

* * INFORMATION PAGE * *

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NEWSETTE

AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN -- NSW UNIT

A C W seeks:

- ... to unite Australian churchwomen in their allegiance to their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;
- ... to provide opportunities for Christian women of different denominations to worship, study and serve together.

PRESIDENT: Rev Elizabeth Walker Tel: 9939.8613

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

My Dear Friends,

This is my last letter to you as your President.

In the next issue of Newsette you will hear from our new President, Jan Harrison. We welcome her as President and look forward to her leadership over the next two years.

The last two years have been a time of much change in my personal life. I began my presidency living in Newcastle; I retired and moved to Roseville; this week we move to Harbord! My father has died, my grandson Sam has been born, and two more grandchildren are on the way! Sometimes the amount of change around us is staggering and almost overwhelming. I know when I watch television that I have lost track of much of the language I need to understand changes in modern information technology, the internet, e-mail and the like!

Fortunately I also know that in all change God accompanies and guides us. Sitting on my desk is notepaper carrying the wonderful words from Isaiah "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." This notepaper was a gift to me from one of the many centres where I have visited and worshipped with you over

2.

the past two years.

I want to thank all of you who have offered me hospitality and who have supported the work of Australian Church Women in your local centres. I encourage you to continue in your commitment to ecumenical activities which illustrate the open-ness and generosity of our God.

I also want to thank and pay tribute to all the people who come regularly to our council meetings, and especially to those faithful ladies who make that extra commitment of serving on the executive!

The fellowship I have enjoyed among Australian Church Women locally and nationally is one of the rich experiences of my life. As president those circles have widened to include many of the special interest groups with which we are associated. For this privilege I thank you. I believe the fellowship we enjoy is a sign of God's love among us and I pray we will continue to share it; and especially may it enfold and uphold our new president, Jan.

*Grace and peace be with you all,
Elizabeth Walker.*

SPECIAL 'MAY DAYS':

STATE CONFERENCE: As you receive this Newsette, our State Conference will be just about to convene at Stanmore, on 12-13th May, with a great program planned. Speakers are NORMA DUMBRELL from Trinity College, Singapore, where our current Winifred Kiek Scholar Mai Zin Zin Wah is studying; JULIANA NKRUMAH, who herself was a refugee and has much to share about refugee and migrant women; DOUG HEWETT, Co-ordinator of Pilgrimage to the Heart, a journey of Australian church leaders from Canberra to Uluru in June, who will share about reconciliation.

INSTALLATION OF PRESIDENT JAN HARRISON: This will be an inspiring occasion at Enfield Anglican Church on Monday, 15th May, of which details were given in February Newsette. A profile of Jan is on the opposite page and it is not too late to decide to share in this day - the \$5.00 for lunch can be paid at the door if you have not 'booked in.'

ADVANCE NOTICE .. A Spiritual Enrichment Day is being planned, to be held on 5th Floor, 222 Pitt Street Sydney, where Council meetings are held. Details of program and speakers are still to be finalised, but mark the date in your diary now for a day of blessing and fellowship.

3.

PROFILE of PRESIDENT-ELECT JANET HARRISON:

"As an only child of older parents I was raised in a very loving, happy environment. I have been all but 13 years of my life in the Strathfield / Enfield area, and my education was at Meriden School. After school, I was employed as a stenographer in a variety of offices for 12 years until I married Graham. For the first 9 years we lived at Wilberforce where Graham was the minister at St John's Anglican Church. Philip and Stuart were born whilst there. Wilberforce was a small semi-rural town out of Windsor, a lovely open place to rear children, and learn the ropes as the wife of the incumbent. From there, to St Thomas' Church, Enfield for nearly 21 years, where I first became involved with Australian Church Women in the Strathfield / Homebush Branch, and also active at Diocesan level, as well as parish level of MU Australia (Mothers' Union), where I served as Convener of the Prayer Department for 6 years. Appointment by MU to represent them brought me onto State level of ACW - the plan being to stay but a couple of years!!

