

AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN

Report of Consultation - Sydney

MARCH 17-18, 1964

ARRANGED BY THE
INTERIM COMMITTEE

c/o 3rd Floor
511 Kent Street
SYDNEY.

This Report is produced in two sections - (1) Proceedings and (2) Recommendations.

Recommendations are forwarded only to the official members and organizations as they have as yet to go before the Interim Committee and then to the Australian Council of Churches.

We will be publishing a NEWSLETTER later giving details of the new developments of AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN.

Mrs. M.G. Wyllie, Convener.

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RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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PARTICIPANTS

Convener: Mrs. B.R. Wyllie

Interim Committee: Head Deaconess M. Andrews
Mrs. S. M. Barrett
Mrs. J. F. Dey
Mrs. H. J. Lilley
Mrs. S. McPhee
Mrs. D. J. A. Verco

Denominational Women's

Organizations:

Methodist: Mrs. F. Latham, alt for Mrs. W.F Hamblly
Presbyterian:

Mrs. A. Dugan and Mrs. F. Hanlin
alt. for Mrs. A. Christie Johnson.

Congregational:

Mrs. I. Haynes

Mrs. Mason, alt. for Mrs. Haynes.

Greek Orthodox:

Mrs. Doratis

Armenian Apostolic:

Mrs. M. Grenville

Mrs. H. Mackerdich

State Women's Inter-Church

Councils:

South Australia: Mrs. E.A. Pitman

Mrs. E.S. Playford

Victoria: Mrs. T.H. Coates

Mrs. Colonel Saunders

Queensland: Mrs. F.G. Dennis

N.S.W.: Mrs. B. Montgomerie

Lt-Col. H. Cross

Australian Council of Churches:

Rev. B.R. Wyllie, President, A.C.C.

Rev. H.L. Perkins, General Secretary, A.C.C.

Secretary: Miss Thelma Skillier.

Apologies were received from Mrs. L.M. Williams and Mrs. Brig. Baker, members of the Interim Committee.

PROGRAMME

TUESDAY:

- 12.30pm Lunch at Wesley College
1.45 Prayers in Wesley College Chapel led by the President
of the Australian Council of Churches -
The Rev. B. R. Wyllie.
2.00 Welcome
Introduction of Programme and Procedure of the Consultation.
Appointment of Drafting Committee.
(Drafting Committee met after evening session.)
Statement of steps leading up to the Consultation
- Mrs. B.R. Wyllie, Convener of the Interim Committee.
Relation of the Australian Council of Churches and
Australian Church Women.
- Rev. H.L. Perkins, General Secretary of the Australian
Council of Churches.
3.30 Afternoon Tea.
4.00 Relation of Australian Church Women to the Department on
the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and
Society of the World Council of Churches.
- Mrs. B.R. Wyllie, member of the WCC Department and
member of the WCC Central Committee.
6.00 Dinner at Deaconess House.
7.00 Report from the Victorian Women's Inter-Church Council.
- Mrs. Colonel Saunders, Secretary.
Presentation on the "Grass Roots".
- Panel.
General review and discussion on programme and publications.
9.15 Prayers - Mrs. D.J.A. Verco.

WEDNESDAY:

- Morning Session held at the ACC's Meeting Room, 511 Kent St.
Sydney.
9.30am Prayers - Head Deaconess M. Andrews.
9.45 Report on the Singapore Situation Conference (Joint Action
for Mission)
- Mrs. T.H. Coates member of the Australian delegation.
The Fellowship of the Least Coin.
- Mrs. T.H. Coates.
10.45 Morning Tea.
11.00 General Discussion on Constitution and Finance.
1.00 Lunch at Wesley College.
2.00 Recommendations to the Interim Committee.
3.45 Closing Prayers - Mrs. T.H. Coates.
4.00 Afternoon Tea.

WELCOME AND PROCEDURE:

Mrs. Wyllie (in the chair) welcomed the participants to the Consultation and to Wesley College and outlined the programme of the meeting.

Mrs. Wyllie said that the Consultation would have no legislative powers but would be able to make recommendations to the Interim Committee and in turn the Interim Committee would make recommendations to the Executive of the Australian Council of Churches.

The aim of the Consultation was to provide an opportunity for a thorough discussion of Australian Church Women by representative church women. It was an opportunity for sharing views and insights and for raising queries and problems.

The Interim Committee had been feeling its way slowly and had appreciated the correspondence received from various individuals and groups. It was true to say that the Interim Committee had already faced many of these questions. It was because of this that the Committee felt that the time had come for this Consultation with a larger and more representative group.

Some groups in the States had made definite recommendations and suggestions and had raised queries. The representatives of those groups were asked to bring these matters to the attention of the Consultation at the appropriate time.

The Interim Committee suggested that there be a Drafting Committee to meet during the consultation to assist in the drafting of the recommendations.

