



AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN "WOMEN AT WORK"

March, 1976.

Our greeting this month comes from Carmel Downey, one of the Vice Presidents of the working committee. Carmel writes:

As we pass through March into that lovely month of April we have much to be grateful for; but most of all we have been given another chance.

The season of Lent - a time once again for reflection and for renewal of spirit; a time to make sacrifice; a time to correct our faults; a time to lift our minds to the Father who helps us to grow in holiness. It is good to remember at this time that no-one is so rich that he has nothing to receive, and no-one is so poor that he has nothing to give. May this season be one of rich giving and blessed receiving.

Carmel Downey of the Catholic Women's League.

NAIROBI - AND AFTERWARDS IN AFRICA

Since the W.C.C. Assembly in Nairobi, Africa has really been to the fore in our thinking. With this issue of Women at Work, you will receive also a supplement in which Dorothy Wacker tells her story.

In Perth, we have been hearing something of this, and receiving much to think about, much to be concerned about, much for which to give thanks. Last month a THINK DAY was arranged at Wollaston Theological College and Training Centre, when thirty women gathered to learn from Dorothy Wacker of what happened at Nairobi and of her own experiences afterwards. That same week Dorothy spoke with the members of the School of Theology which was in session at Kingswood College, so that the story spread through the state.

We hope that you, too, have all been able to share in Nairobi through your own representatives. We are grateful that so many of those involved in the W.C.C. Assembly took the opportunity to find out something further about the African scene.

Jean Yule of Victoria sent us her report, which we would have printed in full had that been possible - for it is not always fair to a report to select extracts. However, we feel sure that the following will be of value and interest to you.

The ASPECTS OF LIFE FOR PARTICULAR ENQUIRY were: Christian Aid Programmes of various types - rural, educational, social, etc., national aims of each country, the question of racial discrimination and that of general social relationships.

FROM TANZANIA Jean spent two days with the Revd Brian Polkinghorne and his wife, Jill. "We should be very proud of the contribution that Brian is making and of the fine ecumenical co-operation that exists in Tanzania....The Kilacha Production Training Centre could be a key institution in implementing change in that part of Africa". (The Centre is where the Polkinghorne's are working, at Himo.)

The Msalato Bible Training School at Dodoma is the centre of the Diocese of Central Tanganyika, and there, Philip Wigg of Adelaide and his English wife, Barbara, are stationed, Philip being in charge of the agricultural work. "The environment provides a contrast with Himo on the ..2

slopes of Mt Kilimanjaro, being a very dry area...and it was the end of the long, dry season when I was there. Phil's main projects at the present time are cattle for meat and goat for meat schemes. The Diocese already has cow and goat dairy projects in another centre. In addition he gives some basic training in agriculture to all the students in the College. Publishing and a fine tape-recording studio are important areas of development in the Dodoma region. Over 200 village catechists and evangelists, as well as the pastors who have authority over them, have their own tape-recorders and borrow tapes regularly for both worship and education".

Here is just a short paragraph from the ZAMBIAN REPORT, on SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ZAMBIA AND TANZANIA: "In general, I got the impression that people were very relaxed, e.g. Christmas shopping crowds in the supermarket at Livingstone, where we were from 23rd - 30th December, were very much the same as here in Melbourne: busy, but friendly, with no feeling of consciousness that I was white and they were black. I was very conscious of tension and a different social atmosphere during my week in South Africa".

We hear about the UNITED COLLEGE OF EDUCATION IN RHODESIA: This is a tremendous ecumenical project. It has done a lot to boost the morale of black Rhodesians to know that they have something that is better than the white equivalent. The last significant phase of their building programme is at present under construction. By 1977 they will be able to take the full quota of 600 students. "The Staff seem to be a good mixture of ex-patriates and Africans, with the numbers of the latter predominating slightly".

In SOUTH AFRICA, DEPENDANTS CONFERENCE CARES is the name of the organization that keeps in touch with political detainees there. "It is a department of the South African Council of Churches and operates through six regional committees, viz. Border, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria and Witwatersrand. In each region the committee works under the local Council of Churches and operates according to a strict set of Policies and Procedures. As in Rhodesia, all activity and all financial transactions are open for Government scrutiny and accountable to the public and to donors who support the work".

We thank Jean Yule for making this report available to us.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN An attractively written little booklet came to us recently from Victoria, called SMALL BEGINNINGS - a story of F.L.C.. It would be an excellent introduction for someone wanting to know or wanting to pass on the opportunity of belonging to the Fellowship. If you want to know more about it, contact the editor.

