



AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN "women at work"

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From Eileen Dingle -

Now we are back at home again, taking up the threads of our life, after the brief sojourn at Deaconess House for the National Committee meeting of Australian Church Women. The coming together of women from all States, the sharing of experience, the stimulation of seeing other points of view in discussion and debate, the enlightenment of Bible Study and the pre-view of special studies being undertaken by the Australian Council of Churches have all contributed to the enrichment of mind and spirit. It is to be hoped that we all can share with others some of the insights that have been gained. The evaluation forms which were completed by those who attended will provide a basis, perhaps, for the planning of future meetings.

ASIAN CHURCH WOMEN'S CONFERENCE - At the National Committee Meeting Mrs. Olga Badger reported on the recent meeting of the Committee held in Hong Kong, which she and Mrs. Bailey attended. The working committee had the responsible task of drafting a new Constitution and By-laws. In the By-laws the duties of the Chairman, (Mrs. Esther Bautista), Secretary (Mrs. Kath. Davies) and Executive Secretary (Mrs. Shanti Solomon) are to be clearly outlined. Work on the Constitution will continue by correspondence with the wider membership of the Planning Committee and it is hoped that the final draft will be ready to present to the 5th Asian Conference when it meets in 1974. The theme for this Conference will be "Go and do thou likewise". Luke 10:37. It was disappointing to receive the news that our invitation for the Conference to meet in Australia in 1974 could not be accepted because of the high cost of fares primarily and accommodation costs within Australia. If we are ever to be the host country it seems necessary that Australian Church Women should raise funds to subsidise fares and other costs. It will depend on just how important we feel it is to have women from Asian countries to visit our land.

WINIFRED KIEK SCHOLAR 1972 - It was a source of satisfaction to all that Miss Terani Alsake was able to attend the Friday sessions of the National Committee meeting. Terani has made a good start with her studies at the Training College, Kangaroo Point, Brisbane - her course is a demanding one but she will have the opportunity of visiting other States during vacation periods. When Terani arrived in Australia she was met by some of our N.S.W. members in Sydney and by the officers of A.C.W. and Miss Violet Sampa in Brisbane. Violet is taking every opportunity to make Terani feel at home and to show her about the city.

WOMEN IN THE NEWS - Mrs. Alvin Pfeiffer, president of the World Federation of Methodist Women visited Australia during January. In speaking to a press representative she said that women had a great role to play in the ecumenical movement. "They should enter ecumenical conversations at every level." Mrs. Pfeiffer voiced her sympathy with movement in America to have all women styled as Ms. not Miss or Mrs. and stated that men and women have to have increasing respect for women who find it their life's work to have a career. (An interesting note is that in Brisbane recently a married couple have taken the names of Mr. What and Ms. Who. - I understand the pronunciation of Ms is Merz.)

It was interesting to read of Glenith, wife of the Indian cricketer of the Rest of the World team, that she is a devout Christian. The Bedis live in a small flat in New Delhi and Glenith does the housework and washing by hand. Her husband works for the State Bank of India. "After a while you begin to accept the poverty as natural", Glenith said. "Even if you were rich you couldn't help all the poor and we are only average middle-class people. You live life just as you do here, you struggle to make ends meet."

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A Sports writer admitted "For this year our sportswomen, led by swimming superstar Shane Gould and tennis queen Evonne Goolagong, have done far more than our men to keep Australia on the map in international sport." Shane Gould, at 15, must now rate as about the greatest athlete Australia has produced. Shane's successes were listed and then the article continues "Even though Shand has dominated the Australian sports scene, we cannot overlook the dazzling form of Evonne Goolagong Evonne gave tennis something that it has needed for years .. a big smile and an absence of tantrums." On the same plane of sports perfection as the two younger girls is squash champion, Heather McKay, who is so far above the rest of the women in the world that it seems unfair for her to play them. Pam Ryan and Raelene Boyle were also mentioned and that article concluded "So it looks as if Australia's reputation as a great sporting nation will continue as long as we have women."

Congratulations to Evonne on her award in the New Year's Honours' List.

MONNA LOUISA'S service was highlighted in the Brisbane "Courier-Mail". For 13 months she has distributed containers of coffee and mountains of sandwiches and cakes to unfortunates around the streets from 5.30 a.m. every day. She has 12 regular stops where she serves steaming coffee from a tray attachment on her car door. Initially she had two women who assisted with the preparations, but she did the rounds alone. Now she takes one helper with her. There are 30 people she can call on who help in some way, forming the St. John's Cathedral Coffee Brigade. Why does she do it? She said "I want to show them that they are really cared for by someone. Christ called me to do it and I feel honoured."

MRS. ROSALIE MONKS, who lives at Essendon, Victoria, was the girl who played "Jedda" in the Australian film. Today she is foster-mother to five wards of the State - they call her Auntie. Speaking of her busy life she said, "I don't know how I do it, but somehow I manage. Life is hectic, but never dull - and loads of fun." Mrs. Monks works with the Victorian Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs in a public-relations capacity. She is an entertaining, witty speaker with a grasp of what her people need. She is concerned for her people and their problems. (Church groups in Victoria may be able to invite her to address them.)

