Thinking strategically

Unavoidably messy hospitality!

CWCI leadership is engaging in Spirit-directed transformational dialogue and negotiation. This process has been a hallmark of our organisation for over 60 years. We have always been willing to enable new ways of helping women, from all walks of life and places of residence, to engage with the word of God. Some have called this process an unavoidably messy hospitality!

But such openness to transformation has seen a small group of women in 1957 establish a Bible-teaching convention ministry that spread rapidly from capital city to capital city and put its tentacles into regional cities and country towns right across Australia within ten years.

This same willingness enabled the 1960s dream of Bible-teaching safaris to remote and isolated areas to become a reality via bus, car and plane. It created ‘Phoebe’ to take Christian literature to rural and remote areas and facilitated the purchase and production of Christian Woman magazine bringing bible teaching and encouragement into women’s homes, churches and workplaces.

In the 1970s this Spirit-filled willingness to dialogue and negotiate spawned the very first Know Your Bible (KYB) studies, printed by hand-operated duplicating machines on a faithful servant’s kitchen table. In the 1980s and 1990s it fostered the exponential growth of KYB groups into every corner of Australia and ministry arms in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Europe, the Pacific and Melanesia. Incorporation of CWCI Australia enabled the purchase of property in Punchbowl to facilitate the ever-increasing administrative and production demands of the ministry.

By the 2000s transformational dialogue had established national training conferences to further the reach and impact of KYB, safaris, events and communications, and a stable of volunteer writers, editors and translators were making KYB available in four continents of the world.

In this current decade, Spirit-motivated transformational dialogue and negotiation is still the hallmark of our organisation as we monitor the changing social and political landscape in which we exist.

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This year CWCI leadership is engaging in dialogue with representatives from other Christian organisations who are responding strategically to the pressures of social and political change. Their experiences
Planning a National Leadership Conference

As soon as one National Conference is over, planning begins for the next. After ‘Purpose with Passion’, our 2014 National Conference, it was decided to trial something different. But what was the reason for this change?

Feedback from the 2014 NLC participants suggested that a full conference in the first year of a Board term presents difficulties because both the presenters and the participants are new to their portfolios. So a new, two part conference was born. Part one (held in the first year of the Board term) consisted of individual portfolio, group Skype session in which the counterparts could see and chat with each other. By and large this would deal with getting to know each other and looking at the basic components of each position.

Once completed, the planning of Part two could continue with each NMB member having a better idea of what their counterparts needs were and how to meet them. Part two would be a live-in conference at Head Office in Punchbowl, Sydney and taking place halfway through the second year of term. This would give a wonderful opportunity for face to face meeting and collective prayer and learning.

Our 2018 theme “Let’s Flourish” was taken from Psalm 52:8. The Psalmist sees the righteous flourishing like an olive tree as they put their trust in God, in his faithfulness and his unfailing love. The idea of flourishing, in terms of NLC, was for women to return to their regions equipped and inspired. They would take what they had learnt and experienced and allow it to overflow from the ‘branches’ of the service tree to the ‘leaves’, the women in CWCI whose lives they seek to impact with God’s Word.

Deciding on format and theme then leads to nitty gritty planning. Who comes and goes where and when? Will there be enough beds? What about catering? But the program content has far more importance and magnitude. And so we ask, “What are the essentials?” With ladies coming from all across the nation who have never seen Head Office and its workings, we need to consider “How do we showcase everything that they are a part of?” The ladies are with us for such a short time, so “What do we give them in both concrete and emotional terms that they can take home to share with others?”

Each portfolio is very different in the outworking of its ministry and requires its own tailor-made program. There were some obvious essentials that needed to be shared across all programs, such as meeting the National Board (a video presentation); discovering more of the Melanesian ministry by personally meeting the Melanesia Director, Jacqui Guy; and learning a little of the workings of the International Board. However, the greatest portion of time is given over to the how and why of what we do across the board in CWCI.

