

AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN



BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT



OUR BURDENS ARE SHARED

FELLOWSHIP DAY

JULY 1983

CALL TO WORSHIP: *Come unto Me, all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn
from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will
find rest for your souls.*

HYMN 500 (A.H.B.) Tune: Vox Dilecti (DCM)

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, O weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad.
I found in Him a resting place, and He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Behold, I freely give
The living water, thirsty one, stoop down and drink and live."
I came to Jesus and I drank of that life-giving stream:
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "I am this dark world's light:
Look unto Me, your morn shall rise, and all your day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found in Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk till travelling days are done.

LEADER: How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to me?

PEOPLE: I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call on the name
of the Lord.
I will fulfil my vows to the Lord, now, in the presence of
all His people.

LEADER: PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING.

VOICE: Jesus called His twelve disciples together, and sent them
out, saying: Go and preach. The Kingdom of Heaven is near
.. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, drive out
demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

LEADER: Even as we praise God for His love and care for us in our
own personal needs, we feel a stirring in our hearts for
others who are being buffeted by life's storms.

PEOPLE: Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the
law of Christ.

LEADER: What is the law of Christ?

PEOPLE: This is the new commandment I give you: Love one another. As
I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will
know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.

LEADER: WHERE DO WE BEGIN THIS MINISTRY OF LOVE AND BURDEN SHARING?

PEOPLE: If anyone says 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

FAMILY
REPRES.: There are many burdens in the families of today: Financial burdens, unemployment or stresses of overwork; varying standards and misunderstanding between generations; the pressures of increasing age, on one hand, and the concerns of younger independence, on the other; the intrusion of media influence, the dangers of peer pressure, the lack of communication; the abandonment of marriage and parental responsibilities; the daily whirl, the frustrations, the emptiness, the heaviness of heart ...

PEOPLE: Live in harmony with one another. Be sympathetic, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil, or insult with insult, but with blessing.

CHURCH
REPRES.: There are burdens in the Church family too. Individuals in crisis ... Groups in tension ... Discouraged leaders ...

PEOPLE: Therefore encourage one another and build each other up. Respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord. Hold them in highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. Warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

LEADER: Are we not also commanded to love our enemies?

PEOPLE: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? If you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others?

ETHNIC
REPRES.: A person may be an enemy because of ignorance, and the suspicion and fear that ignorance brings. A person may become an enemy because of hurt, injustice and misunderstanding. A person may be actively hostile to all that's good and godly because his own ways are evil. Every enemy carries a burden of hate that can only be lifted by good will and good works - and God's grace.

PEOPLE: Remember this, whoever turns a sinner away from his error will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

VOICE: Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

SOLO or 'Music - Silent Meditation'

LEADER: TO WHAT EXTENT THEN ARE WE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS MINISTRY OF BURDEN-SHARING?

PEOPLE: I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

WORLD
REPRES.: The whole world is throbbing with pain, crushed under its load.

Thousands of emaciated children gaze blankly at us from our television screens, literally dying of hunger before our eyes, wilting in the arid deserts where water is treasured by the cupful.

In our bounteous land, hundreds of unemployed or under-privileged queue for food vouchers, or scrummage through opportunity shops, or skimp to support a family from one welfare cheque to the next.

Everywhere, world over, are the sick, the aged, the handicapped, the victims of disasters. Frightened, frustrated, and in countries like India, fatalistic and hopeless. In so many countries, too, people languish in prison, at the whim of oppressive governments, some for their faith, some for their works of mercy, some for their fight for freedom and justice. But we, we have food in abundance if we would only share it. We have healing knowledge if we would use it without profit. We have the power of freedom if we had the courage to express it. And we have the love of God, the Good News of Life, if we would only obey His command and be His witnesses, from here to the ends of the earth.

PEOPLE: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth.

VOICE: Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

HYMN 532 (A.H.B) Tune: Germany (LM) Fulda 137.

Where cross the crowded ways of life, where sound the cries of
race and clan
Above the noise of selfish strife, we hear your voice, O Son of man

In haunts of wretchedness and need, on shadowed thresholds dark
with fears,
From paths where hid the lures of greed, We catch the vision of
your tears.

From tender childhood's helplessness, from woman's grief, man's
burdened toil,
From famished souls, from sorrow's stress, your heart has never
known recoil.

O Master, from the mountain side, make haste to heal these hearts of
pain,
Among these restless throngs abide: O tread the city's streets
again.

