

* * INFORMATION PAGE * *

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NEWSETTE

AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN -- NSW UNIT

A C W seeks:

... to unite Australian churchwomen in their allegiance to their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;
... to provide opportunities for Christian women of different denominations to worship, study and serve together.

Mission Statement

Australian Church Women believe that there is one God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit; one God, Three-In-One. We believe that Scripture teaches that salvation is only through faith in the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's only Son.

PRESIDENT: Mrs Jean Porteous Tel: 9727.2580

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

My Dear Friends,

While the busyness and bustle of the Christmas and New Year season are over for another year, the reason for Christmas and the joy it brings us are ever present. Truly we can say with the Apostle Paul "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" When in the city before Christmas my husband and I were impressed with the banners decorating the streets. Some of you will have noticed them. They had several Christmas objects, one of which was the tree. At the top of the tree was a star which was in the shape of a cross - I don't know whether or not that was what the artist intended. As we looked at the star we could not help but remember the reason for Jesus' birth into this world - his sacrifice on the cross for our sin.

As I write this, Henry and I are enjoying a few quiet days in the country. The air is clearer and the atmosphere quieter. At night the sky is blacker and the stars brighter. One morning I woke early and thought I should

pull back the curtain and take the opportunity of seeing the bright stars, and wasn't I glad I did - there hanging low in the eastern sky was the brightest, largest, most beautiful star I have ever seen. I could not stop gazing at it. Other bright stars dotted the sky too, but this one surpassed them all. As I gazed I could see that it too was in the shape of a cross. A hymn came to my mind, a few lines of which are:

*"I've found a friend in Jesus, He's everything to me;
He's the fairest of ten thousand to my soul!
He's the 'Lily of the Valley', the 'Bright and Morning Star!'"
He's the fairest of ten thousand to my soul!"*

Isn't it wonderful to know that the same Jesus who was born in a stable, died on the cross, rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven, is together with the Father the Creator of the universe. I like the little phrase in Genesis 1:16: "He also made the stars." Jesus himself said "I am the light of the world." It is comforting to know that Jesus - the light of the world - is our Saviour. He has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

As you fulfil our Lord's command in 2003 and let your light shine so that others may see your good works and glorify our Father in Heaven, may you know the blessing and peace of our Heavenly Father.

With my prayers for a joy-filled New Year, *Jean Porteous.*

SPECIAL CALL FOR PRAYER:

The prayers of all her friends and ACW members are asked for our Past President and Life Member, *Lucelle King*, as her husband Bruce is very critically ill in Prince of Wales Hospital, as this goes to press, We think of Lucelle whenever we share in singing our ACW song "In Christ We Are One" for which she wrote the words and music. She and Bruce need our love and support very much at this time.

Our prayers and sympathy are also extended to *Dorothy Woodhouse*, also a Life Member, in the loss of her husband Les just after Christmas, when he did not recover following heart surgery. Dorothy has served ACW in many ways and with Les for many years did all the collating and mailing of Newsette. Several ACW members attended the Service to give thanks for his life on 30th December at Kincumber Uniting Church.

DEDICATION SERVICE:

Our State Unit Annual Dedication Service will be held at 10.30 am on Monday 19th May at the Church of Christ, Bridge Street, Epping. This is advance notice - details of speaker etc. will be in next Newsette.

INCORPORATION OF STATE UNIT:

Because of concerns regarding Public Liability Insurance, the Council decided to proceed to Incorporation of the State Unit and this has been done, and will preclude any individual Executive or Council member being able to be sued in the case of an injury or accident.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE TO OUR STATE:

Following ACW National Conference in Perth next September, it will be our turn to be responsible for the National Executive to be based in our State for the following two years.

As a first step in preparation for this, a Nominating Committee, under the chairmanship of Past President Jan Harrison was formed, with representatives of each of our Denominational groups. This committee has been active in recent months and Jan has reported that there has been a good response from people willing to undertake the necessary positions, and the committee will shortly bring nominations to the Council so that the National Executive for 2003-2005 may be ready to accept this responsibility from the Western Australia Unit in due course.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN:

Since the last issue of Newsette, further donations to the Fellowship following World Community Day in November to the value of \$421.40 have been received. We say thank you to all who support this very worthwhile ministry.

