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**** INFORMATION PAGE ****

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NEWSETTE

AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN -- NSW UNIT

ACW 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: Mrs Janet Harrison Tel: 9744.8626

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

My Dear Friends,

Our Secretary Isabel Hewitt and I attended the recent ACW National Conference in Adelaide as NSW delegates. Despite travel difficulties (owing to Ansett collapse), ten of the fourteen who had booked to attend were able to get there, and enjoyed the many aspects and activities the Conference provided.

The highlight for me were the "Cameo Spots" when members of Asian Church Women's Conference spoke at various times of their life and ministry in their respective countries. (Details in Conference Report on page 3).

It was so good to see Padma Ebenezer there and listen to her speak of God's goodness during her daughter's hospitalisation and recuperation in Australia since her accident nearly two years ago.

2.

The theme of the Conference was "Jesus, our Living Hope." Bible Studies were ably led by Sr Bernadette Kiley. Morning and Evening Devotions, prepared by State and Territory Units centred on the theme of Hope.

We were all horrified by the devastating events in the USA in September, and continue to pray for the world leaders, seeking God's guidance and wisdom in decisions they make. We pray also for people who are bereaved, traumatised, saddened and afraid. May they seek and find the peace that passes understanding found in Jesus, our Living Hope.

"I will put my hope in God, and once again I will praise Him, my Saviour and my God" (Psalm 42:11). May we all...live by faith...walk in love...and be renewed through hope.

With my love, *Jan Harrison*

ACW NATIONAL EXECUTIVE:

OUTGOING:

We do congratulate Marj Dredge (President), Maureen Clark (Secretary) and Dorothy Chapman (Treasurer) for their leadership over the past two years and in organising the National Conference in Adelaide. We appreciated the work and attention to detail as our needs were well catered for. Thanks to Dorothy Ferrier for coping with the many changes in travel arrangements - all conference members were met and returned to the various terminals - a great effort.

INCOMING:

We have written to the new National President, the Rev Lee Edwards, Secretary Leola Loughnan and Treasurer Sheila Mellar, assuring them of our support and prayers for their term of office. The National Executive is now based in Western Australia.

The new President, Lee Edwards, spoke with State and Territory Presidents during the Conference. She is planning to visit the Eastern States around March next year and hopefully will be able to meet the NSW Council members in Sydney then.

Lee is enquiring about interest in a Wildflower Tour to precede or follow the National Conference in Western Australia in 2003; that sounds a long way off but these activities take time to organise, so it is necessary to explore whether there is sufficient interest and what the cost would be.

REPORT OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE:

On pre-Conference Sunday Services were attended at St Peter's Cathedral - Eucharist in the morning and Evensong with visiting choirs in the evening. On a cold, wet Adelaide Monday morning, a warm coffee shop offered respite, while 'Cathedral Fashions' (Op Shop) was like a honey-pot for the 'queen-bee' and her workers.

Daily Devotions:

Most State and National contributions directed our thoughts within the theme of 'Hope'. While the NSW 'choir practice' would have challenged the faith of any conductor, the atmosphere set on the invocation "Be still, for the presence of the Lord" was special.

Bible Studies:

Led by Sr Bernadette Kiley, these were an invitation to re-think some of our long-held beliefs. From the Gospel of Mark came the stories of the women at the resurrection, and of the Syro-phoenician woman whose daughter had a demon. From Matthew, there was the flight of Mary, Joseph and Jesus as refugees. Bernadette challenged us to move out from our comfort zone.

Cameo Spots:

These gave Asian Church Women Conferenc members present opportunity to say a little about themselves and their experiences, and were an important contribution to the Conference. The strength of these women in adversity was a stark reminder of how we may find ourselves in situations which require us to dig deep into our faith resources.

