

Beyond Expectations

The Story of Christian Women's Conventions
International

by

GRACE COLLINS and
JEAN RADDON

Published to coincide
with the twenty-first anniversary celebrations,
telling of the Lord's leading
through twenty-one years of Convention work

Foreword

My knowledge of Christian Women's Conventions International dates back through the twenty-one years being celebrated by this ministry. From my first encounter with them, I realised that this was an organization with a vision to reach the women of Australia with an open confrontation concerning the claims of Jesus Christ. In the interim years it has been a personal joy for me to watch the extensive growth of this ministry, and I am very aware that a spiritual renewal has begun throughout Australia and New Zealand as a result of the intensified efforts of women who have become involved in these Conventions.

The first time I spoke to one of the Conventions was at Stanwell Tops, and my heart is warmed with memories of that occasion. I was very much a stranger to your country, but I felt immediately welcomed by the loving response that great audience of women afforded me. From that first introduction to the present, I have had the pleasure of being a part of many of the women's meetings and functions that have been so well organized and at the same time have purposed to meet the spiritual needs of all.

Because of my continued association with this ministry throughout the years, I feel a vital part of all that God has been pleased to do on an international level through the devoted women who have dedicated themselves to the promotion of the Conventions and related events.

I feel sure that the few women to whom God gave a vision of the Christian Women's Conventions can identify with the title of this book, for the Lord has truly done in and through them "Beyond Expectations." I pray that the theme of this book, which so well defines the past of this remarkable organization, will also be the realization of the future.

MILLIE DIENERT
U.S.A.

God is not dead, as some would have us believe. Neither is His Church. In spite of the pessimism and gloom in some quarters, Christians have all kinds of exciting opportunities to serve and witness, in our own country as well as in other lands.

This small book seeks to show what God has done, and is doing, in women's lives. The writers are fully aware that the Christian life has its problems and difficulties. "What seest thou?" is a good Bible question. What do you see in your Christian life and work? Do you see an opportunity in every difficulty, or a difficulty in every opportunity?

In the methods and messages of all Convention gatherings, we try to be relevant to the days in which we live, to be realistic, and to be positive and helpful. For we have discovered that women in all kinds of situations really want to know whether God has something to say to them. And if so, what.

In the early days of C.W.C.I., many Christian workers were mystified as to the reason for the popularity of Conventions amongst women. In fact it took some time before C.W.C.I was accepted in certain areas. Some people thought we were starting a new sect, and others that we would supersede women's groups in churches. That was never our purpose. Our aim was, and is, to equip women to serve the Lord better in their own churches.

One minister, while waiting for his wife, was watching hundreds of women streaming out of a church after a Convention. He said to me, "Why is it that so many women attend these Conventions? I've never seen so many women coming out of a church!" When I hesitated, he answered the question himself. "It must meet a need in their lives."

Another reason for the attraction of Conventions is that women from different churches and denominations meet and work happily together at the various functions. We have often used at Conventions a famous Christian epigram, attributed to a certain Rupert Meldenius, and quoted by Richard Baxter:

In essentials, unity
In non-essentials, liberty,
In all things, love.

The C.W.C.I., National Board, meeting in Canberra in December 1976, decided to publish a book telling of the Lord's leading through twenty-one years of Conventions, to coincide with our twenty-first birthday celebrations. Jean Raddon and I were asked to write the story of the exciting development of this woman-to-woman ministry.

We were apprehensive. We felt very inadequate, not knowing how best to approach our assignment to make it interesting and vital, and not just a prosaic record of events. So we decided to go to a friend's holiday cottage on the Blue Mountains for a few days, where we could be away from interruptions and the daily routine, and prayerfully consider this big undertaking.

On the first morning before breakfast, Jean came rushing from her room in great excitement, saying that the Lord had given her some wonderful Scripture versus in her daily reading, from Ezekiel, chapter thirty-seven – the story of the dry bones in the open valley.

God said to Ezekiel, "Can these bones live?"
Ezekiel answered, "O Lord, Thou knowest."

And God caused those dry bones to live and have breath from the four winds. We looked out over the open valley, which was filled with mist in the early morning hours, and took those verses as God's promise to us that our book would "live" and would have "breath". SO we set out to record the Lord's faithfulness, and to encourage others to prove for themselves that He waits to enrich and bless their lives.

Jean Raddon's stories of changed lives are true and right up to the minute. The events recorded in other chapters are all the results of ventures in faith, often little faith or wavering faith. Each incident reveals God's response to the faith of those who looked to Him to meet their need. Indeed, every Convention committee has its own exciting story to tell, of its beginnings and its continued blessings. We wish we had room to record them all. A list of C.W.C.I. committees will be found in the appendix.

C.W.C.I. is interdenominational. All my life I have been in an interdenominational mission, the Aborigines Inland Mission of Australia. I was born into it. I have found special interest and strength in working with Jean, and with the two editors, Merle Grigg and Pat Richards, who have all worked overseas in interdenominational missions. God has brought us together to tell forth His praise. He has been very real to us as we have written these stories, which demonstrate that He truly is a God Who is alive and at work in the hearts and homes of many women.

Our purpose, then, is to give Him the glory for what He has accomplished through C.W.C.I., and to affirm that "What He's done for others, He'll do for you."

GRACE COLLINS

Acknowledgements

When something is done for the Lord, invariably there are those behind the scenes who help make it possible.

On behalf of Jean and myself, I want to express gratitude to our two editors, Merle Grigg and Pat Richards of South Australia. They spent many hours perusing and improving our manuscript.

Our thanks are due, also, to Jean Bunce, who typed and re-typed the chapters at night and at weekends; to Dorothy Steel, for her help in taking a great deal of responsibility at C.W.C.I. head office so that I could concentrate on the research and writing; to those in the various States and New Zealand, who supplied some of the information for this book; to those who have written their testimonies, and to those who have prayed as we worked.

We want to record our thanks to our printers, J. Bell and Company Pty Ltd, for their co-operation and assistance at all times.

Finally, to my husband, Arthur, I owe more than anyone will ever know. Without my family's help and encouragement I would not have been able to cope with all that is involved in directing the large organization that our first little Bible class has become. I owe a great deal, also, to Beth Creber and Coralie France, who support and advice as secretary and treasurer over the years have made so much possible.

R.G.C.

Grace Collins describes the early days

“We don’t know much about our Bibles, do we?” A mother and her young married daughter were chatting with me after a Monday Fellowship meeting. The mother had recently come back into the joy of Christian fellowship and the daughter, more recently still, had realised her need of a Saviour and had given her life over to Jesus Christ.

“Why can’t we have a Bible-study night?” was the next question. Well, why couldn’t we? When the need had arisen for ‘something more’ for the women of our church we had begun the Ladies’ Evening Fellowship. This little group had grown as women from other churches, hearing of blessing, had joined in until our numbers had climbed to the seventy mark. A ladies’ choir which had already started from among our number practised on another Monday night and so we decided to hold a Bible Study on the third Monday night of each month.

“You should start a driving class on the fourth Monday night,” suggested some of the husbands. In the days before women drivers were so numerous, the men had found it somewhat wearing, driving their wives to all these gatherings.

We did not arrange the driving class but we did start the Bible Study with John’s Gospel. “Everyone knows John 3:16 and other familiar verses and so the rest should not be too hard,” we said. But we soon became bogged down with the doctrines of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit and one night arrived at exasperation point in our discussion.

Suddenly someone said, “What about going away somewhere for a weekend just to study the Bible? We could invite Miss Cook to come so we can ask her all the questions we can’t answer.” Miss F. M. Cook was a well-known Bible teacher who had greatly helped the women of our Fellowship with her spiritual insight and knowledge of God’s Word.