Mrs. Wyllie concluded that the Interim Committee hoped this would be an Ecumenical experience with a deepening appreciation of the contribution of our different churches and a greater awareness of the reality of our membership in Christ's Church.

The meeting agreed that the following be the Drafting Committee:

Mrs. Joan Coates; Mrs. J.F. Dey and Mrs. B.R. Wyllie.

GREETINGS:

Greetings were received from South Australia and Queensland:

From South Australia

The Greeting we have chosen to bring you from South Australia is both ancient and modern.

In St. John's Gospel we find Jesus in the hours prior to His Crucifixion praying this prayer:

'I pray for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, because they belong to Thee. I am to stay no longer in the world, but they are still in the world; and I am on my way to Thee. Father, protect by the power of Thy name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are one.'

Never in the history of the Christian Church has this need for unity been more strongly felt and yet we are reminded in Ecclesiastes that: 'To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under Heaven. A time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted.' We who are privileged to live in so vast a Continent as Australia realize that God's timing is not the same for us all. The sun rises in the East, and sets in the West, shines on us all at God's own time, but not at the same time. God has His plans for us. God's timing is always right. May our timing always be God's timing.

From Queensland:

Isaiah 44: 8.

'Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? Ye are even my witnesses.'

(Mrs. A.G. Ashton, President.)

STEPS LEADING TO THE CALLING OF THE CONSULTATION

- Mrs. B.R. Wyllie, Convener of the Interim Committee.

It is almost 15 years since a Liaison Committee with the WCC's Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women was formed in Australia. The Reverend Winefred Kiek was very much involved in this work.

In 1960 during the National Conference of Australian Churches a meeting was called by Mrs. Coates of women interested in denominational and inter-church women's groups. This resolution was passed:

"We express our interest in the World Council of Churches and hope that women of the Christian Churches of Australia may be increasingly able to participate in its activities."

In 1962 at the Annual Meeting of the Australian Council of Churches held at "Gilbulla" it was resolved to set up an investigating Committee - the resolution reads:

"That (a) a commission be appointed by the Executive to examine the possibility of some kind of relationship with women's inter-church councils in the various States and with women's denominational commonwealth-wide federations, and report back to the Executive for further examination and implementation.

(b) the commission review the constitution and activity of the United Church Women of the USA, and its relation to the NCC of the USA."

At the Annual Meeting of the Australian Council of Churches held the following year (1963) the following resolution was passed:

"That the establishment of Australian Church Women in accordance with the report be authorized and that the Committee to investigate women's work be re-appointed and nominate to the Executive the National Committee of Australian Church Women."

From the beginning the Interim Committee has stressed three points:-

- (1) The aim should be to encourage ecumenical thinking and activity at all levels of church women's work. The importance of the life of the local congregation has been stressed.
- (2) One of its major tasks should be to further the co-operation of men and women in the church and to keep in touch with the WCC's Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society in Geneva.
- (3) That Australian Church Women should be a co-ordinating body working with and through existing organizations - e.g. state women's inter-church councils and denominational women's groups.

The Interim Committee has been in contact with all women's Inter-Church Councils and denominational women's groups at both State and Federal level and has kept them informed of the thinking and planning of the Committee.

During 1963 women's inter-church councils in the various States were invited to become the unit through which Australian Church Women would work. South Australia, Victoria, Queensland and N.S.W. have accepted this invitation. In Tasmania there is as yet no fully representative group who could be invited to be the unit. The inter-church women's group in Western Australia has declined the invitation.

Most of the denominational women's groups are unable to come to a decision before their biennial and triennial conferences are held.

In September 1963 we set out some SUGGESTIONS for a more formal structure of Australian Church Women. This was circulated to inter-church councils and denominational women's groups as a basis for further thinking and we invited recommendations.

During the year the Interim Committee has undertaken the production of one study booklet, "Saints Alive!". The material for which was prepared by a small group in Melbourne, edited by the Interim Committee and produced by the Australian Council of Churches' office.

The Interim Committee has been interested in the inclusion of women in delegations to overseas conferences and we believe that this will have a tremendous effect on the life of our churches and particularly within our women's organizations. Mrs. Joan Coates attended the Situation Conference at Singapore in 1963 and Mrs. Lilian Wells the Second Assembly of the East Asia Christian Conference in February 1964.

Points raised in discussion following Mrs. Wyllie's address:

. It was agreed that there is need for more effective co-operation of men and women in the church in Australia. Will the formation of Australian Church Women help or hinder this development?

. It was agreed that women had to be encouraged and trained to take a more effective part.

. Are women "shut out" from ecumenical experiences or is it through lack of interest that they do not participate more fully in the life of the Church? Mr. Perkins commented that perhaps they were "shut in" rather than "shut out".

