September 25, was fine and clear, all cares and concerns were cast aside - the ACWC Annual Service and Concert day for 2005 had arrived. A large and enthusiastic crowd gathered at *Northside Baptist Church* in Crows Nest. This was the third time this annual special day had been held on the North Shore, this year sponsored by the *Crows Nest Japanese Church Fellowship* who meet there each Sunday afternoon under the leadership of *Rev Bob Gierhart*.

The afternoon commenced with a tasty afternoon tea at which old friends and new mingled together in the church's Education Centre. When the Japanese Service had finished, many from their congregation joined the ACW group for afternoon tea. Just before 3.30 pm the whole company moved across to the lovely church sanctuary which features a high ceiling with good acoustics.

Following an introduction by ACW President *Major Lyn Middleton*, the hour-long programme included:

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- * Organ Interlude *Alfred Tsang*
- * Chorale & Solo *Macquarie Korean Baptist Choir - Korean & English*
- * Piano & Vocal *Ray Sinao from Taiwan - Mandarin & English*
- * Maori Melodies *Majors David and Joan Tong - Maori & English*
- * Vocal Quartette *Crows Nest Baptist Japanese Fellowship*
- * Cello Solo *Kenny Mizushima*
- * Bible Reading *Psalm 96 in Armenian & English*

At the conclusion of the items the whole congregation joined with the Organ and Piano in a stirring rendition of "To God Be The Glory"- indeed a foretaste of heaven!

The afternoon highlighted the joy with which people of many nationalities from many different Christian traditions can, indeed, join together as one in Christ Jesus.

Winsome Penn (ACWC Convener)

FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN:

What a momentous year it has been for the Fellowship of the Least Coin, and what a milestone we have reached. The Fiftieth Anniversary for FLC is being celebrated world-wide during 2005.

Fifty years ago, *Mrs Shanti Solomon* took a step of faith, born out of a crisis situation caused when a bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. She took a step of faith and commitment to propose a global prayer movement for peace, justice and reconciliation, where all women would pray for one another in different lands. *Shanti* convinced five other women from Japan, India and the United States of America that this was the only way to cross the boundaries of race, rich countries and poor countries. These women took the idea back to their countries, and many women in those countries gladly joined the Fellowship of the Least Coin. The idea of praying and giving on an equal basis has swept around the world.

Fifty years on, *Shanti's* vision has brought peace and dignity to many, and has resulted in safe drinking water, basic education, security, food, physical and psychological healing, to millions of marginalised, hurt and poor people around the world. God continues to call us to go and share the news that He is God of all - the rich, the poor, the young, the old, women and men alike. Thus, on this fiftieth anniversary, our job has just begun.

This year, 2005, thirty FLC grants have been allocated for projects world-wide - \$US372,100 was raised from least coins in 2004-2005, and so the work to the glory of God continues.

Janet Lang (FLC Convener)

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WINIFRED KIEK SCHOLARSHIP:

At this time of writing, the ACW National Conference is beginning and there will be a special time of celebration for 40 years of WKS. Thankyou *Major Joan Tong* as our outgoing National WKS Convener for a service well done. Pray for the new National Executive in Victoria and Conveners taking up their new roles.

A *Winifred Kiek Fellowship* was awarded to *Rev Valamotu Palu*, the General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches. Vala is Tongan but based in Fiji; she has visited some of the other States and will share in the National Conference at Collaroy, than a Picnic Day at Watson's Bay on Monday 17 October for hospitality and fellowship with NSW Unit.

We have had news of past scholars *Lily Politini*, 1995 Scholar from Fiji, *Monique Crabtree*, 2003 Scholar from W.A. and *Mereani Ragueu*, 2004 Scholar from Fiji. All are in good health, serving the Lord using their enhanced skills and again expressing thanks for their ACW support.

At our Spiritual Enrichment Day in September, those present were given the opportunity to write to some of the Scholars. These letters were then sent on to them and there have been several replies. One was from one of this year's two scholars, *Siok Cheng* - her envelope with 6 letters arrived just in time to reassure her of God's study plan relating to her work in disabilities - her prayer requests are for wisdom for study; to be able to express clearly in English for assignments; for good health; for finances, particularly for extra books needed, and to enjoy the study. Remember our other 2005 Scholar, *Anju Borgoary*, in India.

Milise Taipaeti Kale, 1998 Scholar from Tonga, is now married and living in Melbourne. She and her husband are doing further Theological Studies. Her thesis topic is "God's Calling of Women to Lay Ministry in the Tongan Methodist Church: Re-evaluating the Biblical Traditions and the Wesleyan Traditions" - very involved. Their prayer points are for their study, finances, health, family and now an application to become permanent residents of Australia. She wrote "please keep in touch..." She is amazed that we still remembered her!