All this sounded a bit adventurous twenty years ago. How could we leave our families? What would our husbands say? Where would we go? Would Miss Cook put up with us for a whole weekend? We made a pact with the Lord: if a cottage we had in mind were available, if Miss Cook would come and if our husbands and families were happy about the idea, then we would know it was right to go ahead with our plans. Miraculously, it all came about! Our husbands almost pushed us off. Even one young man who was not a committed Christian said, “Do you think I can’t manage three children for one weekend?”

So began a never-to-be-forgotten time. Twenty women fitted into a lovely cottage, which normally held eight, at Wanda Beach near Sydney. Amidst plenty of fund and fellowship, we learned so much from God’s Word, and even before leaving for home we said, “Let’s do it again, though perhaps we’d better wait twelve months.” Of course our families looked wonderfully well when we arrived home, having eaten everything in sight.

The next year, in November 1958, we “lengthened our cords” a little and took over a small conference centre at Wentworth Falls in the Blue Mountains. About thirty women came, including several from other churches, and we enjoyed the same close fellowship and meaningful study as in the previous year. At the lunch table on the Saturday God suddenly showed us what this sort of weekend could mean to other women. So we said, “Let’s open our Bible study weekend to all women who want to come. What shall we call it?”

“Convention” sounded a good, impressive name and so it became the “Women’s Christian Convention”, later to be changed to “Australian Christian Women’s Convention” and later still “Christian Women’s Conventions International.”

I still have vivid memories of phoning the Presbyterian Church office in Sydney to ask about hiring the Thornleigh Conference Centre for a Women’s Christian Convention. The name sounded rather grand, I thought, but when I heard that the minimum number was forty and that we had to pay a deposit of five pounds I felt rather deflated! Would forty women leave their homes for a weekend? And where would we find the five pounds? It was to us, at that time, a big step in faith.

A committee of fourteen members from different churches was formed. We wrote to women's groups in the Sydney area saying "Are you looking for some way to help your women in their Christian lives? Well, here is something different – a Women's Convention."

In what we believe was the long-range planning of God, our first full-scale Convention was held the month following the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade. We had not realised that this would be so, but God had! Women who had recently been led to Christ among the vast crowds at the Sydney Showground were brought to the Convention by counsellors or friends. Sixty women stayed the whole weekend and about one hundred came as day visitors. Altogether fifty-five churches were represented at this our first Convention.

Miss Cook gave splendid teaching for young Christians. Her messages were straight, striking, even hard-hitting, but she could be gentle too. Some of her phrases still come to mind, such as: "The Holy Spirit, is He resident or President in your life?" She was joined by Mrs A. M. Chambers – witty, loving, and gracious, but none the less forceful, using vivid and moving illustrations.

One day visitor went home on the Saturday night and said to her husband, "We've had some wonderful Bible teaching today. One of the speakers took a chapter of Ephesians and she said this and this and this. I'd never heard all this before." "my dear," her husband replied, "I took that chapter on Thursday night at the prayer meeting and pointed out all those things." "Well, I didn't hear you." "Your weren't listening!"

This is what we were discovering. Women, guided by God's Holy Spirit, could put their finger on the need in other women's lives and help them to understand and apply God's Word in a way that only women could.

Another day visitor said to one of the committee members, "However can you stand it? You've got two sons and a husband. Whatever will your kitchen be like when you get home?" To which the committee member replied, "I have received so much spiritual strength and inspiration this weekend I feel I could deal with twelve kitchens single-handed!"

From the beginning we reminded the women: "Carry back to your churches, your groups, your family, the blessings you've received, so that others may share in the good things God has provided for us here."

Being inexperienced as to the finance needed for a Women's Convention, we had made the charge as low as we thought possible for the women, and found, by the last meeting, that we hadn't enough money to pay all our bills. However, a report from our registrar to committee members when the Convention was over showed how God met our deficit. "I have good news to relate. After Mrs Collins' word about the finances, women queued to give me money. Many gave more than the requested extra ten shillings and the impression I got was that they had received so much blessing, they didn't care how much they paid! Also, since the Convention we have received donations through the mail, so now we have £22.14.5 as a start for next year."

This same impression was shared in a letter which was typical of many we were to receive, and are still receiving, after Conventions:

"Just a short note of appreciation for a wonderful day spent last Saturday at the Thornleigh Conference Centre. We received many rich blessings from the messages given and enjoyed the time of fellowship with others. I thought the organization was very carefully planned and carried out. The meals were excellent. I noted also the flowers so beautifully arranged and, for our comfort, the log fire. Thank you for all this."

Another letter was from our cook who, although she was not able to attend the sessions, said she had received great blessing through conversations with the women in the kitchen.

Someone, commenting on the Quiet Time in the mornings, said "This could never have happened at home".

Not only the standard but also much of the pattern was set at that first Convention. Sessions on missions were included. In a Panel Session which we called "Leave it to the Girls" we discussed practical and perplexing problems pertinent to family life, faith and Christian living. Mrs Chambers began the now famous Question Box Session, by handling this query: "Are all believers also disciples?"

One verse we quoted at this first full-scale Convention has been used right through the years. "The Lord Given the Word, the women that publish the tidings are a great host."¹ What a prophecy it has proved to be for C.W.C.!!

Almost one hundred women were in residence for the second weekend Convention at Thornleigh in 1960. A spirit of expectancy was very evident in the introductory meeting on the Friday night when testimonies were given by women who had been blessed at the first Convention.

Then, as chairman of the Convention, I gave the opening address, outlining the meaning and ideals of the great interdenominational Keswick Convention in England, on which the Bible teaching for our weekend had been based, teaching about the reality of sin and salvation, separation and surrender, the Spirit-filled life, sacrifice and service. These have been the basic truths behind our Convention themes right through the years.

Miss Cook's messages developed our theme for the weekend, "Let us draw near,"² "Let us go on,"³ "Let us go forth."⁴ Mrs Chambers led Bible study sessions on the Second Epistle of Peter, encouraging us to holy living and further study of God's Word, that we may "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." Many women were challenged and inspired by the practical help received.

Thornleigh's lovely grounds provided a perfect setting, where early in the morning women were able to spend time in quiet communion with the Lord before the sessions of the day began. Many enthusiastic day visitors were welcomed to the meetings, and on the Saturday about 350 women more than filled the chapel.

The panel session was again a popular feature of the Convention, when problems faced by many Christian women were competently discussed in the light of God's Word, and practical advice given. An unsympathetic husband, the guidance of teenage children, witnessing and giving were amount the questions dealt with by the panel.

Or second Convention brought comments from women who attended and, returning home, wrote to express what it had meant to them to be there. We give just a few quotes from the many letters received.

"I thought I was a pretty fair Christian until then. But, as someone said in the testimony time, I had a rude awakening. Thank you for enriching my life."

"I cannot put into words the wonderful experience we had a Thornleigh but you will understand.

By 1961 women were beginning to say "How great it would be if there were also a weekend life this for men!"

Word was getting around that the Convention was providing teaching on the 'deeper' Christian life for which many women had felt a need. There were five hundred present at our third Convention, the ages ranging from girls in their teens to one ninety-on-year-old lady. The chapel was filled to capacity and the crowd overflowed on to the verandah and into the entrance hall.

A women's Bible Class was formed in one place after the women went home. That year's report says, "Numbers and enthusiasm have grown with each successive year. Women came from places as far distant as Nambucca Heads, Singleton, Newcastle, Penrose and Wollongong, and some extension Conventions in other areas are being considered."