. Mlle. Barot when visiting Australia had remarked on the lack of interest in, and knowledge of, the ecumenical movement on the part of church women and the absence of real co-operation of men and women in the governing bodies of some denominations. She commended the formation of Australian Church Women as a means of furthering ecumenical concern and also co-operation of men and women.

. From the Congregational Women's Fellowship of South Australia we received a resolution which was noted in the context of this discussion:

"September 20, 1963: That the Congregational Women's Fellowship of South Australia desiring to support the purpose of Australian Church Women agrees that the Women's United Church Association of South Australia should act as the state council in South Australia of Australian Church Women provided that the purpose of A.C.W. shall never be considered as an end in itself but always within the framework of the Co-operation of Men and Women in the total life and mission of the Church."

. Comment from Victoria - the programme of Australian Church Women must lead us to the co-operation of men and women.

. Letter received from the Presbyterian Women's Association of Australia, Victoria Unit, was noted in the context of this discussion:

"March 1964: Since receiving the initial information regarding the formation of Australian Church Women at the Annual Meeting of the Australian Council of Churches, the executive and Council of the Presbyterian Women's Association of Australia, Victoria Unit, have given much thought to the suggestions sent by the Interim Committee.

The P.W.A. does not really favour setting up a separate women's organization, but would prefer to see, within the structure of the Australian Council of Churches, an organisation patterned upon the Department of Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, as exists in the World Council of Churches. Representation to such a department (or even to a women's organization if this be decided upon) should be on the basis of member churches."

RELATION OF AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND
AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN:

- Rev. H.L. Perkins, General Secretary
Australian Council of Churches.

(1) The Australian Council of Churches is a COUNCIL of CHURCHES. That means it is a family of churches and as such tries to live by family relations. For that reason when one of the member churches cannot agree with a proposal before the Council then the matter is dropped. But usually we have found that division of opinion comes through the churches and not from one individual church.

Our concern is that Christians live together as a family, conscious that each member is different and has a particular contribution to make. Concern for Christian unity is concern for the family of Christians.

Similarly the Australian Council of Churches functions through its various parts or agencies or related bodies and so between them as a family. Members of a family have freedom as well as the responsibility to act as belonging to each other, and that is how the various parts of the Council work with each other. For example, the Australian Council of Christian Education was separate from the Australian Council of Churches but since it became the Division of Christian Education within the ACC, the ACC appoints four representatives. In this way we develop the family relationship, draw help from each other and relate members of the family to each other. The Australian Church Women would have the same freedom as a group within the ACC, with the same responsibility to act as belonging.

(2) The Australian Council of Churches is a national council of churches, the members of which are churches through their Australian courts. It is not a federal council in the sense of a federation of state organizations.

We deal with the member churches of the ACC and seek to serve them. As the ACC deals with member churches so must Australian Church Women. But it is also true that the member churches do most of their work at a State level. Therefore we cannot do effective work without State Councils. The same is true of Australian Church Women. You cannot by-pass the national women's organizations and you must take seriously the member churches as national churches. You must take equally seriously how they work through their State structures.

In the document circulated in 1963 headed "Suggestions for a more formal structure", the proposed composition of Australian Church Women looked massive and complicated but it was intended to be a co-ordinating body to provide effective co-operation both between the women's organizations and the State inter-church councils.

Australian Church Women is not intended to be limited to those churches who are members of the Australian Council of Churches. It is not an exclusive club. You will note on page 2 of the "Suggestions" under '3' the words:

"That the State Council include all member churches of the ACC and such other bodies as may desire membership, e.g. the Russian and Serbian Orthodox Churches are in the Inter-Church Aid in

Australia but are not members of the ACC, the Baptist Federal Board of Education is a member of the ACCE and the ACYC but the Baptist Church is not a member of the ACC., the Baptist Unions in Victoria and Tasmania are members of the Victorian and Tasmanian Councils of Churches affiliated with the ACC but the Australian Baptist Union is not a member of the ACC. The basis of membership shall be that which governs admission to the ACC:

'A fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' "

The Constitution of Australian Church Women can express these concerns of membership and participation of both church organizations and State bodies.

(3) The ACC as part of the Ecumenical Movement has as its basic concern the wholeness of the Christian Church. By 'wholeness' we mean -

- (a) the being of the Church as the Body of Christ. The Church is the Body of Christ in so far as it reflects Christ - this is what we call renewal.
- (b) The mission of the Church as the Body of Christ. Only in mission - as we acknowledge being sent does the Church express its true being or life.
"The Church exists by mission as fire by burning" is a quotation worthy of note.
- (c) The unity of the Church. The people of God in every locality must identify themselves with each other and be identifiable by those about them as belonging to each other. This much at least is the unity which God wills, without which the Church can be neither true to its being nor faithful in its mission.