Now for some information about the two multicultural Australian Scholars for 2006:

Vivian Cheung is from Sydney, undertaking a post-graduate Bachelor Degree in Theology full-time at Moore Theological College and working part-time as a casual weekend physiotherapist at Wollongong Hospital. As a Senior Student at the College Vivian is involved pastorally in looking after the married female students. At St Paul's Church, Kogarah, along with her husband Eric she works as student minister, mainly with the

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youth. Her Scholarship will enable Vivien to do her Master of Arts in Theology commencing in February 2006. Her minister *Rev Mee-Ping Lau* states that further studies will significantly enhance her strategic and teaching ministries in a wide variety of areas within the parish. She is passionately committed to the preaching and teaching of God's word.

Tania Eichler from Queensland will undertake further education and training at St Francis' Theological College, Milton, as part of the Diaconate Formation program in the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane. This will help undergird her ministry and equip her with the relevant skills. Tania is currently a member of the Moggill/Mt Crosby Anglican Parish and involved in ministries of Liturgical Assistant, Deacon, preaching, prayers, religious education teacher, school and community chaplain.

Tania is married to Mark and they have 2 children, *Sonny* (9) and *Zoe* (6). They enjoy spending time together, listening to each other and are very conscious of bringing up their children with Christian understanding and beliefs.

We look forward to supporting both these young women in 2006. Thank you for your continued support and prayers for our past, present and future scholars. Please contact me on (02) 9896.3758 for copies of letters mentioned above.

Judith Cayzer (WKS Convener)

SPECIAL DAYS:

The themes for Special Days Services in 2006 have been chosen. They are:

FELLOWSHIP DAY in July - "*I Am The Bread Of Life*" - this Service will be written by the Queensland Unit.

WORLD COMMUNITY DAY in October - "*A Little Becomes A Lot In The Master's Hand*" which will be written by the Victorian Unit.

Offertories from the recent World Community Day Services in October will be dispersed as always - half to our commitment to Asian Church Women's Conference and the other half divided between the two Special Projects chosen for 2005, which were *The Retreat Centre at Parakaleo in Sheffield, Tasmania* and *The After-School Programs for Indigenous Children in Broken Hill, NSW*.

State Units have been invited to submit ideas to the National Executive for consideration for the Special Project Offerings at World Community Day Services next year.

AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN 20th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Having worked together over two years as the NSW National Executive, which had proved to be a great team, we were glad to see it all come together. As the Conference began we felt the absence of *Jean Porteous* who was unable to attend because of ill health. Preparations had been tuned as finely as possible with each member accepting responsibility as required. We appreciated the many gifts Executive members brought and their willingness to use them.

Celebration was the keynote, but *Vala*, one of our visitors, reminded us this not only gave happiness but also brought responsibility for the future. To have international guests of the stature of *Rev Valamotu Palu* and *Dr Esther Byu* was a godsend. Both are 'big' women - though seeing them together rather than hearing what they had to say might belie that thought!

Our focus on the *Fellowship of the Least Coin* enabled us to hear *Esther* express her joy at celebrating the FLC Jubilee with us. She brought greetings from the International Committee which would shortly meet in Delhi. As ICFLC celebrates the legacy of 50 years it is visioning the future and living the Jubilee. But is it possible to measure the power of prayer offered as least coins are given? Or the effect of grants on recipients. An audiovisual on the history of FLC was screened and a CD of this was given to each Unit.

Reports were given of two Australian projects which received grants in 2005, the first from *Pastor Annie Lewis Brammall* who works with *Hope Street Women's Space*. She spoke of reaching the marginalised, especially women working as prostitutes in the inner city areas of Sydney.

Then we heard from *Sister Joan Westblade* on encouraging compassion in nursing in *East Timor*. This began when four nurses came to Australia for a special primary health care program. Because of high illiteracy, pictorial charts help patients and carers increase the value of treatment by taking care with cleanliness and by showing compassion.

On the Open Day, following the *Ecumenical Service* at which *Vala* was the speaker, and our special lunch, the 40th Anniversary of the *Winifred Kiek Scholarship* was marked by each State and Territory Unit being presented with a copy of *Honouring Australian Church Women*, which has replaced the Memorial Bursary Book which could only be accessed when National Executive was in their State. Then the 'new entries' for 2005 were introduced, who included *Lucelle King*, *Marie McCann*, *Edith Ridge* and *Mina Whybourne* from NSW.