- *Nancy Lin* from *Taiwan* spoke of the typhoons which strike and asked for prayers for the victims of natural disasters.
- *Illuminada Domingo* from *The Philippines* told of intense poverty and how it demoralises people.
- *Esther Byu* from *Myanmar* gave us an idea of how residents of some countries can be victimised when travelling, being asked for a visa simply to be in a transit lounge en route.
- *Padma Ebenezer* from *Sri Lanka* focused on the goodness of God as she faced family crises.
- *Yasuko* from *Japan* confronted us with our 'Australian-ness', telling of her shock at loud laughter! As a child her physical deformity of a faulty kneecap had led to her being sent to a Christian school. With the changing economic situation in Japan, suicide is an increasing trend.
- *Uma David* from *India* got us thinking about female infanticide, the dowry system, and 'saffronisation' in education, which are problems confronting her country.

4.

Australian representatives to the ACWC Assembly, which will be held in Korea in 2002 elected by the Conference are Lisa Jackson (nominated by NSW), Pat Walker (South Australia), and Jean Thomson (A.C.T.).

Business Sessions:

These moved smoothly for the most part. Both the motions submitted by NSW Unit were carried. Consideration of the future of Australian Church Women emphasised the differences in perception of groups composed of members from different States. The NSW Unit saw the need for promotion and publicity to achieve dynamic growth. Local Branches can be established to celebrate Special Days. Closer links with State Ecumenical Councils could be mutually helpful.

The Venue:

Aquinas College was located in a very pleasant part of Adelaide. Food was good - adequate, varied and well-prepared. The Conference Dinner was a fine food occasion enhanced by the superb singing of the daughter and son-in-law of Shirley Sampson. Such talent!

Highlights:

- Ecumenical Service - This was held in the lovely Christ Church North Adelaide. Banner procession, good singing, visitors and an interesting address by an Anglican minister from Payneham made it a worthy inclusion in the Conference program.
- Civic Reception - At Adelaide Town Hall, this preceded the Ecumenical Service, and the opportunity to explore some of Adelaide's history was appreciated.
- Excursion - The trip to Hahndorf via Mt Lofty showed us something of Spring in the hills. The beautiful trees and flowers are memorable, as are the talk and laughter over coffee in the German cake-shop.

Overall, the Conference was a very positive experience, especially in offering the opportunity to meet and share with people from around the country. The presence of ACWC members added depth and colour, not only in their individual cameo spots, but also in incidental conversation over meals. Personal contact with both the outgoing and incoming National Executives was valuable. South Australia's hard work to accommodate our needs was evident in many little ways - biscuits, coathangers, travel arrangements - we were very thankful for their efforts, and I trust we were enthused by the time of renewal and encouragement we enjoyed in Adelaide.

Isabel Hewitt, State Secretary.

5.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN:

Having just returned from our National Conference in Adelaide, my thoughts are still very much focussed on the wonderful five days of fellowship we all enjoyed together.

It was so nice to renew friendships and to meet the new National Executive from Western Australia - especially Major Olive Dell, our new National FLC convener.

Mrs Margaret Greenslade, the retiring National FLC Convener, presented her report, and it was thrilling to hear of the FLC happenings Australia-wide over the last two years. Time was spent with Esther Byu, the International Executive Secretary for FLC, who was able to share with me and other State FLC Conveners the way God is blessing the Fellowship in answers to prayer and in using our least coins in such wonderful ways.

Please pray for the International Committee as they meet in November to consider the many applications received this year from the world countries, and decide on the grants to be given.

By the time you are reading this report, World Community Day will be over and our least coins will have been brought and dedicated, and will shortly be on their way to Geneva. Pray that God will use them in a special way to bring peace, justice, reconciliation and healing to many people.

If you are requiring copies of Circle of Prayer, FLC Offering Boxes, Prayer Cards or Teaspoons, kindly contact me on (02) 9872.1719.

Thank you again for your support and help during the year - my love and Christmas greetings to you all.

Shirley Wells, FLC Convener.

VALE -- GLAD WEST:

A very long-time member of ACW, Glad was called home to meet her Lord recently, after a long period of illness and weakness. Glad was a gentle and gracious lady who came to the NSW Unit as a delegate for the Baptist Church, and served as State President in 1980-1982, following which she served as Convener for Fellowship of the Least Coin. Glad's husband, Jack, was always very interested and supportive of ACW and they welcomed the 1983 WKS Scholar, Byong Ok Min from Korea into their home. "Blessed are they who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

6.

