

Australian Church

Women



FELLOWSHIP DAY

July, 1969

Theme:

Who is My Neighbour?

ORDER OF SERVICE
FELLOWSHIP DAY, 1969

"WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?"

THEME: "WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?"

CALL TO WORSHIP:

- L. How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!
- R. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.
- L. Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?
- R. He that walketh uprightly, that speaketh the truth in his heart, that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.
- L. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.
- R. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.
- L. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
- R. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

HYMN: "Stand Up, and Bless The Lord" (Tune: Carlisle S.M.)

Stand up, and bless the Lord, Ye people of his choice;	God is our strength and song, And his salvation ours;
Stand up, and bless the Lord your God With heart and soul and voice.	Then be his love in Christ proclaimed With all our ransomed powers.
O for the living flame From his own altar brought, To touch our lips, our mind inspire, And wing to heaven our thought!	Stand up, and bless the Lord, The Lord, your God adore; Stand up, and bless his glorious name Henceforth for evermore.

PRAYER:

L. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:16.)

Let us pray—

Lord God, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God. Let our prayers rise before Thee and in Thy mercy, hear our supplications. Accept the praise of our thankful hearts and bless our time of fellowship together in the name of Him who taught us to pray

"Our Father, which art in heaven . . ."

LEADER:

How shall witness to God's goodness through Jesus Christ be made in daily living?

To emulate His life and follow His teaching is to witness indeed to Him. "And who IS my neighbour?" He was asked, following His pronouncement, "Love your neighbour as yourself." In reply to this question, He told the story which forever defines as "neighbour" anyone who stands in need, whether it be within the close circle of home and family, or within the spreading circle of community life, even within the precincts of the next church pew, and most certainly, in these demanding modern times, if it be in the remotest spot on earth!

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR? — IN THE HOME

SCRIPTURE: Mark 5: 18-19.

LEADER:

Christ, our Master, speaks to us today in the words of this scripture, and He tells us to begin our witness for Him at home.

It was a very searching question which Isaiah asked King Hezekiah following the visit of Babylonians to the palace, when he said, "What have they seen in your house?" The king made a most revealing reply. "All the things that are in my house have they seen, there is nothing among my treasures that they did not see," he answered. Truly Hezekiah was obsessed with "things". No doubt a very salutary reflection for us would be, "What do visitors to my home see?"

The people next door, the tradesmen, relatives, even members of my own family, all have some impression of the home I call mine. Am I too pre-occupied with "chores" and "things" to notice the worry lines on a loving face, the longing for a sympathetic ear and the ill-concealed pain? Is the winsomeness of Christian character expressed in my tolerance, self-control, thoughtfulness, sympathy and forgiveness? Are my efforts to establish in the home Christian ideals and the standards of morality upon which Christian society depends, a worthwhile witness? Can others see in my home a striving for the righteousness that will exalt our nation?

RESPONSIVE PRAYER:

- L. O wise and merciful Father who hast promised grace sufficient for our need, hear us now.
- R. Give us, we pray, a measure of Thy grace, that Thy strength may be made perfect in our weakness.
- L. We thank Thee for the loving example of self-sacrifice given to us in Thy Son.
- R. Grant that our love for Him may find expression in sincere concern for those close to us.
- L. Bless all the homes of this troubled world, dear Lord.
- R. Strengthen our will to stand firm in the midst of unrest and wavering beliefs.
- L. In humility, O Lord, we ask for understanding to perceive fulfilment of Thy purposes in the bewildering events of our times.
- R. Make us ready always to be used by Thy Holy Spirit, that Thy will may indeed be done — Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. AMEN.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR? — IN THE COMMUNITY

SCRIPTURE: Acts 9: 36-40.