In 1996 Graham and I moved to Wollongong where he became a Hospital Chaplain. My lifestyle changed, without parish responsibilities, so I joined an inter-denominational Bible Study group; did an afternoon in a local Op Shop - folding clothes; organised a "pot plant" patio and a small garden; enjoyed contact with my Asian student neighbours, also frequent train trips to Sydney and back.

I was always aware of God in a childlike way. When presented with the claims of Jesus Christ as a teenager, and my need of Him, I accepted Him as Lord and Saviour. I grew up in a wonderful Christian fellowship, teaching Sunday School, and then spending Sundays before marriage at a migrant hostel teaching Sunday School and visiting the parents of the children in the afternoons. I felt God's call to me early in parish life to ministry/working with women, and this has continued.

With parents since passed on and having no siblings, aunts, uncles or cousins, I am grateful to God for some wonderful friends whose love and support is of a great strength to me, and I value contact with sisters-in-law. Graham and our sons are God's special gifts. For relaxation I enjoy reading, crochet and gardening, which puts me in the company of many of you.

I enjoyed 2½ years as State Secretary but felt most hesitant in accepting it to be my role to become President, but under God's strength and guidance, and with your prayerful support and help we will together take ACW NSW Unit on for the next 2 years." *Jan Harrison*

4.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE LEAST COIN:

In February we were delighted to hear that our application for a grant for Australian Indigenous Ministries had been successful and that an amount of US\$3,000 was on its way. This grant will enable the A.I.M. Bible College in the Northern Territory to purchase a computer and accessories for a training program. The main focus of the program will be leadership training for developing leadership with the church, in the context of sound Bible teaching. It will also include the production of English lessons and Aboriginal Art. The computer will also help with general college administration.

Three other Australian projects also received grants. These are:

- Tasmania - US\$2,000 for the Cressy-Campbell Town School Chaplaincy;
- US\$2,000 for North-West Hospitals Chaplaincy at Burnie;
- Queensland - US\$3,000 for Leadership Development for the Girls' Friendly Society.

Apart from Block Grants, the International F.L.C. Committee members were able to allocate 41 grants world-wide. This is indeed a cause for praise and thanks for the many, many needy people who will be touched and helped through this giving and receiving Prayer Movement. In the next edition of Newsette I hope to provide more details of the 41 grants.

Shirley Wells, FLC Convener.

WINIFRED KIEK SCHOLARSHIP:

Various members of NSW Unit received Christmas greetings from some of our former scholars; the National Convener also received greetings in reply to her letters.

We were pleased to hear from RACHAEL McMANUS, who was married last October, and from NIGHAT GULZAR (Pakistan).

RACHEL (SOBANA) KANLY, with her greetings told us that she has now resigned from her position as 'school principal' at Catherine Booth Hospital, Nagercoil (South India) and is planning to take Brian (6) and Keren (2) to join Kanly, her husband, in Kuwait. Please pray for Rachel and her family - life may not be easy for them in Kuwait - they will need to find a house, education for the children and a job for Rachel. She has

5.

worked at Catherine Booth Hospital for 13 years, 10 of which were in an administrative role.

MAI ZIN ZIN WAH (1999 Scholar) is well into her first semester of work at Trinity College in Singapore, where she is working on a Master of Ministry course.

SUE NITRAI (this year's Scholar) has commenced her studies at St Mark's National Theology Centre, doing her fourth year of study for a degree in Bachelor of Theology.

I recently had news of Catherine Min (1983 Scholar). She has been ordained to the Anglican priesthood in Korea. Catherine has said how grateful she is for the training she received through W.K.S.

Please continue to pray for scholars past and present. There is a published list of scholars, their country of origin, the years they had the Scholarship and the area of their studies distributed each year with the Fellowship Day services. You may care to use this list to help you to remember the scholars and to pray intelligently for them.

Edith Ridge, WKS Convener.

