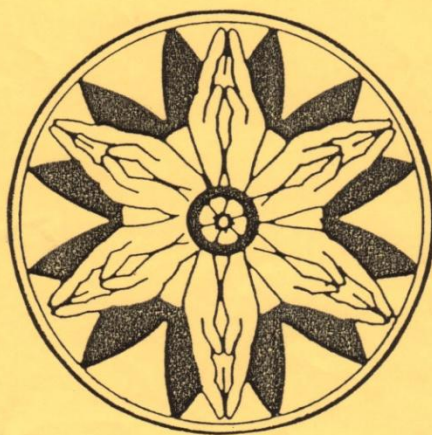


A SEARCH
for
RECONCILIATION



Fellowship of the Least Coin is unique gift of God given to Christian women of the whole world. There is a profound strength in prayer supported by the small offerings of least coins to be shared with the needy and the suffering.

Participants in FLC use this prayer when they present their offerings of least coin to God.

O Loving Creator,

*we present ourselves in your
divine presence to thank you
for all the bountiful gifts of life.
We are especially grateful for the*

Fellowship of the Least Coin

*which binds us together in
love and forgiveness around the globe.*

*Free us from all doubts and prejudice,
we pray, inspire us to live in solidarity
with humankind that we,
may know the joy of giving and receiving.*

Dear God, accept this least coin

"token of love"

*Make us mindful of the miracles of
these coins. Let us honour your creation
with love, as shown through the
life and resurrection of
your Son, Jesus the Christ.*

Amen

The idea to give a least coin to the international fund to help in international projects with concern and prayers came out of the visit of the Pacific Fellowship Mission Team.

TRAVELLING IN TESTIMONY



Amy Carl



Marion Wittie



Ellen Lang



Shanti Solomon



Teneko Ohashi



Margaret Shannon

This was organized by Presbyterian women of USA under the leadership of Margaret Shannon in 1956.



Presbyterian women who sponsored "goodwill Team" in 1956.

The purpose of the visit was to bring the message of peace and reconciliation to those who were hurt as the effects of the second world war in Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Philippines and Thailand. Unfortunately Mrs. Shanti Solomon was refused entry visa in Korea. She stayed back in Manila, Philippines and conceived the idea for Least Coin Fellowship. A crisis and misery of the experience of separation brought the vision for wider unity among Christian women.

At Kamakura, Japan, 24th, October 1956



The team members met with a selected group of women representing many Churches for Bible Studies. Mrs. Shanti Solomon talked to the group and said "Friends, it is a wonderful thing to come here and meet face to face, knowing we are already one in a world of Christian fellowship. I have been wondering if there is not a way to continue this warm fellowship we feel when several nationalities are together. I had thought of an international project in which the Christian women of Asia could combine our efforts - and invite the women of America, too, if they cared to join us on the same level."

"While I was in the Philippines we thought out this plan: each woman would set aside the least coin of her country each month. As she did it, she would pray for all the Christian women everywhere. Then at the end of the year she would send in her twelve coins in whatever way her women's organization planned. Together they would go into one fund with the least coins of all the other women. We say 'least coin' because we want to keep it so that every woman - the simple villager in my country or the richest woman in yours - would be participating on exactly the same level."

The participation and covenant of fellowship and prayer were the important factors. Mrs. Shanti Solomon was inspired by the richness of fellowship with women of the team. Her vision to give a least coin towards the international fund was in response of experience of her own country India, where some women before cooking their food put a handful of rice or wheat flour to be given as an offering of thankfulness to God. She shared her vision with the members of the team. They immediately accepted her invitation to share in her vision. They happily pledged their cooperation and stewardship for international fund. Presbyterian women of USA accepted the idea and took the responsibility to promote it in their country. The idea of FLC from the beginning was to empower women in their perspectives for the programme of christian outreach on the global scene.

Abandoned Brazilian mothers and their children, living temporarily at Casa da Mamee, in Sao Paulo, a temporary refuge for these women and their children. Seed funding by Fellowship of the Least Coin. (1989)





Women's sewing and knitting project Yazdich, Syria. (1990)



*"Women's Refuge and Training Centre" - Popondetta
Papua New Guinea*

The years in early fifties were of great importance for Asia. Most of the countries were getting independence, the Asian Church was also facing the challenge for selfhood. This gave way and vision to Asian Church to find strength in ecumenical Church.

In 1962, 1st meeting of Consultation of Men & Women in Home Church & Society - at Petburi, Thailand.