And here's another thing! How do you celebrate the anniversary of something like F.L.C.? By writing its story? By sharing the idea with another and so doubling the number of those interested? What other ideas have you? The anniversary doesn't take place until 1981, but it's something to exercise your creative thinking. There is no prize, but all ideas are welcome.

We have received a letter of thanks from Sister Monica of the Missionaries of Charity in Greenvale, acknowledging the gift from F.L.C. for the building project for the sick and lonely among the aboriginal people near Bourke.

SPECIAL DAYS "All joy be yours wherever you are today confessing Him together". So reads the last sentence of the introduction to the FELLOWSHIP DAY SERVICE prepared by Elizabeth Appleby and Dorothy Wacker. It should be a joyous thing to confess Christ, and to confess with another, doubly joyous. Multiply it by the number of people "Confessing Christ Together" at your Fellowship Service in July - make it a truly great experience - to be repeated confidently, quietly, or for all the world to see and hear as you go on confessing Christ is all of life.

FROM ONE WORLD TO ANOTHER

The "world" that I was most conscious of leaving behind me on October, 19th, 1975, was a changing church world surrounding me with questions and I was feeling very tired

The "world" that became mine for 5 weeks on the following day was one both known to me and unknown the world of London and Southern England a world of events and places known to me through history and tradition - and the reports of twentieth century media and travellers a world unknown through personal experience a world for which I was well and truly ready on October 20th - after sleeping all the way from Perth to London !!

It was a world that I enjoyed greatly and that my legs experienced particularly! With a Londoner guide who knows and loves her city, I spent 3 weeks walking!

That meant :

becoming familiar with streets and lanes and alleyways;
replacing the imagined with the actual - (Hi! to Trafalgar Square and to Nelson so far above it!);

reaching out to people of the past as I explored an archeological "dig" or "discovered" for myself historical places and plaques or monuments commemorating people and happenings;

wondering about the future as I surveyed new buildings trying to replace or to crowd out the old and sometimes succeeding - (St. Paul's is even having a battle!);

getting to know the bridges and dreaming on the banks of the Thames which has its own undefinable beauty;

becoming accustomed to chimney pots and stacks and the November "mistiness" while rejoicing in the sunshine and the general mildness of the weather;

responding very positively to the parks and gardens - some in the most unexpected places and some memorable for their autumn colours; visiting museums and galleries and gazing at a great variety of treasures of the earth and creative achievements of people;

sometimes lifting the load off my feet and listening to the "Hold tight" of the bus conductors and noticing the many different accents and nationalities of both conductors and passengers;

easily coming to terms with the underground transport system but not wanting to spend much time so underground!;

admiring the spic and span taxis and taking time to photograph a mounted policewoman;

joining both Londoners and eager tourists on great processional days honouring the Lord Mayor of London, Remembrance Day and the opening of Parliament;

having to learn again the dates and the sequence of Kings and Queens and the significance of Guilds, etc;

grasping wholeheartedly the different gifts of Bankside, the East End, Chiswick Village, Petticoat Lane, the Royal Mews, the numerous Pubs, the Ritz, ETC, and sometimes leaving the city to add places like Box Hill and Waddeson Manor and Hampton Court Palace to one's London experience;

being greatly impressed by all that Greenwich was and is;

sensing deeply people's fears and vulnerability in the face of bomb scares;

thinking about life and its meaning as I made the theatre my destination on several occasions - (my diary says of "Pilgrim" : "alive" and worshipful - akin to "Godspell");

almost being overwhelmed by churches and cathedrals! and by what they gave me to look at and to think about;

meeting Congregationalists recommended to me from "afar", remembering Wesley and our nonconformist forefathers in their historical "areas", and becoming one with Roman Catholics mourning their beloved Cardinal Heenan;

having my questions about the church renewed as I worshipped with different congregations - but feeling very much at home as a person of faith when I shared with an ecumenical group at Notting Hill Gate, in a 'consultation-worship time, focussing on the celebration of Christmas.

This world of London gave way to its associated world of Southern England when I went to and from Cornwall for one week and to Oxford, Stratford and Coventry for another.