There has always a strong emphasis on music in our Conventions which God has used to inspire and encourage. Bright and meaningful hymns and choruses have been featured in smaller groups right through to the magnificent singing at our larges Conventions when

thousands of women's voices are raised in praise to God. Convention music has been relayed through the Australian Broadcasting Commission in the regular hymn-singing sessions as well as by medium of cassettes. Women have taken the music and messages of theme choruses home to their families and church group. Soloists, singing groups and choirs, pianists and organists have brought a holy hush and a spirit of worship to Convention meetings and prepared the way for the spoken message.

Recognising the importance of good singing and knowing that this doesn't just happen, talented and dedicated songleaders have accepted this special service in C.W.C.I., while others have been trained to make an important contribution in this way at local Conventions and as members of teams travelling to country areas and on Safaris.

Much of this has been due to the gifted and enthusiastic leadership given by Betty Long, who commenced this ministry of song at our first Convention at Thornleigh. The high standard she has set and the inspiration she has given have, in a wonderful way, helped many thousands of women to sing and make melody in their hearts to the Lord.

- 1 Psalm 68:11 A.R.V.
- 2 Hebrews 10:22 A.V.
- 3 Hebrews 6:1 A.V.
- 4 Hebrews 13:13 A.V.

Grace Collins describes some exciting developments

Suddenly it was happening!

“Could you come and help us start a Convention in our district?” As women continued to come in increasing numbers to Thornleigh, some from far away places, they returned home excited about the possibilities of this woman-to-woman work for the Lord and wanting the same blessings and opportunities in their own areas. Interested women who wanted to form committees were asking for Conventions more quickly than we could arrange to meet with them.

We began to realise that what we had thought was to be a weekend, once a year, for Sydney women, was going to spread and multiply further afield. The whole thing had mushroomed beyond belief. “Right out of our hands,” as our first registrar kept saying. “But,” as we said to each other, “out of our hands and into the hands of God.” He was leading us out into an ever-widening ministry.

Women who had never done so before were beginning to take on leadership. Stories were coming back to us of changed lives and transformed homes. One woman met the secretary of a Convention in the street and told her, “My whole home has been transformed since I went away for that weekend.” “Why, how could that be?” asked the secretary. “Because my attitude has changed,” she replied, “my attitude to my husband, my children, and my work.” We were seeing more clearly than ever before that the Bible does change women’s lives. It is an attitude-changing book.

We were delighted when twelve women from Newcastle, at the mouth of the Hunter River, 100 miles north of Sydney, and four or five others from Branxton and Singleton, fifty miles further north, came to our second Convention in 1960. One of them had visited our first house-party at Wanda Beach and had also attended our first Convention. Another in this group was a minister’s wife, on whose behalf the Lord had laid the need of the women in the Hunter River Valley for Convention ministry. She became the first chairman of the Hunter River Valley Committee and, later, one of our panel of speakers. Their first Convention was held in November 1961 at the Church of England Conference Centre, Morpeth.

Several women came to our earliest Conventions at Thornleigh and Morpeth from Nambucca Heads in the N.S.W. Northern Rivers district, driving through Friday night to be there in time for the Saturday and Sunday meetings. As their numbers grew, they too wanted a Convention arranged for their area. We discussed this at Morpeth and then I was able to meet with them at Nambucca Heads on my way home from Brisbane, where I had been speaking about Conventions. The Northern Rivers women were really quick off the mark. Having had the experience of attending these other Conventions they commenced in their own area with a weekend at Scotts Head Conference Centre early in 1962.

Exciting experiences in those early days were often related to travel. Mrs Chambers and I were being driven to the nearest airport on our return journey from the Northern Rivers Convention when, miles from anywhere, the little car suddenly stopped. Whatever was wrong? After exploring the various areas of the car, our kind driver discovered we were out of benzene, as she called the necessary liquid. What were we to do?

I hitch-hiked back to the coast and appeared eventually at the door of the hall where the last session was being held. Miss Cook broke off in the middle of her address, thinking that we had met with an accident. When I explained our predicament, a nursing sister in the audience volunteered to drive us the sixty or so miles to the airport. Picking up Mrs Chambers on the way, our driver sped along trying to make up some of the time already lost, urged on of course by us. In answer to the prayers of the women still at Scotts Head, we arrived just in time for the plane!

During a later Convention in that delightful spot, the women had great fun calling Mrs Chambers and myself the 'aged women,' because of the reading from Titus¹ instructing the aged women to teach the younger generation of wives how to behave. Somehow the name stuck! Since then, of course, we have aged nearly twenty years more.

Meanwhile, in 1961, a group of women had gathered in the lounge of a mission headquarters in Brisbane, at the invitation of the hostess at the headquarters, with whom I had been in touch about Conventions in Queensland. After the women heard of the blessing this type of weekend gathering had brought to women in Sydney, they decided to go ahead and introduce Conventions in Brisbane.

While in Darwin the following year on mission work, I received a letter from the woman who, though absent at the time of that first get-together, had since become secretary of the Brisbane Committee. Calling in again on my way home from Darwin, I found an enthusiastic group ready to plan a weekend Convention for the following year.

It is a big step in faith, now, to form a committee and start a Convention, but at that time it was especially so, as Women's Christian Conventions, as they were then called, were virtually unknown outside New South Wales. So many things need to be considered and decided. Would the women respond to the invitation and join in a Convention? What time of year would be best, and where should it be held?

However the committee launched out into the unknown, and in 1962 Brisbane's first Convention was held at the Methodist Youth Centre at Margate.

At about this time, the first suggestion of a Day Convention came from a woman who lived at Sutherland, a suburb on the south side of Sydney, who had attended the Weekend Conventions at Thornleigh. She wrote to me saying that, although crowds of women did come for the Saturday sessions, she felt many others would not be willing to travel across from her area. We hesitated at first, thinking, "God has led us unto this weekend Convention and, if the women want fellowship and teaching, let them come to the weekend."

Of course God showed us our selfishness, and eventually we agreed to hold a day of meetings, patterned on the usual Saturday's sessions, in June 1962. The Sutherland Congregational Church was crowded, and many women approached the speakers, Mrs Chambers and Miss Cook for counselling. The panel session was much appreciated also. God was using other women to make suggestions which extended the work.

As well as this commencement of the Sutherland Shire Convention, plans were already in hand for a Convention in the Manly-Palm Beach area, to be called the Northern Beaches Convention. The C.W.C.I. committees in both these places are still making a great impact in their areas with dinners, coffee-hours, Mini Conventions and Day Conventions.

Today hundreds of Day Conventions are held across Australia and New Zealand. Although we recognise that a Day Convention does not carry the same possibilities as a weekend away, when women are free from all normal duties, we have found that these shorter gatherings do meet a need and often inspire the women in the area to think of holding a Weekend Convention.

In the years of beginnings Mrs Chambers and Miss Cook travelled extensively and spoke at so many Conventions that women began to feel it would not be a Convention without one of them there. It was my privilege in those early years, too, to attend every 'first' Convention and often the first two or three. Getting to know the women on the committees and the women of the area, stood me in good stead in later years, helping me understand the situations and problems which sometimes arose.

The kind of ministry given at Conventions was meeting a real need. The idea grew and spread far and wide. Committees were formed and Conventions held in rapid succession.

After the first Queensland weekend at Margate, others followed at Tumut in the Riverina district, N.S.W., at Canberra, A.C.T., with South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria holding their first Conventions in 1966 and Tasmania in 1967. By 1968, our tenth year of Conventions, there were nearly forty Conventions at places scattered across our continent.