Bible Studies were presented by *Sister Patricia Stevenson* and *Captain Robyn Collins*. They were very different but both instructive and thought provoking, picking up the theme of *Forward Together In Christ*. From the Acts of the Apostles and the Book of Nehemiah we looked at prayerful approach, the value of teamwork, making contact with the wider community, using conflict in a healthy way and being open to change. Good starting points, but as Bible studies, over all too soon.

Deceased Members were honoured in a beautifully presented segment arranged by *Edith Ridge*. A floating candle was lit for each State Unit as a flower was added to the bowl for each member who had died over the two years since last conference. We also honoured the new *National Life Members* nominated by their States - *Juanita Miller, Tasmania* - *Shirley Wells, NSW* - *Janet Watts* and *Leila Wilson, WA*.

Devotions were well prepared by each Unit, and the dramatic presentation of the *Good Samaritan* by South Australia must rate a mention. So too the *Prayer Concert* conducted for New South Wales by *Lyn Middleton*, where we progressed from solo, to trio, ensemble and full orchestra. *Lyn* had already set a good direction for the conference by her address at the *Opening Service*.

In *Business Sessions*, it was agreed that we proceed towards having an *ACW Website*. Concern for people with mental health problems resulted in a motion calling on governments do something about this. *South Australia* spoke of their *Community Concern Project* - annual events that raise money to help a chosen cause - this has an outreach into the wider community that is a good example to all..

Vala helped us to understand the fragility of the Pacific islands with the creeping threat of global warming. *Heather Reid* brought daily news of the outside world. From our idyllic location at *Collaroy* we tried to imagine the horror of earthquake devastation in *Pakistan*.

The *Good Shepherd Trading Circle* which helps women to trade their way out of poverty displayed items from African, Asian and Latin American countries - eagerly bought and raising \$4000.

On the final evening, the *Salvation Army Sydney Staff Songsters* brought a delightful musical program - a joyful time of listening and singing along.

(Reported by Isabel Hewitt NSW State Secretary)

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SOCIAL ISSUES:

At recent Executive meetings we have reflected on what we understand by this term, what areas we wish to cover, who is responsible for action - the Council, the Executive or individual members - what areas do we wish to cover, and the Social Issues Committee has also been looking at these points.

We speak as Australian Church Women who hold Christian values and are concerned with the care of the disadvantaged in our society, those who are experiencing injustice, neglect of their human rights or affronts to their human dignity. We speak out because we believe that we are all brothers and sisters in one human family and because Jesus Christ himself reached out to the poor and the disadvantaged. As Christian women we speak with a Christian voice, and with due discernment.

Some areas of concern could be issues affecting the well-being of women and children and families; care for the mentally ill in our society; accommodation for younger disabled adults; young carers. We feel that as a State body we should focus mainly on State issues, but may be asked at National level to speak out on an issue, or we may become aware of issues about which National Executive need to be made aware.

The guidelines for the *Social Issues Committee* state that they should alert the State Council about social issues they consider important, and respond to requests from National Executive as required. Council members are encouraged to write or phone appropriate authorities when issues are raised. The Convener is to write letters on issues after they have been considered by Executive and presented to and approved by Council. The Convener or committee members should report to Executive and Council on any Seminars or other meetings attended.

Council members are also requested to alert the Social Issues Committee on issues they consider we should speak up about to the relevant authority.

Sr Joan Bird (Social Issues Convener)

PAN PACIFIC & S.E.ASIA WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION:

Two most interesting speakers have addressed us at recent meetings.

Julia Nkrumah, a member of the Board of *ANCORW*, has extensive experience in resettlement and advocacy work with refugee women in Australia. *ANCORW* regards refugee issues as human rights issues. The first need of a refugee is protection, the second is empowerment. 85% of all refugees are women and their dependant children. They are forced to

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flee from their homes and their countries, in danger and subject to physical and sexual abuse. They have the trauma of seeing family members killed or mutilated. 70% of refugees coming to Australia are from Africa and 70% of these are from Sudan - most of the people coming have lived in refugee camps for 15 years

ANCORW is committed to empower refugee women to have control over their lives and to advocate on their own behalf by the provision of advocacy training. At national level, it lobbies for changes in domestic laws, social policy and improved service provision. Internationally, they lobby at the UN for changes in International Law and UN Declarations.

Refugees arriving in Australia are met by a government official, taken to a house and left there. Theoretically they have access to Medicare, English language lessons, social security etc. and the government is supposed to look after them for the first 6 months. Non-government welfare agencies are not allowed to intervene during that time - only after the 6 months is up so this system does not work as it should.