It is essential that each person attending NLC goes away with a bigger picture of CWCI than when they came. So while each one needs training in their own portfolio, more than that, they need their vision enlarged so their ministry will flourish. If we had missed the opportunity to showcase the big picture of CWCI then we would have missed the essence of CWCI. It is all the portfolios working together, becoming like one olive tree, producing an abundant crop.

Isabel O’Neill
ANMB Vice-President
Joan Young facilitating dialogue between Boards

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“All things are possible” are informing our dialogue. In February Joan Young, a CWCI speaker, facilitated open discussions with both National and International Boards of Management concerning our core purpose and products. Our mission is unchanged: CWCI Australia continues to help women from all walks of life and places of residence to engage with the Word of God.

In March a Call to Prayer was issued to every member of CWCI both nationally and internationally. In May Regional Chairmen attending the National Leadership Conference engaged in extended observation, reflection, and dialogue regarding opportunities for CWCI ministry across Australia. In June both National and International Boards of Management met again for a weekend of prayer and strategic planning before the Lord.

CWCI leadership is keenly aware that God has led this ministry to places far beyond human expectations. Hebrews 11:6 reminds us that without faith it is impossible to please God. Therefore, with these encouragements, we are continuing to negotiate new ways of helping women engage with the Word of God because with God all things are possible.

Please continue to pray with us, hope with us and dialogue with us as together we seek God's clear direction and guidance.

Heather Jackson
President CWCI Australia

First time at NLC

For the past fifteen months I have been in weekly email contact with my Vice-Chair of Prayer counterparts led by Linda Lawson. We had been sent a laminated copy of us all “individually beaming” our smiles to each other on the Australian map. And because of our weekly email contact we grew together. There is a verse in 1 Corinthians 13:12 where Paul talks about reflections in a mirror and seeing God face to face. As I reflect on my time at the conference, the emails were like a reflection! The laminated pictures paled when I met these lovely ladies for two days in May. Our emails had been wonderful, but face to face was even better! We shared laughter, tears, hugs, joy, food, walks, and we prayed together! In those two days I was to consolidate my role. I asked every question about the things I did not yet understand and by sharing and praying together, I grew in my understanding and was equipped for the next part of my role. It was a joy beyond measure listening to Linda Lawson’s wisdom, meeting the staff at Head Office, Chris Mill, Michelle White and Hannah Paduch and spending an evening with Jacqui Guy. And we flourished by being together! Our emails are now richer because of this time together!

“The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon, planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, “The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him” (Psalm 92:12-15).

Jo Pope, VCP SERB

Second time around

A cuppa tea with friends you haven’t seen for several years around a table in a quiet kitchen — what could be better? This: Meeting new friends whose names you’ve taken to the Lord in prayer each week, who have been praying for you, and having a cuppa with them! Such joy and so many hugs as we got to know each other — a quiet kitchen no longer! This was the beginning of National Leadership Conference for my ‘second time round’. A few of us knew the layout, where to find things, and the familiar faces in the office, but there were surprises as we slept in a different bed in a different room with different delightful sisters, and found a revised training program all ready for us.

This was such a blessed time as we worshipped our Father together, learned from each other, pooled ideas, prayed over difficult issues, rejoiced in the Lord as devotions were shared, and laughed a lot. And of course, when a group of women open their hearts to each other there are first tears and then prayer. Time flew, with conversation, walking, eating, cuppas, and then more tears as the two days came to an end with goodbyes waved. For those of us who were the ‘second time rounders’, it was even harder knowing that we may not meet again here on earth, but we can look forward to eternity, where we will have plenty of time for hugs and catching up together in the presence of our Saviour.

Beatrice Weekes, VCP ECC

Jo Pope, VCP SERB

Experiencing NLC

Experiences in a mirror & face to face

“Experiencing NLC”

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Beatrice Weekes, VCP ECC
Travelling on a wing and a prayer!

