

* * INFORMATION PAGE * *

ALL A.C.W. MONIES — Affiliation Fees, Fellowship of the Least Coin, Subscriptions for Newsette or ACWC News, Offertories from Special Days, Payments or Donations, also changes of address for Newsette subscribers, should **ALL** be sent to the **TREASURER**:

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521 Mowbray Road
LANE COVE 2066
(Tel: 9428.2384)

ALL CHEQUES to be made payable to 'AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN' and **NOT** to any individual person.

FEES from AFFILIATED GROUPS are due 1st March each year as follows:

Denominational Groups:	\$15.00 per annum
A.C.W. Local Branches:	\$10.00 per annum
Organisations eg YWCA, WCTU, Girls' Brigade :	\$10.00 per annum

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS' FEES due 1st June: \$10.00 per annum
(includes subscription to Newsette)

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CONTRIBUTIONS to Newsette are requested from readers and should be sent to the **EDITOR**: Mrs Beryl McLaughlin
2/15 Morwick Street
STRATHFIELD 2135
(Tel: 9744.8609)

Almighty Father, who dost give
The gift of life to all who live,
Look down on all earth's sin and strife,
And lift us to a nobler life.

The world is weary of its pain,
Of selfish greed and fruitless gain,
Of tarnished honour, falsely strong,
And all its ancient deeds of wrong.

Hear Thou the prayer Thy servants pray,
Uprising from all lands today,
And o'er the vanquished powers of sin
O bring Thy great salvation in.



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.

PRESIDENT: Rev Elizabeth Walker Tel: 9415.2603

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

My dear friends,

With the Easter greeting 'Christ is Risen' we celebrated the deathless love of God. Sadly, this year our Easter celebrations were dampened by the tragic scenes of refugees fleeing from Kosovo, their homes burning in the background. We wish we could do something to help - anything to stop the conflict.

A story of hope springs into my mind. Three years ago, when I was a parish minister, I received a telephone call from the refugee worker in the NSW Ecumenical Council who asked me if any group in my parish could help to re-settle a refugee family from Bosnia. Without hesitation the first group I asked agreed to do so. The refugee family consisted of a young Muslim widow and her two little children. The young husband and father had been murdered by the 'christians' in the Balkan conflict. The little children were very frightened and withdrawn. Their mother with great courage and determination quickly became independent and they are now happily assimilated in the local community. Following this first family we were

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later able to assist a second family of four from Bosnia. In this family there was a mixed marriage, one parent being Muslim and the other Christian. This activity called upon us to cross boundaries which we may not have expected. It called upon us all to respect each other's understanding of faith. It challenged us to express God's unconditional love.

We may or may not be able to assist refugees from Kosovo but the causes of the conflict remind us again that reconciliation calls us to cross boundaries with unconditional love. May God's Easter love continually give us the strength to do this in our daily lives!

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Elizabeth Walker.

ACW NSW UNIT...TWO SPECIAL EVENTS.

ANNUAL SERVICE OF DEDICATION

At THE UNITING CHURCH, STRATHFIELD
(31 Carrington Avenue)

At 10.30 am On MONDAY 17th MAY 1999

SPEAKER: MRS AILEEN MORTENSEN, ACW NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Followed by Light Refreshments All Welcome

ECUMENICAL LUNCHEON TO CELEBRATE THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF OLDER PERSONS

At SALVATION ARMY FUNCTION CENTRE, 140 ELIZABETH ST SYDNEY

SPEAKER: MRS MARJORIE DEASEY, '4 Times Retired' Missionary

Subject: Never Too Old To Be Of Use!

Cost \$10 Bookings Essential RSVP with payment by July 5
to Major E Holley P O Box 5319 Newcastle West 2302

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FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN:

The Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the International Committee for FLC was held at Chaing Mai, Thailand, after the ACWC Assembly concluded in November 1998. The Committee's Report states "The meetings went well under the leadership of Mrs Maija Vuorinen from Finland, and a new Vice Chairperson, Rev Althea Spencer Miller was elected. She is a senior program officer of the Caribbean Conference of Churches in Jamaica.

