

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT THE YEAR 1996

INTRODUCTION

I feel honored promoting FLC as it enters its fortieth year. I present my report with great joy and gratitude to God for sustenance of FLC -- especially realizing the extensive acceptance and growth of FLC in these last forty years. At such an occasion I find it necessary to thank on behalf of a large number of people the founder and the team of people who nurtured it. I thank God for providing God's guidance, companionship and wisdom to me and to several others to carry the responsibility of the promotion of FLC.

BIBLICAL AND FLC EXPERIENCE OF FORTY YEARS

In Biblical experience forty is an important figure: Jesus remained in the wilderness for forty days encountering temptation as a human but overcoming with a divine power and strength; Israelites spent forty years to reach the promised land; It rained for forty days and God promised not to destroy God's people with rains. These biblical experiences for those who experienced were not very delightful; however, each time we read them, they enrich our lives.

What does this mean for us in this present context of the fortieth year of the Fellowship of the Least Coin? For me it is satisfying that FLC has remained an inclusive movement. Due to FLC's emphasis on small giving, it is still continuing for forty years with the same vigor and excitement. It continues to remind me that greed for excessive riches, popularity, possessions and positions, keeps one away from God as well as from our fellow human beings. Perhaps, like the Biblical stories, our fortieth year in movement has brought us to the point where we are convened for the first time in accordance with the constitution and are being presided by our elected Chairperson. It is a delightful experience that this is happening at the time of the 40th Anniversary celebrations of FLC.

ON THE ROAD

FLC has gone through various experiences of organizational structures. It was steered under the umbrella of organizations which provided stability and a definite form; and supported its expansion and increase. We pay tribute to them for their support, and honor their intentions and efforts.

We offer our enormous gratitude to them. At this point we also thank those who under difficult circumstances did not surrender to make it an organization. They remained clear in their vision -- for its uniqueness -- to let it exist as a movement. They emphasized the ecumenicity of the movement which occasions a great challenge for FLC to respect the diversities of race, culture, denomination and location.

PRAYING AND MOVING AHEAD

Throughout these forty years Prayer and intercessory concerns have played the most fundamental role in FLC. I believe this is the concealed truth of FLC. It renders strength to people. It uplifts them in their spirituality. Most of all it is connecting rich and poor, educated and uneducated and people in most modern settings and most remote and underprivileged areas. It leaves us with the challenge to promote Prayer and prayerful giving in the present world which is drying up of these very resources.

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Worship service for the fortieth year with the theme: "Come - Celebrate, Rejoice and Pray" is playing the most reviving role. Through litany and reflections in the worship people are re-learning the history of FLC. Prayers from all the regions are exposing the different concerns of people as they are brought to God.

This worship service was printed and sent out to many individuals, organizations and to ICFLC members. I thank those who informed me about their fortieth celebrations and sent the translation of the worship in their language. I am happy to mention their names and the name of their language and display the translations. Maya Michael from Ghaziabad, India---Hindi, Navamani Peter-India--- English, Kimiko Ibaraki--- Japanese, Yun Moon Ja, Korea---Korean, Susan Chuang, Taiwan--- Chinese, Susan and women in Taiwan arranged for the celebrations on the 14th August and dramatized the story of the beginning of FLC and also how it spread to different countries. She asked for more information, I sent her information immediately. Mervat Girgis, Egypt--- Arabic, Mary Cline Detrick, USA---English, Eileen Holley, Australia--English, Padama Ebenazer, Sri Lanka--- Singla or Tamil, Helga Christine, Germany---German, Shunila Ruth---Pakistan, Urdu, Margaret Taylor--- Scotland, English, Pamela Williamson and Ana Cory---Wales, Welsh, Noemi---Romania, in their local language, W^Dar^Aonut Pant^uapong from Thailand in Thai. Maija Vourinen, Finland, Finⁿish. In Canada the 40th FLC Anniversary Worship Service is being made available to groups across Canada to use for their 1996 Fall Ingathering Service, for the

ingathering of the least coins. On October 11th, 1996 Australian Church Women are having celebrations, Mary Cline Detrick, Dorothea and myself will be participating in their celebrations. We thank them for their invitation We have the translations in English, Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Urdu, Hindi, German, Romanian and Hungarian, Singla, Tamil, Finish, Tegal, Bengali and Welsh. I am sure there will be translations in French and Spanish.