WINIFRED KIEK SCHOLARSHIP:

Excellent reports have been received of both our 2000 and 2001 Scholars. The National WKS Convener, Dorothy Ferrier, received a copy of the Year Book from Trinity Theological College, Singapore which contains a lovely photo of *Mai Zin Zin Wah* (Yr 2000) from Myanmar, and the words "I would like to thank the good Lord for guiding and helping me, and I would like to thank those who gave me the scholarship to do this course; finally I really thank all the lecturers of Trinity College, who were kind and loving to me. May the Lord bless every one." Then Dorothy was surprised and delighted to receive an invitation to Zin Zin's marriage to Reginald Kyaw Lwin in June this year. She regretted being unable to attend, but sent congratulations and good wishes to the happy couple from ACW.

The 2001 Scholar, *Celestial Lusi* from the Solomon Islands has been thoroughly enjoying her year in Papua New Guinea. She will graduate in early December and then return home to Honiara to take up her ministry with the Solomon Islands women. Pray that her return journey will go according to plan and that she will find all is well at home in the aftermath of the unrest in her country not so very long ago.

The recipient of the Scholarship for 2002 is *Lai Mui Ching*, known as *April*, from Hong Kong, who was nominated by the Executive Committee of the Hong Kong Women's Council. April will undertake an MA course on Women's Study in Relation to Women and Religion, at the Chinese University in Hong Kong. April has affiliation with the Lutheran Church of Hong Kong, and is married with one child, Timothy who is 8 years old.

Do continue to remember our Scholars in your prayers.

Mina Whybourne, WKS Convener.

SPECIAL DAYS:

Recently in the last weeks of October, *World Community Day Services* were held around Australia. In our State, it was observed in 17 city and suburban centres and 16 country areas.

One very special reason for praise was the holding of a World Community Day Service in the City of Sydney, after a lapse of several years. Held at St James' Church, King Street, pray that this may lead to the revival of a City Branch of ACW.

Irene Carder, Special Days Convener.

7.

YEAR 2001 SPECIAL PROJECT:

The Special Project to be supported from this year's World Community Day Services around Australia is the *Talitha Kumi Welfare Centre*, in Lahore, Pakistan. As Pakistan is Australia's Prayer Partner until 2002 and their National representative to ACWC, Shunila Ruth, has expressed great appreciation of the 'bond of sisterhood with the Australian Church Women' an account of this Centre is included in this Newsette to encourage our prayers.

TALITHA KUMI means "Young Woman Stand Up" - they are the words in Aramaic spoken by Jesus when he raised the daughter of Jairus from death in Mark Chapter 6. The Centre, opened in September 2000 is described as "Women Empowering Women To Overcome Violence."

The women of the Diocese of Raiwind, themselves in comfortable circumstances, envisaged a Centre for minority women who experience various forms of violence, who are so vulnerable that they hardly know how to protect themselves and are often abused and raped by their own family members. They may be subjected to various forms of violence, such as abduction, sexual abuse, bonded slavery, domestic violence and police torture.

The Centre trains women to become economically independent, makes them aware of their legal rights and family laws, enables them to learn various skills to be able to market their products and provides legal aid.

The Patron and Director of the Centre, Rev Mrs Khushnud Azariah writes: "Living as a minority (women) within a minority (Christian in a Muslim country) is difficult. Many a times, women are afraid to step forward as they feel lonely and weak, defenceless and powerless, because they are women, and economically less advantaged. Many a times, the church feels the same. We women are called by God to rise in faith; to speak against and resist oppression and to work together. We have learnt that it is in bonding together as sisters that we are able to overcome violence and discrimination. Though our untiring work is like a drop in a big ocean, we are sustained through prayerful support. It is my prayer that many more women, and men, will come forward to overcome intolerance and violence, and to promote peace on earth and goodwill towards all as a response to God and his unfailing love towards us."

Since the above was written, we have seen the aftermath of the terrible events in New York, war in Afghanistan, and in Pakistan the flood of refugees across their border and the great strife and unrest in their streets, so let us be faithful in surrounding them with our prayers.