The *Centre for Refugee Research* has developed a community help package, to advise members of the community how new refugees can be helped during this period. This gives guidance toward English language, safe and affordable accommodation and maintaining links with their homeland

Dr Eileen Pittaway of the *Asian Women's Human Rights Council* started by reviewing the history of the Beijing Conferences: the first one had made significant gains, but the review in 2000 found a changed world, because of HIV/AIDS and the impact of globalisation on women in developing countries. Also there was a new element - extreme right-wing well-funded Christians, so delegates no longer felt they could negotiate a revision of the UN document for fear of women's rights going backwards, especially the right to contraception - the 1955 Convention in Cairo was the first to state that women have that right.

Because women and children were the most affected by the Tsunami, a paper on Gender issues was presented to the General Assembly of the UN and was passed by acclamation. All governments signed off on the UN 8 Millennium goals, to be fulfilled by 2015, though it is obviously impossible to achieve this in practice. The next session of the UN will not have NGO's attending because of security. As the majority of NGO's are women, women's issues will not be advancing.

Eileen brought some good news from Sri Lanka. Post tsunami planning meetings for men only will be opened to allow women to attend.

Edith Ridge (ACW Delegate to PPSEAWA NSW)

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN NSW:

Through its OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND, *National Council of Women of Australia* has been able to: Outfit 100 children in Southern India with school requisites; train 22 widows in India as tailoresses, giving each a sewing machine to start their own cottage industry; help pay for teacher training in Indonesia; assist women in Papua New Guinea with their affiliation fees to the International Council of Women.

They now have five more requests for help, to: Assist more school children in India; help to support tsunami orphans in Thailand; train more teachers in Indonesia; instal rainwater tanks in villages in PNG; assist flood victims in India.

An interesting and informative presentation at a recent NCW Lunchtime Forum entitled *Nuclear Myths, Fears and Facts* was given by Dr Clarence Hardy, Secretary of Australian Nuclear Association and Vice-President of Pacific Nuclear Council, now retired after a 35-year career in nuclear science and technology in the UK, USA and Australia, for 20 of those years in senior positions at the Lucas Heights Research Laboratories.

Dr Hardy cited 10 'myths' and 6 'fears' which he proceeded to clearly demolish with his audio-visual presentation. Space does not permit them to be listed or dealt with here, but the full copy of his material may be had from Newsette Editor by anyone interested. He concluded by saying that nuclear power must be maintained as one of a number of energy producing technologies as the world's population continues to grow and as developing countries demand a better standard of living. It has much to offer as a practical low-polluting technology for the 21st century and its waste can be disposed of safely. Finally, he sees strong reasons for replacing the old research reactor at Lucas Heights with a new one which will underpin nuclear medicine for future benefits.

(Reported by Newsette Editor from NCW Council material)

A CHRISTMAS STORY TO FINISH THE YEAR:

The first ministry assigned to a young pastor and his wife was a very run down church in a Brooklyn suburb, needing much work. Arriving in October they set a goal to have everything done in time for their first service on Christmas Eve. They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, and by December 18 were just about finished. On December 19 a terrible tempest, a driving rainstorm, hit and lasted for two days. On 21st when the pastor went over to the church his heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster to fall off

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the wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit. He cleaned up the mess, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve Service, headed home. On the way he passed a flea-market type sale for charity and noticed a beautiful handmade crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work and a cross embroidered right in the centre. It was just the size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus, but missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus 45 minutes later. She sat in a pew and paid no attention as he got a ladder etc. to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. He could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area.

Then he noticed the woman walking towards him, her face white as a sheet. "Pastor," she asked, "where did you get that tablecloth?" The pastor explained. She asked him to check the lower right hand corner to see if the initials *EBG* were crocheted into it. They were. They were her initials. She had made this cloth 35 years before, in Austria. She explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria. When the Nazis came she was forced to leave, her husband intending to follow her the next week. She was captured, sent to prison and never saw her husband or her home again.

The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth, but she made him keep it for the church. The pastor drove her home to the other side of town - she had only been in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job.

What a wonderful Service they had on Christmas Eve. The church almost full, the music and the spirit great! At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said they would return. An older man, whom the pastor recognised from the neighbourhood, remained in one of the pews, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving. The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war, and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike? He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety, and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in prison. He never saw his wife or his home again all the 35 years in between.

The pastor asked if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to the same house where he had taken the woman three days earlier. He helped the man climb three flights of stairs to her apartment, knocked on the door and saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine.

(A true story from WCTU White Ribbon Magazine)