Experiences on the 2018 North West Queensland National Safari

Well, perhaps ‘travelling on a wing and a prayer’ might be a bit of an exaggeration, since we were actually travelling with the two rather safe wings of the Outback Aerial Mission Cessna 182, very competently piloted by Steve Cavill from Longreach. And, of course, we also felt totally covered and uplifted at all times by many people’s prayers during the National Safari to North West Queensland held from April 22 to May 5 2018.

I’m sure that because of the grace of God and answered prayer, there were no hitches anywhere with the meetings, with our travel or with the aircraft. What a tremendous blessing! I am reminded of Psalm 139:9–10.

The Speaker, Lyn Harvie from Griffith NSW, and I met for the first time in the Brisbane airport terminal just before boarding the flight to Longreach. And just as always (this has been proved to me many times over) I felt an instant bond with this Christian sister. We talked the whole way to Longreach!

For Lyn, going on safari was a new experience, and to be flying on safari was a new experience for me too. I had previously been the leader on two Tropical Regional Board safaris, but as we covered the great distances between meetings I really enjoyed this different experience of being able to sit back and admire the wonder of God’s creation from 4000 to 7000 feet. It certainly gives a different perspective and appreciation of the vastness of this wonderful country when you are viewing the topography, river systems and the changing landscape from the air. We flew over land still suffering from drought (there were hardly any livestock visible from the air) and over country where there had been recent rains revealing dams topped up with water and green grass in the paddocks.

As we met with ladies in each town, it was quickly evident how much the seasons have affected each place. There is a sense of anxiety about the future in some of the women and Lyn and I have come away from this experience feeling so blessed that we both live in towns of reasonable prosperity and that we have been spared from that day-to-day angst about when the rains might come.

The safari began and ended in Longreach, with rest time in the middle weekend in Longreach also. As a former resident of the town, it was a delight for me to have the time to meet up again with old friends.

The places we visited in the first week were Jericho, Alpha, Barcaldine, “Brendallan” station near Aramac, “Eldorado” station near Stamford and Hughenden. In the second week we travelled to Richmond, Julia Creek, Cloncurry, Camooweal and Winton.

We pray that the messages Lyn gave from God’s word and the words of encouragement in the form of a mini testimony from me will have a long-lasting effect in the lives of the ladies we met. Many do not have the blessings we have of being able to attend Bible study, and be involved in church fellowship because churches in their towns have closed or services can only be held once a month by a visiting minister.

We were able to travel with a bookshop which we displayed at each meeting and the ladies in isolated areas were so happy to be able to make purchases.
The olive tree at first glance is fairly unremarkable — a bit gnarled, dull in colour, not particularly tall or attractive — and with bitter fruit. However, it is a hardy tree and long living, which grows in poor soil and needs very little water. Along with this, it is incredibly useful. Although the fruit needs processing, it is good for eating. The oil from the crushed fruit (and the leaves) can be used for producing light, cooking, refreshing the body, and even for medicinal purposes. The tree’s wood is also used for a multitude of purposes.

However the processes used to make the olive tree flourish, to make it produce an abundant supply of food and oil, teach us some very humbling lessons. To produce oil the fruit must be crushed in a press using tremendous pressure. To be edible the olives must first be washed, broken, soaked, sometimes salted and then left to ‘cure’ for quite a long time to draw out the bitter flavours and make them good for eating.

Perhaps some of this may remind us of the processes God uses in our lives. But we need to keep in mind that none of these is an end in itself. The purpose of these processes is to preserve the olive in a new form — a form more beautiful, fragrant and useful than it was before, so that it will become a blessing to those who use it.

Just like the olive, so it is with us. As we put our trust in our Father, his unfailing love for us works in our hearts and lives to produce what we perhaps never imagined we would ever be — something beautiful; living a life that exudes his sweetness and shines with his brightness; a life that flourishes bearing fruit for His glory.