LETTERS AND MESSAGES OF GRATITUDE

Project for the year 1996, Nancy Goodwin from The Girl's Brigade International wrote that they had five courses on Officers' training in Vanuatu-one, Papua New Guinea-three and Solomon Islands-one. They feel satisfied with their efforts to have these courses. They experienced that the most effective strategy is to train small groups of women with leadership ability who can pass on what they learn to those whom they want to train using their own language/terminology. In the past the work has faltered as all leadership and decision making was in the hands of the missionaries so they are unused to being the ones who make the decisions, change the program, and generally run the organization.

Catherine Muhera, Chairlady of Kunzwa Nokuita Soap Making Project from Zimbabwe expressed gratitude for the grant and appreciated the generosity, love and cooperation of FLC to participate in their project through FLC grant.

Rev.Kathryn Johnson from the project "Healing and Justice: Comfort Women Advocacy reported that she sent half of the grant money to Philippines for the use in Philippines as it could not be possible to have the combined project only from the United States. She thanked ICFLC for assisting them in this project.

D.N.Miskell, Major Director from New Zealand thanked for FLC grant. Their project bought books and videos for the library. They send their heartfelt gratitude to the people in the Fellowship of the Least Coin for their kindness and generosity.

Mrs. B.N.P Helen from India wrote that the board of directors and the village partners of the project acknowledged ICFLC grant with gratitude and sent their greetings to the members.

Agnes Conteh, Secretary General from Rogbonoh Agricultural Project from Sierra Leone thanked for the grant which helped them to set up their project at the initial stages. It was encouraging to know that the

community provided the voluntary services. They support FLC with their prayers.

World Alliance of Reformed Churches thanked for the grant. Thirty three participants and two staff members participated in the Consultation held in Delhi

Rev. Ulises E. Sala, President of South Pacific Theological Schools wrote that they are grateful for the support of the Fellowship of the Least Coin for the Weavers Committee program that seeks to encourage women to participate in theological education.

Khaled Elayyan, Director of the program thanked for the grant for Art for Children. They have taken a further step towards establishing a children's club in the centre with regular activities throughout the year.

BLOCK GRANTS

Alexina Murphy, CO-president of Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women thanked for the block grant and wrote that the Forum continues to offer the ICFLC very sincere thanks for unfailing financial support. Their reserves are sufficient for three months survival beyond the current budgeted year. So the confidence that they may apply to the ICFLC for funds year by year gives them moral support for their work beyond the purely financial. She thanked for sisterly solidarity as well as significant financial contributions. They had Coordinating Committee in Greece to have contact with Orthodox women. They also had National Coordinating meeting in Romania encouraging Romanian women as they founded the Romanian Forum branch. They had Seminars in Italy, Tschech Republic, Hungary on non-violence for women from Ex-Yugoslavia. In every Forum meeting the time is taken to promote FLC.

Vivian Harrower, Former Director of Women's Inter-Church Council reported that they used the block grant for Ecumenical Gathering of women in Newfoundland, work on ending violence against women, support for Council member to attend Beijing Conference, for WICC's delegate to ICFLC meeting in Vancouver and local visits by ICFLC members in Canada.

WICC will also update the 'Brochure' of FLC. Fran Bartlett from WICC is working for editing and printing of 'Circle of Prayer' volume 14. ICFLC members are asked to give the information on the forms given to you before you leave here so the distribution and mailing of 'Circle of Prayer' could be smoother. Angeline will be reporting in detail about FLC

activities in Canada. I am thankful to Angeline WICC representative to be impressively vigilant connecting link between ICFLC and WICC.

Susan Chuang, Hon. Treasurer of ACWC reported that they spent 95% for the Executive Secretary's office and 5% for the ICFLC meeting. Iluminada Domingo ACWC Executive Secretary in her letters always shared the news of her promotional activities. She used a lot of materials which I had to send her in emergency. I trust that ACWC supported her promotional trips from the block grant.

WDPIC's Report for use of the block grant was given last year.

Rev. Valamotu Palu thanked for the block grant for 1995 and 1996 which was sent in the beginning of this year.

Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour also wrote a letter of gratitude acknowledging the receipt of block grant.

I am thankful to those who sent the reports of the use of the block grant. This year I sent two forms to make it easier for the recipients to write their report for the year 1995 and send the details to receive the grant. Only two organizations returned the reporting form with report of the utilization of the grant. *Nov 1995*.

FLC BEYOND THE ICFLC OFFICE

I want to share a happy news: Middle East Council of Churches organized a Women's Committee and met for their first meeting in May/June, 1996.

Margaret Taylor from Scotland spoke at 25 different places about FLC. She is encouraged to see that her audience were interested to learn and practice FLC.

At the time of the workshop in Caribbean region WDPIC planned to give time for the promotion of FLC.

EFECW national coordinators met in Berlin in September 1996 and there Maija promoted FLC and distributed materials. I am sure Maija will have more to tell us about this meeting. EFECW had a meeting in Tallinn, Estonia in January 1996, Baltic women showed their interest in FLC and volunteered to promote. Maija was happy to report that she found a new contact in Austria. Last year on my visit to Romania I met Dr. Irma from Austria. She kept in touch with me and asked me to write an article for WDP Austria magazine. I am happy to report that it was printed. What

the result will be, we leave it in the hands of God. I am grateful for the efforts of Maija for the promotional work of FLC in the region of Europe.

Soos Noemi from Romania wrote that they will have FLC 40th Anniversary celebrations in 30 regions of her country.

This gives us an opportunity to thank God and appreciate the efforts of our sisters in the region of Africa. Dr. Christine Sadia from the Women's Desk All Africa Conference of Churches wrote to me that they have started massive awareness campaign and sensitization for women to join FLC. The publicity materials have gone out together with guidelines for celebrations marking the 40th Anniversary of the FLC.

I am happy to report that countries in Africa such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Uganda organized for the FLC and they collected their contributions. They need assistance in the matter that their contribution is acknowledged and collected in a place which could be used for others.

FLC promotional article is given a very significant place in the News Bulletin of each issue of Asian Church Women's Conference throughout the year. It is widely circulated in Asia and beyond Asia.

Eva Findlay Honorary Treasurer of ICFLC visited ^{many} ~~few~~ women's groups in other cities beside Christchurch promoting FLC.

Audrey Vallance National Convenor of FLC from New Zealand wrote in her annual report that contributions from over 200 groups throughout the country are received. In practicing FLC they go through the experience of caring for others. The membership was lessening due to the aging but it is encouraging to know that new groups are forming. A Newsletter is published yearly and sent to all supporters. In the Newsletter information on the allocations is provided and also information relating to FLC is shared. Copies of "Circle of Prayer" on 40th Anniversary are made available to people. The Annual Service for this year's Asian Church Women's Conference/Fellowship of the Lest Coin is to be held on Friday 1st November 1996 at the St. Albans Methodist Church, cnr. Rugby Street and Papanui Road, All participating groups and visitors are invited to this service. The participants in FLC in New Zealand remember with pride the founders, pioneers and many others who over the 40 years have given so willingly of their prayers, time and money; so many lives are transformed and changed for the better.

Major Eileen Holley, FLC Convenor for Australia asked for the FLC materials which are used throughout the country.

I received a few letters of women from Latin America after the visit of Angeline Hesje. They feel encouraged that Angeline visited them on behalf of ICFLC. They are better informed about FLC specifically about the procedure of applying for FLC grant. We will have an opportunity to hear Angeline's report. We are grateful indeed to Angeline to make her trip impressionable, for which she made special preparations to represent ICFLC in a most meaningful and appealing way. We bind profound hopes with her visit that it has cultivated relationships for desired reception of FLC in Latin America.

Mary Cline spoke in several places in the United States promoting FLC.

Women's Desk, World Council of Churches is organizing Decade Festival prior to the WCC Assembly in Harare, Dorothea at the occasion of her report will share with us more details about the Festival.

Waronut Pantapong spoke in several places about FLC in Thailand and outside Thailand. Most of the materials of FLC is translated in their local language to reach to women at the grassroots level.

Mrs. Marvin Keisler from United States wrote that after my visit to a group of Church Women United in San Francisco, their interest in FLC is revived and they are always happy to receive information and materials.

