

No.5

December, 1970

AUSTRALIAN
WOMEN

CHURCH

WOMEN AT WORK

From Joan G. Coates

This is a Hail and Farewell sort of Newsletter, because it is my first since returning from a round-the-world tour with my husband, and my last as your Publicity Officer, as the Working Committee in Melbourne moves next year to Brisbane.

I would like to pass on to you a few highlights of my trip, but first this message from our sponsors, sorry I mean first these reports from the Working Committee.

ZAMBIA

The Winifred Kiek Scholarship for 1971 has been awarded to Miss Violet Sampa. Altogether seventeen applications were received for this Scholarship from places as far apart as Sierra Leone, Nauru, West Cameroon, Samoa, South India, Singapore, Ellice Island, Tonga, Ghana, Kenya and Indonesia. Selection was difficult as many of these young women were strong candidates. Miss Sampa is the youngest of the applicants, 20 years of age, and in training as a minister of religion to serve the women of Zambia, in the United Church of Zambia. She is the first Zambian woman candidate for the ministry. She speaks English and Bemba and is studying Greek. Her programme of theological studies will be based in Brisbane but it is hoped that she will have an opportunity to visit Church women's groups in other states, as earlier scholarship holders have done. The suggestion of the Working Committee is that she visit Sydney and Canberra in the May vacation, Queensland in August and Victoria, Tasmania, S.A. and W.A. after the academic year ends in October.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE

National Committee meets again in Sydney in February of next year from Tuesday, 9th February to Friday, 12th February, 1971 at Deaconess House, Carillon Avenue, Newtown.

Open sessions will be held on Wednesday, 10th February, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. (after the evening meeting I am to show slides of recent visits to aid and development projects). Thursday, 11th February, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Co-operation of Men and Women on some aspects of Science and Marriage, and 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. If you have a copy of the E.A.C.C. Hymnal please bring it with you to the National Committee.

REQUEST FROM TREASURER

The Treasurer naturally wishes to finalize her books, with all due payments included. If you are holding any money for the National Committee - from Fellowship Day, World Community Day, Fellowship of the Least Coin, A.C.W. pens or notelets - please see that it reaches the Treasurer as soon as possible:

Mrs E. Stephens,
Honorary Treasurer Australian Church Women,
Unit 4,
24 St John's Avenue,
MONT ALBERT, 3127.

VISITS TO PROJECTS FROM ATHENS TO DJAKARTA

As my husband and I were returning from a long-service leave and study tour which had taken us to the United States, England, and Europe, we thought it might be valuable to break our journey at a number of places where we would see the Church at work in projects of aid and development, particularly those with which Australia has a link through its Inter-Church Aid programme (now to be known as World Christian Action).

ATHENS

Mr Walter D. Bell, the Field Representative in Greece of the World Council of Churches, arranged for us to visit an Old People's Home in the suburbs of Athens which is under the joint auspices of the W.C.C., the Y.W.C.A. and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Miss Makre who escorted us was delivering a beautiful radio set from a well wisher to a White Russian couple living in the home. (The husband was stricken with paralysis 15 years ago). You should have seen their happy faces - in fact you can if you come to the National Committee meeting. This home is excellently run with shopping and cooking facilities for those guests who can look after themselves, and space on the balconies to grow flowers. Later that day a Y.W.C.A. worker took me to see the I.C.E.M. (Inter-governmental Committee for European Migration) Training School in another part of Athens. Here I met a group of girls from all parts of Greece but mostly from small villages and islands. These girls are learning English and preparing themselves for the great adventure of migrating to Australia. We had a chance to talk to them (in broken Greek and English) about their new life here. Australia is lucky to be getting such charming girls as migrants. I hope some of you will be able to make them welcome.

24 HOURS IN JERUSALEM

We were able to have one day in Jerusalem, and it turned out to be the day of Nasser's funeral and Jewish New Year, so that both Arabs and Jews were observing a close holiday. However we did have the great privilege of staying in St George's Hostel (attached to the Anglican

Cathedral), and of being invited by the Dean to take part in the early morning Communion Service. We had hoped to see Archbishop Appleton, who was formerly Archbishop of Perth, now of Jerusalem but he was in Cairo for Nasser's funeral as Cairo is part of his archdiocese

In the old city of Jerusalem we went to see the Convent of Our Lady of Sion, where Sister Shirley Sedawie, known to us formerly as Sister Mary Callistus and Sister Antoninus of the W.I.C.C. of Victoria had been stationed at different times. Here an old friend of theirs showed us a grooved pavement which has been excavated under their buildings. The sisters believe that this could have been the very pavement on which Christ stood at the time of his trial. There is even a game scratched in the stones such as Roman soldiers might have played.