After much prayer and consideration, apart from the block grants to regions, 59 projects were allocated grants for 1999. These included two special grants: (1) The Shanti Solomon Memorial Day-Care Centre for Senior Citizens in Delhi and (2) FLC Circle of Prayer Special 2000 Edition." A full report on all the grants will be available later in the year. An FLC History has been compiled and will soon be available.

Esther Byu, Executive Secretary of ICFLC concluded her report by requesting prayer for support and promotion of the FLC Prayer Movement in our community, country and region. She prays "May God bless our commitment and may God multiply our least coins."

The following are still available from me: copies of Circle of Prayer Volume 14; FLC Leaflets, Prayer Cards, Money Boxes, Spoons; Shanti Solomon's Autobiography "A Legend And A Legacy."

Thanks again for your support,

Shirley Wells, FLC Convener.

SPECIAL VISITOR at APRIL COUNCIL MEETING:

MRS PADRA EBENEZER From Sri Lanka, who is a member of the Asian Church Women's Conference Executive Committee, and is currently in Sydney as her daughters live here - one is married, living at Stanmore, one studying at University of Technology, was invited to meet and speak at April Council.

Padra shared in a moving talk how the deeply-ingrained culture and traditions of her country and her church (Dutch Reformed) have kept women very repressed and unable to take their rightful place or undertake leadership roles. She testified how her involvement with ACWC has taught her so much and widened her experience and confidence so much.

Padma is a past Administrative Secretary of Sri Lanka National Christian Council and is involved with the National Association of Church Women - the equivalent in Sri Lanka of Australian Church Women. In her own church a Women's Fellowship has been commenced, through which women are beginning to realise their self-worth and learning to speak out on women's issues. Younger women are being educated in the role and place of women and encouraged to become leaders.

Padra also has her own special ministry, visiting and helping in homes and institutions for the extremely poor, old people and children - she told how the Lord has helped her to overcome her initial revulsion at the dirt and infections in such places.

Padra also spoke of how her country has been torn by war for many years - causing many to become refugees, widows and orphans. She told of assisting people following bomb blasts; of helping many, soldiers and others, who have lost limbs to obtain artificial ones. The Association of Church Women has very limited funds but they are doing what they can.

Other activities are Seminars - on leadership, AIDS (which most people don't realise exists in their country), battered wives, child abuse and incest. They also share some of the same activities as ACW e.g. World Day of Prayer, Fellowship of the Least Coin. Padra concluded by saying how her welcome among us was such a blessing, and how ACWC has helped her to grow - emotionally, physically and spiritually.

ACW NATIONAL CONFERENCE:

As the ACW National Executive is currently based in Queensland, the National Conference will be held in Brisbane, at Grace College in the University of Queensland, from Monday, September 27 to Friday October 1 1999. Registration Forms will be available shortly with details of costs. For the weekends preceding and following the Conference, accommodation will be available at Grace College for \$38 for Bed & Breakfast, payable at the College, but can be booked with Registration Form for Conference.

The special guest will be Esther Byu, Executive Secretary of Fellowship of the Least Coin,

Do think about this and plan to attend if possible.

WINIFRED KIEK SCHOLARSHIP:

Our 1998 Scholar, MILISE TAIPALITI, from Tonga, has sent a card and wall-hanging made and painted on TAPA, a product hand-made from the bark of the mulberry tree. In the culture and traditions of the Pacific Islands, this is a gift of high value and is received with great appreciation. On the card, Milise has written that she had a happy 3 months holiday in Tonga with her family and friends and found it very hard to return to Melbourne to University. En route, she and her father had a brief stay in New Zealand for her aunt's funeral. Milise is now very busy writing her thesis to complete her Master's degree in Theology. She expressed her thanks for all the love and hospitality she received during her visit to Sydney.

Our 1999 Scholar, MAI ZIN ZIN WAH, from Myanmar (Burma) will not be going to Singapore to commence her Scholarship at Trinity College until 1st July. Mai has written of her education, training and ministry over recent years.

