

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND METHODIST WOMENS' FELLOWSHIP

2018 REPORT

CHOSEN PEOPLE CALLED TO PROCLAIM

God is good all the time – all the time God is good. It is with great pleasure that I share my report with you all today. What a life changing experience I had being part of the Thirteenth WFMUCW World Assembly at Houston, Texas with 800 Methodist sisters and 2000 World Methodist Council members from all over the world. I was pleased to have three members of my National Executive members with me and we are all passionate about the theme “Chosen People Called to Proclaim” which has inspired us throughout our two year term.

WORSHIP: I write a bi-monthly newsletter featuring a chosen person which can be used for meeting devotions and Bible Studies. The first was Tarori, a twelve year old Maori girl, who wanted to bring peace in the 1830s to her people through the Gospel of Luke. After she was killed in a raid that precious book was read and carried throughout the country with the message “Forgive and Love your Enemies”. The second was Susanna Wesley, the Mother of Methodism who with strong theological views quietly revitalised religion and the quickening of religious thought during the time of a new spiritual rebirth in Great Britain in the 1790s. Her example paved the way for her sons John and Charles to include women as workers, as visitors, as pastoral carers, as class leaders and gifted preachers. The early missionaries to this part of the world brought that same faith, those values, attitudes and practices. The third was Saint Mother Teresa who proclaimed “Kind words are short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless”. In 1946 she began her Missionaries of Charity with the poorest of the poor alone and today there are over 600 foundations in 133 countries.

The fourth was Shanti Solomon whose vision began the Fellowship of the Least Coin in 1956 in India starting a ripple of justice, peace and reconciliation through praying hands and coin giving throughout the world. The fifth was Mary, the mother of Jesus and her words of the Magnificat, the response from her heart for all that God had done for her. The sixth was Lydia and her ministry of hospitality. She began the home group ministry and welcomed the early missionaries of Acts with the Apostle Paul helping the eastward movement of Christianity. The seventh featured Mary Magdalene and her role as a disciple during the last weeks of Jesus life on Earth and her excitement running to her friends proclaiming that Jesus is risen indeed. My latest chosen person is Naaman’s servant girl, an Israelite refugee, who confidently shared the good works of the Prophet Elisha leading to Naaman, a Syrian, being cured of his leprosy and becoming a worshipper of God.

We also have a profile set of twelve New Zealand Methodist Women called “In the Steps of Susanna” reminding us all of those women who have worked, prayed, encouraged and proclaimed during the first century and a half in our church history.

As I have toured the country I have used these amazing women as the theme for my devotions. At our annual Council Meeting our Bible Study was based on The Woman at the Well and I have a worship service available for any church invitation.

We have our theme “To Know Christ and Make Him Known” and as chosen people we are His hands, His feet, His eyes and His voice loving and serving others here and overseas. Throughout my term as President I have challenged our members to share their faith journeys, their Bible Study learnings and their God Moments when-ever and where-ever they meet.

God knows the women who have grown spiritually, who have brought someone new to faith, and who have grown in confidence to share their spiritual life with others and I praise God for my part in our wonderful ministry focussing on this wonderful theme.

RELATIONSHIPS: For my term as Aotearoa New Zealand President I have a multi-cultural team of members from five cultures – Maori, Fijian, Tongan, Samoan and Palagi and this is a very enriching experience working together. We

have eighteen districts including the Fijian, Tongan and Samoan Districts being nationwide districts. I have become more spiritually alive after attending the very memorable Tongan and Samoan conferences.

Since our Brisbane South Pacific Seminar the Tongan District has worked on Millennium Development Goals 1 Eradicating Extreme Poverty and Hunger and Goal 7 Ensuring Environmental Sustainability in their own communities. Their 2018 Conference theme was “ Chosen People called to Proclaim with Hearts on Fire” experienced through their Bible studies, Holy Discipleship Training, festivals of song and praise, prayer groups, workshops, art and craft groups and exhibitions and seminars. The Samoan District has plans to build a hall in Auckland for the use of the whole Sinoti Samoa New Zealand Church members, supporting their younger members to attend overseas seminars and encouraging new members. The Fijian District is our newest district and their aims are to support women to be closer to God, to inspire leadership development, and to engage in Mission projects supporting the vulnerable. Our Maori sisters support their local communities through their nation- wide organisation the Maori Womens’ Welfare League. There are very worthwhile mentoring and financial education courses happening in our Pacific churches supporting vulnerable youth and families.

I am pleased to report that there has been an increase in the recipients of our grants through the Smethurst, Kurahuna and Friendship Funds enabling women and secondary school girls to work on courses, studies, attend conferences, buy school uniforms and pay school fees.

SOCIAL ACTIONS: This year we celebrate 125 years of Women’s Suffrage – we were the first nation in the world to grant women the right to vote. We continue to look for ways to make further progress to benefit our women. Pacific Watch New Zealand provides opportunities for Pacific women in the Auckland area to discuss concerns relating to the Convention of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Our groups are all affiliated to the New Zealand National Council of Women celebrating 122 years this year. We are encouraged to discuss issues like the Gender Equal Campaign, Consent Education, Mental Health following Natural Disasters and Pay Equity for Women with Disabilities. All recommendations are passed on to the relevant Members of Parliament.

Our whole church theme for this decade is “Let the Children Live” and each of our groups are challenged at the silence in our churches and communities around youth suicide, child abuse and child and family poverty. Their annual programmes include Fellowship of the Least Coin, World Day of Prayer, speakers and fundraising for local missions and overseas mission projects, district get-togethers, support of Deacons and Theology College students, pastoral caring and sharing.

Our New Zealand Special Projects have been the Young New Zealanders Foundation “If I Value myself, I Value Life”, a publication for pre-teens in schools to reduce the suicide rate and stop cyber bullying, the Diabetes in Children and Youth in New Zealand to support the families and finance camps, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder to support those children and families where alcohol has damaged the child’s brain due to the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy. All young women need this education. Pillars is an organisation to support all children who have a parent in prison and the funds will be used for a mentoring programme to stop the inter-generational crime. Our Christian World Service Overseas Projects have been the Developers Foundation rebuilding homes and livelihoods after Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, the Neythal Group in South India who are working with displaced fishing communities to protect their environment and livelihoods, Nicaragua CEPADS Programme training young people to work on overcoming shyness, literacy, communications skills and domestic violence, and in South Uganda we are providing water tanks for vulnerable orphan children transforming their lives. Now they are clean and healthy with new bathroom facilities with hope for a better future at school and in their villages out of the misery of poverty.

All of these projects and social actions are based on the Millennium Goals.

I want to finish with these words from Psalm 89:1 “I will sing of your steadfast love O Lord forever: with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations”.

Dianne Claughton
NZ UNIT PRESIDENT