LINDEN GILLBANK, now Mrs. David Williams, with her husband is going to Malaysia for two years, probably to teach. They are going under the Australian Volunteers Abroad scheme. Linden is a member of the Victorian Society for Social Responsibility in Science, a group which provides a forum for scientists concerned about the application of science to society. She is encouraged when groups like Rotary ask for speakers. (An invitation from Church groups would also be an encouragement, I guess.)

Seventy-one year old ELSIE FEDORA ANDERSON made the headlines by sitting for the Higher School Certificate examinations in Melbourne - sparking off some controversy as to whether older people should compete for places in Universities.

FROM THE MAIL BAG - The Annual Report of the S.A. Unit of A.C.C. made interesting reading. The five council meetings were well attended - speakers being Mrs. Kain (His Holiness the Pope's visit to Sydney), Mrs. R. Wilkins (Annual meeting of A.C.C. Sydney, 1971), Mrs. Marion Giles (Volunteers at Glenside), Mrs. Bache (Christian Family Service Centre) and Mrs. Pauline Crosby (Volunteer Work at the Royal Adelaide Hospital).

This account of their Hospital and Home Visiting Scheme (presumably for the "Asian Focus" article) may inspire other Units to engage in similar activities -

In February, 1968, a very significant thing happened for church women in South Australia. An ecumenical seminar was held in Adelaide to discover what these women could do together that would be of real service to the community. The conference was sponsored by the Women's Inter-Church Council of South Australia, the state branch of Australian Church Women. But it was not confined to representatives of member churches and was attended by women from the Roman Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Churches of Christ, Salvation Army, Anglican and Reformed Church of Jesus Christ denominations, the Y.W.C.A. and the Girls' Brigade.

From this meeting evolved what is now a growing, systematic scheme of hospital and domiciliary care provided by a core of volunteers. A questionnaire was sent to hospitals and nursing homes asking

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for their ideas about the proposed scheme and the result was encouraging - "responsible people who are trained and co-operate with the staff will be welcomed". It was obvious that three needs would have to be met before the plan could succeed -

1. Co-operation with and co-ordination of existing hospital visiting schemes.
2. Training for hospital and domiciliary care.
3. The scheme must be of real service.

General training courses were started in September, 1968 and the five-week course covered general-hospital visiting, co-operation with hospital staff, geriatric, psychiatric and domiciliary care. They were given by two hospital chaplains who are trained counsellors. Since then 1400 women have done this training in the city and country centres.

With the co-operation of medical staff and social workers two volunteer co-ordinators were appointed in 1971, to the Royal Adelaide Hospital and the Glenside Psychiatric Hospital. About 75 volunteers are already rostered for regular duties and the two co-ordinators work closely with the social work department. The service includes domiciliary care such as temporary cooking and housework, driving outpatients to and from hospital, and caring for in-patients by writing letters, playing games, and taking them for walks.

150 volunteers have also done remedial therapy courses and are now all working in hospitals or geriatric nursing homes teaching simple handicrafts. The latest development has been the request from the S.A. Council for the Ageing and the Department of Health for a course in diversional therapy (including Music through Movement) to counteract 'institutional neurosis' in geriatric hospitals and this is to begin in February, 1972.

MISS PAT MYLREA, who sent greetings to the National Committee, returned to the Malmaluan Training College in late February to her position as lecturer under the United Church Assembly.

MISS NANCY ANDERSON, who has served for several years at Malmaluan returned to Australia during the month and is to take up a position in Melbourne at the Presbyterian D.C.E. office.

MRS. JOHNSON of Lae (PNG) spoke of the Christian Women's Fellowship there and of the offer of two talented dressmakers to share their methods and skills with the members. Meetings are attended by Lutheran, Baptist, Salvation Army and United Church Women. The meetings are in English and are attended by Papuan and New Guinean women who speak English as well as Europeans. The committee has been busy preparing for the observance of the Women's World Day of Prayer. There will be an evening service in English (attended by indigenous women and students as well as Europeans) and morning services in Pidgin, at three different centres to enable women to walk to the centre nearest their home.

From TENNANT CREEK comes the news that United Church women are pleased to have the co-operation and participation of Anglicans and Catholics in religious education in schools. They are planning to write a newsletter this year and will send a copy to A.C.W.'s Mrs. Ruth Lane.

Mrs. Lane would like to share with you this piece from her scrap book - A MOTHER SUPERIOR'S PRAYER

Lord, Thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older and will some day be old. Keep me from getting talkative, and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion.

Release me from the craving to try to straighten out everybody's affairs.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details - give me wings to get me to the point.

I ask for grace enough to listen to the tales of others' pains. Help me to endure them with patience;

but seal my lips on my own aches and pains - they are increasing and my love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally it is possible that I may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet; I do not want to be a saint - some of them are hard to live with -

but a sour old woman is one of the crowning works of the devil.

Make me thoughtful, but not moody; helpful, but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all - but Thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.