Meanwhile at Thornleigh our numbers were exceeding all expectations. Women who were blessed brought others, so that by 1963 the numbers had reached the 1,000 mark and we could no longer accommodate the crowds in the Conference Centre Chapel. We hired a large marquee, which was filled to capacity, and so we opened up the sides and the women sitting in colourful groups on the lawns were able to share in the sessions. Several of the first committee members cared for and cooked the meals for a number of years. There was fast-growing interest in these 'Keswick' type Christian Conventions for women. Denominational papers and the interdenominational Christian newspaper, *New Life*, gave us publicity which helped to create interest in States other than N.S.W.

During the 1963 Convention at Thornleigh we introduced the Missionary Faith Promise offering. This offering has in the fifteen ensuing years grown to gigantic proportions. As related in the chapter, "Back the Attack," it has also brought encouragement and blessing to many women.

The marquee seemed to be an admirable idea, although much work was entailed in erecting a platform and setting out chairs. We were ever grateful to several men who came to our rescue. But, alas, during our 1964 Convention, which was described as "windy, wet, but wonderful," the marquee collapsed! We were forced to hold all the sessions in the chapel, with the overflows moving into the quiet room and the dining room.

In the six years the Convention had been held, this was the first time we had experienced bad weather. We later discovered, also for the first time, that there was an alternative site for our Convention. It had taken what was almost a hurricane to force us out into a larger place! We found that the National Fitness Camp at Narrabeen provided what we thought would be sufficient overnight accommodation and the authorities were in the process of building a basketball stadium which would be turned into an auditorium with platform and chairs, and which would hold 1,000 women.

However, the next year, 1965, we were quickly booked out, and in the providence of God found accommodation at a late date at the Salvation Army Conference Centre at Collaroy. As the staff were attending a conference in the city over that weekend, the Salvation Army Centre had not accepted any bookings. When we explained our predicament, and agreed to arrange for meals at a café, they were happy to take in our overflow. The following year, 1966, we were able to accommodate the overflow at the Methodist Youth Centre at Elanora.

From the torrential rain of Thornleigh we turned to blazing heat at Narrabeen. Fires were raging in the bushlands around us and further afield in country areas. Some women had to leave in the middle of one of the sessions when they received a message that their properties and homes were endangered. We had to cut the frock of one of our committee members right down the back, it was literally stuck to her with the heat!

The year 1966 also marked another memorable event. C.W.C.I. purchased the magazine *Christian Woman*. The second "Venture of Faith" chapter tells the story of the Lord's provision of an editor and all the finance needed.

"1,600 women with one accord in one place.....All one in Christ Jesus," was one description of the Convention in the following year, 1967.

The obtaining of a venue for this year was another miracle of provision from the Lord. We were completely non-plussed when the authorities of the National Fitness Camp at Narrabeen told us we could no longer put chairs in the big basketball stadium because they had put down special flooring. Nor were the kind of high heels which were then the fashion permitted. We had visions of all of us sitting on the floor and a thousand pairs of shoes lying outside, waiting to be sorted out after the session!

There was no conference centre in Sydney or the surrounding countryside with accommodation or a hall large enough for us. Then the miracle happened. We heard that Ambassadors for Christ at Stanwell Tops, thirty miles along the coast, were erecting an auditorium in honour of the well-known evangelist, Rev. John Ridley. This would hold 1,600, and the glass doors along each side, when opened, would allow for rows of seats to be placed outside. With good amplification, all present would be able to hear.

The doubting Thomasinas had lots of queries. Would the women want to move to a new venue so soon? They were just growing accustomed to Narrabeen. Would they be willing to travel so far? What would we do if the auditorium was not finished in time? Since there was no public transport, how would everyone get to Stanwell Tops?

I remember the thrill I felt when, a week or so before our Convention, the men building the auditorium suggested that I be the first person to walk cross the big platform. I remember, too, that the electricians finished the wiring of the building just before it was time to start our first session on the Friday night! And I recall that John Ridley's daughter was there among the women who filled the beautiful auditorium, which was officially opened the weekend following our Convention.

God's timing? Yes We had taken the step in faith and He had met us at that point. But we had to step out first.

The accommodation at Camp Ambassador was all booked two months ahead, and so we made exhaustive enquiries regarding more. We were helped in our search by a returned missionary who has housed some of the national speakers who came as counsellors each year. We booked the Methodist Youth Camp at nearby Otford, and guest houses and hotel accommodation at Austinmer, ten miles further along the coast.

We felt we had found a true home. Stanwell Tops proved to be a place where the Lord gave great blessing. He undertook for every detail, from the weather to the arranging of the right place for the right people in dormitories and bedrooms. The staff at Camp Ambassador, though hard pressed day and night, were faithful throughout. There was never a cross word or a complaint, even at an off-guard moment, because everyone was working so that the Holy Spirit could use every part of the weekend for His glory.

This Convention proved to be a place of heart searching before the Lord. Women came with problems and difficulties, but went back to their various situations, their churches, and their homes and families better equipped to serve the Lord.

Some of those who attended shared their impressions as we relate to you in the following extracts:

"Just to be in a community for a whole weekend in a place where Christian principles prevail, is something one cannot describe in words."

"I arrived in Sydney last week from Canada, needing Christian fellowship. I went to a bookstall to buy some books and there saw a brochure about the Convention. I praise God I decided to come."

"I am the mother of three young children and no doubt am not alone when I say that the things of the Spirit tend to be crowded out by an extremely busy life. I was invited to the Convention by a member of the committee. My acceptance was tentative because of many obstacles which, as others have also experienced, were eventually overcome, and I was on my way to my first Convention. I feel extremely grateful to the Lord for the abundant

fellowship I enjoyed, as such fellowship has been almost totally excluded from my life since the birth of my third daughter three years ago.”

“I spent yesterday from 9.15a.m. until 8.15 p.m. at Camp Ambassador at the Christian Women’s Convention, and what a blessing it was to me! We are privileged indeed to have speakers able and willing to give their time and energy to interpret God’s Word to us in such a wonderful way. From the shortest talk, right through the missionary session to the main speakers, we received a message. The organization was excellent and my friends and I were thrilled and amazed that so many women had come, and from so many different directions.”

Within three days of the end of this year’s Convention, one woman who did not attend, hearing such glowing reports from others, booked in for the following year, all 362 days in advance!

The Conference Centre at Stanwell Tops is now owned by the Churches of Christ, and we continue to receive the most wonderful co-operation.

In 1968 we celebrated ten years of Conventions, although they had actually started twelve years before with our first Bible study house party. It was an exciting year for us. Our first international speaker, Miss Jean Raddon, From Nepal, was in Australia for part of 1967 and 1968. Her visit had been partly sponsored by her Mission, the Nepal Evangelistic Band, now the International Nepal Fellowship, and partly by us. She spoke at Conventions across the mainland and in Tasmania. A true convention speaker, her message was fresh, down-to-earth, and of great practical worth to the women of our day. At Stanwell Tops, where we were celebrating the tenth anniversary, Jean was the main speaker.

An extra bonus was that Mrs Millie Dienert was then in Australia, promoting the Home Prayer Meetings, which were to precede the second Billy Graham Crusade in our land. We were further inspired and blessed by her address at the Saturday evening session. It was a momentous weekend.

Another happening which set apart this year as a special one was that C.W.C.I. “went international.” A small team left for New Zealand in early May and travelled through parts of the South and North Islands, experiencing loving hospitality and fellowship with the women in eight centres. We really had ‘cold feet’ as we started the series of meetings with a Day Convention in Dunedin in the South Island. Would the women across the Tasman respond to the idea of an interdenominational Convention as the women of Australia had? However, under the direction of God, the same spirit of enthusiasm which characterised Australian Conventions prevailed in all the meetings throughout New Zealand.

