

Australian Church Women National Life Member



Mrs Mabel Gertrude Wyllie NSW - 1973

Chairman of the Interim Committee which the Australian Council of Churches invited to bring a proposal for the formation of a co-ordinating body to bring together the leaders of the different women's denominational groups in the Australian Church.

Mrs Wyllie was the first President of ACW under the Constitution which was accepted by the ACC and she showed great skill and enthusiasm as the aims and constitution were prepared and basically these have remained unchanged.

Later Mrs Wyllie became the archivist for ACW.

Mrs Wyllie was born on May 8th, 1907 in Adelaide. Her maiden name was Jenkins.

Education: 1928 BA [Adelaide]
 1931 Dip Ed [Melbourne]
 1951 MA [Sydney]
 1965 – 72 Lecturer in Social Anthropology of Australian School of Pacific Administration

Denomination: Methodist

In 1931 married Rev B.R. Wyllie – 53 years of happiness.

1933 - 34 Swan Street Church, Hobart.

1934 -39 Hamilton, Victoria.

1939- 43 Yarra Street, Geelong.

1943-64 - Wesley College – University of Sydney.

Membership:

Member of Methodist Overseas Mission Board. Assisted in training of missionaries.

President of Women's Auxiliary to Overseas Mission.

Representative of Methodist Church of Australia to World Council of Churches Assembly in 1961 – New Delhi. Elected to the Central Committee of WCC 1961-68. A member of WCC Committee on Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society. A member of WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism.

Why the ACW? Mrs Wyllie wrote:

"My training and experience had encouraged my enthusiasm for the Ecumenical Movement – an enthusiasm shared with my husband. I heard him say many times – 'Ecumenism is not an optional extra, it is at the heart of the Gospel – that they may all be one.'

AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN [NSW State Unit]

Mrs Mabel Wyllie, First President of Australian Church Women

On 12th June 1995 the death occurred of Mabel Wyllie. She was 88 years of age. Her home had been in Canberra for eight years, but prior to that, she lived in Sydney.

A Service of Thanksgiving for her life and witness was held in the Wesley College Chapel, University of Sydney on 28th June. For many years her life had been centered in the life of Wesley College, where her late husband Rev. Bertram Wyllie was the Master.

Many tributes were paid to Mabel Wyllie at this service, not the least being the attendance of a large number of people. Australian Church Women were represented and her association with the ACW was referred to.

We would like to make our tribute to this founding Mother of ACW.

At the time when the Australian Council of Churches Secretary, Rev Harvey Perkins was looking for someone to initiate moves to create a national body for church women, he approached Mabel Wyllie and gave her the commission to 'do something'. Unbeknown to her, NSW State Unit had already made representation to sister Units in other States asking for their reaction to the idea of a National Committee for Australian Church Women. The fortunate meeting of Mabel Wyllie with Marjorie Verco resulted in the eventual forming of ACW National Committee, the first executive was drawn from NSW members. Mabel Wyllie was appointed the President and served her term with distinction.

Life Membership was conferred on the remaining members of the first Committee in 1973 and in 1987 Life Member badges were presented to Mabel Wyllie, Marjorie Verco and Deaconess Mary Andrews.

Mabel Wyllie was a woman who understood the importance of keeping the records of an organization safe for future generations. She set up the filing cabinet of records of ACW National, thus beginning the Archives of that body. Many interesting and important books and documents [including letters in her own writing from Rev Winifred Kiek] have thus been saved for us and those who will come after us.

Members of NSW Unit are proud to record our tribute to a fine lady to whom the whole organization is indebted for her leadership and vision.

“Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord.”

Edith Ridge
Archivist for the National Committee

Vale: Mabel Gertrude Wyllie Foundation National President Australian Church Women

The long and illustrious life of Mabel Wyllie drew to a close in Canberra on 12th June, 1995. Mabel was born in Adelaide on 8th May, 1907 – subsequently graduating with BA [Adelaide], Dip Ed [Melbourne] and MA [Sydney].

In 1933 Mabel married Rev Bertram Wyllie. They lived in Tasmania and Victoria before moving to NSW in 1943. Mabel's life centered for many years around Wesley College, University of Sydney, where her husband was Master.

Mabel's many interests included:

1. Membership of Methodist Overseas Mission Board where she assisted in the training of Missionaries.
2. President of Women's Auxiliary to Overseas Mission.
3. Representative of Methodist Church of Australia to World Council of Churches Assembly in Delhi [1961]. Elected to the Central Committee of WCC [1961 – 1968]

A member of WCC Commission on World Mission on Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society.

A member of WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism.

1965-72: Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the Australian School of Pacific Administration.

Mabel Wyllie played a significant role in the creation of the National Committee of Australian Church Women. She subsequently became the first National President of Australian Church Women under the constitution accepted by the ACC, serving her term in office with vision and skilled leadership.

Mabel was instrumental in setting up the archival system of ACW National Records, understanding the importance of keeping safe organizational records for future generations. Mabel later became the archivist for ACW.

An excerpt from the entry on Mabel Wyllie in the ACW Bursary book records that when asked “Why the ACW?” Mabel responded “My training and experience had encouraged my enthusiasm for the Ecumenical

Movement – an enthusiasm shared with my husband. I heard him say many times – ‘Ecumenism is not an optional extra, it is at the heart of the gospel – that they may all be one’ “. Mabel wrote that she was inspired by the meetings of the Central Committee of WCC where she got to know people from other Christian Churches and other countries. She wrote “ I wanted more Australian women to share in this ecumenical adventure”.

After attending a Conference of Church Women United in USA Mabel was convinced that the life of women in the churches of Australia could be enriched in a similar ecumenical organization.

Life membership was conferred upon Mabel in 1987, in recognition of her outstanding contribution to Australian Church Women.

How fortunate are the members of Australian Church Women, past, present and future, to have had as their first National President a woman of the calibre of Mabel Wyllie. The example of her vision and leadership will endure forever.

May she rest in perfect peace!

Evonne Sullivan
National President 1995-97

Aknowledgements:

Material for this tribute was taken from the ACW Bursary Book and from notes provided by Edith Ridge [National Archivist]. I express my appreciation of same.