NEWS of DOROTHY HARRIS-GORDON:

Australian Church Women in New South Wales send congratulations to Dorothy, a former member of State Council, who represented the Uniting Church, and accompanied June Graham, the President at that time to the Asian Church Women's Conference Assembly.

Dorothy served on the NSW Council for a number of years until she and her husband Rev Charles Harris retired to the far north coast of our State. We were sorry to lose her but happy that she and Charles had some time together in retirement with their people before Charles' untimely death. Charles was well-known as the founding Chairman of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, and he and Dorothy gave their lives to this work.

Now we have had word that Dorothy has remarried, and as Dorothy Harris-Gordon, was ordained into the ministry of the Uniting Church in August last year. Dorothy is the only ordained Koori woman in the Uniting Church at this time, though there are others in training. Her work is with the Goorie Good News Ministry in Grafton and as part-time chaplain to the aboriginal prisoners in the Grafton Correctional Centre.

(Contributed by Edith Ridge)

6.

ASIAN CHURCH WOMEN'S CONFERENCE:

In ACWC, ACW Australia's Prayer Partner Link is Pakistan, and in a letter of greeting, Mrs Shunila Ruth, Co-Ordinator of Women's Synodical, Church of Pakistan wrote:

"The women in Pakistan uphold you in their Prayer Meetings. We pray that the Lord blesses you abundantly, especially at the time of your National Conference.

We would like you to remember us in your prayers - women who are still struggling for their identity, who are oppressed in home, Church and Society, who are victims of violence - who need to be recognised as equal partners in the life and work of the Church."

A visitor at ACW National Conference in Brisbane last September, Mrs Glynthea Finger spoke of her work in Asia for the Christian Conference of Asia and World Council of Churches. Her graphic description of the atrocities suffered by women and their families confirms the need of our love, practical and prayer support for our sisters in Christ.

The next ACWC Executive Committee meeting will be in Adelaide in 2001 at the same time as the next ACW National Conference.

From ACW National News.

INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE:

At March Council Meeting, Sister Trish Madigan spoke about her involvement in "dialogue" with folk of other faiths than Christian.

She explained different initiatives being undertaken in this area, and the sensitivity we all need in our contacts with people whose culture and life outlook is so different from what we are used to.

Sister Trish quoted that any contact is "dialogue" - even giving a smile when trolleys pass in the supermarket, or admiring a little child in a stroller on a train. This talk gave us all quite a lot to think about.

Reported by the Editor.

UPDATE for NIROOSHA EBENEZER:

Niroosha is progressing well following discharge from hospital in March. She has physiotherapy three times weekly, and whilst the response in her

7.

'bad' leg has not been very encouraging, she has a wonderful spirit and accepts that she may have to wear some legacy for a long time yet.

Because she is unable to bend the leg more than 70%, in early May she will have exploratory surgery to scrape the bone and release any excess fluid and this will assess future healing. Padma is very concerned and asks for prayer for further healing for Niroosha.

Niroosha will recommence her university studies next semester, and to help with her situation she has applied to a Hall of Residence for Overseas Students for accommodation. Whilst this will be an extra financial commitment, Niroosha feels it will be best. Padma is very hopeful that the financial situation will improve as her husband Godfrey is due for a payment similar to our superannuation next year.

Please keep the family in your prayers. They are wonderful people and trust God completely. They are very humble and grateful for all the prayer and financial support that they are receiving from Australian Church Women.

Contributed by Joan Tong.

THE GIRLS' BRIGADE:

Have you ever been invited to a 60th BIRTHDAY PARTY where hundreds of girls from Kindergarten to early twenties are celebrating?

This year Girls' Brigade in N.S.W. are celebrating the anniversary of our commencement at the Leichhardt Baptist Church.

On Saturday 8th March 2000, in the Whitlam Centre in Liverpool, I joined with hundreds of girls, leaders and parents in a morning of celebration.