After the final meetings in Auckland, we sadly said goodbye to Jean Raddon, as she left for furlough and deputation work in England while we prepared to return to Australia. Little did we think, as we watched her disappearing down the long tunnel-like walkway to board the plane, that God would bring her back to us, and right into the fellowship of C.W.C.I. as a beloved fellow worker. But that, too, is another story.

Why has God blessed the work of C.W.C.I.? Not because of any one person, but because groups of women are willing to pray, and to work very hard together. Because women have been prepared to travel in teams, to use their own or the family car, sometimes for long journeys. One husband purchased a little old car in which to travel to work so that this wife could have the modern one for C.W.C.I. work.

So the Lord has been made known in their own community and beyond.

Ten years of Conventions

A missionary doing deputation work in New Zealand was the first to take news there of what was happening among many women in Australia. Two women who were very impressed gathered others into their homes to share what they had heard about this new women-to-woman ministry.

One of those interested women later became the first secretary of C.W.C.I. in New Zealand. The other, who is now the national chairman, describes the development of Conventions in that land:

“We formed a committee to plan a Convention-type meeting in Auckland, and I was asked to chair this committee. In 1968 a group of women from Australia, led by Grace Collins and Jean Raddon, introduced Conventions to New Zealand, visiting eight different centres in the North and South Islands, and creating keen interest.”

The team members were encouraged also, as they travelled to different centres, meeting many women who had come to the convention because friends, helped and inspired at other centres, had written urging them not to miss such a wonderful experience.

One woman in Australia had written to twenty-nine of her friends in New Zealand, encouraging them to attend the meetings.

Hundreds of women attended the final meetings in New Zealand, which were held at the Baptist Tabernacle in Auckland. After the day sessions, they went home to prepare the evening meal for their families. It started to rain heavily, and the team thought sadly that the evening meeting would be spoilt. But not so.

As they entered that huge church, dripping wet, they met scores of women arriving. Grace Collins said to a row of them sitting across the back, “I didn’t think you would come back again in all this rain.”

They quickly replied, “You did.”

“But I had to.”

“So did we!” was their answer, which gladdened the hearts of the team members and promised well for the future of Conventions in New Zealand.

The national chairman takes up the story again:

“While the team from Australia was visiting New Zealand, I was overseas with my husband. Before leaving I had prayed that the Lord would lead me into a wider sphere of service for Him. On my return, I found myself chairman of the First official committee of Christian Women’s Conventions in New Zealand! This was the simple but wonderful beginning of what has now become the largest and most rapidly expanding Christian women’s organization of its kind in New Zealand.

“The Lord broadened our vision to see the whole of our lovely little country being blessed through C.W.C.I. Committees in many districts have caught the vision too and are now reaching out into surrounding areas and finding women are just waiting for such a ministry as we have to offer. A chain of C.W.C.I. committees now stretches from the far North to the far South, and keen interest is evident in many smaller places where women have heard what is happening elsewhere.

“I recently return from a weekend Convention at Marsden Bay, where I met a young mother from the small country-town of Kaikohe in the far north. She was excited at experiencing her very first Convention and asked. ‘Why haven’t I heard of this before! It’s just what I have been looking for. When can you come up to my district?’ Father north women in Kaitia were also waiting for us to come and this we plan to do very soon.

“Each Convention gathering shows evidence of the hand of the Lord in blessing, and this confirms to us that the work is indeed His and we are workers together with Him.

“That which began with a small step of faith, in 1968, is in this our tenth year, bringing more and more women together, as they realise that God is using C.W.C.I. to meet the spiritual needs of women in their daily lives.

“At Marsden Bay weekend, during the sharing time, a middle-aged woman testified that she had found in Conventions the reality and proof of the ‘Oneness in Christ,’ and that this fellowship has become the most wonderful thing in her life. She has not missed a Convention since they started.

“A retired school-teacher came to Eastern Beach to her first Convention. Being put into a group with young women, she began to complain. But after a short time she confessed that she had learnt from these young women that there is no age barrier in Conventions. Meeting a young missionary who had only one dress for the whole weekend, she became very concerned, so much so that she went home to share her own wardrobe with the missionary. She has also ‘adopted’ the missionary’s children and is now their New Zealand grandmother.

“A gracious woman, the wife of a professional man and mother of a growing family, rang the morning after her first Convention meeting, which was our annual Career Girls’ Dinner. She was excited because she had found at the dinner what she had long searched for, really warm Christian fellowship. She has not since missed any Convention meeting that she can possibly attend.

“One of the women who came to know the Lord in the early years of Convention work, is still seeking to win her husband and family for Christ. She says the Convention was the beginning of new life for her. Not only did she meet the Lord, but she had discovered herself as a real person and is now learning to reach out to others. She is finding out so much about herself as she does the questions for the K.Y.B. Bible-study which we have not started in her home.

“A young mother with a growing family had a problem which was wrecking her home relationships – her bad temper. She came to a Weekend Convention at Eastern Beach, and there gained the victory over her temper. Two weeks later her husband, speaking at their Sunday morning church service, witnessed to the wonderful change in his wife. He said the whole family was different because mother had lost her temper for good. He then added, ‘Even the dog noticed!’

“Many Know Your Bible study groups have been commenced throughout the country, and many more women are catching the excitement of studying God’s Word together, and finding how much it relates to their everyday lives. At the second study in one home, a neighbour, a young woman who is not a Christian, was asked what she had learnt from the study so far. She replied, ‘One thing I have learnt is that this Book has something to say to me today.’ We are praying for her conversion through these studies.”

All these experiences are being multiplied in many areas of New Zealand, where women are sharing with other women the ways in which God meets their needs and helps and guides in their daily lives.

New Conventions are starting in these places: Kaitia, Kaikohe, Whangarei, Putaruru, Taumaranui, Rotorua, Oamaru, Gore.

The National Capital

A minister's wife, who was one of the original committee for the first Convention in Sydney, moved with her husband to Canberra. She invited some of the women from their church to attend one of the early Conventions held at Thornleigh. They returned home enthused, and wishing they could have a similar weekend in Canberra. A committee was formed, and Canberra's first Convention was held in 1963 at Bruce Hall, one of the halls of residence at the Australian National University. As was usual in those early days, the speakers at that first Convention were Mrs Chambers and Miss Cook. Many women who attended the meetings were greatly blessed, and some were given a new vision of what it meant to be a Christian.

In 1968 the committee decided to move the Convention to Ursula College, the Women's College of the A.N.U., and one which had been recently finished. Rising costs caused them to alter their programme to a Friday night meeting and a Day Convention on the Saturday.

Coffee mornings and evenings have also been held regularly. The attendance at the first coffee evening was a real surprise and the committee did not know how to accommodate all who came, let alone feed them. But of course they did, and the results amazed them.

Canberra has often been included in the itinerary of overseas Convention speakers. The events of one year could have spelt disaster for the schedule of Mrs Millie Dienert of U.S.A.

After speaking at an evening meeting in Canberra, Mrs Dienert was driven to the airport by a committee member, to catch the 10 p.m. plane back to Sydney. When they went to the ticket counter to check in they were told that the plane had been suddenly cancelled! Mrs Dienert was due in Tasmania for meetings the following day but it seemed humanly impossible for her to get there. However she finally made it, at great cost to herself. The committee member's drover her halfway to Sydney, where a Sydney committee member and her husband met them and drive Mrs Dienert back to the city, arriving at 3 a.m.! At 7 a.m. Mrs Dienert was on the plane for Tasmania.