As a tourist I worked hard in this world also! delighted with the countryside which seemed to be "in miniature" - holding my breath as vehicles passed one another on the country lanes hemmed in by hedges - thoughtful as we passed over the moors and as we paused to look at the grim Dartmoor prison - listening to stories of the past, including those about Jamaica Inn - becoming a history student again at Plymouth - fascinated by the cobblestones of Clovelly village - greatly appreciating the fellowship of the United Reformed Church at Bude and Church friends at Bath, a stopping place on my way from Cornwall - wanting to stay longer at this unexpectedly interesting city with its Roman Baths and its distinctive buildings - made very aware of the "unknownness" of the past at Stonehenge - adding to my Cathedral thoughts at Exeter, Truro, Bath and Salisbury and later at Oxford and Coventry - feeling the thoughtful peacefulness and beauty of Oxford and for the first time, the coldness of November - passing through Churchill territory - and very glad that I had included Stratford on my itinerary plus "Henry IV" in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre .. which made me almost ready again to equate drama with Shakespeare, - and deeply moved by the new Coventry cathedral rising up out of the ruins of the old, courageous with the new symbolism for the twentieth century, sending me forth into my ever changing world with great hope!

From this world where I was very much the tourist concerned with history and places - but with caring friends as my tourist guides - I moved

T O A N O T H E R :

..... where I was very much the conference delegate, almost overpowered by the size of the meeting, the structure of the programme, and the input of thoughts and questions THE WORLD OF THE 5TH ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES - AT NAIROBI, IN KENYA

a world from which I have gathered most benefit since I have returned home and taken time to reflect upon what happened there.

I remember words spoken by ROBERT MCAFEE BROWN : "As Jesus liberates us, we are required to face the potential divisions that liberation brings, so that we can move toward a truer unity than otherwise would be possible"
by M. M. THOMAS, calling for a spirituality for combat and a theology of dialogue and raising the question : "How can we develop a Church order which recognises the possibility of contest and tension within the Church?" by JOHN DESCHNER, stressing the need of "a witness which embodies among Christians and Christian churches a believable sign of the liberating unity-in-controversy which God has promised to all mankind" by BISHOP ARIAS : "The moment has come to acclaim the missionary and evangelistic potential of all that the W.C.C. has been doing through us and in our name" by MICHAEL MANLEY : "Liberation is about victims" - words in the midst of an address outlining the dehumanising characteristics of capitalism, challenging the Third World to find a moral basis for the conduct of its international affairs and calling the churches of the world to fight in a united and co-ordinated fashion against the symptoms and the causes of domination and oppression wherever they occur by CHARLES BIRCH : "The Creation Stories are not about events in the past. They are about relationships of dependence, alienation and renewal in the present" AND "I cannot see that there will be any fundamental reshaping of technology and society without a basic change of heart and mind about man's relationship to nature." ,

I remember group discussions focussed on the ideas given to us in keynote addresses, on the Bible message, on issues of global significance, on the work done by the W.C.C. and the way to proceed into the future and I commend the reports and the recommendations made under much pressure of time and programme, by people of widely varying backgrounds and understanding. I have underlined many words, including the following : "Without clear confession of Christ our discipleship cannot be recognised; without costly discipleship people will hesitate to believe our confession" (SECTION I REPORT - CONFESSING CHRIST TODAY)
"We ask the churches to recognise their common responsibility for mission by planning together not only the tasks which they have to accomplish jointly, but also the tasks which they have to do separately." (SECTION II REPORT - WHAT UNITY REQUIRES) "The entire life of the Christian community is educative, and the quality of its worship and work as a whole determines the quality of the nurture of its members." (SECTION IV REPORT - EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION AND COMMUNITY)
As members of a wider community, "we have to be open to being addressed by neighbours of a faith different from our own without regarding it as aggression on their part" (SECTION III REPORT - SEEKING COMMUNITY) AND suggestions in SECTIONS V AND VI concerning STRUCTURES OF INJUSTICE AND STRUGGLES FOR LIBERATION and HUMAN DEVELOPMENT - calling me and the church as a community to identify and fight human rights violations, to get involved in development through giving at least 2% of our income and by influencing power structures and to take action to achieve a quality of life that will show solidarity with those deprived of an adequate quality of life.

I remember the African setting with its great contrasts - symbolised by the fine Kenyatta Conference Centre in a city where there are areas of great poverty with its obvious response to Western culture but with its own enthusiasm and styles of living symbolised in the music, the dancing, the independent churches and the quality of the African speakers

with its reactions against colonialism of the past and present but with its own great struggle for true freedom - symbolised by the action and the question in the powerful and moving African play called "MUNTU" and by the searching response of the Liberian, Burgess Carr, to the call for Third World Moral leadership.