SOME MEDICAL UPDATES:**NEW HOPE For MENIERE'S.**

A pressure pulse generator, made by Pascal Medical, called Meniett 20 has been approved by the American Food & Drug Administration. This is a portable pressure pulse generator which sends out a low pressure pulse into the ear canal to restore the balance in the inner ear's hydrodynamic system. It is very practical to use and can be carried while travelling so that patients can treat themselves when necessary. To use this treatment method, a routine surgical operation is required, to fit a ventilation tube into the eardrum. Those who suffer from the condition now know that Meniett exists as an alternative form of treatment. It is important that treatment is started early before the ear becomes too badly affected. Treatment steps include reducing stress, changing eating habits, avoiding salt.

LIVING With CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME:

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) is a debilitating condition of which there are now 20,000 sufferers in NSW. It is a silent epidemic that affects people of all ages. It is important to educate the public, including family, friends, teachers and employers, so that they understand the illness and its devastating effect on the lives of the sufferers.

People with this syndrome outnumber those with HIV, but for years ME/CFS groups have struggled to raise interest and awareness. Though it is a physical condition, many people still see it as a "yuppie flu" or "all in the mind." Sadly, this is often the case also with the medical profession.

There is a resource manual for carers of people with ME/CFS, which provides useful information, including what it means to be a carer, what to do when the illness is diagnosed, how it affects relationships, caring for oneself, contact details for support groups and services. To obtain a copy or for further information, contact the ME/CFS Society on (02)9662.3488 or (02) 9439.6026.

POST-POLIO SYNDROME.

There is similar difficulty in getting doctors to accept that there is such an illness.. Many doctors have little knowledge or experience of poliomyelitis itself and are unable to recognise post-polio syndrome, but as many as 8 million former polio victims could face a similar illness to ME/CFS for which as yet there is no cure. The syndrome occurs as polio victim's nerve cells wear out. The polio virus causes the destruction of a large percentage of the nerve cells of the muscles. Over time, the surviving nerve cells take over the functions of the dead nerve cells in

order to restore motion. Over time, these nerve cells become overworked and eventually atrophy, and post-polio symptoms appear. The effects of this new form of polio-related illness are difficult to manage since former polio victims believe they have learned to live with the results of the disease. Up to 40% of polio survivors will develop the syndrome, of which symptoms are profound fatigue, muscle weakness, muscle and joint pain, cold intolerance, sleep disorder, breathing and swallowing difficulty. The abovementioned Manual could also be a good resource for former polio victims.

THE MEDICAL WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION aims to encourage communication between women doctors world-wide, and to promote health for all throughout the world, with particular interest in Women, Health and Development. Its Triennial Congress earlier this year was chaired by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir OA, herself a member of MWIA, and had several keynote speakers - one from Indigenous Health Committee, one from Ethiopian Fistula Hospital, and an Australian doctor from Royal Flying Doctor Service spoke on Health Services to remote and rural Australia. Many topics were covered, but one gives an example of what can be achieved. Following a presentation by a doctor from Nigeria of the de-humanising cultural and traditional practices to which widows are subject (as listed below), this horrifying account was spoken of at a session of the United Nations, and as a consequence, these widow rites have been made illegal in part of Nigeria and it is hoped that further governments will abolish these practices.

Mourning rites differ between ethnic groups and are most obnoxious in Eastern Nigeria. Here are a few examples:

- Disinheritance of property and children;
- Drinking water that the dead husband's body had been washed in, to prove that the widow is innocent of murder;
- Shaving of the head with razor or glass so she looks very ugly and is easily noticed and shunned;
- Scarring of the face with a knife or razor;
- Prohibition on bathing, which lasts from 28 days to 8 months, even when the widow is menstruating;
- Nakedness. The widow sits naked to wash in a stream, then her clothes and shaven hair are burnt and she must return home naked. In another area she stays naked for 3 months with hands covering the breasts; she must not speak or make a noise unless requested to cry;
- Eating from unwashed dishes for the duration of mourning;
- Sleeping with the corpse as a last sexual act with dead husband.