After completing a B.Sc at the University of Yangon, Mai was appointed by her Archbishop as an organiser in the Religious Education & Music Department of the Church of the Province of Myanmar. This included training for Sunday School teachers in the 6 dioceses of the Province. She attended the English-Speaking Course & Basic Music Course sponsored by the Mothers' Union; Basic Health Training by YWCA; AIDS Education by Myanmar Council of Churches; Food/Fruit Preserving & Processing Training by the Women's Dept. of the Council of Churches. In 1998 she obtained her Bachelor of Religious Education from Myanmar Institute of Theology.

Earlier this year Mai was on tour for 3 months with a group of eight, giving training to children and church members in religious education. This was an arduous journey on foot, carrying their own baggage, with many mountains to climb and streams to cross. She writes that by God's grace all went well. Do uphold Mai in prayer, and we look forward to hearing more of her later in the year.

Edith Ridge, WKS Convener.

SYMPATHY for ILLUMINADA DOMINGO:

Many of us have met Illuminada Domingo, Executive Secretary of ACWC. Our condolence and loving thoughts have been sent following the death of her husband recently.

SPECIAL DAYS IN 1998:

FELLOWSHIP DAY was observed in 36 places last July. The theme was "A Message For All Seasons" was written by ~~ACW~~ ^{of ~~the Unit~~}. In most centres the liturgy was well received, the theme was considered excellent and the service well set out. The reading of the testimony of Milise Taipaliti, the 1998 Winifred Kiek Scholar, was a highlight of all services. Some efforts to add variety were - lighting of candles, banners, christian dance and singalongs.

WORLD COMMUNITY DAY Services were held in 40 centres in October, the theme being "Unity In Diversity."

The Service, written by ~~women in Venezuela~~ ^{Tasmania ACW Unit}, was interesting and well co-ordinated. Speakers stressed the need for tolerance and prayer, and the unifying effect of our faith in and love for God. All went home inspired by the warmth of the fellowship and challenged to co-operate with others in sharing our gifts. Variety was added by drama, music, ethnic choirs and speakers, puppets; each person taking part in one service was given a flower and when her part was finished she added her flower to a floral arrangement; this demonstrated that in sharing our gifts we make something beautiful.

The 1999 Themes are: Fellowship Day in July "People Reflecting God's Glory." World Community Day in October "Faith In Action."

Irene Carder, Special Days Convener.

A NEW DENOMINATION JOINS ACW:

Following the Council's decision to amend our membership requirements from 8 delegates from each denomination to "Up to 8" so that a denomination which could not appoint 8 would not be precluded from being part of ACW, we have been very pleased to have the CONGREGATIONAL FEDERATION OF NSW appoint representatives to the NSW Unit.

The two ladies appointed are Mrs Arieta Filipaina, the wife of the Moderator, and Rev Sandra Dodwell, Associate Minister at St Andrew's Congregational Church, Balmain, and we have been delighted to meet them and welcome them.

This is not really a 'new' association for ACW, as Congregational women were involved at the very beginning, and Rev Winifred Kiek was the first ordained minister in the church.

PREPARING For BEIJING PLUS FIVE:

What is Beijing Plus Five? It is the next United Nations major women's event - five years after the Beijing Fourth UN Conference on Women in 1995 - to be held in New York in June 2000.

In preparation for this, an important Regional Women's Meeting is to take place from July 8-11 at the Women's College, Sydney University. The committee organising this is a follow-on from the Non-Government Organisations Women's Forum held in Beijing last June, (which was attended by Australian women) to assess the world progress made on implementing the World Platform Of Action decided in Beijing in 1995. Following from that forum, regional women's meetings are being convened during 1999 to consider regional implementation of the Platform, establishing contacts with women in the Pacific, and secondly to re-invigorate women's networks in Australia.