Jenny Nixon
ANMB Secretary

“Flourishing like an olive tree
flourishing in the house of God;
I trust in God’s unfailing love
for ever and ever”
(Psalm 52:8)

Claire Manning
Safari Leader,
Chairman Cairns Committee

as again, in their towns, there is no access to Christian literature.
I can see from firsthand experience that the running of a national safari is a costly exercise. Praise be to God though that this ministry is receiving financial support and two more national safaris this year are being planned with confidence as I write.
I would like to encourage KYB group leaders to have a “safari” money box on the table on KYB study day and to encourage group members to commit to putting money aside each week for the future work of safaris. Every little bit helps!
Thank you to everyone who faithfully covered us in prayer as we travelled and praise be to God for showering us with grace and mercy — always!
Celebrations in Floreat

On Sunday 17 June 2018 a celebration was held at ‘All Saints’ Floreat Uniting Church to remember thirty years of fellowship and studying the Bible through KYB at Floreat. Ten years ago (just the other day!) we celebrated our twentieth anniversary and, since then, our group has continued to grow.

We have twenty-three members currently on the list who take the study books, but not all can come every week because of varying circumstances. A nucleus of 8–12 ladies attend each week. 134 ladies have studied with us in the last thirty years from many denominations and from countries all over the world — this has added to the diversity of experiences shared amongst the group each week. There are many spirited discussions and even more laughter. We are proof that God’s love brings all people together as one family through studying his word.

A PowerPoint presentation was given during the services and brochures with photos and books studied over the years was given to all the current members of the group. A special cake was cut after the candles were lit!

During the thirty years the group has been led by Sylvia Ryan and Val Chew who both feel very blessed to have been called to this ministry.

KYB group in Floreat

NLC participants: What did you think?

What are your thoughts on the ministry of CWCI in Australia?

“I’m even more ‘in love’ with what CWCI offers and achieves.”

“CWCI is truly unique and we are blessed by all those who have gone before us.”

“A great way to teach and encourage women studying God’s Word together.”

“Change is good! Sometimes a fire happens so that things can flourish and grow back more beautiful than before. Exciting times!”

“I believe it has evolved and continues to evolve to try and keep pace with today’s need. It has been a blessing to me and it continues to help me grow in my faith.”

“How has the National Leadership Conference benefitted your regional Board?”

“I have a new enthusiasm for my role and will be able to contribute much better to our Regional Conference.”

“I have learnt more of the ways of helping our Board grow the ‘arms’ of CWCI in my region especially listening to the various regional representatives discuss the activities they undertake in their regions.”

“I am going to take the vision of the benefits of safari to my Board to encourage them to pray for and seek the person of God’s calling to the position of Safari Admin.”

“It will breathe new ideas that come from the unity of the wider CWCI network. The sense of belonging to something that is going somewhere and growing by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

How have you personally benefitted from NLC?

“I have a list of useful things to implement. I have a great new resource to help with training my committee counterparts.”

“It has given me a sense of belonging to a team and it was helpful to share ideas and get some new ones.”

“It refocussed my passion for the ministry God has called me to.”

“NLC broadened my vision concerning what God is doing around the nation through CWCI. A great encouragement!”

Responses from the participants have been edited for clarity.
KYB study reflections

2 Corinthians: grace and power in weakness

Reflections:
The very word brings to mind images of the sun reflecting off windows or trees reflected in the still water of a lake or a river, scenes of great beauty and delight. As we have studied 2 Corinthians together we have found several ways we are to be a reflection of God to bring beauty and delight to our world.

Reflecting God’s comfort:
We read how we are to share the comfort that we have received from God in our difficult times with others in their own times of need. As we do this, we reflect the caring, compassionate heart of God who longs to comfort us all, in all our sorrows.

Reflecting Christ’s image:
Just as Moses’ face shone after he had been in the presence of God, we reflect the Lord’s glory as we are being transformed into his likeness. God “made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). But lest we think this is our own doing, God’s power shines through our weak imperfect lives so that all the thanks goes to Him for His grace at work in us.