Till sons of men shall learn Your love and follow where Your feet
have trod,
Till glorious from Your heaven above shall come the city of our
God.

ADDRESS/DISCUSSION

OFFERING - The Winifred Kiek Scholarship

LEADER: YET THERE ARE GREATER BURDENS THAN THESE THAT WE SHOULD SHARE.
THEY ARE SPIRITUAL BURDENS: THE BURDENS OF OUR LORD HIMSELF!
THE HEARTACHE OF GOD FOR THE SOULS OF MEN!

VOICE: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone
them sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your
children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings
but you were not willing ...

When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because
they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd
Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but
the workers are few ..."

PEOPLE: Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all .. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, and He has given to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors.

LEADER: We must enter, also, into His prayer burden for the perfecting of the saints.

PEOPLE: ... For those who will believe in me: That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in Me and I am in You, May they also be in us. .. That the love You have for Me may be in them and that I myself may be in them ...

(short pause for silent prayer)

LEADER: And, above all else, we must yearn for, and live for the ultimate glory of God.

PEOPLE: Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour, and power, for you created all things, and by Your will they were created.

(short pause for silent prayer)

VOICE: Could you not watch with Me one hour?
Carry each other's burdens and you will fulfil the law of Christ.

LEADER: BUT HOW? HOW CAN WE TAKE UPON OUR HEARTS SUCH BURDENS AS THESE? AS PAUL CRIED LONG AGO, "WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?"

PEOPLE: By love, serve one another. Live by the Spirit, be led by the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love .. God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given to us.

LEADER: By the power of the Spirit our burdens are shared!

HYMN 322 (A.H.B.) Tune: St. Clements (9.8.9.8.)

O Breath of life, come sweeping through us,
Revive your church with love and power;
O Breath of life, come cleanse, renew us,
And fit your church to meet this hour.

O Wind of God, come bend us, break us,
Till humbly we confess our need;
Then in your tenderness remake us,
Revive, restore: For this we plead.

O Breath of love, come breathe within us,
Renewing thought and will and heart:
Come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,
Revive your church in every part.

LEADER: Let us pray for the glory of God,
for the salvation of men,
for the social needs of the world,
and for our own deepest personal needs.
They are all included in the prayer our Lord taught us:

TOGETHER: Our Father Who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name ..
AMEN!

LEADER: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and
the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. AMEN.

SCRIPTURES USED IN TEXT, AS THEY OCCUR:

Matt. 11:28,29; Ps. 116:12-14; Matt. 10:1,8; Gal. 6:2; John 13:34;
1 John 4:20,21; 1 Pet. 3:8,9; 1 Thess. 5:11-14; Matt. 5:44,46,47;
Jam. 5:20; Matt. 25:37,40; 1 John 3:16-18; Matt. 23:37;
Matt. 9:36,37; 2 Cor. 5:14,15,20; John 17:20,21; Rev. 4:11;
Mark 14:37; 2 Cor. 2:16; Gal. 5:13,16,18,22; Rom 5:5

(All scripture quoted is from the New International Version of the
Bible, copyrighted 1978 by New York International Bible Society,
published by Hodder and Stoughton, used by permission.)

Prepared by the VICTORIAN LAPTIST WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESENTATION:

LEADER to speak from side lectern; VOICE to be placed apart and if possible, from a higher position, e.g. pulpit.

A CENTRAL TABLE and chairs provided for the various "representatives" and their tokens, e.g. Family - apron; Church - S.S. material and Bible; Ethnic - aboriginal artifact or cultural item; World - globe or opened atlas; Spiritual - upright Cross, higher or larger than the other items. Representatives could use leader's microphone, then move to place token on table, before being seated.

ALL READERS should seek to enter into the burdens of those they represent, and to express this in attitude and tone.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION (If required):

1. Is there a tendency for Christians to become over-dependent on others in times of crisis? To what extent should we bear our own burdens? (See Gal. 6:4)
2. Is burden-sharing the responsibility of individual Christians, or the Church as a group?
3. In what practical ways can Christians/Church help to bear national burdens, e.g. economic depression, technological change, corruption, armaments, race, etc.?
4. How important is Social Justice in the Church's mandate? How does it relate to evangelism, witness and worship?
5. How does the Spirit equip us to bear our own and other's burdens? (Personal testimonies)

All offerings and donations to Australian Church Women should be forwarded through your State Treasurer.