Among the many Grants allocated by the International Committee for FLC, three were given to Australian projects, as follows:

- *Train The Trainers* - to bring four East Timorese health workers to Cairns, Queensland, to learn skills which they will use to train others back home. Sister Josephine Mitchell will assist the Carmelite Sisters in East Timor to administer the grant.
- *The Girls' Friendly Society* of Anglican Diocese of North Queensland for National and International Conferences.
- *Embracing People With Disabilities* in Morley, Western Australia.

I have donation boxes available, and can supply information about the Fellowship, which may give your group or fellowship insight into the FLC, also information about suggesting projects or making applications for grants for 2003.

Nancy McLaren, FLC Convener

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WINIFRED KIEK SCHOLARSHIP:

We look forward to an interesting year with news of the development of ministries of our three Scholars for 2003, *Gaye Inall* (Brisbane), *Susan Liersch* (Wagga) and *Monique Crabtree* (Northam WA).

A letter was received from Gaye before Christmas, saying she is so thankful for the scholarship, as it will take the burden off her of having to find money for her interpreting needs; this contributes to deaf people's lack of access and participation in the life and work of the church and the world. Gaye will continue with studies in Year 2 of Education For Ministry (EFM), and we will receive news via her newsletter "Chat-Time." I have sent a New Year letter to each of the three scholars.

Mina Whybourne, past WKS Convener, received a Christmas card from *Malai Mahamaneerat*, 1993 Scholar from Thailand, who sent "warm wishes for all the best and happiness throughout the year and forever." Malai is now manager of Medical Services Division of the Nonthavej Hospital in Bangkok. She was a very clever girl and was formerly nursing at St Louis Hospital run by St Vincent de Paul. Mina also had a letter from *Nighat Gulzar*, 1993 Scholar from Pakistan, now in Philadelphia. Mina doubts whether she and her husband Asif will return to Pakistan with all the persecution of Christians. She sends love and best wishes.

A card was also received from *Rachel McManus*, 1997 Scholar, with a photo of herself and baby Ivy May, also sending love and best wishes and thanks for support during the past year as she goes on as a single mother.

What a privilege is ours to be called to pray for these women!
Judith Cayzer, WKS Convener.

NEWS From W.A. Of 'OUR MARIE':

Marie Majoor, our State Treasurer before moving to Perth, has been elected as National Special Days Convener in W.A. We didn't think she'd be idle for long! In the National News, Marie wrote to introduce herself: "It is a real pleasure to be part of ACW WA and the National Executive here in Perth and I have been given a warm welcome in Western Australia. I first joined ACW 20 years ago when I represented the local churches on NSW Council. After holding various positions I became Treasurer for NSW and held that position for 9 years. As well as being involved with ACW I was also involved in Catholic Women's League and was also State Treasurer of the National Council of Women of NSW for 3 years. I have never been involved with 'Special Days' except for banking the money, but I look forward to working with the State Units' Special Days Conveners for the next twelve months."

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ASIAN CHURCH WOMEN'S CONFERENCE:

Pat Walker, from Adelaide, was chosen as Australian Church Women's Representative to ACWC. In introducing herself, Pat wrote "I was baptised and brought up in the Catholic tradition. My first experience of ecumenism came when, as a member of my Parish Council, we received a letter from a gentleman from the Uniting Church, who felt called by God to organise prayer meetings with all the local churches. Since it was very difficult to claim a 'previous engagement' for 7 a.m. on Saturday mornings, about twenty people came to the first meeting, representing most of the local denominations. That first meeting was very simple with Bible readings and prayers for the special needs of our congregations. We have found that on most subjects we tend to agree. Where there are doctrinal differences, we respect each others' beliefs. My involvement with Australian Church Women began when I was nominated as one of their delegates to the South Australia Unit by the Catholic Women's League of Adelaide Diocese some years ago."

PAN PACIFIC & S.EASIA WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION:

As representative of ACW on the NSW Unit of Pan Pacific & SEA Women's Association of Australia Inc. it was a privilege to be involved in the activities of PPSEAWA in 2002. There were informative and inspiring addresses by guest speakers, fund-raising occasions to support their projects, participation in special events of companion associations, and, at every meeting, the opportunity for personal growth through companionship over morning teas and informal lunches.