Women in Church found the awakening as well. Presbyterian women of the United States supported Asian women to develop in leadership and in their vision to come out from the denominational prejudice and be united in ecumenical women's organization. In early 1958 Presbyterian women of USA organized a meeting of Asian women to meet in Stony Point in United States. During the meeting the idea to start an organization became very clear when Felicia Sunderlal from India made the suggestion that it will be wonderful if Asian women could organize themselves. Luckily it resulted in calling a meeting of Asian women in Hong Kong in 1958. Ms. Rayann Ma from Hong Kong presided the first meeting of Asian Church Women's Conference. Presbyterian women of USA supported this idea and helped Asian women so that dream could be a reality.



First ACWC meeting in Hong Kong, 1958.

Mrs. Shanti Solomon in her first letter of November 20th, 1956 wrote, to those who showed willingness to share in her vision. She informed them that she found support of Asia Council of Ecumenical Mission who had their office in Thailand to take care of the funds collected by the contributions of FLC. The idea was to have a global community to share in concerns, to be a supportive community. The idea was not to create a fund raising community or a donor agency.

Asian Church Women's Conference (ACWC), was part of East Asia Christian Conference at that time. ACWC members accepted to take part in FLC and invited women from different parts of the world to join them. ACWC at their second conference agreed to be the stewards of the Fellowship of the Least Coin, interpreting and promoting the idea for FLC; while the East Asia Christian Conference (now Christian Conference of Asia) administered the funds. The first offerings were given by Filipino women in 1957.



First FLC offering brought by Philippine women.

The first grant was given to an orphanage in Korea in 1959.

In November 1963, Mrs. Jannuan Suriyakham the chairman of the Planning Committee for 1966 Asian Church Women's Conference wrote in her letter "we felt that God was calling us into the Fellowship of the Least Coin which we considered to be one of the most strikingly unique projects in the ecumenical movement today. We felt that God was telling the christian women of Asia to seek the participation of more countries and of more churches in this fellowship."

3rd Assembly of Asian Church Women's Conference in 1966, at International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan.



Madeline Barot the staff of WCC Committee on Cooperation of Men and Women was very enthusiastic about this idea of FLC. She tried to help the Asian women to continue the indigenous process and felt it would be wrong to pull it into WCC because doing this it would loose its Asian flavour. Dr. D.T Niles then the Gen. Sec. of EACC took a great lead in attempting to make it world-wide both in its concerns, its initiatives and administration. In 1962 at the second conference of Asian Church Women's Conference a world committee was envisioned to be set up with the help of WCC committee on Cooperation of Men and Women with the Planning Committee of ACWC as the Central Committee for FLC.

There was an understanding from the beginning that there will be an allocation from FLC fund of US\$5,000.00 a year for the chairman and secretary of ACWC for programme and committee expenses and US\$5,000.00 a year for the operating budget of ACWC. This US\$5,000.00 will be treated as a reserve to be built up over the four years period and be used to finance ACWC quadrennial Assembly. Along the years this vision was interpreted differently and the resources collected by the contributions of the women from different countries were only given out by ACWC and EACC.

In 1970 Ms. Margaret Shannon became the Gen. Director of Church Women United, she encouraged CWU to become another channel of interpretation and channelling funds for the Fellowship of the least Coin, thus making it an ecumenical participation in the USA. The first contribution from Church Women United came to Geneva in 1970.

FLC helps women of different cultures, social thinking, and denominational background to grow in Christian faith together. FLC strengthens women in their relationships.

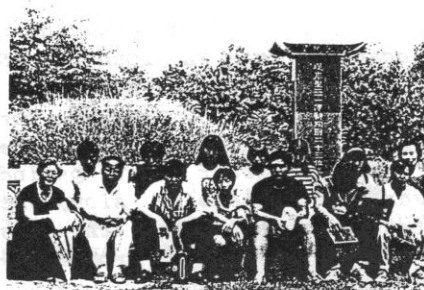
FLC works to empowers women to bring healing, restoration and rehabilitation. It brings hope to them.

FLC makes the participants sensitive to the suffering of others. It reminds them of their responsibility as followers of Christ to love their neighbour. It brings hope to the participants at the same time encourages them to work for hope for the victims of injustice, violence, anger and hatred. It helps the participants to share with others the message of peace and reconciled life with God as well as with their fellow human beings.

Bethune House Refuge Centre for displaced women migrant workers. Some of the client took time out to pose for some pictures in the living and client's room. They seem to be happy but deep inside, they are affected by the problems confronting them. (1991)



One of the members of this team Byong-Yoi has reported that the biggest problem he faces with his Korean name is that he is waiting for the time to come for making the decision to change his name from Japanese to Korean. (1991)



In FLC we find the importance of international stewardship. FLC has two aspects, It consists of two processes; Praying and involving in the prayerful actions. It is continued to be expressed by people in two ways, giving and receiving. The offerings presented by women in different countries are collected and sent to Geneva each year.

