



Methodist Women's Fellowship



February 2018

Malo e Lelei, Talofa Lava, Noa'ia e Mauri, Nisa bula Vinaka, Taloha Ni, Kia Ora.
and warm greetings

Dear Friends,

This new year we are wishing you TIME to enjoy the gifts of each day, LAUGHTER to help meet life's many challenges, FRIENDS AND FAMILY to share your joys, DREAMS to keep you going and HAPPINESS through all the seasons of your life.

I begin this newsletter with good news. In the New Year Honours we congratulate Valeti Finau, a member of our Tongan District, for services to education and the Pacific Community. Greetings, too, to Rev Tevita and their family in Northcote Auckland.

Now for the sad news. We have shared with Ruth Bilverstone two funerals of two members of her National Executive '93 – '94. Peggy Yeatman and Celia Irvine. Celia was our present Smethurst Secretary. We also record the death of Myra Fraser, of Invercargill, a Solomon Islands missionary for 21 years. We thank God for the gift of their lives, for their long contribution to the NZMWF and for their service in your name. Please remember their families and their MWF friends.

Can you quote our theme memory verse yet? 1 Peter 2: 9: "But you are the chosen race, the King's priests, the holy nation, God's own people, chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God, who called you out of darkness into his own marvellous light".

Let us face a new year focussing on Lydia found in three verses - Acts 16: 14,15 and 40.

Earlier in the chapter Paul had a vision and a Macedonian man pleaded with him saying "Come over and help us" and Paul immediately set sail for Macedonia in Northern Greece, now Turkey. His first convert was Lydia, a Gentile, living in Thyatira on the Lycus River, a thriving manufacturing and commercial centre on the cross roads of trade and a melting pot of cultures. There were not enough Jewish men at the time to build a synagogue but she was cultivating her faith, opening her heart with an enquiring mind, always strong and faithful and very like Ruth, the Moabitess, who had moved several times.

Her story is a beautiful testament of God's love of women. She was a widow, a highly successful seller of purple cloth, the red-purple dye and the plants, a wealthy business and trade woman, maintaining a spiritual glow and her spacious home was a centre of hospitality. The first home groups would be set up there!

In order to meet stiff competition in business she needed prayer and grace received at riverside meetings hungering for more deeper personal spiritual experiences.

She gave her full attention to Paul's presentation of the gospel and her baptism with her whole household at that place was a testimony to many. Jesus became her business partner and much of her profits supported Paul and his ministry.

God gained complete control of her life and she played a prominent role in early church ministry.

Through her she helped to further God's purpose supporting the spread of Christianity westward.

As a strong and faithful Christian her home became a centre of hospitality for Paul, Luke, Silas, Timothy and other missionaries. This was a refuge for them after harsh treatment especially after the earthquake and the miraculous opening of the prison doors. She learned that even slaves and gaolers were children of God. Her house was truly blessed.

Can you aim to be Lydias in your homes, churches and communities this year remembering our memory verse as inspiration?

In early July with my group of ninety at the Fiji South Pacific Area Seminar we will meet our World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women's President Alison Judd of Dorset, England. Her house 'Green Pastures' is also truly blessed. Her Welsh husband Les and Alison open their home to make space and time for all to meet God. It is an oasis for prayer, worship and encounter, a place of rest and retreat where all are recharged and equipped to serve in communities and churches. Many leave feeling that God has touched their lives in the deepest and profoundest way possible. You would be welcome too! See www.green-pastures.org.

Two of us attended the South Canterbury District Christmas Meeting with a Christmas 'The Chase' and lunch. Seven of us will be at the Tonga District Convention in South Auckland 9 – 11 February with the theme 'Women with Hearts of Fire'. Two of us will be in Tauranga 26 - 28 March and several will attend the Nelson – Marlborough district 15 – 16 April. We cannot wait to meet you all.

Will you be participating in this year's World Day of Prayer Service on Friday 2 March? The theme is 'All God's Creation is Very Good' written by the women of Suriname, north east South America. 170 countries are involved and this is the 131st year. Everyone – men, women and children are invited.

Our Convention this year will be held at the Gardens Motel Complex in Shirley, Christchurch, Thursday 25 – Sunday 28 October with the closing service celebrating our first Tongan District National Executive. We value your prayers as we plan the programme based on our theme and please pray for Siniva Vaitohi as she gathers and prepares her incoming National Executive.

Our Friendship Scholarship, Kurahuna and Smethurst Committees have met. Thankyou to those committee members and we pray for all the recipients as they face their new year of studies. The next closing date for Smethurst funding is 20 March. The information is on the Methodist.org website under Methodist Women's Fellowship.

You can look up the website at any time to read our Methodist news and MWF information.

Please mark these dates in your calendars: Friday 2 March: World Day of Prayer
Thursday 8 March: United Nations International Women's Day. The theme this year is "Achieve Gender Inequality and Empower Rural Women and Girls in the Pacific Area. Meet together and talk about overall health and prosperity of their families, communities and nations. These discussions are essential to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Look up the UN Women website and read about the Meri Self Bus for safer transport for women in Port Moresby, New Guinea.

See also the list of events planned for your community and join in. Remember to wear your Thursday in Black badge that day in solidarity with all women campaigning for a safer violent-free world. Protests began in Argentina against the treatment of women, especially by the military who had 'taken' their men leaving the women alone and vulnerable.

Easter is fast approaching. The Lenten Season is a time of preparation. It is a very good time to think about our relationship with God, and what Jesus' life, death and resurrection mean to us. Let this autumn, Lent and Easter be a time in which your MWF group and your family make new discoveries together about what God is doing in the world and in your home. Join a Bible Study group and may this be a time of looking forward to the joy of Easter Day. I challenge you to fast and give your attention to prayer and Bible reading. Can you use your savings over this time for a missionary project? May your Lenten understanding be deepened and your Easter joy be increased this year.

May God bless you all richly this year from Dianne Claughton President grahamanddianne@xtra.co.nz, Lynne Scott, Vice President and WFMUCW Correspondent, Philomena Paetaia Secretary, Valmai Horlor Treasurer, Roz Wilkie Liaison and Cultural Link, Rev. Barbara Peddie Chaplain and Diaconate Link, Ofa Giblin and Unaisi Tikoinaka Missions Contacts, and Moe Petaia National Council of Women Link.