Reflecting reconciliation:
We are to be Christ’s ambassadors, reflecting God’s desire for reconciliation between men and God through the sacrificial death of Christ and reconciliation between people as we become all one in new life in Christ.

Reflecting God’s generous giving:
We saw that God desires us to be generous, cheerful givers as we share out of our abundance with our fellow believers. When we do this, we are reflecting God’s abundant grace and generosity to us that has its ultimate expression in the great gift of his Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.

Reflecting God’s power in weakness:
We read how Paul struggled with a physical weakness and that he begged God to take it away from him. However, God’s answer was to allow the problem to remain so that he would experience the sufficiency of God’s grace and find that God’s power is made perfect in weakness. Paul’s life was a shining reflection of God’s power whatever his circumstances.

In all these ways we were challenged to live lives that reflect the awesome, almighty power of God so that we can be his shining witness to all we meet.

Judy Wheaton

Telugu Special Project 2018

Praise be to the Lord!
On behalf of our fellow believers in Christ, in the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States of India, we say, ‘Thank you!’

We are delighted to report that donations have been received to fully fund the “seed money”, to provide for the initial printing of KYB studies into the Telugu language. It is expected that future sales of KYB material in India will enable the project to continue there. Excess funds will go towards other needy translation work.

Each of you have given what you decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, and

God loves a cheerful giver ... You have been enriched in every way and you have been very generous ... This service of giving that you have performed will not only supply the needs of the Lord’s people but will overflow in many expressions of thanks and praise to God. (Adapted 2 Corinthians 9:7, 11–13)

Kaye Shooter
Head of Translation
CWCI International Board

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Kaye Shooter
Head of Translation
CWCI International Board
Prayer focus

“For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world... Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty... All the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me’” (John 6:33, 35–38).

In the prayer Jesus taught his disciples (Matthew 6:9–13), he told them to pray for their daily bread. For them bread was perhaps the major item in their diet. It was not just something they liked; it was an absolute necessity if they did not want to go hungry. Yet in John 6 he told them, “Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will provide” (v 27). He went on to say, “I am the bread of life... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:48, 51). We can, and some do, live now without bread — but we will surely die if we do not feed on the Bread of Life.

Reflect on John 6:32–33

Praise God for his wondrous love for us. Knowing the emptiness of our sinful lives and our complete inability to ever satisfy the deepest needs of our souls; knowing we had nothing to feed on that could give us the eternal life he had planned for us; he himself provided all that we needed. He gave his one and only Son to give his life so that we could have life both abundant and eternal. Are we living our lives in the light of the knowledge that we are meant to live life to the full for his glory and so honour him? Are we sharing the wonderful news of eternal life in him for those who will put their trust in him?

Ponder on John 6:35–40

Thank Jesus for his mighty promise that if we come to him we will never again know the aching pain of spiritual thirst and hunger. Thank him that if we come to him he will welcome us with open arms. Thank God the Father that it is his will that our Lord Jesus will never lose us or let go of us but will raise us to eternal life on the last day.


Let each of us look deeply into what we spend our time and resources on. Is it on those things which will never bring true satisfaction; do we labour for those things which, in the end, will burn like hay, straw and stubble; is he who is the Bread of Life our pearl of matchless worth? Ask for forgiveness for any failure to see Jesus as our All in all — and for any occasions we have been tempted to be dissatisfied with what he has provided.

Think about Luke 24:13–35

How often are we like the two disciples who walked the road to Emmaus with Jesus but did not recognise who he was? Do we act as though he is far away and not, as he promised, always with us? Do we go hungry because we fail to see him as the bread of life; the one whose body was broken and whose blood was shed for us? May our times of reading his word and of prayer be that which nourishes our lives so that we will live always and only for him.

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body’” (Matthew 26:27).

Linda Lawson
ANMB Vice-President (Prayer)