Within the world of this Nairobi Assembly, I remember more, however, the setting of the whole world - a world that is fragmented in so many ways - and I hear PHILIP POTTER speaking of the global dimensions of problems and the need for global perspectives and the mobilisation of Christian forces globally. I think of all the languages used and the comprehensiveness of the programme and I feel the frailty and the tenderness of the relationships between different groups within this WORLD church body - highlighted during discussions about East Timor and the U.S.S.R.'s involvement in the Helsinki Agreement, demonstrated in the lack of Eucharistic fellowship, and evident in the different resource-backgrounds of the developed and developing worlds.

I remember a great gathering of people, which meant many personal encounters, new friendships, the widening of horizons, and new understandings about possible responses to the gift of life.

I remember that we came together as people of faith and that Robert McAfee Brown spoke to us as people of faith when he concluded his keynote address with these words :-

"Ours is an Easter faith that frees us to respond to God's call to join in the divine struggle, so that as God's children are set free we too may be set free and thereby united with God and with one another.

Certain affirmations have dominated past assemblies of the World Council of Churches. At the initial Assembly at Amsterdam in 1948, the delegates affirmed: "We intend to stay together. At Evanston in 1954 they affirmed: "We intend to grow together. I suggest to you an affirmation for Nairobi in 1975: We intend to struggle together - not only to struggle honestly with one another who are here assembled, but also to begin to struggle together on behalf of all of God's children who are not here assembled, even (and most especially) the non-persons, the "very least" of the sisters and brothers of Jesus Christ our Lord."

The struggle was evident at the Assembly but we celebrated our faith and worshipped together amidst our uncertainties and Philip Potter helped us to review what had happened when, in closing remarks, he spoke of the Council as "a pilgrim people in the wilderness, recognising the reality of our situation, affirming our faith in the living God, exposing ourselves, suffering together and staying together to build up the faith."

Now the struggle continues wherever God's people are. For me, it is against the background of the Assembly and the following eight weeks that I spent in Africa and Mauritius -

as I moved from one world

TO ANOTHER :

..... with ten more days in Kenya marked by movement and hospitality!

During this time I wandered through the streets of Nairobi and Mombasa and Nakuru - with a companion who constantly surprised me by meeting people she knew! I attended the Independence Day Celebrations at Jamhuri Park, and I learnt to shout "Harambee" with the crowds who are keen to "pull together". I gazed at Mt. Kenya, available in the sunshine and a place of mystery hidden by cloud, and I discovered "The Ark" to which the animals come in one of the northern game parks! The flamingoes flew off to Tanzania before we arrived at Lake Nakuru but hundreds of pelicans waited to greet us! People seemed to be "ever-present" even in lonely areas as we travelled north and south and west and east, including a detour into Tanzania to see a Force 10 project under the direction of Brian Polkinghorne from South Australia.

To share with the people of this world was a memorable experience, and I am different now because of it. After a year in Perth as a student, my travelling companion and "hostess" opened many doors of understanding for me as she introduced me to her Kikuyu family and friends throughout the country. The "pictures" I retain in my mind are of mealtimes and family gatherings in rural settings, new food (maize dishes, goat meat, arrowroot) and new customs of hospitality (the washing of hands, the provisions of slippers, the gifts of food by other than the host family), the questions and the delight of the children in sharing with someone so "different", the attentiveness and questions of worshippers following an address on the W.C.C. Assembly, the patience and "timelessness" of people for whom speed and material wealth are not qualities of life possible for them, women undertaking great family responsibilities, in simple, uncluttered surroundings, people knowing so much about their country and their country's decision-makers and filled with both hope and anxiety concerning the future. From family gatherings on small-plot farms to a new youthful style family life on the outskirts of Nairobi, from a struggling business man's life in a country town to the life of a cabinet minister marked by authority but also by uncertainty, from gatherings of the faithful to wandering groups of displaced people in a new and changing society - the scene is one of great contrasts but the joyous energy of the people and their simple wisdom are gifts for the situation now and for the future when they will face new demands in a country working out its independence.

"Thank You" were words that I said to Evelyn Muthoni as I left and words that I said to myself again and again as I moved from that world

TO YET ANOTHER :

..... where Violet Sampa was my Zambian "centre-point" !

In her land-locked country, I became more aware of the pressures upon President Kaunda and his government and the responsibilities they have concerning relationships between African countries. I looked over the border to Rhodesia and I wondered about the future. I shared with families whose student sons and daughters were in national service training and I wondered. I noted queues for goods regularly held up because of distribution problems and I wondered. I visited the Copper Belt and was reminded of the low copper prices and the difficulties associated with transport across another country and I wondered.

And I invite you to continue wondering with me - until next month.

Donna Walker