



AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN

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THE REVEREND WINIFRED KIEK, M.A., B.D.

WINIFRED KIEK (nee Jackson), the first woman to be ordained in Australia, was born in 1884, in Manchester, England. She took her B.A. degree at Manchester University, and taught for a few years. She married the Rev. Edward Sidney Kiek and they had three children before coming to Australia in 1920, to Parkin Congregational Theological College where her husband was Principal for 37 years. Winifred was interested in theological studies and took her Bachelor of Divinity (Melbourne) in 1923, being the first woman to do so. She then did her Honours B.D. in Old Testament Language and Literature, the only woman ever to do so and studied at the Adelaide University for her M.A., which she took in 1929. While studying, she was also housekeeper at the College, devoted mother to her three children, and lectured in Old Testament and Comparative Religions to her husband's students. She was ordained on June 13, 1927, at the Colonel Light Gardens Congregational Church, where she was minister for eight years. She was later minister of the Knoxville Congregational Church. She continued preaching well into her eighties. She died in 1975 at nearly 91 years of age.

She was involved in the work of women in the church, President of the Congregational Home Mission (1920 and 1950) and of the Congregational Women's Society (1936-1940 and 1948-1950) and was the first President of the Congregational Women's Association of Australia and New Zealand, representing that body at the International Congregational Council in the U.S.A. She was the first woman on the Executive of the Congregational Union of South Australia and was twice Vice-President. She was enthusiastic about co-operation between men and women, and worked with the World Council of Churches in the Status of Women Commission, handling a questionnaire answered by 58 countries. She represented Australia at the World Commission 'Consultation' in Oxford (England) in 1952 and was the first Convener of the Australian Council of Churches Commission on the "Co-operation of Men and Women in the Churches" (1952-1956). In the nineteen-twenties she addressed the Adelaide Theological Circle and the Christian Sociological Society, both exclusively male organisations. She objected strongly to segregation of the sexes, to intolerance between Denominations or between religions, and to any form of discrimination against women. She was, however, a strong supporter and was several times President of the ecumenical women's work (Women's Interchurch Council etc. and Australian Church Women). She was instrumental in founding a Scholarship for Asian and Pacific Christian women. This is now called the Winifred Kiek Scholarship and has been operating very successfully since 1965.

The Reverend Winifred Kiek, contd.

Apart from her church work, she was very active in work for Peace, from the early days of Copec, Federal Union, the League of Nations Union and the Pan-Pacific Women's Association of which she was President and an overseas delegate. She was State and National Convener of three International Peace Committees (National Council of Women, League of Women Voters and Women's Christian Temperance Union). She was Convener (1937-1949) of the Standing Committee for Peace and Arbitration and after the war, of the National Council of Women All-Australian Committee for Peace and International Relations. For the League of Women Voters she was Australian Chairman of the International Affairs Committee.

Politically she was firmly non-party in her approach, and was President of the Women's Non-Party Association (1935-1938) and represented this body (later called the League of Women Voters) at a number of overseas conferences. She led the Australian delegation in 1952 to the International Conference on Equality and Peace in Naples.

Her interest in social problems, law and justice was expressed in her support and leadership in the work of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, where she was Superintendent of Moral Education from 1926-1945, and was Federal Superintendent of Racial Hygiene. She gave 39 broadcasts for them. She was also Convener of the National Council of Women Committee for Equal Moral Standards, and led several parliamentary delegations. From 1926-1946 she was a Probation Officer for the Children's Court and during the Second World War was leader of the Class for Women Air-Raid Wardens in the Norwood District. She was also concerned about the problems of old age, and helped to establish the Congregational Wing at Aldersgate, and the retirement home, Allambi, where she herself led a very active life in her eighties.

She was much interested in puppetry, and for many years ran the "Good Companions" troupe. It was a marionette show and she made all the puppets herself. They toured South Australia and raised money for charity, and entertained the Army during the war. She was in touch with the international puppetry organisation in Paris, lectured to the University Theatre Guild, and gave demonstrations and broadcasts. All kinds of handiwork interested her, and she took a prize for a patchwork quilt at the Royal Adelaide Show.

Her publications include: Child Nature and Child Nurture (used as a text book in Canada); Honest Bible Enjoyment; We of One House; and Christmas is for Everyone. Her biography, entitled "Winifred" (M. Knauerhase) appeared in 1978 but sold out and is now out of print. (National Library of Australia Card No. and ISBN 0 9595741 0 7)