These concerns lead us to two attitudes toward the Church as it is:

- i. you work with it because it is what God has given you and you are part of it.
- ii. you work to change it in so far as it is not the true being of the Body of Christ.

In the same way Australian Church Women must work with what we have. It must work through women's organizations because God has placed them there for a purpose. But you must also work to change them.

- i. to improve the life and work of the women's organizations as they are. Improve by opening the eyes of the women of the churches in ecumenical dialogue, so that these challenges of renewal, mission and unity which God brings through it can lead us.
- ii. open the ways to fuller expression of the corporate life of the Church. Our present segmentation into sex groups, while allowing the opportunity to use the gifts God has given us, is often a denial of the ministry of reconciliation between

the sexes. We must be prepared in our church organizations for co-operation with each other.

So Australian Church Women is strategic. There are many of our women's organizations that are not ready to provide leadership. They need to be introduced to new perspectives of the church's task. Then they will also be ready for that co-operation of men and women which will give real expression to the corporate life of the Church.

How do we develop these relationships between men and women? Does Australian Church Women need to be primarily a small organization to improve women's work in the churches? Or do we develop Australian Church Women alongside that of the committee the Australian Council of Churches is setting up on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society?

At the moment we see two alternatives:

- (1) Australian Council of Churches' Committee on the Co-operation of Men and Women as the primary body with Australian Church Women functioning as part of its work, reaching for the women's organizations of the churches.
- or (2) Australian Church Women developing as the primary body, with a special committee on Co-operation of Men and Women functioning alongside it.

In the East Asia Christian Conference the Asian Church Women has now become part of the Committee on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society. Perhaps this is the pattern for us too. It is a matter of strategy for us not principle. Either way we seek the same objective. If Australian Church Women had a functioning relationship within the ACC's Committee on the Co-operation of Men and Women, in Church, Family and Society (the first alternative) it would be "homed" in the ACC's Division of Church and Community, but in the whole family it would also have vital links with Christian education, inter-church aid and ecumenical promotion generally.

RELATION OF AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN AND THE WORLD COUNCIL
OF CHURCHES' DEPARTMENT ON THE CO-OPERATION OF MEN & WOMEN
IN CHURCH, FAMILY & SOCIETY.

- Mrs. B.R. Wyllie.

In this generation we have a new picture of the wholeness of the Church. To be whole means - to be complete and to be healthy.

The phrase, the wholeness of the Church, suggests the re-union of the Church within the ecumenical movement, it suggests the breaking down of the barriers of denomination, of race and of class.

But "wholeness" can be achieved only when every part of the membership of the Church is enabled to participate fully in the life of the Church, when there is a rich partnership between laity and clergy and a rhythm of being "gathered" and "scattered".

It includes also the co-operation of men and women in the Church. Joint action for mission includes the joint action of both men and women in the mission of the Church.

The World Council of Churches' Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in the Church, Family and Society had its beginnings in the Committee on the Service and Status of Women. This later became part of the Division of Church and Society and the name was changed to "the Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society". At New Delhi when the integration of the International Missionary Council with the World Council of Churches took place the word "family" was added to the title. The IMC had included a Commission on the Christian Home and this emphasis was added to the work of the Department following New Delhi.

The Department functions with a Working Committee and the Director is Mlle. Madeleine Barot. It has a very small staff with the Director and Rev. William Clarke as executive secretary.

The Department thinks of itself as the servant of the Churches.

The work of the Department has a Biblical basis. St. Paul makes clear that the Church is whole when every member is discovering and using the gifts of Christ. In Genesis we read that men and women have their special gifts, both contributing to the whole.

At Davos the following statement was issued by the working committee of the Department:

"God created men and women and set them together under His blessing and His order.

Christ came to save men and women and called them together to His discipleship.

The Holy Spirit was given to men and women as members of the new community to witness together for the sake of Christ in the world."

What do we mean by co-operation?

Men and women, created by God in two different sexes, with diversity of gifts, can have a new relationship to each other by having a living relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship when it is real, it

brings a completely new element into the present broken relationships between the sexes and enables men and women to go beyond rivalry, beyond defensiveness and competition, beyond seeking status to acceptance and appreciation of each other in diversity.

True co-operation between men and women in the Church is perhaps the richest partnership of diverse gifts available to us.

Most churches give general consent to the idea of equal partnership of men and women in the Church, but in many cases this is still only a theory. We have to acknowledge that in most places effective co-operation is neither recognized nor practised except perhaps in the Congregational Church, the Salvation Army and the Society of Friends.

What are some of the problems which make co-operation of men and women in the church difficult?

(1) The presence of lively and active women's groups in the Churches. There is practical justification for the existence of women's groups within the Church but is there a danger of the women's groups becoming a church beside the Church?

There are many women whose needs are not met within the existing women's church groups:

- . mothers employed outside the home
- . professional women.

