

COUNTRY REPORT – AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND – JULY TO DECEMBER 2020

On Friday 6th November 2020 Church Women United Aotearoa New Zealand hosted the annual ACWC service prepared by the Women's Ministry Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan with the theme "Breaking Walls, Bridging Gaps and Moving Forward in Solidarity". Observing ACWC Day with a service using the same liturgy is a good opportunity for our members to be aware of Asian issues and to experience unity in Christ. As part of the service, we also incorporate the Fellowship of the Least Coin Ingathering Service. CWU ANZ are encouraged by the continuing nation-wide dedicated support for Fellowship of the Least Coin. Thank you so much! As 'main-stream' church groups continue to go into recess, we must continue to promote in our communities Shanti Solomon's vision of FLC as a worldwide ecumenical movement of prayer for peace and reconciliation and encourage and educate people that as we offer a prayer for justice, we give a 'least coin' in solidarity with sisters in need.



We continue to value and appreciate the support of groups throughout Aotearoa New Zealand and in particular acknowledge those who gathered with us for the service and luncheon.



Guest speaker, Rev Jannet Mudavanhu, based her reflection mainly on the third aspect of the theme – “Moving Forward in Solidarity”. Jannet began by greeting us in her native language (Shona) – “Mangwanai, mamuka sei?” Literally translated this means – “Good morning – how did you rise?” The response is “Ndamuka kana Mamukawo – (I woke up well, if you woke up well!).” Jannet explained that the response implies that if you are not okay, I am not okay. It acknowledges the humanity of the other – it is saying “I see you, I am here, I am present and I hear you.” In her culture,

greetings are usually done as you simultaneously extend your hand for a hand-shake as well as looking the person in the eye!

Jannet reflected that at times some of the obstacles we encounter can easily be overcome by *taking time to listen*. Listening is half of the communication process and the other one is speaking. This means communication is two way – with the speaker on one hand and the listener on the other. In most respects, the more important part of the communication process is listening because someone can speak for hours on end, but if no one is listening what good is it? When people feel that they are being heard they are less likely to be confrontational. Therefore, listening to the other is not only acknowledging the other's humanity but it is also a sign of being in solidarity with them.

From the Bible reading we have also learned that *solidarity's starting point lies in the very heart of God*. This was demonstrated when Moses presented the land inheritance issue to God.

The Fellowship of the Least Coin is about encouraging us to spend time in prayer and to uphold in prayer victims of injustice, standing on His promise that “... *the prayers of the faithful are powerful and effective.*” Moving forward in solidarity calls us to always remember to refer everything back to God who is above everything even our cultural or social boundaries. The Fellowship of the Least Coin is also about building “global sisterhood” that is guided and centred on Christ Himself. It is about seeing Christ in the other sister, the sister here – the sister there – and the sister everywhere in God's world. As women, *Moving Forward in Solidarity*, can only be achieved when we see ourselves through other women. Jannet concluded by encouraging us to keep praying for ourselves and for others as we seek for peace for all nations.

We continue to give thanks to God that while other countries have been severely restricted in their ability to hold community gatherings due to the devastating spread of COVID-19, we have been extremely fortunate here in Aotearoa New Zealand to be able to organise and attend gatherings such as this. It is important to remember in these challenging and uncertain times we have the assurance that everything can work together for good for those who love God. It does not mean we will avoid all difficulties, but it does mean we can trust our faithful God who took the risk of coming into our world as a vulnerable child and showing us the power of love.

We do not know what the future holds but we know WHO holds the future!

Lynne Scott

Church Women United Aotearoa New Zealand