Girls and Leaders came from all over the State in buses, coaches, and cars to join together for this special service. Each Division presented an item of praise and thanks to the Glory of God. Some sang, some danced, some mimed, but all performed with the joy of the Lord, and I could only give thanks that so many girls' lives are being touched by Christian teaching through Brigade

I later lunched with our Patron, Mrs Pam Goodhew, our National President Mrs Elizabeth Stokes, our International Vice-President Mrs Julie Breckenreg, and our State Commissioner Mrs Hazel Allison, and several

8.

other officers.

The girls all changed into play clothes and joined together for a picnic lunch and games afternoon. What a joy it was to see so many happy faces and to know they were being touched and won for Christ.

Celebrations finish in the first weekend in November, when a camp is to be held in Dubbo for all Companies, and hundreds of girls are expected to attend.

Heather Reid, Girls' Brigade Representative to ACW.

JUBILEE 2000 UPDATE:

The Jubilee 2000 campaign has climbed halfway up Everest! In the space of 3 years it has been largely responsible not only for making debt cancellation a realistic project, but making it one of the central issues on the international agenda.

Since the pledges made at the G7 Summit in June 1999, the United States has cancelled all of the debts owed directly to it by 36 heavily indebted countries. This was a major breakthrough in helping these countries and in providing a point of leverage for convincing other countries to do likewise. Canada recently announced the cancellation of Bangladesh's debts. The dominoes have begun to fall!

Unfortunately most of the 1.3 billion living in absolute poverty have as yet received little or no real benefit. No initiatives to date are sufficient to allow a lasting exit from poverty. For example, Zambia spends more on debt service than on health and education combined; this in a country with a life expectancy of 33 years, a level not experienced since medieval times.

Sadly Australia is implicated in this inhumane situation. One of our debtors, Nicaragua, pays over two-thirds of government revenue on debt servicing - five times more than is spent on basic education. To cancel the \$5.3 million would be a drop in the ocean for us, but to them it means cutbacks in health, education and public sector employment. Yet our government still refuses to make this small gesture.

We need to keep up the pressure on creditors to end this cruel situation. It is important for Australians to act now, to make sure this historic opportunity does not pass us by. By gathering a second wave of petitions - 5 million more signatures will make it the largest in human

9.

history - it is hoped to be a voice loud enough to convince world leaders to go further, to break once and for all the chains of debt which keep poor countries poor.

From T.E.A.R. Magazine, 'TARGET'

SMILES ON CHILDREN'S FACES:

Members of Catholic Women's League, Wollongong, helped make this possible through gifts sent to some 788 children through Prison Fellowship "Angel Tree" Project last Christmas - twice as many as in 1998.

The following letter was received from one child:

"Dear friends, thank you for my Christmas present it was good. I had fun with my textas and drawing book and the sox fit good. I had ask Nanna to by me some sox like them now she doesn't have too. We saw mummy on Christmas day it was nice. Love from Alicia."

The increasing number of grandparents now left caring for these children is of great concern to Prison Fellowship staff and volunteers.

From CWL Wollongong Newsletter 'The Flame'

LINKS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS & OTHER AUSTRALIANS:

ALICE SPRINGS CONVENTION - A Time of Vision.

What an exciting way to start a new year! A week with fellow Christians who had come from all over Australia to Alice Springs for the Central Australian Aboriginal Convention.

Each morning a group met on top of Anzac Hill at 6 am to pray for the town, the nation and the Convention. One morning a reading was given from 2 Chronicles: "If my people...will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." One Elcho Island lady shared a vision that she believed God had given her before the Convention - people would be coming from the North, South, East and West to the centre of Australia - to the heart of Australia - to pray for the nation and the Aboriginal people. God clearly showed her that she was to come from far North to be a part of this vision.

10.

A highlight of the Convention was the outreach in the Mall, in the town centre, on the Saturday morning. With flags, ribbons and lots of music, the Aboriginal Christians witnessed to the power and greatness of God, and how the Lord can change lives.