Topics treated by guest speakers covered *Lady Angela Carrick's* memories of a return visit to the bridge over the River Kwai; the future and hope of East Timor, as assessed by *Sister Josephine Mitchell*; *June Duncan Owen's* "Mixed Matches - Inter-Racial Marriage in Australia"; *Rev Paul Dew's* account of the work of the Bush Church Aid Society in outback Australia; and a sharing of members' own treasuries of research and life experiences. During the year, monies were raised to assist in the setting up of a PPSEAWA group in Papua New Guinea, and to support the work of the Mary MacKillop Institute for East Timorese Studies. Support was also offered for a Uniting Church's Multicultural Ministry project for leadership training of young women.

Highlights of PPSEAWA's 2003 calendar of events will be its National Committee's A.G.M. to be held in Canberra in March, and its participation in the PPSEAWA International Conference to be held in Singapore in August.

Marie Craddock, R.S.J.

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N.S.W. ECUMENICAL COUNCIL:

The Annual General Meeting of the Ecumenical Council was held on 9th November 2002 at St Alban's Anglican Church, Epping. Reporting on an AGM is a bit difficult. All those reports! So, here is a sketchy outline.

The Executive Secretary, *Rev Ray Williamson*, had just returned from the Middle East Christian Council (MECC) Partners' Meeting in Kuwait City. The words "we are living in a world that has lost its way" he said, could well sum up much of the feeling that prevailed at that meeting, speaking of the threatening situation that hangs over the people of the Middle East and the Gulf, but those words were spoken by the preacher at the opening worship of the First World Conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne on 3rd August 1927. He spoke of 2002 being a year of anniversaries, the Faith and Order Movement celebrating 75 years since its inauguration, the Roman Catholic Church 40 years since becoming a member of the same, and 20 years since the NSW Ecumenical Council was formed.

The Council is now being established as a legal entity, requiring many amendments to its Constitution, and we were given a draft of the amended constitution. A change to its structure was being considered, as ten different committees need more personnel than can be found, so two basic units were being considered.

Ecumenism still has problems. Diversity in religion and worship tends to be a problem not easily overcome, not even by theologians and pastors. It was felt that John 17, the Lord's desire "that they may be one" has been lost, and "a change in mentalities, ways of thinking and prejudices, all of which have a long history, would be needed to achieve this goal." (Cardinal Bea) At the Kuwait meeting, it was said that when churches get property on which to build, the first thing they build is walls - walls that divide the churches from one another.

Finance - another concern. There was a deficit for the year of \$6,126, which in actual fact was not a true figure, the Secretary having waived his long service leave payment to help out. After discussion it was agreed that this was not acceptable. Ten minutes of the day was devoted to finding ways to generate more income. If they found the answer to that one, I think we'd all like to know!

Points of Interest:

An invitation has been issued to the ACT Churches Council to become associated with the NSW Ecumenical Council.

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Homelessness. The estimated number of people experiencing homelessness in the ACT at any point in time could be considered to be in the range of 1,260 to 1,570.

Taize. There are plans for further phases of the Taize Pilgrimage in 2003 and 21004.

The House Of Welcome has been made available for refugees at Carramar, with the aim to assist those people with temporary visas to come to terms with their new environment. The Department of Housing has provided a 3-4 bedroom cottage at Canley Vale at a rental of \$60 per week, but there is still a lot needed to help these people whose plight continues.

Rural. Since the last meeting at Bathurst, Ecumenical Rural Consultation is now aware of the need for more than just financial counselling and the inadequate levels of emotional and mental health counselling services available. The report said they had preliminary discussions on the issue of genetic modification and will discuss at their next meeting where they think that discussion might go.

Conclusion. Bishop Richard Hurford from Bathurst chaired the meeting and was named President for 2003, which will complete his 2-year term of office. The meeting closed with a worship service, a dedication of staff and executive committee and a prayer of commitment. The general theme of the day was from Isaiah 40, one of my favourite verses: "They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength, they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not faint." We were well fed and watered throughout the day, which was much appreciated, especially the jugs of water on every table. After all, the temperature was in the high 30's, not conducive to major concentration!

. Nola Dickson, ACW Rep to NSW Ecumenical Council.

ECOLOGY AND SOCIAL ISSUES:

At Catholic Women's League Conference, *Sr Marie McDonald*, Director of Najara Centre of Spirituality & Ecology, Nambour, Q'ld addressed this elaborating on the importance of **doing** something. What can we do?