(2) In some Churches in Australia there is almost a complete absence of women on the governing bodies of the Churches. In the secular world women share with men the responsibilities of civic and political life, but many churches still reserve the responsibility of direction exclusively to men.

Is this because we are faced with a deep biblical and theological conviction that women must be subordinated to men and therefore cannot be placed in positions of authority or is it due simply to passiveness, or habit, or the fear that as soon as occasion arises the men will abandon all their responsibilities to women?

How can we be sure that it would be a good thing for churches to have real co-operation of men and women at the level of governing boards? Where has this been tried? If we are convinced about this, how can we deal with the traditional prejudices opposing the admission of women?

Here are some questions which may help us in our thinking of this subject:

(1) Would you gain the impression from your knowledge of your church that the term 'laymen' or 'laity' included all the women of the church?

(2) Do men treat women's church work seriously enough and with sufficient respect? Is it regarded as important as the Trust or business matters? Do you think that the Deaconess Order in the churches has the status and prestige that it deserves?

(3) Is there a tendency for the men not used to the idea of full co-operation, to regard the women who wish to share church life as competitors rather than co-operators?

(4) Have men still the attitude that a mistaken chivalry demands that

they give way to a women colleague when their opinions differ? Is this another method of not taking her seriously? Does this attitude hamper full co-operation?

(5) When women accept positions on boards and governing bodies, are they prepared to accept analysis, criticism and sometimes opposition to their ideas and proposals or do they look for this mistaken chivalry?

(6) Are women within the Church given sufficient freedom to use their initiative - c.f. the work done and the leadership given by women in the YWCA and other organizations on the international level?

(7) Would women tend to lose their womanliness if they took their place as equal co-operators on governing bodies of the Church, either local or connexional? Are women prepared to take the responsibility and pay the price of becoming worthy co-operators in church life?

Women in the Ministry is another concern of the Department. This question arises inevitably from a discussion of the diversity of gifts which St. Paul talks of and from the discussion of the relationship of men and women in the life of the Church.

It is a question which is answered differently by different churches. Sometimes the answer is an ignoring of the real question. It involves a definition of ordination and very often it demands a re-examination of the relationship of baptism and ordination. (For further reading I refer you to the August bulletin of THE LAITY, WCC periodical.)

This is a very real question where churches of different traditions are preparing to unite.

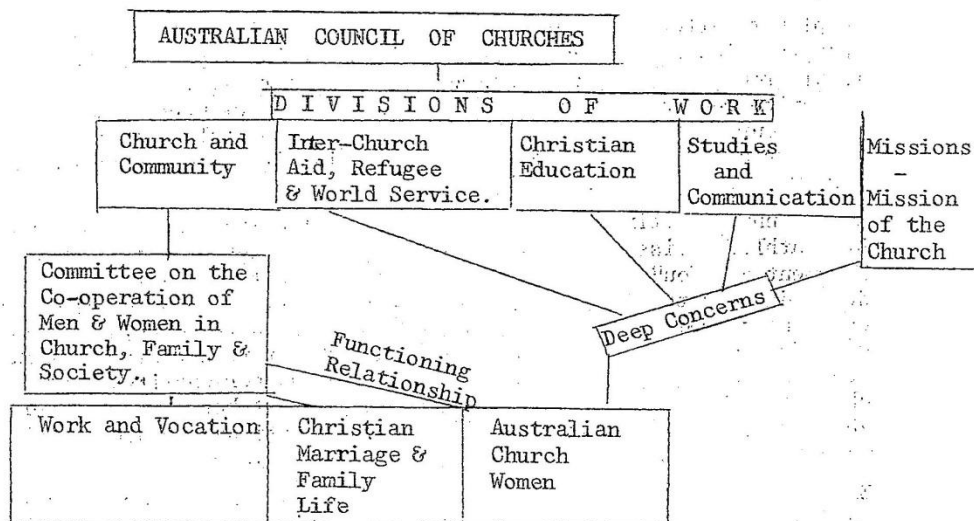
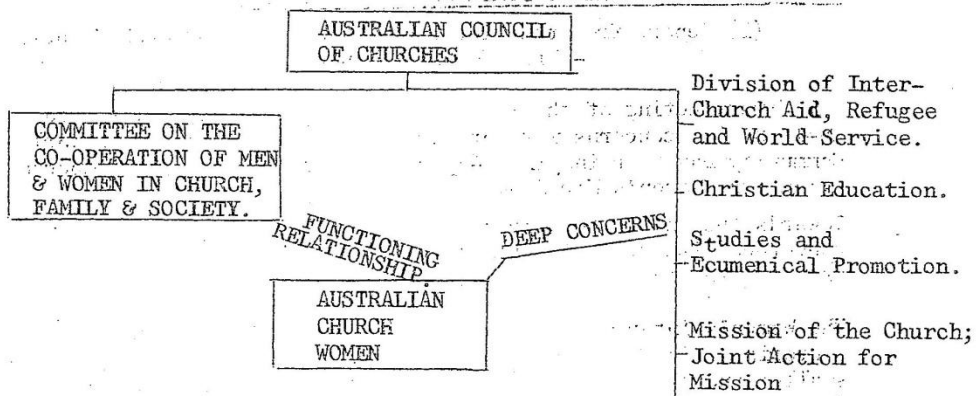
The Department has conducted several consultations in Europe on the meaning of Christian marriage and family life. In this regard also the Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society seeks to be a servant of the churches and seeks to help them discover a sound theological basis for the Christian sexual ethic.