International Committee for the Fellowship of the Least Coin Meets once a year.

In 1993, Half of the International Committee for Fellowship of the Least Coin met in Papeete, Tahiti.



This committee is representative body from nine regions of the world and two world bodies of women, World Day of Prayer, and Women's Desk WCC.

The contributions which are collected each year are given to different projects of women and children. ICFLC makes decision for the project grants, block grants and emergency grants to be given for the coming year. The administration grant is also taken out from the contributions collected in Geneva. Funds are not accumulated for the next year. The grants are granted in hope and faith that drop by drop money will come from women of the world and will be sent back to women who are in need.

In 1993, Doyj Production & Training Centre, Bangladesh.



Throughout the years it has been experienced that always money came which was sufficient to send out approved grants. The grants are given to women's groups for awareness - building, education and conscience-raising. The policy for grants depends on the realities of time and situation. FLC grants are mostly given to those projects of women who take initiatives at grassroots level and try to make projects so women of the small income can be helped. It is also to create confidence in women. It encourages them to take part in planning and decision making like income generating projects. The grants are usually non-recurring and not to exceed US\$6,000.00.

Rayann Ma the first chairperson of ACWC had a great desire to strengthen the participation of women in FLC. She introduced a devotional booklet called 'Circle of Prayer' with a devotional thought of each month. This idea was accepted by ACWC and women of other countries who decided to join FLC. The meditations were contributed by women of different countries, the first volume of 'Circle of Prayer' was prepared by World Church Committee Women's Association Hong Kong Council of Church in China in November, 1959.

'Circle of Prayer' Vol.1



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"The measure of our concern for unity is the degree to which we pray for it. We cannot expect God to give us unity unless we prepare ourselves to receive His Gift by costly and purifying prayer. To pray together is to be drawn together."

Mrs. Shanti Solomon
INDIA



The Founder of FLC

ICFLC continues publishing 'Circle of Prayer' every alternate year. Vol.13 is being printed by the women from All Africa Conference of Churches, Nairobi, Kenya. The theme for vol.13 is 'PARTNERSHIP IN A CHANGING WORLD'. It will be soon ready for use. Theme for vol.14 will be 'CHRIST: OUR VISION AND HOPE'. The process for writing articles for vol.14 has been started.

The symbol of FLC



The idea for symbol of FLC came from Mrs. Raynn Ma, the actual design was the gift of her brother -in-law, James Raynn Ma, a commercial artist. The special gift of FLC symbol was from the women of Hong Kong to the Fellowship of the Least Coin. At first glance it suggests a beautiful flower within a circle. The circle represents the whole world, and the hands folded in prayer belong to each woman sharing in dedication, concern and the ministry of the Least Coin. The beautiful flower in the circle in one way resembles a flower for its significance and spirit gives off a beautiful fragrance- the sweet scent of love, human and divine; of trust. The design of the symbol was first used on the cover of the first volume of 'Circle of Prayer'.

The idea of FLC remained alive with the women who committed themselves to demonstrate God's love and concern for His people in times of distress and calamity. The Silver Jubilee was celebrated in the end of 1980 at the El Grade Hotel in Metro Manila, Philippines. It was a time of great rejoicing and thanking God for His blessings on FLC. It was also an occasion to look back and assess accomplishments in terms of its aims and objectives and to plan for the future with hope.

FLC is growing and maturing. Its inclusive character is appreciated. There are about thirty five countries where women regularly take part and send their contributions to Geneva. Each year about 35 to 50 projects are given grants.

Presently challenge stands that we find the foundation of FLC in the message of the Gospel. It has the invitation to work for peace, justice and reconciliation relating to human life in a world which is economically imbalanced and threatened by internal and external forces.

Its inclusive nature demands that the participants continue making the message of FLC available to people emphasizing the need of prayer, unity of the purpose and action, blessings of faith and God's power of miracles and importance of international stewardship. It is to demonstrate that God is present in our realities and He works through us to bring peace and justice in this world.

RESOURCES

1. Minutes of ACWC, EACC and ICFLC from 1962 - 1993.
2. Silver Jubilee Book.
3. Letters of Ms. Margaret Shannon, Mrs. Shanti Solomon, Mrs. Rayann Ma and Mrs. Jannuan Suriyakham.
4. 'Circle of Prayer' Vol.1.

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