- **Sort the Garbage** - compost; re-cycle; use fewer plastic bags.
- **Plant Trees** - in your own garden; encourage tree-planting projects.
- **Save Water** - wash the car on the lawn not the driveway; channel roof water onto the garden; Use phosphate-free and bio-degradable detergents.

(From CWL Wollongong News "The Flame")

MONITORING MEDIA For YOUTH:

MMY, formerly the NSW Council for Children's Films & Television, had an interesting speaker at their meeting last October. This was Jan Syme, who is the Chaplain at Yasmar Juvenile Detention Centre.

Yasmar is the only Juvenile Detention Centre in NSW for young girls, so girls up to 17 years of age come there from all over the State. The full capacity is 36, the usual number being 20-30. The youngest there at present is 11 years old. Jan is not only "Chap" to the girls - she offers spiritual support to staff as well. Sunday night Church Services are well attended - Jan is not sure why, but it could be something to do with the supper provided afterwards!! Some of her care includes taking the girls out for the day, or being available for Court Support for an individual girl. On the whole, the girls are good, but sometimes can be difficult.

Reasons for girls being in Yasmar are very different. A small shoplifting offender (held for a short time) will be there alongside a girl convicted of murder (who will be held for a long period of time) but all are treated with care and support and are given opportunities to learn. Once a girl turns 18 she will have to go to the Adult Prison, but this may be deferred until she is 21 on request from a Barrister. In dealing with a girl who has been convicted of murder, Jan needs to know whether the victim was a close relative, carer or other person.

Where possible, families are encouraged to support the girls, but many are from the country so distances for travel are difficult. Juvenile Justice Dept however does assist with these problems. Yasmar offers the girls a variety of opportunities to learn and participate in work situations. School and recreation programs fill up the day. Television, videos and sports such as swimming, volleyball, tennis and basketball are all available for personal development.

Jan said "We are not all born equal" so a girl who may have "user" parents will most likely be assisted to find alternative accommodation upon discharge. She sees the other side of the girls - the softness and the need to be accepted - they have been damaged and are often the victims of abuse. Jan hopes that her ministry will show them the love and care they have not known before. No-one has tried to run away because "I wouldn't do that to you, Chap!"

Jan spent more than 20 years as a Church Army Officer, and, supported by Anglicare, The Mothers' Union and her own parish of Rozelle/Lilyfield, she plans to continue her work with young people.

(From The Monitor, MMY Newsletter)

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN:

OSTEOPOROSIS:

Professor Michael Hooper, speaking to National Council of Women NSW, gave a most interesting and informative address.

- **What is osteoporosis?** A thinning of the bone trabeculae and loss of connections between them, leading to weakening of bone strength.
- **Who are affected?** Two thirds of women and one third of men likely to suffer over the age of 60.
- **What are the signs?** Loss of height and stooped posture. Pain does not occur until a fracture happens. May be family history. May be result of illnesses such as celiac disease, hyperthyroidism, severe arthritis - also by illnesses treated by corticosteroid drugs.
- **What are the human costs?** Pain, disability, loss of function, inability to continue work etc. With hip fractures in older patients it is not uncommon for death to occur in next 6-12 months.
- **To prevent the first fracture:** Weight-bearing exercises throughout adult life. A balanced diet rich in Calcium and Vitamin D. Limit alcohol consumption. No smoking. Compulsory bone density studies to all people 65-70 years. Vitamin D and Calcium to patients in residential care and the disabled, who are at greater risk by lack of mobility.
- **Appropriate medication.** HRT to women in immediate post-menopausal years. Specific drug therapy to those found to have evidence of osteoporosis. Drugs need to be available on PBS prior to occurrence of fracture. Identification by GP's and Orthopaedic specialists of those likely to have osteoporosis.

This disease has only been recognised as treatable in the last 20 years and many people still see it as a natural part of ageing, but Professor Hooper left us with a clear message that we need to be active in our own protection from this medical condition and request information and follow-up from our general practitioners.

(Reported for NCW News by Dr Margaret Mills, NCW Medical Adviser)

As ACW is an affiliated organisation with National Council of Women and with Australian Women's Coalition, the following report is of interest.

