



Australian Church Women

"Women at work"



OCTOBER, 1972.

No. 9

From Eileen Dingle -

HOME AGAIN! It is good to be home again in Australia, though I found it hard to leave England. First I must express my sincere thanks to Ruth Lane for attending to my duties while I was away. She has kept you informed of the doings of women within and without the churches and has added her own inimitable touch to the presentation of news. England is indeed 'a green and pleasant land'. The countryside is glorious & I was amazed at how much open country there is, the extent of the park lands in and around London, and the village greens and commons which are a feature of the towns and villages. English people do like to get out-of-doors into the sunshine. It seemed to me that they took every available opportunity to sit in the sun - even if it were just by the roadside. Being summer time - and holiday time - the women's activities in the churches were mostly in recess, but I was able to contact Methodist Women's Federation officers and Women's World Day of Prayer committee members. I had the privilege of attending the British Methodist Conference held in Nottingham - yes, I saw Sherwood Forest and walked down Maid Marian's Way. Deaconess Clare Powers presented the report of the women's work and made a plea for women to be given greater opportunities for service in the Church; great reserves of talent and skills are there to be used if the Church will avail itself of them. Four deaconesses were presented for ordination. I had an interesting conversation with Miss Pauline Webb who had been in Sydney and Melbourne earlier in the year. As an ex lay vice-president of the Conference she sat on the platform during the sessions of Conference. I found it a moving experience to visit some of the old parish churches where for hundreds of years prayer and praise has been offered; as well as the large cathedrals. I attended a morning service at Ely Cathedral and in conversation with the Dean afterwards learned that next year they will be celebrating their 13th century anniversary! London is a fascinating place and the numerous churches there are steeped in history and tradition. Their architectural beauty, stained glass windows, wood carvings and adornments and embellishments are a source of joy and satisfaction to the senses as well as to the spirit. Mentally and spiritually I have been enriched and physically refreshed and I am indeed grateful.

WORKING COMMITTEE - I was given a warm welcome back to the Working Committee on Monday last where I was brought up to date with the happenings of the last three months. What alarms and excursions there were when Mrs. Shanti Solomon's arrival was delayed! We all sympathise with our members in Perth, Adelaide and Victoria, whose careful planning for her visit proved all in vain. At the time of writing we are eagerly awaiting her arrival in Brisbane and have a full programme arranged for her short visit. At Nambour she will be given a civic reception before the women's meeting and in Brisbane after the women's rally she will be entertained to lunch at Parliament House and taken on a tour of inspection. During the afternoon she will have the opportunity of viewing slides and films of the special work being done amongst aboriginal women and children, for which a donation from the Fellowship of the Least Coin has been sought.

FROM THE MAIL BAG - Recently I heard from one of the delegates to the Asian Church Women's Conference, Mrs. Vilma Dube from Trinidad. Almost a year ago she and her family moved to British Columbia, Canada. She writes, "My husband works in a clinic along with about ten other doctors. It's very different from practice in a tropical under-developed country, but it has its challenges. Our children, Ian 16, Joy 14 and Mark 12, have settled well in their various schools and feel fully accepted. It's been a pleasant surprise to find that the United Church minister here is the son of a missionary who spent some years in Trinidad as the Principal of the Theological College. She goes on to speak of the Women's World Day of Prayer services and the local church activities where she shares in a 'team' ministry. The team ministry is a structure made up of the ordained ministers and volunteers from the congregation. The lay volunteers share with the ordained clergy in the spiritual oversight of the congregation and serve for two years. Their acceptance of the team is marked by an official recognition by the Presbytery and is almost as serious as an ordination service, - with vows and congregation responses, etc. "I am one of the lay members on our team and have been finding it a very rewarding service." She says, "Shanti Solomon visited us in Trinidad and helped to launch our infant ecumenical movement of women. She was accompanied by Akhtar Azadegan of Teheran, and they certainly proved a great inspiration to the women of Trinidad."

This week I had a note from Mrs. Ang Kim Kiat whom I saw on my way through Singapore. She is a member of the Working Committee of the Asian Church Women's Conference. She sends greetings to Australian Church Women - 'my fellow-workers', she calls us.

From Mrs. Wilson in Perth come two news items -

During June, Perth had a visit from Miss Gladys Ambat of the Y.W.C.A. of Madras. In speaking at a luncheon to a large and representative group of women, she made them aware of the involvement of the Madras Y.W.C.A. in the whole community; not only among the hungry and poorly housed but also in providing suitable accommodation for professional women, in a community where women are playing an increasing role. There is considerable co-operation with the Y.M.C.A. It is interesting to note that the membership comprises only 25% Christians.

The Anglican Church has recently opened the Wallaston Conference Centre at Mt. Claremont, where accommodation and excellent facilities for conferences are offered. The annual Conference of the W.A. Council of Churches was held there in May and members appreciated the lovely surroundings with easy access from the city and suburbs.