DISCUSSION FOLLOWING PAPER ON THE WCC DEPARTMENT ON THE CO-OPERATION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN CHURCH, FAMILY AND SOCIETY:

Mrs. McPhee said there had been a greater emphasis on mixed conferences and activities of recent years and the next generation of adults will move more easily into co-operation.

Mrs. Dey said that she had heard the following comment which emphasized what we mean: "women in the Church's work NOT women's work in the Church".

Discussion took place as to the relationship of Australian Church Women to the work of the Department on the Co-operation at both national and world level and the following charts ^{were} suggested as expressing the concern for this relationship.



DEVELOPING PROGRAMME AT STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS:

- (1) Report from the Victorian Women's Inter-Church Council.
- Mrs. Colonel Saunders, Secretary.

The first meeting of the Women's Inter-Church Council was held in 1941 and its concerns were primarily these, of fostering a World Community Day, working in co-operation with the Women's Temperance Union, the Women's World Day of Prayer and the YWCA.

Towards the end of the War the Women's Inter-Church Council was concerned with girls leaving the Armed Services. A leaflet was prepared setting out the claims of Christian service in the community.

The Women's Inter Church Council inaugurated World Community Day in Victoria. In recent years World Community Day services have been smaller and now are mainly centred in the city. But we have just formed a new committee to foster the work in suburban and rural areas and we are hoping that we will be able to have regional meetings.

The Women's Inter-Church Council now organizes a third Day in the year - Fellowship Day which has been held on the last Wednesday of July.

We have "Report Days" when representatives from the regional groups are brought together and share the findings and experiences of their Fellowship Day.

We plan to alter our Constitution to provide a 5/- affiliation fee so that the minutes of our Council meetings can be circulated to keep local groups in touch with our work on the State level. We also plan to invite regional groups to send observers to our meetings. One of our immediate tasks will be to assess the value of the work of local groups and to ensure that a leader is with each group and so through them to establish links.

At an Annual Meeting of the ACC held at "Gilbulla" some years ago when Dr. Kathleen Bliss visited us she spoke on the subject "the Ecumenical Movement and You". A fresh impetus was given to our work and we decided to invite a woman from Indonesia to visit us and so Tina Frasz came and toured Victoria. We felt the change in the meaning of our work from her visit. As she moved about the State speaking at women's meetings she brought with her a friendship and personality that challenged us all. After paying the expenses of her visit, we were able to send £420 to her to use for some educational project by which we could be united with our near neighbours in Indonesia.

Each year we find we must have a project to put before our women - in 1963 it was the Freedom From Hunger Campaign and this year we have chosen the WCC project in Hong Kong, The Haven of Hope Sanitorium, and we have chosen the theme "Healing Hands".

(2) Discussion.

(1) Preparation of material for Community Day and Fellowship Day by the Interim Committee.

Certain criticisms were expressed and it was suggested that each denomination could, in turn, be invited to prepare the material according to its tradition and further suggested that to meet the varying needs of the States, Australian Church Women choose a project and theme and prepare an outline of a service and study for the States to build upon. Later it was suggested that a full service of worship be prepared and circulated to be used as desired. Various suggestions were made concerning the use of the Days:

- . luncheon with speaker

- . short devotional with a speaker leading to the participation by the group in a particular project e.g. Freedom From Hunger Campaign.

(2) Publicity of the work of Australian Church Women should be done through the various church papers.

(3) Concern was expressed at the confusion between the names - Inter-Church Councils and Australian Church Women and the meeting agreed that each State had to take the steps necessary to clarify this matter.

(4) There is a need for the Inter-Church Councils to disseminate information concerning Australian Church Women and the Ecumenical Movement to the local level and through the denominational groups on the State level.

(5) There is urgent need for local groups to be formed, especially in rural areas, where the women of the churches can be brought together for worship, study and service.

(6) The following were suggested as projects for Fellowship Day:

- a) Scholarships and bursaries: Papuan and Aboriginal girls were suggested.

- b) Inter-Church Aid Projects

- c) Christian literature and literacy campaigns.