After her arrival, she spoke at a morning meeting in Launceston, had lunch with the committee there, and then travelled on to Hobart, to speak at a dinner that night! The women present at the dinner have since said that when Mrs Dienert rose to speak, no one would have guessed she had driven through the night with no sleep, flown across three States in the early morning, and filled two other engagements before arriving at the dinner. Many stories are told of the intrepid Millie Dienert as she has travelled the world, speak to women and inspiring and counselling them but this is one with an Australian flavour.

Many times at the Canberra Convention gathering women's lives have been changed. One young woman, who was opposed to Christian teaching, came along to a Saturday afternoon session because it was raining and she was not able to do her washing! During the meeting the Lord spoke to her, and now she is in full-time service for Him.

Another young woman, as unlikely a person as you would ever expect to see at a Christian coffee evening, she was converted and now runs a Bible class for the women in her street. Know Your Bible classes have also been established in Canberra, as a result of a combined two-day Bible study seminar.

The Snowy Mountains Convention, which was commenced as a result of women attending the Canberra Convention from Cooma, continues as a source of strength and blessing to the women there through dinners and coffee evenings.

Women of the North catch the Vision

Queensland's first C.W.C.I. weekend Convention late in 1962 was an immediate success. The Methodist Youth Centre at Margate, which accommodated 200, was booked out, and so many other women came for the Saturday meetings that extra chairs had to be put out in the sun for the overflow.

Earlier in the year the secretary and one other members of the newly-formed committee attended the Convention held at Thornleigh, N.S.W. This gave them the opportunity to meet the Sydney committee and to learn something of the practical side of holding a Convention. They gained an understanding of the Lord's pattern so wonderfully demonstrated in the outflow of blessing that weekend. They returned home with a vision of the tremendous potential of such a Convention.

To the surprise of the Queensland committee, women came from outlying areas, one even travelling from Bundaberg, two hundred and sixty miles north. Bundaberg now has its own weekend Convention. The long distances the women travel has been an outstanding feature of the South Queensland Central Convention, as it is now called.

The speakers at this Convention, Mrs Chambers and Miss Cook, were accompanied by three other women from Sydney, who had come to support the first interstate outreach of C.W.C.I.

One year a woman travelled 750 miles from the heart of this big State to attend the Convention. She had received a Convention brochure and an invitation from an acquaintance who was praying for her. She had been away from the Lord for eighteen years but during the Convention she fully surrendered her life to Him returning home a radiant Christian after a fifteen-hundred-mile journey! She has maintained that glow despite difficult conditions. She lives on a cattle property and the big slump in this industry has been a time of great testing.

The committee soon had to take another step in faith and hire a marquee and chairs to cope with the numbers. This they did each year for twelve years, straining the weekend accommodation to its limit. Setting up the marquee entailed a lot of work for the committee members, who were grateful to the men who came to their rescue. A platform had to be built, electricity installed, and chairs arranged, a heavy job when the attendance reached as many as 500.

As the years went by, the rising cost of hiring, the increased over-all charges, and the lack of sufficient accommodation increasingly concerned the committee.

Finally they had had enough, especially when the firm from whom they had hired the marquee each year sent a smaller one. It was torn in places. It leaked. Committee members had to keep tying up the splits as they paddled in water. It was time to move on!

God had provided a place for them. High up on beautiful Tamborine Mountain stands the Keswick Convention Centre where, in separate accommodation centres, there is room for as many as 600. The committee stepped out in faith in 1975 with many wonderful results.

Many lovely young women were attending for the weekend. Two of them were billeted in with some of the older committee members in one house party. These girls were so helpful; it needed only a whisper and the necessary job was done in a flash. One girl testified at the Sunday afternoon session that she was convinced there was no generation gap at Conventions. In 1977 all the eight centres were booked for house parties.

Two committee members who were very active in Christian work among younger women and girls were leaders of a weekly Bible class. From this grew a Business Girls' Dinner, attended each time by 60 to 100 girls. Eventually that dinner was discontinued because many of the girls entered Bible College or married. But each year's Convention programme

now includes two or three dinners at the Canberra Hotel which are usually attended by the capacity number of 268. The committee is planning an austerity dinner for a future occasion.

When calls came in from other areas about starting Conventions, the committee in Brisbane had to face the problem of the size of their State, which covers 670,500 square miles. Requests were coming all the time from various places. But few women were able to be away from home for the time needed to travel long distances to help form committees.

Two members of the Brisbane Committee, now the South Queensland Central Committee, responding to one of these appeals, made a train booking to Townsville, 921 miles north. They arrived at the station with their luggage, only to be told the train had been cancelled, due to a strike. Discovering they could go by coach the next morning they telegraphed the Townsville women about their change in plans. Rain teemed down – and it can pour in torrents in this tropical State in the wet season – and one of the committee members was so nervous that she watched the driver all the way.

The meeting was scheduled to start at 10.30 a.m. They arrived, hot and tired, at 12.30 p.m.! At the coach office a taxi was waiting to rush them off to talk to the women who had waited over two hours in 36° Celsius heat.

A bad start, one would think, but the work has gone on from strength to strength in spite of that difficult journey at the beginning. Townsville was included in the first Safari tour. Now there is a weekend Convention there and coffee hours are held each time the team passes through.

It was decided in 1975 to divide the immense State of Queensland into north and south for the work of C.W.C.I., with Brisbane as the central committee for the south, and Townsville as the central committee for the north.

For six years the South Queensland Central Committee had prayed for a car. Their members had used their own cars to travel the long distances to many country centres as the work expanded. After the final meeting at one of the Margate Conventions, during which this prayer request had been mentioned, a woman gave ten dollars to start a fund to buy a car. Later, this same woman gave another ten dollars to buy the first supply of petrol.

The Convention secretary continues the story. "Another woman on one of the country committees came to me and said, "You've got your car!" She explained that some developers were interested in buying a family property, the proceeds of the same were to be divided among the family, who would make enough money available, out of their tithe, to purchase the car. In the New Year, however this open-hearted woman contacted us with an apology. Due to the recession in the building industry, the developers had withdrawn their offer. Sending a gift of \$300, she very generously offered to lend the balance, interest free and without a time limit for repayment. However the central committee felt they should wait, and so they continued to us their own cars.

"At another country Convention a committee member displayed great interest in the car situation, asking about the amount of money in the fund and the type of car being considered. Shortly afterwards a letter came from her enclosing a cheque for \$5,000. The donor, who wished to remain anonymous, attended the first Central Convention held at Tamborine Mountain and surreptitiously this lady along with the secretary looked over the different cars parked there. She had suggested an air-conditioned model, but, after seeking expert advice, we decided to buy a Holden Kingswood, as spare parts for this were procurable throughout all the country areas. As we took delivery of the lovely new white car with tan upholstery and a laminated windscreen, the dealer said, 'You must have been praying. It's the only one left.' The Lord also provided a very suitable garage at the home of a woman who had no car. She had been making good use of the garage for storage. We did not want to impose by making this a permanent arrangement as it meant sacrifice for her. At present the car is being satisfactorily housed in another area.

"After much prayer for God's timing the Missionary Faith Promise offering was launched at the 1971 Central Convention, resulting in cash and faith promises amounting to \$5,857.

In the years since then the offering has steadily increased so that in 1976 the total amount of cash and faith promises was \$9,300.”

The continuing expansion of C.W.C.I. in Queensland is interwoven with the exciting development of the Safari ministry, which has enabled women in isolated outback areas to share in the blessings of Conventions.

The little plane flew over the tree tops landing on the road outside a house. A woman came running out in great excitement. Her whole face was alight. “I’ve a big pot of stew on the stove,” she cried, “that is all we are going to eat. I just want to talk and talk about the Lord.” What a wonderful evening of fellowship it was! Only one woman whose life had been transformed by the Lord through her coming into contact with C.W.C.I.

