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CONTRIBUTIONS to ACW NEWS are eagerly sought. Please send them to The Publication Editor, Edith Ridge, 54 New Line Road, West Pennant Hills. NSW 2125

If you enjoy reading ACW NEWS, pass it on to a friend and share our Good News.

Deadline for the May Issue, 8th April, 2004. Please.

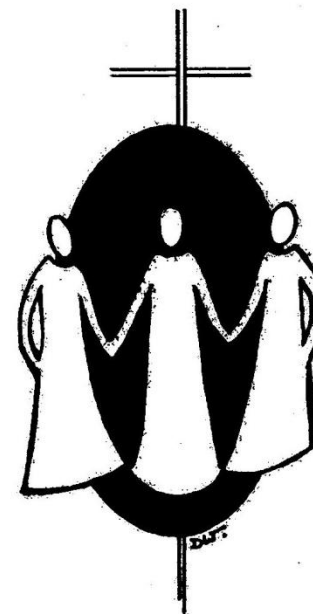


AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN ACW NEWS

FEBRUARY 2004

"Forward Together in Christ."

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain. Psalm 127



Australian Church Women seeks to unite Christian women across denominational boundaries, to promote peace, understanding and unity through faith and love in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR to you all from your National Executive members. As we commence our work, we know that you too are about to commence a new year and we wish you well in it.

Welcome to our readers to this first copy of ACW NEWS for the term of office of the NSW team.

We are grateful to Sr Dorothy Woodward, rsj for the beautiful theme picture on our cover. This will be our 'logo' for the next two years.

Sr Dorothy Woodward, rsj, is currently working in the RE department of the Maitland-Newcastle Catholic Schools Office as Secondary Schools Religious Studies Advisor.

From as far back as her memory goes, art and life have been inseparable for Dorothy. Art has been, for her, a form of communicating and interpreting reality, discovering connections and exploring ideas. Liturgical Art in particular has led her to explore the use of symbols, to move out of the world of words, to experiment with universal, as well as Australian, images. Dorothy has created over forty lead-light windows in hospitals, chapels, schools and Churches throughout Australia. She has worked extensively in the designing of logos and school crests as well as liturgical banners.

The following prayer seems right for this time of the year. It is taken from the Working Papers of the ACW National Conference held last October. Author not acknowledged.

A PRAYER OF BLESSINGS FOR THE FUTURE

May God, our Leader, guide each pilgrim step we take on our journey: may God's vision remain clear before us:

may God's presence be strong support beneath us;
may God's perseverance be our continuing initiative,
and God's joy the warmth of the heart within us.

May Christ, our Companion, sharing life and love with his friends, renew our commitment to serve him,

and empower our ministry – however and wherever it may unfold.

May the Spirit, our Sustainer, enhance our talents and deepen our faith, and give to others the humility to receive and use our gifts with joy. May

God, the Holy Trinity, continue to bless us,
so that we may be blessings to all we meet on our journey,
this day, and the next day, and all the days of our life. Amen.

INTRODUCING :-- Our National President, Nancy McLaren.

Nancy is a Major in the Salvation Army and lives in Balmain, a suburb of Sydney, with her husband Phillip. One of the Salvation Army's representatives to the NSW Unit of ACW, Nancy is currently the Convener for Fellowship of the Least Coin.

Some of her background includes this information. After two years of intensive training for ministry from 1973-1975, Nancy, Phillip and their three sons served in North Queensland for seven years; at Clermont, Townsville and Gladstone.

There followed three years service in Sydney, ministering with Chaplains and care workers in western Sydney before another fourteen years as Church leaders in Lismore, NSW and in Rockhampton, Albion and Carina, in Queensland.

Moved to Sydney in 2001 to be co-ordinator of the Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory Child Sponsorship Department. Additional appointment is work as Territorial Secretary for the Silver Star Fellowship (co-ordinating work in caring for the parents of ordained Salvation Army officers). Nancy's and Phillip's three sons are married and they have two small grandchildren.

YOUR NATIONAL EXECUTIVE 2003- 2005

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| President | Major Nancy McLaren |
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| Secretary | Mrs Isabel Hewitt |
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| Special Days | Major Eileen Holley |
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| Publication Editor | Mrs Edith Ridge |
| Social Justice Issues Convener | Mrs Jean Porteous. |

ACW NATIONAL CONFERENCE, October 2003.

This report is adapted from Isabel Hewitt's account, printed in NEWSETTE November 2003. Used with permission.

The Conference venue, *Swanleigh*, is located in a rural setting on the upper reaches of the Swan River in Perth. The spacious grounds made it easy to walk for exercise, especially early in the morning. Accommodation enabled the Unit groups to be housed together, and for five days we coped comfortably in closer living than we are used to at home. The communal lounges were invaluable as places where for short periods of time we could discuss seriously, joke, socialise over tea, coffee and slice, catch up briefly on world news or give support to one another in prayer.

Meal times gave us the opportunity to mix with interstate people, as well as to share in the really appetizing meals prepared for us.

Devotions led by the State Units and National Executive provided inspiration, morning and evening.

The Bible Studies presented by Rev Eira Clapton considered how community as God's household of life is where all contribute by giving and receiving. We were reminded that God loves everyone and we are expected to do the same as we share love in community. Her other focus was on community with the earth. To lessen consumption of resources and improve sustainability she suggested we live every day as though we will live forever. To set the scene for our sharing in and as community, the National Executive used the idea of an 'Agape' or fellowship meal. This is an ancient tradition of the Church, followed by the Iona Community in Scotland, whose Service was adapted for our use.