- d) Adult education programmes, especially in Papua. Trained social worker could perhaps spend a year working with women's church groups in the Pacific. The attention of the Consultation was drawn to the fact that Miss Marjorie Stewart had worked for 3 years with the S.P.C. (South Pacific Commission) on women's welfare. Her salary had been paid as part of a World Community Day project by the United Church Women of the USA.

- e) Overseas students living in Australia - they need friendship and accommodation.

- f) Ecumenical youth work in Papua and New Guinea - e.g. YWCA.

SINGAPORE SITUATION CONFERENCE - JOINT ACTION FOR MISSION

Mrs. Joan Coates was one of the six delegates from Australia to the East Asia Christian Conference meeting in Singapore during February-March 1963.

"Joint Action" and "Mission" were the major concerns of the conference and in the words of the report:

We have attempted -

To explore the situation confronting the churches in our area and in our different countries, and to discern the ways in which the Holy Spirit is leading us to the widest extent possible within the limits of our separation as churches, to a united strategy and joint action, arising from our common obedience to our one Lord Jesus Christ.

As a result of this conference the Australian Churches have been stimulated to analyse and re-think their own programmes.

The Conference sprang out of the World Council of Churches but was convened and planned by the East Asia Christian Conference. The number of women at the Conference was small but they were not there just because they were women and they entered into the total life of the Conference. One of the highlights was the full participation of women. We, as Australians, were challenged by the fact that we were there as full members of an Asian Consultation.

Out of this experience a number of important questions arise:

(1) What is our mission? What is the central task of the Church? We ought to be one missionary people bringing the secret of peace to all men. Are we? What does this mean for us in our church life? What does it mean for us as a sending church? We were reminded at Singapore what Joint Action for Mission is NOT. It is not the listing of a number of important things that ought to be done for which someone else should pay the bill.

(2) What are the things we ought to give up? What are those things which are now out-of-date? What new projects or what new direction should we be now taking?

(3) How best can we do these things together?

What does this mean for Australian Church Women?

We have a part to play in reminding women that they are part of the whole church - e.g. through World Community Day. Australian Church Women must encourage a rich and full fellowship in the Church. Therefore it is important that women work with men. There should be full co-operation with men, e.g. in the Church and Life Movement planned for 1966 and through Inter-Church Aid. Members of the Australian delegation asked the question-what must we - the Australian churches - give up? Many of us feel that it is the multiplicity of meetings - the overlapping of concerns and organizations that the Australian Churches have a problem. In Australia we need a comprehensive stocktaking of the Church.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN.

- Mrs. Joan Coates.

Christian women around the world are linked in a fellowship of prayer in which they set aside once a month the least coin of their country, and pray for some aspect of the work of the Church.

This began in 1956 when an Indian woman, Mrs. Sharti Solomon, was travelling round the Pacific with a group of Christian women. Wherever she went the idea caught fire, especially amongst Asian women, and the project was sponsored by the East Asia Christian Conference.

Each country makes its own arrangements for collecting the coins, but the amount each country collects is kept secret, and only the total in the Fund is announced at the end of the year. The reason for this is to avoid any element of competition between the countries.

This money is distributed to good causes in all the Continents of the world. These token gifts, unsolicited, express the solidarity of Christian women in the work of the world Church. Australians were deeply touched last year when a gift of \$1000 (£A446) was made for work amongst our aborigines. Other projects have been education in Colombia - relief in the Congo - a hostel for girls in the Cameroons - work amongst Vietnamese refugees in France - the purchase of a station-wagon for evangelism in Thailand - A Divinity School in Burma - a home-making centre for African women - child care in East Harlem - student welfare in Paris - and many more.

The Fellowship has been warmly commended by Dr. Madeleine Barot of the WCC's Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, Geneva. Her Department is now responsible for promoting the Fellowship and collecting and distributing the coins.

The idea of keeping to the least coin of the country is that every woman from the poorest to the richest can contribute on the same level. The suggestion is that Australian women should contribute one penny a month (changing to one cent a month after the introduction of decimal currency). The stress is always on the element of prayer rather than on the collection of money.

The booklet, Circle of Prayer, tells the story of the Fellowship and gives prayers and meditations for each month for two years. The contributors to the booklet include one man, Dr. D.T. Niles, and many distinguished women, including Mrs. Sharti Solomon herself, also Dr. Madeleine Barot, Mrs. Louise Paw, chairman of Asian Church Women, and Mrs. Beales from Australia.

From the inception of Australian Church Women it has been suggested that it would be appropriate if the Fellowship of the Least Coin could be one of its activities and we now commend this to our member groups and to all Church women.

DISCUSSION FOLLOWING PRESENTATION OF THE
FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN BY MRS. COATES

. The Fellowship of the Least Coin would give spiritual content to Australian Church Women.

. It would bring women in the out-back into fellowship with other church women.

. Prayer themes and background information would enable intelligent participation in the prayer circle.