CONTRIBUTIONS MAKING PROJECTS HAPPEN

Before I start talking about other aspects of contributions and projects, I take the opportunity to thank Mme. Elizabeth Griggs for keeping me informed about FLC Funds every month and sending out grants immediately after she receives authorization from the Executive Secretary and the Treasurer. Things moved smoothly on time avoiding any delay. I also appreciate the help of Dorothea Dilschneider for sending me the required information.

Though FLC is a movement, a movement does not need a proper rigid structure but for its growth and extension more than a structure is needed, that is constant promotion. Unless it is part of a structure we remain forgetting to promote it. My hope is that all the organizations which are attached constitutionally to ICFLC will make FLC as their project and will take responsibility to promote it to the countries in their regions to connect with FLC on continuous basis.

Prayers, contributions and projects provide spine to the movement of the Fellowship of the Least Coin. It can not survive and sustain if one of these aspects is weaker than the other. All these have to be treated with same

care, effort and commitment. If one is neglected, it may create a danger for its collapse.

There are few fundamental realities for which we need to be reminded. Some of us are learning that the real essence of the 'least coin' did not get through the people correctly. In some situations it has been misleading that FLC is only a grant giving movement, ignoring the real essence of the movement that it starts with a concern for others for prayer.

There are projects which apply for the grant. They only know of FLC as grant giving but how the money is collected to give grants is not their interest to know.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

1. After going through the statement of 1995 and 1996 of FLC income and expenditure, My observations are:
 - a. The number of givers has increased
 - b. The number of the projects is incredibly greater.
 - c.. The contributions are in less numbers.
 - d. The quantity of project grants are much more than the contributions received.

2. There is another reality which to me is much complex, but, I feel that we should face it with courage and confidence, trusting God that God remains with us in the changing situations, guiding us and empowering us to be God's instruments for the glory of God's name. The reality is that 'coin' in many countries is not in circulation. Upon my coming back to Pakistan a year ago, I found it to my surprise that all transactions were being made in paper money. At the road side some years ago we used to see beggars sitting with coins around them which the passers by dropped for them. In the Mosques we always found a place where people left coins for the poor, but, now you see paper money. Children will not take coins to buy sweets, instead they would demand 2 to 5 rupees. The question is what do you tell the people to give. This situation is not peculiar to Pakistan; it is perhaps the same in some other countries. The difficulty for me is, do I continue telling them to give 'least coin' when it is not found there or are there any other options. I hope that we face this reality and find a suitable alternative so that we do not loose our partners or deprive them of comprehending the real spirit of FLC. This matter needs our attention and discussion and some decision so our partnership in Christian faith found in FLC around the world continues to strengthen and support each other.

3. The collection point for FLC offerings in each region and country has to be more known to people in that region and country. How can this be done? For this we will not have one answer or solution but will differ from region to region and country to country. The representatives on ICFLC will have to go back and discuss this with their own people to find the most suitable way and then share the summary of their discussions with the ICFLC. I know for sure that there are many more who pray and sincerely offer their offerings to be shared with others than they are able to send it to Geneva.

You will recall that I wrote to all the ICFLC members in the beginning of the year about the contributions received from the people in their regions in 1995. I would like to include this in this report also. I wrote letters to the contributors thanking and acknowledging their valuable contributions. List of the contributors for the years 1995 and 1996 is attached.

LINKING PEOPLE - OFFICE ACTIVITIES

Materials were circulated to people in several countries and individuals. Summary of the projects which received grants for the year 1996 were sent to the countries which are actively participating in FLC. Some of them translated the materials to be shared with the women at all the levels in their countries. This works well because women get the information as where their money is used and they also make the concerns in those projects their priority for their prayers. They share in their need and suffering.

Last year I asked for the list of contact persons in the regions; I received from ACWC and Europe. I sent them materials and kept them in contact through letters. I hope I will receive contacts from other regions also.

'Circle of Prayer' Special edition was sent to those who asked for it. Posters showing the participating countries was sent to some, Iluminada used many of them on her promotional trips in Philippines and in other Asian countries.