Scattered right over that vast state you will find women in similar circumstances. The committees of Queensland are filled with expectancy as they face the future with God. So much still to be done, so many women to be reached, but in joyful anticipation they press on with Him who is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”¹

Have you ever felt completely satisfied with your life, and so busy that you really could not fit any more into it? Busyness does not necessarily mean satisfaction, of course, but it does keep one from thinking!

One woman, who has always been very active in the church, was just like this. She was completely sure she had found all there was to find, until she attended her first C.W.C.I. live-in Convention, at Margate in Queensland.

The experience revolutionized her whole life. She listened spell-bound to the speakers. She had never heard anything like it! The messages were given lovingly, but with depth and urgency, and spoke to her heart. For the first time she saw herself as she really was. Strivings and efforts to live a Christian life were revealed to be just so much wood, hay and stubble. Seeing how far from the truth she was living, she was deeply convicted, and at one of the sessions she broke down and told God, for the first time in her life, that she really did love Him. She stepped out into His glorious light, and has never stopped trusting and living Him since.

This weekend was the turning point in her life and, although no one realised it, in the lives of all the members of her family. Returning home from the week-end, she was conscious of a great hunger and thirst for God’s Word. She talked this over with her husband, and they started together as a family having daily breakfast devotions, and rejoicing as they all moved into a closer relationship with the Lord. They did not know that this was all preparation for a devastating test of faith. When this time of crisis came, God’s Word to them, as a family, was clear and strengthening, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”²

They took that Word as a family, and He was right there with them, in the midst of the furnace, holding them tightly. When they were incapable of doing anything but cry out to Him, he answered, and completely changed the direction of life for this lady’s husband and two teenagers.

The years passed, and they all learned to trust Jesus as Lord and Saviour. They proved daily that His mercy endures forever, and discovered that while they walked in obedience to His Holy Spirit there was never any need to be afraid.

This woman wrote, “Who would have thought the Christian life could be so wonderfully thrilling and exciting! C.W.C.I. committee work, K.T.B. Bible studies, and Religious Education at high and primary schools all add up to give me the utmost joy and pleasure in serving our wonderful Lord Jesus Christ. And all this has happened because someone cared enough to take me to a Convention, where Jesus Christ became a reality to me. So thank you to C.W.C.I., where I learned to tell God that I loved Him.”

1 Ephesians 3:20 A.V.

2 Hebrews 13:5 A.V.

The Ripples Move Out. Grace Collins traces the westward expansion of C.W.C.I.

In my mail one September morning in 1963 there were two letters from South Australia which were to start ripples moving even further out in Convention work. One came from a young woman, and the other from a minister's wife.

The young woman wrote, "For some time now, several of us in this area have wondered whether there was any possibility of a small Convention weekend being held here in South Australia, similar to those you have described in the magazine, *Christian Woman*. Distance is a problem, but perhaps one or two of your personnel may be able to come over." She gave the names and addresses of three other women who were interested and prepared to do some organizing.

The minister's wife, who lived in another area, said, "I have in my possession two addresses given by Miss Cook and Mrs Chambers at your Sydney Convention. I have never read anything so vital and alive as these two messages for women by women. I am convinced that such Conventions, with their special ministry, by women for women, provide the answer to women's needs. So many speakers at women's meetings give topical and travel talks, but there is a real seeking for the things that count most. Your Conventions are on our daily prayer list. We are praying that God will raise up someone in South Australia to whom He will give a vision of what Conventions could do for women here."

I replied to both women that C.W.C.I. would be praying about this with them.

Two years later, I wrote again, saying I was now able to visit Adelaide to explain Convention work to any women who were interested. The young women replied, "We are still vitally interested, although we may not be able to work on a committee. Since writing to you two years ago, three of us have had babies and we all have young families. However, we are keen to meet you, and have friends who would like to, also."

As it turned out, two of them were on the first committee of seven in Adelaide, as was also the minister's wife. We had other very good helpers in the initial stages. A missionary-hearted couple at Victor Harbor took the trouble to write out a list of more than thirty names and addresses of women whom they thought would be interested. The secretary of the Evangelisation Society of South Australia gladly gave us permission to use their meeting room in the city.

On my arrival in Adelaide the letter writer, a happy faced young woman, and her husband met me. The women who gathered were very interested in the possibilities of C.W.C.I., but not all were sure that this new idea would take on in South Australia as it had in New South Wales and Queensland. One woman said to me "We don't get as excited about things here as you do in the eastern States." I had not realised we were excitable, but it have smiled to myself many times since, on hearing of the enthusiasm and the wonderful attendances at S.A. Conventions in the years that followed.

However, the committee decided to start in a small way. They chose Port Elliot as the venue, booked a Christian boarding-house and the smaller of two halls in the town, and had brochures printed to advertise the Convention. After several weeks there were none left to give to women who were still asking for them. Seventy-eight women lived in that first weekend, and extra beds were put up everywhere. They encountered other difficulties. They had to clean the hall, and there was no microphone for the speakers. For the following year, 1967, they booked four guest houses and the Town Hall, and the registrations more than doubled.

But a report of the first committee meeting after the Convention in 1966 says, "Time was spent reflecting on the wonderful Convention held at Amerta Guest House and the R.S.L. hall, Port Elliot, when Mrs Chambers and Miss Cook spoke on the theme, 'Christ pre-eminent in all things.'"

At the first Convention the chairman suggested that the women put aside twenty cents each week to help pay for their next weekend away. Shortly afterwards she wrote, "The word is spreading around. The other day I was walking along the street and a woman called out to me, 'I've put aside my first twenty cents,' She missed out the first time but is determined to come next year."

One woman from a country area described the way in which life changed for her because of the weekend Convention:

"I was spent, both physically and spiritually, when I went to my first C.W.C.I. Convention at Port Elliot, six years ago. I had become bogged down and depressed with my lot in life. My three children seemed to be sick more often than not. Two were asthmatics, and I felt trapped at home. My marriage suffered in consequence, and communication with my husband had almost ceased.

"Although I was a Christian, my joy in the Lord seemed a past dream. I knew something was wrong, but how to put it right was beyond me. In fact, I was even losing the desire to seek a solution to my problems.

"My friend's invitation to attend the Convention brought to light all the excuses I could possibly find. But my friend wasn't easily put off. She may have been praying, now I come to think of it, because my husband agreed to look after the two eldest children, and my friend's husband, who drove us to the Convention, cared for my three-year-old, while we attended the sessions. All the arrangements seemed to be out of my hands, and so I found myself at a Christian Women's Convention.

"My barriers were high, but I underestimated God's precious Spirit at work. I could have been the only one in the hall that weekend. God met me in my deepest need, and I realised that Jesus Christ wanted to carry all my burdens and cares for me, if I would let Him. I couldn't get over the down-to-earth, practical application of the Word of God which both speakers shared with us. They identified with each of us there, as they spoke about experiences and dealings with God in their lives.

"How I enjoyed all those marvellous choruses, and the theme song, which I discovered I was humming each day after I returned home. What a change for the family! Every detail of those meetings seemed to be just for me, and I returned home, renewed in spirit and in strength. The despair was gone, and although the problems remained to be worked out, I knew that I was not alone, but that I had a great God whom I could trust for the answers.

"I enrolled in the Know Your Bible Postal Fellowship course offered by C.W.C.I., and I can't say just how much that did for me during those first months after that mountain-top experience at Port Elliot. My husband was surprised, to say the least, by the change he saw, and now, six Conventions later, he is as enthusiastic about my Convention weekend in March as I am."

