

AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN N.S.W. STATE UNIT

Minutes of the Council Meeting, held at 222 Pitt St. Sydney on Monday, October 16, 1989.

The President Marjory Baker welcomed members to this special meeting of A.C.W. It was explained that no meeting was held in the usual month of September because members of the Executive were unable to return in time from the National Conference on account of the Airlines' strike. The meeting had been cancelled before the Conference and a special meeting called for October 16 to enable the Council to meet the WKS scholar, Miss Failautusi Teb'ati and to hear her story.

A special welcome was extended to Fai who was on the end of her visit to the state units after completing her study course and prior to her departure for Kiribati later in the week.

There followed the screening of the audio-visual on Kiribati and Vanuata.

Failautusi thanked the Council for arranging the day's meeting and talked to us about her country. Kiribati is made up of 23 islands and is home to 30,000 people. It was formerly called Gilbert Islands but at independence from the British Commonwealth in 1979 was re-named Kiribati.

Fai told us of her pleasure in the opportunity to come to Australia for training. It is her aim to help her people with what she has learnt. She applauded A.C.W. for the Winifred Kiek Scholarship and thanked us for the electronic typewriter which was the gift of A.C.W. and bought with funds collected at World Community Day services around Australia this year. It will be of great assistance to Fai and the work of the women in Kiribati.

Fai went on to tell us about her work at home. She is one of three women working in the Protestant Church office and she is the secretary of women's work. This involves her in office work and in visiting women's groups in the 23 islands. There the women receive instruction in child care, home management, bible studies, cooking, sewing, handicraft, music and singing.

Fai has enjoyed her time in Australia and values the contacts she has made here. While she was looking forward to going home, she hopes also to meet with us again. Fai finished her address by saying 'God bless you all.'

The members were anxious to ask Fai questions and she was generous in her replies.

1. Could you type before coming to Australia?

Yes, she did some typing, but was not good at it. The course has given her expertise and improved her speed.

2. What can you tell us about the women's work in Kiribati?

There are about 3,000 women involved in groups. They meet in their own islands and have weekly programmes. It is in the conducting of these programmes that the office staff is called on to help.

3. Please tell us about your family.

Fai is one of a family of 6 girls. Four of her sisters are married and she has lots of nieces & nephews! Her father is a minister of religion.

4. What is the position with employment in Kiribati?

There is really no work for girls after they leave high school. They stay at home and help with the gardening and make handcrafts.

There are jobs for boys in the boats, but very little other work. The church is trying to extend the skills of their unemployed young people.

5. Where do families get money to live on?

Each family earns by fishing, gardening and by making handcrafts. Not many goods are imported they are really self-supporting people.

6. What is the system of government?

There is a President elected by the people. He is really responsible for the whole place. There are local councils on each island.

7. What is the currency of Kiribati?

Australian money is used.

8. We have given you an electronic typewriter. What is the source of electricity on the islands?

There is electricity on the main island. Power is generated by generators in the lesser islands.

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9. What exports are sent overseas from Kiribati?

Coconuts etc. are sent to Europe.

10. What do you mean by Independence?

Kirabati is still a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations but is an independent country.

11. Please tell us about your handcrafts.

Baskets, mats and hats are made from the fibre of the pandanus and coconut trees.

12. We saw some beautiful head dresses in the audio visual. What are they?

They are beaded headdresses and are made & worn for traditional dancing.

13. If half of the population attends church, what percentage is unchurched, are those people nominal Christians?

93% of the population is Christian, they are Protestants, Catholic, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Bai Hai and Mormons. There is a continuing problem with the Mormons, they 'steal' people from the other denominations.

14. Are your people worried about the Green House Effect?

Yes. Kiribati is comprised of atolls only 4 feet above sea level. Please pray that this danger of being engulfed by the sea will be averted.

15. What about cyclones?

Most of the cyclones are weak, so there is not much worry.

16. Will you speak to us in Kiribatese?

This is our own language, English is a second language. Fai then gave a greeting in Kiribatese.

MAURI Good morning, hello.

Sabor Good-bye.

And we responded in her language.

17. How long will it take you to fly home?

Sydney to Nadi, Fiji is 5 hours.

Nadi to Kiribati is another 5 hours.

18. Fai then told us that she would have a week's holiday before starting back in the office. She will share with her colleagues the things she has learnt here.

The typewriter can be serviced in Fiji (it is a Brother machine). She is taking with her a good supply of wheels, ribbons etc.

Mina Whybourne, the WKS Convenor then thanked Fai for her lovely visit to our meeting. The President, Marjory Baker made a presentation of flowers, coasters with Australian motifs and an Australian card. We assured her of our continuing prayers for her and in thanking us for the gifts Fai promised to write to us. She said 'I will never forget you.'

A love gift was taken to help with the travel expenses of Fai's visit to the States.

President-elect Major Joan Tong lead in prayer.

A small informal business meeting followed.

The meeting resolved that the minutes of the August Council meeting should be taken as read and the Executive was asked to deal with any business arising and with the current correspondence.

The Treasurer's statement, having been circulated was received & adopted by the meeting. Accounts for payment were also approved.

Thanks were expressed to Jeanne Sutherland for doing the A.C.W. arrangement at the recent St. Andrews Cathedral Flower Festival.

It was reported that Mary Clothi Thuang, who spoke to the Council some years ago and who has been studying in Australia is unable to return to her home in Burma. A newspaper cutting about Mary Clothi was tabled and the Editor was requested to use some of the information in the February copy of 'Newsette'.

Requests for help on the packing days of World Day of Prayer were made & there was some response. Isobel Mackay expressed an interest in becoming a delegate to W.D. of Prayer. The Secretary to liaise with Mrs Mackay & Mrs Helen Richardson.

The Bass Hill Branch banner was displayed to the meeting. This is a new banner made since the Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1988.

The President thanked Council members for their prayers for the women who travelled to the Conference in Perth. A time of reporting on the Conference will be held at the November meeting.

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Small souvenirs purchased in Perth were given as gifts to the three people who were unable to attend the Conference because of the difficulties in travelling during the Airlines strike.

The FLC Convenor announced that the new copies of Circle of Prayer are available for \$2 per copy.

She spoke of the powerful film, 'Ramero' which tells of the assassination of the Bishop of El Salvador. Although it is a very hard experience to watch this story, the film was recommended to members. Mrs Burke used an El Salvadoran prayer to complete the FLC segment.

The Secretary suggested that a roster be drawn up of people willing to set up the meeting room before Council meetings. These people would also stack the chairs at the end of the meeting. The proposal was accepted and will operate from the November meeting, in this way. —

Delegates whose denomination was rostered to provide morning tea in any month, will form the 'chairs' roster' in the month following their 'Morning tea' rostered turn. This roster will be put on to the new Programme for 1990.

Thanks were expressed to the ^{CHRIST} Church of ladies for the morning tea. The Baptist ladies will provide at the November meeting and the Churches of Christ ladies will prepare the room.

Thanks were also expressed to Rev. Ross Mackay of the UCA Board of Mission for setting up the audio-visual and for operating it.

Members were reminded that the trading table operated by Deaconess Andrews provides money for our contribution to the National Overseas Travel Fund. Goods and customers are sought.

There being no further business, the President lead in prayer and the meeting was closed with the saying of the Benediction.

Confirmed.