LEADER:

For Dorcas, being good meant doing good right in the community which was her environment. The garments she sewed represented Christian neighbourliness in action in the community. In fashioning her coats and shirts she was expressing her love for Christ. "I was naked and ye clothed me," said Jesus of those who clothed his poor and destitute children. Dorcas not only thought of ways of relieving distress, she knew what she could do, and did it, and almost in spite of herself, she has become an acknowledged founder in the cause of Christian good neighbourliness in the community.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER:

- L. Accept our thanks, our Father, for the many Christian examples which have come to us down through the centuries, beginning first with our Saviour Himself.
- R. Teach us so to love others in our local communities that our lives will truly witness to our love for Him.
- L. Forgive us, O Lord, when we have neglected and buried talents that might have glorified Thee through service to others.
- R. Help us to recognize and develop the abilities which have been allotted to us in God's good grace and grant us the perception to see the needs which can be supplied through our endeavours.
- L. May grace be ours to do whatever our hands find to do, as unto the Lord. AMEN.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR? — IN THE CHURCH

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:23. John 17:1, 2, 8, 9, 11.

LEADER:

The unity of believers for which Christ prayed has as its prime purpose the acceptance by the world of Himself as Son of God, through belief in Him. Surely, if Christ's followers are ever to convince a doubting world that theirs is a gospel of goodwill, there must be evidence of that goodwill in relationships between Christians. It could be truly said of some of the first Christians, "See how they love one another!" for they displayed a care and concern for each other which made them unique in their time. They did, in fact, behave as members of one body. Paul's simple explanation of the functioning of the Christian Church is certainly just as timely today as it was when he wrote it, though it would appear to be even more warranted in these days of division. "Just as in a single human body there are many limbs and organs, all with different functions, so all of us, united in Christ, form one body, serving individually as limbs and organs to one another. The gifts we possess differ as they are allotted to us by God's grace, and must be exercised accordingly."

RESPONSIVE PRAYER:

- L. For Thy Church, O Lord, in which we find our "one-ness" with Thee and one another—
- R. We give Thee our thanks.
- L. For the hurts and offences we have caused our fellow-Christians—
- R. We humbly ask for forgiveness, O Lord.
- L. For our insensitiveness to the needs of other members of this one body, Thy Church, and our unawareness of the burdens which we could have helped to bear—
- R. Grant us Thy pardon, O Lord. Quicken our senses that our eyes may see the need and our ears hear the cry of distress.
- L. For our impatience and intolerance of other opinions and attitudes—
- R. Dear Lord, forgive. Create in each one a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us all.
- L. This we humbly pray, our Father, that the world, looking on, may say with the psalmist of old, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

HYMN: "The Church's One Foundation" (Tune: Aurelia — 7676D).

The Church's one foundation	Though with a scornful wonder
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;	Men see her sore opprest,
She is His new creation	By schisms rent asunder,
By water and the word;	By heresies distrest,
From heaven He came and sought her	Yet saints their watch are keeping,
To be His holy Bride;	Their cry goes up, "How long?"
With His own Blood He bought her,	And soon the night of weeping
And for her life He died.	Shall be the morn of song.
Elect from every nation,	Mid toil and tribulation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,	And tumult of her war,
Her charter of salvation	She waits the consummation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;	Of peace for evermore;
One holy name she blesses,	Till with the vision glorious
Partakes one holy food,	Her longing eyes are blest,
And to one hope she presses	And the great Church victorious
With every grace endued.	Shall be the Church at rest.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR? — IN THE WORLD

SCRIPTURE: John 21:17. Matthew 25:37.

LEADER:

The gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" is for ever widening. Two-thirds of the world is underfed: half the world goes to bed hungry every day: South East Asian nations have one doctor to several thousand people, while leprosy and other dread diseases are rife in lands to our near north.

Who is my neighbour?

Mass media bring the world into our very homes. From the comfort of a living-room armchair, we can look in on the suffering of Biafrans, the anguish of war-torn Vietnam, the despair of Czechoslovakia, the stark horror of earthquake in Iran, and the endless streams of Chinese refugees to Hong Kong. Who is my neighbour? It is the sufferer, whoever, wherever, whatsoever he be.

"Wherever thou hearest the cry of distress, wherever thou seest anyone brought across thy path by the chances and changes of life whom it is in thy power to help — he, stranger or enemy though he be — he is thy neighbour." (A. P. Stanley).

"How," you ask, "can I love those as unknown and different from me as the Tamil population of South India?" Love is to care, to feel the hurt as though it were one's own — "my neighbour as myself!" Infinite patience, infinite tenderness and a deep personal humility are learned only from the Good Shepherd Himself, who showed us how to care.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER:

L. In the quiet awareness of the Divine Presence here within and among us, we dedicate all that each one may be or do in loving service.