In the House of Assembly Chamber of the South Australian Parliament hang two stunning tapestries, which are titled "A Woman's Place is in the House. These tapestries were woven to celebrate the centenary of two great constitutional achievements - the granting of the vote for women in South Australia, and the granting to SA women the right to stand for parliament. South Australia was the first democracy in the world to grant women this right. The tapestries were woven as a community project, with

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public participation, and signify the advancement of women and Australia's commitment to equality for all citizens. It is appropriate that the tapestries hang in the Assembly Chamber, making a clear statement about the rightful place women have secured in the governing structure of the State, and honouring the work of all women to secure and protect the Australian democracy.

The Australian Women's Coalition is developing projects to address such issues as osteoporosis; culturally diverse women's groups; education of women recently released from prison; liability insurance.

(From Australian Women's Coalition News Bulletin)

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS CONFERENCE:

Last September, at the UN in New York City, 2700 persons registered for this 55th Annual Conference, from 650 NGO's from 85 countries - also 200 youth. The theme was "*Rebuilding Societies Emerging from Conflict: A Shared Responsibility*." As well as the Plenary Sessions each day, there was a choice of 10 workshops one could attend at mid-day.

Introductory speakers spoke on prevention of conflict. Some had visited various countries, held conflict prevention meetings, attempted to establish human rights and develop peace-building communities.

Mary Robinson (Ireland) said that women's groups are vital in resolving conflict. After conflict it is usually humanitarian and development groups who help. Human rights need a national protective system of legally binding rules. In helping to rebuild Afghanistan women have a great contribution to make. A Swedish committee has been in that country about 7 years as teachers.

Succeeding sessions each had a theme:

- Re-establishing the Rule of Law: Encouraging Good Governance.
- Restoring Social Services: Identifying Priorities.
- From Less Than Zero: The Challenge of Rebuilding Economies.
- Against the Odds: The Process of Reconciliation.
- Demobilising the War Machines: Making Peace Last.

On September 11 a "Ceremony of Remembrance" was held. During a minute of silence the bells of New York City rang, as this large gathering from many countries stood in silent contemplation and meditation in memory of those killed on September 11 of the year before. (Of course this took place before another terrorist attack in Bali a month later - Editor).

(From W.C.T.U. World Bulletin)

11.

A MINISTRY AT WOOMERA:

(Written by Rev Tom Beever, Anglican Minister at Roxby Downs)

When Michelle and I first met our Roxby Downs and Andamooka congregations, little did we all realise that God would lead us to a ministry at the Woomera Detention Centre that would change our lives.

Much has been said about Woomera, but what I see each week is a far cry from what we see on television or read in our newspapers. There are enormous difficulties there, but what I see when I make my weekly visits are normal human beings doing the best they can for other normal human beings who are rightly anxious and frustrated as they wait for possible acceptance and freedom within our country.

I saw a young woman weeping as her husband spoke of the family's incredible hardships in Iran; leaving Iran, travelling to their "freedom" and now here in a detention centre. I wondered, "Lord, what can I do to help these beautiful people?" In my emotional state, all I could muster up were the words: "don't give up" - "don't lose hope" - "there are people within and beyond these barbed wire fences who care" - I will go back to my church and tell people about you" - "I will tell my church leaders about you" - "We will not only pray for you but we will do all we can to help and assist you." He nodded his head and smiled whilst the tears of his wife slowly dropped onto the head of their daughter.

I met another Iranian family whose situation is a little more "serious." This family has been given 'rejected refugee' status. Because of their religious belief these families face severe discrimination and persecution back in Iran. I find it awesome to speak with people who have never ever heard the Christian message before. It is wonderful to be able to speak of Jesus and they love to hear of Him. I have told them that when a man named Jairus came to Jesus he too was afraid, weak and without hope - but just as the source of all hope brought forth the impossible in Jairus' life, so too can He bring about the impossible in our life as well.

Our Bishop has said: "Perhaps we Christians could invoke the biblical virtue of hospitality as a lens through which to look at the asylum seeker question. This means we would treat them as honoured guests. They would not necessarily have the rights of citizens nor all be expected to stay to seek citizenship. Could they not have a short term in detention, followed by general temporary protection visas, with some sort of living allowance? If every asylum seeker who had come to Australia in the last two years was paid the job seeker allowance, given rental allowance, and released into the community under strict regulations, the cost to the Australian community would be less than 20% of the present system.

(From Bush Church Aid Society Magazine The Real Australian)