(Items on Pages 8 & 9 are reprinted from National Council of Women NSW News)

LONG BAY GAOLBIRDS SINGING:

Patrick is a murderer who has served 14 years in Long Bay. He is also a committed Christian who is studying to go into the ministry when he is released in just over a year's time. During Homeless Person's Week in August he and other Long Bay prisoners were on the streets of Woolloomooloo, singing gospel songs and hoping to inspire people they believe are less fortunate than themselves - the homeless of Sydney.

"I became a Christian when I started my sentence" Patrick said. "Mine was a domestic case. It was a big turning point, taking another person's life. It got me thinking about myself." He studies at a college two nights a week and plans to join a ministry helping the homeless after he is released.

Patrick said the choir helped his rehabilitation. He was a founder member six years ago. Initially members just wanted to practise their singing for the Sunday services inside the prison, but for the past 5 years they have been entrusted to sing at churches around Sydney. "This gives us a chance to meet people in a congregation, and we find a lot of acceptance, which is very encouraging. Not everyone accepts us - some of them are scared, but when they get to know us they treat us pretty well."

Alan, with 11 months left to serve of a 4½ year sentence for drug trafficking, said he re-discovered Christianity in prison. "When we go outside, we share our stories, maybe in the hope that they may change someone else's life, persuade them not to make the same mistakes we have made" he said.

The choir, which admits it would never pass professional muster, performs gospel and spiritual music. Patrick said "We sing about freedom, our love for the Lord, and songs which encourage peace and hope."

(Condensed from article in Sydney Morning Herald 13th August)

FIRST GIRLS' BRIGADE COMPANY In TANZANIA:

A Commissioning Service earlier this year marked the beginning of the Girls' Brigade in Tanzania. CMS missionary, *Helen Hoskins*, chaplain to the Bunda company reported "We now have a National President and 5 companies of Girls' Brigade, with 40 leaders and 200 girls. Pray for them as they learn and grow together."

(From CMS 'Today' News Sheet)

TWO MIRACLES OF GOD'S LOVE:

(From Maggie Mead, serving with Leprosy Mission in the Congo)

In 1994 a soldier decided he had to give up this work. He said it was not possible to be a soldier and a Christian because of what soldiers were expected to do. He left, but his name stayed on a piece of paper. Later, when heavy fighting came to that area, the opposition came looking for him., and found him at home praying. He knew they had come to kill him. They dragged him outside, put a gun to his stomach and pulled the trigger. The gun didn't fire. Again they pulled the trigger, again it did not fire. To test it they pointed the gun into the air and it fired, back to his stomach and it just clicked. The soldiers were shaken at how they could not kill this man lying at their feet. They went away but came back later. This time they put the gun to his head and exactly the same thing happened - each time the gun was pointed at him it wouldn't fire - each time it was pointed away it did. The third time they decided to do it another way so stood him up in a firing line with others. They were just about to start shooting when their commander came in and said "Why have you got that man lined up there? Don't you know you can't kill him, he is a local Christian." Again he walked away.

These days that man is working as a pastor; this is true because I met him.

In another village a young pastor was in his home in a forest region, when soldiers attacked the village and a group entered his home. "Now you will die," they said. The young pastor asked if he and his young family could pray before they died. The pastor, his wife and their young children held hands and knelt in a circle in the middle of their hut and began to pray. Waiting for the gunshots they continued to pray, but the shots didn't come. The pastor looked up, there were no soldiers there. He looked outside and they had left the village. A couple of days later he was in a church meeting and told them about what had occurred, and finished by saying "We don't know how but we do know we were saved." A young man at the back of the room stood up and said "I can tell you what happened. I was one of those soldiers. I had my gun on your children." He went on, "As you and your family knelt in your home in prayer a fire sprang up around you, a big fire so we had to bet out of the hut. Then we saw your whole house covered in fire but not burning and we ran. Then he added "If your God can do that to save his people I want to know him, and that is why I am here today." God had not only saved the young family but had drawn one of the would-be perpetrators to him also!

(From Leprosy Mission Action Partners News Sheet)