R. Accept us, we humbly pray, dear Lord.

L. Grant, O Lord, that we may clearly recognize the cry of neighbours in distress in the international turmoil of our day.

R. So direct our thoughts and actions, O God, that our "caring" may find expression in response through channels of practical Christian service.

L. Abundantly bless, we pray, all missionaries who serve in lonely and distant places as they tell the Good News of our Saviour's wonderful love for mankind. In their loneliness, cheer them; in their difficulties, strengthen them; in their problems, encourage them; in their tasks, inspire them. May the remembrance that we have them ever in prayerful thought comfort and uphold them. Hasten, we pray, the day when the knowledge of Thee shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN.

ADDRESS:

HYMN: "The Heavens Declare Thy Glory, Lord" (Tune: Alfreton L.M.).

The heavens declare Thy glory, Lord; Nor shall thy spreading Gospel rest

In every star thy wisdom shines; Till through the world thy truth has

But when our eyes behold thy word, run;

We read thy name in fairer lines. Till Christ has all the nations blest

Sun, moon, and stars convey thy praise That see the light or feel the sun.

Round the whole earth, and never Great Sun of Righteousness, arise;

stand; Bless the dark world with heavenly

So when thy truth began its race, light;

It touched and glanced on every Thy Gospel makes the simple wise,

land. Thy laws are pure, thy judgments

right.

OFFERING AND DEDICATION:

UNISON PRAYER:

O God, Whose matchless power is ever new and ever young, Who didst create all things by thy Word and art redeeming them through the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection of Thy Son, pour out Thy Spirit upon Thy Church, that with renewed faith, vision and obedience we may the more joyfully testify to Thy new creation in Christ, more selflessly serve Thy new order amidst the old, and more hopefully await the new heavens and the new earth of Thy promise, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. ("All Things New" — Uppsala, 1968). AMEN.

BENEDICTION:

"Now to the One Who can keep you from falling and set you in the presence of His glory, jubilant and above reproach, to the only God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, might and authority, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, before all time, now and for evermore!" AMEN.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION IN SMALL GROUPS:

I. IN THE HOME

- (a) Where does the real importance lie — in the performance of work necessary to maintain a smooth-running home, or in the behaviour and attitudes of the one responsible for it?
- (b) Is there justification for insisting on helping a person in spite of his declared wish to be left alone?

II. IN THE COMMUNITY

- (a) Read Matt. 5:16. Can the Christian ensure that acts of neighbourliness reflect credit on his Maker rather than on himself?
- (b) Local community projects often need practical support. It frequently happens that a Christian on being approached, finds it difficult because of many local Church obligations, to decide where real Christian responsibility lies. Discuss this situation with a view to laying down some guiding principles.

III. IN THE CHURCH

- (a) Are there limits to the Christian "neighbourliness" which members of Christ's Church might reasonably observe towards those whose expressed religious beliefs and opinions on essentials of Christian doctrine appear to be in direct opposition to one's own?
- (b) How does one distinguish between what is personal opinion or prejudice, and what is authoritative Christian teaching, and to what extent is it important to do so?

IV. IN THE WORLD

- (a) As tremendous financial support is needed to maintain all the outreach programmes now in operation in S.E. Asian countries, have you any practical suggestions for channelling of monies received, so that the Christian can see his priorities in proper perspective?
- (b) Ours has been described as a "post-Christian" era. Do you agree with this description?

The service has been prepared by the Women's Inter-Church Council of Queensland, and produced by Australian Church Women, C/- Victorian Council of Churches, 100 Flinders Street, Melbourne, 3000.

The Australian Church Women was established by the Australian Council of Churches, to co-ordinate the work of women in the member churches throughout Australia. It operates through the State Units and prepares two services annually, Fellowship Day on the fourth Wednesday of July, and World Community Day on the fourth Friday of October. The Australian Church Women encourages support of the Women's World Day of Prayer, and promotes the Fellowship of the Least Coin. Through the Committee on Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, it is linked with the Department of this name in the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

The offering taken at this Service will be used for the work of the Australian Church Women, and in particular the Winifred Kiek Scholarship. Money collected should be sent to the treasurer of the State Unit in your own State.