. We would need some practical way of collecting the money in the home - e.g. boxes of a particular shape (coconut or shape of some fruit or fish). (The meeting was very interested in hearing of the experience of Mrs. Coates in Singapore. There a Chinese dish out of the kitchen with the picture of a fish was used.)

. We could provide a label to be pasted on a box or tin and envelope for the sending in of the money.

. The prayer list could be included on the label.

. We need to suggest a variety of ways of sending the money to a central office.

. We must keep it the least coin - one penny was suggested as this would then be equal to one cent when the new currency is introduced.

. It was suggested that World Community Day be the time when the money is received.

. The meeting agreed that we do not want to have a launching date but that the Fellowship should grow with time.

The meeting agreed to recommend to the Interim Committee that the Fellowship of the Least Coin be introduced throughout Australia.

A small committee of four was appointed to meet during lunch and bring back recommendations for the implementing of the Fellowship.

Report from Committee: Mrs. Barrett reported on behalf of the committee. The Committee was unable to find any united method of introducing the Fellowship that could be common to all States. Representatives from the various States commented on the way they thought it could best be introduced in their State.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INTERIM COMMITTEE OF
AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN.

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The Consultation recommended the following ^{to} the Interim Committee:

- (1) That the AIM of AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN be:

"To unite Australian Church women in their allegiance to their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to provide opportunities for Christian worship, study, fellowship and service across denominational divisions; to promote co-operation of men and women in the church, family and society; to help Christian women to take a more effective place in the total life and mission of the Church; and to unite them through the Fellowship of the Least Coin with Christian women of all countries."

In agreeing to this recommendation the meeting felt that further consideration should be given to the order of the various clauses of the Aim. This was referred to the Interim Committee.

- (2) That the STRUCTURE of AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN be:

- (1) National Committee of Australian Church Women. The National Committee of Australian Church Women shall include:

- i. Representatives of Federal Denominational women's organizations (appointed by the Federal body or by whatever means appropriate to the particular church). Church of England 2; Salvation Army Southern Territory 1; Salvation Army Eastern Territory 1; and other denominations 1 each.
- ii. One representative of the State women's inter-church councils who have agreed to be the unit of Australian Church Women.
- iii. Special interest groups - e.g. YWCA - one representative each.
- iv. The Australian Council of Churches - 4 representatives to be appointed by the Executive of the Australian Council of Churches. Men will be included in this representation.
- (a) The National Committee will meet for two or three days once each year.
- (b) A Working Committee based in Sydney will be appointed by the National Committee.

- (2) State Committees of Australian Church Women. The existing State Women's Inter-Church Councils wherever they are willing to act, will be recognized by the National Committee of Australian Church Women as the units through which Australian Church Women works. Such groups will have consultative status on the State Council of Churches or State Committee affiliated with the Australian Council of Churches.

- (3) Local Groups of Australian Church Women in suburban and rural areas shall be affiliated with the State unit. These groups will be encouraged to work in close relation with the local Inter-Church Councils of the Australian Council of Churches.

(3) STRUCTURE WITHIN THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.

That Australian Church Women function in relationship with the Australian Council of Churches' Committee on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society.

- (4) That Australian Church Women commend and sponsor the Fellowship of the Least Coin.

- (5) That wherever possible Australian Church Women be associated with the Committee and programme of the Women's World Day of Prayer.

- (6) That a State Women's Inter-Church Council be asked to prepare the FELLOWSHIP DAY service and that a denominational group be asked to prepare the COMMUNITY DAY worship service.

That a service of worship for FELLOWSHIP DAY 1965 be prepared by the Victorian Women's Inter-Church Council.

That FELLOWSHIP DAY be held at the beginning of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity OR if this is not possible sometime in June.

That a service of worship for WORLD COMMUNITY DAY 1965 be prepared by a particular denomination according to their tradition.

That the fourth Friday in October be observed as WORLD COMMUNITY DAY and that the money from the Fellowship of the Least Coin be received on that day.

- (7) That Australian Church Women prepare study material and suggest a service project for FELLOWSHIP DAY.

- (8) That study material produced by Australian Church Women such as "Saints Alive?" be used in denominational women's groups; in mixed groups and in Bible Study groups both mid-week and on Sundays.

- (9) That the following principles regarding finance be accepted:

- a) That no affiliation fee be sought from groups at present.
- b) That where special days and services are held a percentage of the collection be used for the promotion of Australian Church Women.
- c) That where meetings are held with overseas speakers the collection above local expenses be used for the promotion of Australian Church Women.
- d) That Australian Church Women encourage individuals and groups to join the WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES FELLOWSHIP.

It was reported that the next meeting of the Interim Committee would be held on Wednesday, April 8 which will consider these recommendations and forward a report and recommendations to the ACC Executive Committee which meets on Wednesday, April 15.