Application forms were sent to all the ICFLC members, Regional Women's desks and whoever asked for it. It is surprising that the forms are sent to people but most of them try to send their applications through fax or want me to send them the application forms through fax. I want to share with you that it increased the work in the office greatly. Sometimes the information sent is not clear. I would like to ask for your cooperation in this matter that you kindly take application forms now from me for

your region and send them to me in time on the original forms and also encourage people in your regions to do the same.

Shanti Solomon asked me to write two pages on her life which World Alliance of Reformed Churches would like to use for their publication. It was a great privilege for me.

I also wrote an article to be used for WDP magazine in Austria.

Two Bible studies were sent to more than 300 individuals and women's organizations. Some of them translated those and used them in their local churches or communities. I am grateful to Rev. Ms. Navamani Peter to prepare one study.

Along with Eva Findlay I planned for a 'Display' at the time of the Worship Service in Christchurch, I asked women to send articles or any objects with the title 'What Does FLC Mean To Me'. Some supported this idea by sending their articles.

Projects were received and prepared to send out to the ICFLC members before the meeting. The copy you receive is the last step in the preparation for the projects but it includes a tremendous work and correspondence for which I have to make my time available to prepare. I enjoy doing this work for several reasons. Most important reason is that it gives me a feeling that I am involved in their difficulties, problems and sufferings. These concerns become very much a part of prayers and devotions of my family.

The projects each year give sustenance to FLC and provides strength and opportunity to recommit ourselves. They also give the realization that God is great and God of miracles never fails FLC to continue its commitment and interest in working for others. We the participants in FLC around the world feel strengthened in our faith that God accepts our offerings and blesses them to be multiplied. FLC helps us to get out of our own world of worries, tensions and anxieties and see through where God and people have been kind to us to provide positive situations for us. It is not that FLC helps us to pray and give offerings only but it makes us sensitive to the situations where there are injustices, hunger, poverty, oppression and suppression and several other kind of miseries. There is always a 'Big Question', as when will the day dawn, when there will be peace and justice and we human beings will learn to live in harmony with our fellow human beings and abide in obedience with God.

I was invited by World Council of Churches to be part of a meeting organized by Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Unit III in Geneva in

the beginning of April, 1996. We were a small group represented by three organizations and four five staff members. The main emphasis was on how the local churches may have jubilee communities stressing the need for taking responsibilities for each other in communities. Through my experience of FLC which is a movement of people at all levels and my exposure to several communities in my own country and outside my own, I shared many illustrations of sharing resources of different kinds which brought very positive and faith strengthening results. I shared the materials of FLC with the participants. They all appreciated what FLC does for people.

I spoke in several places about FLC in my own country and city and distributed FLC materials.

Regular activities in the office continued such as correspondence which is most fundamental to connect with people and keep the contact of FLC fresh and approach new groups and individuals to challenge them with the message of FLC.

New materials were printed and sent out to different groups. A packet of three FLC boxes with prayer card and book mark were sent to 100 people with intention that the recipient will keep one and give to two other people. Few people wrote back appreciating receiving them.

WORDS OF GRATITUDE

On behalf of the ICFLC I would like to thank the women in Canada for making visitation programme possible for the ICFLC members; it was indeed an enriching experience. Also, I wish to thank our kind and generous hostesses in New Zealand who are sharing their love and extending their tender care to make our stay pleasant and fruitful. We appreciate their hard work and untiring efforts to host this meeting. We look forward to be enriched by their fellowship and learn from their experiences. Our special thanks to Judy and Eva for working for all this year to make our meeting a reality.

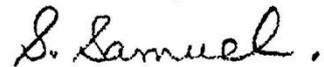
I found the support, counsel and cooperation of Mary and Eva always available to continue my responsibilities. Their kind attention and understanding to my needs kept my energies and commitment fresh. My family and the office staff rendered help in every way for completing the work. Your letters and messages of encouragement and appreciation strengthened me to give my best for the work of FLC.

I praise and thank God for faith and labor of love, you and a great number of women around the world express for the FLC. I conclude my

report thanking God for bountiful mercies of good health and other enormous resources which remained my companion throughout the year. My earnest prayer and fervent hope is that FLC may live long to remind us to abide in Jesus Christ by devoting ourselves to prayer and making offerings to be shared with others.

Thank you

Submitted by

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S. Samuel".

Shirin Samuel

Executive Secretary ICFLC

September/October, 1996.