Conference participants were organised into Interest Groups, formed around Photography, Computers, Travel, Family History, Books and Reading, Grandparenting, Music, Puzzles, Handicrafts and Interest in Organisations. In this way, we were grouped beyond our State groupings. A facilitator from W.A. Unit was assigned to each group.

Special guests at the Conference were *Wong-Wei Yin (Christina)* from Asian Church Women's Conference in Hong Kong, who came on a Winifred Kiek Fellowship, and *Monique Crabtree* from W.A., one of the Winifred Kiek Scholars for 2003.

Business sessions were conducted using consensus voting, a method which seeks to arrive at agreement while ensuring that people who differ from the majority feel that their voice has been heard.

A number of resolutions were directed at clarifying and/or correcting the Constitution and Guidelines. Now, "Honouring Australian Church Women" as the new title should ensure that the Bursary Book is freed

from the problem of whether women can be recognised in their lifetime. Our great day of 'liberation' was a welcome break in the city of Perth. The Governor of W.A. hosted conference members at Government House, though unfortunately, his wife was ill. We enjoyed morning tea on the terrace, overlooking the lovely gardens, as well as viewing the public rooms. The floral arrangements were eye-catching and beautiful.

We were then 'let loose' in the city before the Ecumenical Service in Perth Wesley Church. State Unit banners were carried into the church. Highlights of the service included the singing of the choir, the organ, and the challenge given by the Reverend Bev Fabb in her address calling us to respond to the needs of our neighbours.

The Conference Dinner was a pleasant affair with great entertainment from four charming woman singers and a young man on the keyboard and piano accordion.

We came away from Perth with the feeling that there is much to be done, not just in preparation for the next Conference in 2005 (the responsibility of the new Executive based in NSW) but in implementing the decisions just taken (the responsibility of all Units.)

The small team which organised the Perth Conference so capably is congratulated for their hard work and for the hospitality they afforded us.

WINIFRED KIEK SCHOLARSHIP NEWS.

The Winifred Kiek Scholarship Trustees have worked hard and long to assess the applications received from the Pacific Area for the 2004 Scholarship. They have chosen that of *Deaconess Mereani Dinaeika Ragueu*, submitted by the Methodist Church of Fiji. Mereani is 37 years old and a Deaconess/Social Worker. She will do a 24-week course of study in Australia, at "Project Respect" at Fitzroy in Melbourne, commencing in February, 2004. Remember her in prayer as she prepares for and commences this course.

News of 2003 Scholars, *Susan Liersch* and *Monique Crabtree*. Susan and her husband are ministering with defence force trainees at Wagga Wagga NSW. She paid a visit to the ACT Unit while in Canberra and the members very much enjoyed meeting her.

Monique was in W.A. for 6 weeks and attended the National Gathering of Churches of Christ Women. She accepted the task of stand-in

speaker at the last minute, with sessions over 4 days on the theme "God's Woman For Today- Where To From Here?"

She asks for our continued prayer for balance of time with studies and family, health, protection etc. as do all our scholars, past and present.

Adapted from Judith Cayser's article in Newsette November 2003. Used with permission.

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

We congratulate and welcome Eunice Reidy Victoria, Mollie Jean Hunt, Queensland and Evonne Sullivan A.C.T. who were accepted after nomination from their respective Units to be National Life Members.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S COALITION

ACW is a member of this Committee and has appointed Jean Hambley President of ACT Unit to be our delegate. She replaces Rev Lee Edwards. ACW places on record its thanks to Lee for her contribution on our behalf during her term.

Look for reports from Jean on the Coalition meetings from time to time in ACW NEWS.

SYMPATHY

We announce with regret the untimely death of World Day of Prayer State Secretary, W.A. *Mrs Jannice Graham*. Jannice was a delegate to our National Conference in October and made a fine contribution there.

Whilst holidaying in South Australia with her husband, she suffered a massive heart attack on 31st. October. Australian Church Women extends to her husband Alex, to her family and to her friends in WDP and ACW, our sincere and deep sympathy.

MY HIGHLIGHTS OF CONFERENCE

- * Catching up with old friends. (I missed Conference 2001 in Adelaide, so had extra 'catching-up' to do.)
- * The lovely Worship Centre in the conference hall, with its charming display of someone's precious Hummel figures.
- * The Prayer Room, with its lovely posters and reflective music.
- * The Remembrance Tree.
- * Phillis Dolling's Morning News and weather forecasts. And her catchy "words for the day".

* The colour and perfume of the roses in the public rooms of Government House. The rose is well-named Fragrant Cloud.

* The 'freedom' of the leisurely walk through Perth and the company over lunch. (My special thanks, South Australia.)

* The beautiful organ music and the singing by the members of the choir, WASIMH "With a Song in My Heart".

* The Bible studies and the address at the Ecumenical Service, reported elsewhere.

* Meeting the special visitors to Conference.

* The amazing entertainment at the Conference Dinner.

* The simple, but moving Installation of the Incoming National Executive.

* Receiving my 'stone' from Phillis Dolling as she handed ACW NEWS on to me.

* The Agape Meal.

* The fun and fellowship in our houses and over meals.

* The good humour as we all learned a new way of doing business through consensus.

* The bitter-sweet farewells as we all turned towards home.

CONFERENCE 2005

The ink is barely dry on the Minutes of one National Conference before we are turning our thoughts to the next one!

For all those people who enjoyed the Perth Conference and to those who missed out, we issue a warm invitation to you to *plan now* to attend National Conference 2005 in Sydney.

The dates are Monday 10 October to Friday 14 October 2005, at the Salvation Army Conference Centre, at Collaroy. Well-sited at one of Sydney's beautiful Northern Beaches, this Conference Centre promises first-class accommodation.

More details will be available during the year, but take a note of the dates and venue and promise yourself a time of inspiration and fellowship with ACW members from across Australia.