Mrs Julie Brackenreg, of the Girls' Brigade, who is a member of the above committee, writes of the importance of this July meeting, which will look at the Twelve Critical Areas of Concern of the World Platform of Action, and expresses her hope that a number of ACW members will find it possible to participate. A brochure with further details may be had from Heather Reid (9746.5656) or from Julie on 9874.7442).

OLDER WOMEN'S 'WELLNESS' FORUM:

As part of the Year of Older Persons, a Forum convened by NSW Health, will be held from July 6-7 at the Women's College, Sydney University. If you are interested in sharing your experiences with other older women, this will offer an opportunity for older women to share information about their wellness initiatives, to identify examples of wellness activities across NSW, and to provide inspiration and ideas for older women, policy makers, health and community workers. For further information, Phone or Fax Jacklynn Draper on 4294.3459.

A CHANGE OF ADDRESS TO NOTE:

New address and telephone for President Elizabeth Walker are 6 Findlay Avenue, Roseville NSW 2069, Phone 9415.2603.

JUBILEE 2000:

The spirit of Jubilee is the spirit of equality, of putting right what has gone wrong; it is about God putting right all that we have caused to go wrong in the relationship between us and Him; it is about what God requires of us in order to put right all that has gone wrong in our relationships with others.

The year 2000 is a special year for Christians, reflecting the 2000th anniversary of the traditional birth of Jesus. It is a never-to-be-repeated opportunity for us to make a great celebration; a time for mutual forgiveness and reconciliation; a time for churches particularly to re-order their life for the restoration of communion.

The General Secretary of the World Council of Churches says: "...there is hope that the possibilities offered by the year 2000 for a genuinely common witness and for a renewed commitment to the unity of the church can be realised."

In NSW/ACT, the Ecumenical Council is committed to facilitating the churches to respond positively to the invitation for the celebration of the Jubilee Year to be as inclusively ecumenical as possible. One possibility is to plan, prepare and hold local ecumenical activities on the themes of the Jubilee

One particular and special project for Jubilee 2000 is to relieve the debt of the poorer countries who are enslaved by it. One billion people in the world's poorest countries are in debt from money lent to their governments in the 1970's by rich nations, which they will never be able to repay - the original loan has been paid back many times, but many are now paying interest on the interest for these loans.

Governments or dictators spent the money from the loans on lavish living or unrealistic projects - the poor rarely benefited. Then came disaster - new economic policies in the west made world interest rates rise sky high. Further disaster - prices of commodities from poorer countries fell very low, while prices of goods those countries had to buy, like oil, fertilisers, tractors etc. went up. The poorest countries fell further and further into debt. Governments paid regularly, but because of high interest rates, their overall debt began to rise up even higher than their initial loan. Most of them had to take out new loans to

service the old one, diverting much needed monies from providing for their people. According to UNICEF, some 500,000 children die weekly due to this. To encourage income, indebted poor countries have allowed richer countries to establish big businesses and exploit the country's resources e.g. logging, mining. They have encouraged migration of their people to work in richer countries, where they are often sexually or physically abused. Other effects have been indiscriminate killings of people opposed to so-called 'development'; dislocation and disempowerment of the poor; massacres of indigenous people who resist giving up their land which is their life; internal refugees or cross-border refugees; prostitution even of young children; trafficking in women; drug farming; drug addiction; slavery; sale of body organs and many many more social problems.

Almost all of these debts are controlled by more powerful governments and big international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, largely controlled by the powerful governments of the G8, the members of which are USA, UK, France, Germany, Japan, Canada, Italy and Russia. There is to be a G8 summit in mid 1999. They have the power to end all debts - the original loans have been repaid many times over.

The Jubilee 2000 Project is a campaign which hopes to become a global social movement to remit the "unpayable backlog of debt" of the poorest countries by the year 2000. It is modelled on the 18th century campaign to abolish slavery, which was led by the slaves on plantations and in the West by church women and men linking up with others across the world. Jubilee 2000 has worked with economists, business people, politicians, diplomats and aid agencies to find a practical proposal balancing the interests of both debtors and creditors to:

- ...identify the poorest, debt-burdened countries;
- ...calculate the debt of each country that could never be repaid;
- ...work out conditions on a case-by-case basis and ensure that the poor will benefit;
- ...cancel those debts by year 2000 as a one-off celebration of the millenium.