SYMPATHY - Sincere sympathy is expressed to Mrs. Dorothy Pederick whose husband died recently. Mrs. Pederick attended our annual meetings during her term as President of the Australasian Federation of Methodist Women.

INTRIGUING TITLE FOR NEWSLETTER ARTICLE - An article in the August Newsletter of the World Federation of Methodist Women (Editor - Jean Skuse) appears under the title, "Jesus was a Feminist"! Leonard Swidler wrote the article in which he says, "The Gospels give no evidence of Jesus ever treating women as inferior to men. When the restricted state of women in the Palestinian Judaism of that time is recalled, even this mere absence of a male superiority attitude is extraordinary." He enumerated several prohibitions and oppressive customs which Jesus publicly rejected; but probably his argument is most dramatically supported in this observation: "Jesus strove to communicate the notion of the equal dignity of women in many different ways. Once, in response to a challenge, he related three parables in a row, all of which contained an image of God. The first story was of the shepherd who left the 99 sheep to seek the one lost - the shepherd is God. The third was of the prodigal son - the father is God. The second story was of the woman who sought the lost coin - the woman is God. It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus vigorously promoted the dignity and quality of women in the midst of a very male-dominated society!" Jesus was a feminist, that is, He promoted the equality of women with men; He treated women primarily as human persons and willingly contravened social customs in so acting. "Jesus was a feminist, and a radical one. Can His followers attempt to be anything less?"

FROM MY NOTEBOOK - God knows no strangers,
He loves us all.
The poor, the rich,
The great, the small ...
He is a friend
Who is always there
To share our troubles
And lessen our care ...
No one is a stranger
In God's sight,

For GOD IS LOVE
And in His light
May we, too, try
In our small way
To make new friends
From day to day
So pass no stranger
With an unseeing eye,
For God may be sending
A new friend by. - Helen Steiner Rice.

MORE OF DEACONESS MARY in NEW YORK -

Last month we ended in mid-sentence at the Diakonia Meetings held in the Riverside Church with an admonition from the Bible Study leader, Dr. Bill Webber, to the group to be significant "drops" in their particular buckets! To continue ...

"The Church of Tomorrow calls for change in structions, but the basic elements of praise, prayer, worship, witness remain constant. I was elected to a Sub Committee to consider the future of the International Federation of Deaconesses, which produced an interesting report. I was also elected an alternate on the small Executive Committee of the Federation, and asked to serve in a small group to study Deaconess Orders and Communities, which is expected will meet in England next year. So I left the Conference with added responsibilities, which also bring privileges.

The Festival Service to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Diakonia was held in St. John the Divine Cathedral in New York, the second largest Cathedral in the world. The service was attended by the President of the World Council of Churches, the President of National Council of Churches, Dr. Cynthia Weddel, who was also a former President of C.W.U., Dr. Margaret Shannon, the Director of the World Day of Prayer, and many other important people.

Miss Theresa Hoover, the Director of Methodist Overseas Mission, the Women's Department, gave what Dr. George Webber, the President of Union Seminary described as a "brilliant address" on enjoying the freedom of the Spirit in our life and witness.

It was a great thrill for me to read the Epistle 1 Peter 5:6-11 at the inspiring service. The verse 10, "But after you have suffered for a little while the God of all grace, who calls you to share His eternal glory in union with Christ, will Himself perfect you, and give you firmness, strength and a sure foundation. To Him be the power forever", will always remind me of that wonderful experience.

After the Diakonia Conference I stayed for two nights at Episcopal Centre near United Nations in New York. While there I was invited to have dinner at the Colony Club in Fifth Avenue with Mrs. Alexander Wiley, the Co-Director of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer. We talked for three hours about the Fellowship of Prayer. On my return to the Centre there was a message for me to ring Mrs. Eleanor Searle Whitney, the former wife of the multi-millionaire, Vanderbilt Whitney. What a thrill it was to talk with that amazing Christian woman who had just returned from Dallas and was on her way to a function in Washington. She has written her Autobiography, "Invitation to Joy". She wears a butterfly brooch, which she has found has been the means of introducing her to many people whom she has later introduced to Christ. (Mrs. Whitney has sponsored the issue of what is called the "Net" Good News for Modern Man' Edition, which has aids to Bible reading at the front and back of it.) She may one day come to Australia - what a thrill it would be to have her here. From New York I went to Boston - I preached at St. James Anglican Church in Groveland, then went to tea with Bishop and Mrs. Burgess in Boston. He is the first black bishop to be given charge of a Diocese. They are wonderful people radiating joy and serenity (formerly of China). The Dean of Gordon Conwell Seminary in Massachusetts took me to their home in Danvers for the last two days. Dr. Babbage was the former Dean of St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney, so we had much to talk about. -- In my office there now hangs a bright coloured poster from New York, which says -

"LIVE IN THE GLADNESS OF TODAY".

- Finis.