We were able to see two of the staff of the Near East Christian Council, who sent us with their driver down the Jericho Road to Bethany. It is an indescribable feeling to walk the streets of old Jerusalem and travel on the roads of Palestine, over the ground that Jesus trod. to the Homes of Mercy, founded by an Arab Orthodox woman and serving the needs of old people, cripples and handicapped children. Here we were met by the German matron, who kindly showed us round the heart-breaking wards of the home. We have touching pictures of the helpless children, one little girl blind, deaf and dumb and of some of the happier adult patients.

On the way we saw a mobile Clinic belonging to the Lutheran World Federation which had just returned from delivering medical supplies to Amman where the fighting was, and was refuelling to return.

What a cross section of Christianity, spanning the centuries from the time of Christ himself to the troubled twentieth century.

INDIA

In New Delhi it was an inspiration to meet the leaders of two of the great agencies which are leading the way in constructive plans of self help for India - Christian Agency for Social Action (C.A.S.A.) ably led by Mr Stephen Mathai an Indian serving his people with vision and distinction. This is the service agency of the National Christian Council.

Mr Mathai gave us a challenging and exciting description of the work of C.A.S.A. and sent us on to a related organization AFPRO Action for Food Production, where the Director is Lt. General P.O. Dunn, an Indian national and the Executive Secretary is Miss Elizabeth Reid an Australian member of the Grail, an organization of Catholic Lay Women. AFPRO maintains a vital programme for food production, water development and nutrition education and works in close liaison with the government of India. Miss Pamela Harrison, an Australian girl, young and charming, and her equally delightful

December, 1970

social workers took us to a village clinic run by a Mission hospital they conducted. Here one conducted a class in how to improve diet by using available vegetables, including leaves of the drumstick tree which grows by the wayside and the other taught children songs with puppets. We were hospitably entertained in a Mission household in this village. Most of the workers are day labourers, and many families would not get more than R60 a month - about \$4. Here is real partnership in Christian service - Indians and Australians and Catholics and Protestants putting all differences aside in the service of a Muslim-Hindu village. The day we were there the social workers (Indian) were delighted because they felt they were gaining the interest and co-operation of the village women. They were most insistent that we should send back copies of the pictures we took, and this we have done. I wish you could all have been in Okhla village that day. Here was India in miniature.

But this letter is running away with me. I cannot go into detail about our visit to Rangoon where the Rev. John Thelgyi is raising poultry on a pilot scheme to help improve the living standard of the Burmese farmers, or Penang where we saw the site of the proposed new Y.M.C.A. centre and hostel supported by I.C.A. in 1970. We can only spare a glance for the magnificent work being done among the flat dwellers of Toa Payoh the mammoth housing development in Singapore where the Rev. Michael Wong has moved in with his wife and two young sons, into the flat above the shophouse Church. If ever I saw real ecumenism and real involvement it is here.

DORKAS

But I must tell you that in Djakarta I saw Connie Tan, our first Winifred Kiek Scholarship Holder, and shared the evening meal of the Dorkas Children's Home where she is educational advisor. And what a meal - rice - bulgur (barely edible) and a sort of fried yam that tasted to me like sawdust though there was a good soup. We photographed the thirty children, happy in spite of everything - their quadrangle with Connie and Miss Wartina, the Director of the Home.

I asked Connie what could we send from Australia to help her in her work, and she suggested two practical things to help with their Kindergarten works - pigments for making poster colours and finger paint and used Christmas cards which can be cut up and used in making many things. Connie is advisor to 14 children's homes so she can use any materials you can send. Her Indonesian name is:

Miss Deborah C. Widyatma,
Dj1 K.H. Wahid Hasjum 25
Djakarta,

INDONESIA

Here again we see the church at work and through our association with Connie we have a small share in what is being done for these children in Indonesia.

I would like to close with something the Rev. Stephen Mathai said to us when we were in New Delhi.

"In this kind of work you have to keep your spirit free, so that you can be open to the world. If this work is something special, it should show in us. There is a need for sanctification".

I have come back from this experience of contact with Christian men and women in other countries with a renewed faith in the living witness of the Christian tradition. My prayer is that Australian Church Women may continue to play a vital part in this witness with a growing awareness of the world's needs, so that we may live in the twentieth century as interpreters of Jesus' love for the world.