As these people have now gone back to their homes and communities, may they take with them the message of the saving power of Jesus to their people.

From The Salvation Army Aboriginal Newsletter.

NOTES from NUNGALINYA COLLEGE, DARWIN:

From Principal Rev Wali Fejo's letter. "I have journeyed many times down the Stuart Highway, through the centre, to South Australia and back to the Northern Territory. The usual experience is one of hot winds, flies and a dry, barren land. On a recent journey however, a change had occurred - good rain had fallen, extending from Alice Springs in the North down to Coober Pedy in South Australia.

A feeling of well-being overtook me and it was good to be alive. The smell of nature brought a joyous aroma to my nostrils and my eyes lit up with gladness. The touch of rain falling on my face, wetting me even to my toes, made me feel transformed. I loved every moment of that experience.

It makes my heart leap when I think about our Christian experience - so much like that transformation I experienced in the desert. I share these thoughts with you and pray that you enjoy the wonderful uplifting experience of God's love."

From Literacy Co-Ordinator Elizabeth Caldwell: "Many of the students who come to Nungalinya have 3 or 4 oral languages, English may be a fifth language they have had to learn, so need support in their text-based literacy and languages skills. Another part of the work is to promote the use of translated Scripture material, and to support indigenous translators as they translate the Bible into their own languages. I was greatly encouraged to receive a thick wad of handwritten translated material from Numbulwar, East Arnhem Land - the whole of Genesis translated into Nunggubuyu! Now the mammoth task is to have it typed and checked!"

CHRISTIAN BLIND MISSION PROJECT 'VISION 2020':

Every minute of every day 12 people in our world go blind.

Of these, 10 live in disadvantaged countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, where their blindness adds disability and stigma to already

11.

grinding poverty. At least 9 go blind needlessly - 6 have cataracts, which could be cured by an operation - some are needy children whose blindness could have been prevented through a good diet and immunisation.

VISION 2020 is to coordinate CBMI's efforts with other organisations concerned about blindness, to join hands as a global community to end the scourge of blindness in the world.

This practical help has already started. A CBMI nurse in Ghana came across 8 children in one village blind from cataracts. CBMI paid to transport them and their parents to hospital. A CBMI-trained Ghanaian ophthalmologist performed the surgery. Glasses were made in the CBMI-supported optical workshop and 2 weeks later the children returned home, seeing.

Another example comes from Central India where 2 new eye hospitals in poor rural areas have been built. Within one year of opening, these hospitals have treated more than 30,000 outpatients and operated on 3,000 people with cataracts. The cost to run each hospital is only \$6,000 per month and for this 1200 people are being treated and 120 people are receiving sight-restoring surgery each month.

Our goal is to perform one eye operation every minute of every day, 365 days a year - approximately 525,000 operations per year. This means training surgeons and nurses, and providing equipment, instruments and medicines. CBMI has the medical ability, but they can't do it without support - each eye operation costs approximately \$27.

THE BIBLE CHANGES A LIFE:

Mr TAVEE SAK, who is the Thailand Bible Society's driver, was a rebellious, drug-addicted 20 year old when he first heard the gospel. Tavee says "I wanted to stop taking drugs but I couldn't find a way to stop. Then someone with whom I played football invited me to a meeting to talk about Jesus Christ. The only thing I knew about Jesus was that He was the religious leader of the Christian community, so I went to hear more. The preacher said that if we invite Jesus into our lives He can help solve our problems, so I decided to do that, only to test if what I had heard was true."

Tavee spent the next 2 months reading the Thai Bible he was given and started going to church. He says "I was impressed by the love of the people at the church and when there was an announcement for a whole night of prayer for people with problems, I went. People prayed for me and I never had a desire for drugs again."

Tavee's parents were happy to see the change in him but after a brother and 2 sisters became Christians he was forced to leave home. He is now permitted to visit his home and continues to pray that one day his parents