A signature campaign has been launched globally to gather 22 million signatures to present to the G8 summit in mid-1999.

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THE EXODUS FOUNDATION:

Rev Bill Crews and a band of dedicated helpers and volunteers run the Exodus Foundation at Ashfield Uniting Church.

- ...The Exodus Foundation receives NO government funding and relies solely on donations from individuals and companies;
- ...Meals are provided 6 days a week to anyone who is hungry - more than 300 meals need to be prepared each day; pots and pans have to be cleaned, the dishwasher loaded, people need to talk and have spiritual guidance; donations have to be picked up and goods delivered. The phone never stops ringing. Stress and strain on teaching staff and volunteers are enormous.
- ...Financial aid in the form of emergency relief for rent, medical expenses, payment of telephone bills etc. is offered;
- ...For those in real trouble (the Foundation currently has 5000 names on its list!) a large food parcel of tinned and packeted goods is available - more than 3 tonnes have to be sorted into parcels and given away each week;
- ...On Christmas Day, the Foundation provides 1800 meals, has 2,500 people through the premises, of whom everyone receives a gift. Last year 400 hampers were distributed to families before Christmas to help make their day a little more special.

A Special School, behind the church, under the guidance of Bill's son, Michael, has been set up to assist 11-13 year olds (Years 6-7), especially with numeracy and literacy skills. This is run with help from Macquarie University Special Education teachers and students. They always need help from volunteers willing to hear children reading. At present 20 students attend the school each morning and then return to their normal schools. The improvement in most cases has been remarkable. Many of the children have been referred by Father Chris Reilly and would otherwise have literally no future. It costs about \$3000 per child per annum and although the State Premier opened the school, Bill and Michael are struggling with a new area of State Government bureaucracy to get funding, as they are now classified as an "educational institution!"

From Exodus Foundation Annual Report.

LOVE TOKEN TO REFUGEE FAMILY:

The Strathfield/Homebush Branch of ACW were pleased to be able to give a Christmas gift of \$50 to a Sudanese refugee family who have been settled in Strathfield by the NSW Council of Churches Refugee Program, and they were overwhelmed and touchingly grateful for this token of welcome and love.

The husband, Matur Gak, is a doctor, but his qualifications are not recognised in Australia - he is working as a nursing aide. They are grateful to have been given a car (old but serviceable). Matur and his wife Elizabeth have two children - Orjok, a toddler and Deng, still a baby. They are living in a home unit in the same street as my own.

Beryl McLaughlin, Editor, and
Strathfield/Homebush Branch Rep.

SNIPPETS From THE BIBLE SOCIETY:**GIFT TO THE NATION UPDATE:**

The distribution of gift copies of the 'Jesus' Video, accompanied by the Gospel of Luke, continues to take place around Australia. In Queensland, the vision to see every home reached with the gospel, with follow-up by the local churches, has impressed church leaders and politicians - more than 100 members of their State Parliament received the gift packs, also Federal members and senators.

In Adelaide, the switchboard was jammed when a Christian Radio Station offered packs free to the first 20 callers.

In Sydney, the Jesus film was screened for many months in Hoyts cinema, and Geoff Holland of 'Student Life' says it has been an invaluable tool for reaching people from many cultures in outreach on university campuses.

SIR CLIFF AFFIRMS THE BIBLE WORK:

During his visit to Australia, Sir Cliff Richard, who is a Vice President of the British & Foreign Bible Society said: "As a strong supporter of the work of the Bible Society in England, I am delighted to know that the Bible Society in Australia is responding to key areas in the community, especially in translating and publishing the Scriptures in Aboriginal languages. Also particularly exciting is the translation project in video format for the Deaf. I hope and pray that Scriptures being prepared and published for the Sydney Olympics will make an impact on all who read them.