Starting with that first Convention in 1966, there has been a focus on missions. This programme included a missionary session, with a missionary speaker from Borneo. Another year a panel of missionaries took part, answering questions for the women about their work and witness on various missions fields. And so it has continued.

A day Convention was launched in 1968 in a suburban area at Unley Park Baptist Church, when over 400 women attended. It was a great day and the outreach was encouraging. This Convention moved, in 1973, into Maugham Methodist Church in the city, and large numbers have attended each year since.

In the same year, 1973, the Central Weekend Convention moved to Victor Harbor for more accommodation. The auditorium at the Bible College of South Australia, was so crowded with women that committee members were informed that not only did the meeting create a fire hazard, but that if any more were packed in the floor would probably

give way! The following year they booked the theatre in Victor Harbor, which was another venture of faith, because they had no idea whether or not it would be filled. In fact, the theatre was almost full that first time, and has been packed to capacity every Convention since.

A valuable outreach has been developed through large sales of books at these Conventions. Records of addresses were also popular and now many thousands, including men, have been reached by the messages recorded on cassettes. Two women at least are known to have been converted through listening to cassettes.

One woman, whose life was changed through a weekend Convention, shared her impressions thus:

"Imagine being completely bogged down by circumstances, tired and confused by constant stress, and then being whisked away for an unforgettable weekend. That was my experience. A Christian woman, unable to attend a Convention, graciously offered to give her accommodation to someone who needed it, and I was chosen.

"The speaker was a Christian psychiatrist, who had herself suffered from depression. How grateful I am for her ministry, and how much I owe to the Christian donor and to God for meeting my need so completely that year I returned home strengthened and refreshed.

"The warmth of Christian women, the fellowship and meetings for prayer in the guest houses, plus the hilarity at mealtimes and shared experiences, are all part of going to a weekend Convention.

"I recall the power of one speaker's witness as she testified to God's wonderful leading on the mission field, giving my first insight into living by faith. I enjoyed another speaker's down-to-earth ministry, and emphasis on Bible study. I decide to read the Bible regularly, and wonder, now, how I ever managed without God's Word to guide me.

"I felt a kinship with another overseas Convention speaker, who also likes my favourite hymn, "Great is Thy Faithfulness," and who once had so many baskets of left-over ironing, she dated them 1974, 1975, 1976! She then had a good idea and I follow her example in praying for each member of the family as I iron his or her clothes, and this way it is becoming easier to keep up with the chores.

"One year, a deeply troubled friend came to a Convention with me. There she made her commitment to Christ, and found new meaning and happiness in her life.

"So there it is, a string of memories: the unity in Christ, the speakers, the joyful singing, and the emphasis on Bible study and prayer, shining like pearls through the years, reflecting God's glory and giving just a glimpse of what is to come when Christ returns."

Another woman wrote of her experience at a weekend Convention,

"About three years ago I had reached a very low period in my life and was beginning to think, 'What point is there to anything?'

"Just when things were really bad, I was invited to spend a weekend at Victor Harbor, at the Christian Women's Convention. I travelled there feeling very depressed. As my going was a last-minute decision, I didn't have a room with my friend, and couldn't even stay at the same guest house. The other women had all come to share God's Word and learn more themselves. I didn't feel one of them. I felt they had something I didn't have.

"The first night when I went to bed, I just couldn't sleep. I tried every way I knew to relax my mind, but it was impossible. So about two a.m. I began to write, and until five a.m. I just kept writing down everything that came into my head, as though I was talking to God. As I did, I felt my mind clear, and my heart became lighter. In the morning, instead of feeling exhausted after a sleepless night, I had feelings of joy, love and peace, and from that time on I obtained new inner strength. The Lord has said, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.'¹

"Don't misunderstand me, I still have problems. But many things that would have worried me once, I realise now are not so important."

In 1971 there was a general move into country areas – Mt Gambier, Port Wakefield, Mannum, and later to the Riverland, Naracoorte, Port Lincoln and Whyalla, and in 1976 to Murray Bridge. These country Conventions have been a great blessing to many women and their families. One woman from a country area, whose life was changed through C.W.C.I, wrote:

“God gave my friend and me something more than joy, renewed strength, and encouragement to take home from the weekend Convention. We returned with the burden to pray for the women in our area, and began to meet regularly for prayer.

“Three months later a mini-bus took ten ladies from our town to Balaklava’s first day Convention, in the mid-north of South Australia. When these ladies saw what this ministry could mean for women in our area, they went home to pray too.

“We wrote to the Balaklava committee for advice. Imagine our joy on learning that one of their committee members had moved to our area! We knew God was with us and His next step for us was a coffee morning at Berri, which 120 women attended. After this a committee was formed, and many prayers for the women in our district were answered when we held our first Riverland Christian Women’s Convention.

“It was like reliving my first C.W.C.I Convention at Port Elliot, as I saw the same response on women’s faces, and heard over and over the comment I myself had first made, ‘That was just for me!’ “

A members of the south-eastern committee in South Australia was pouring tea in her lounge one morning for a few friends. Suddenly one girl spontaneously exclaimed, “My Bible reading this morning was just so exciting.” One of the other women listened, incredulous! The Bible exciting? How could it be?

When she returned home, those words, “The Bible, exciting” stayed with her, and she commenced to read for herself. At first she experienced no excitement, but she persevered, and her interest grew.

One night, on going to bed, she began to read the Bible, and, her attention arrested, she read on oblivious of time. Suddenly she thought it must be time to put out the light and looked at her watch. It was three a.m.! She, too had at last found the Bible exciting.

Following this, this woman attended the local Christian Women’s Convention, and was greatly impressed with the message. Friends invited her to join a Bible study group, and one day when she returned home, she made this entry in her diary, “Today I gave my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Her husband’s employment necessitated a move to another town, where she commenced a C.W.C.I. prayer group with ladies from different denominations.

All her life, this woman had felt resentment towards her mother. Because of happenings in her childhood, she felt she could not forgive her mother. God spoke to her about this, and just recently she made a trip to Queensland to visit her mother. She told her about her new, transforming experience and her desire for reconciliation. As she listened, the mother’s heart was touched, and she too found new life in Christ. At month later, God called the mother to be with Himself. At about the same time, this woman’s brother also became a Christian, through his sister’s testimony.

One of the country Weekend Conventions is held in a picturesque spot at Melrose, looking out on to glorious mountains. The catering and cooking are done by the committee. Here, cut off from the world, the women are able to listen to what God has to say to them. The meetings are held in the most attractive chapel, with its glassed in sides, surrounded by gum trees.

Connected with each State’s growth in Convention work, there are many exciting, funny, and traumatic incidents which make the whole story full of interest. South Australia has had its share of these.

One year the chairman of the Central Committee and Jean Raddon were going to Port Lincoln for a day Convention. The secretary of the Affiliated Conventions Committee drove them to the airport and then left, as both women assured her they would be all right. After obtaining their seat bookings they sat chatting happily, waiting for the flight to be called.

Suddenly one of them realised that the departure time was well past. She enquired at the counter, only to be told that the plane had left at least ten minutes before.

"But," she said, "Why didn't you call us?" The official looked a little exasperated as he replied, "Madam, we called you both by name over the loud speaker." Fortunately there was a plane leaving Adelaide at seven o'clock the next morning and they were able to arrive in Port Lincoln in good time for the Day Convention.

In the early days, bringing speakers from another State was a bit step in faith. When budgeting for expenses at one of the first Conventions the committee quite forgot to include the speaker's travel. After all, none of them had ever arranged anything like this before. After a hasty consultation the committee decided to take up a thank offering, and were full of praise when this covered all the expenses.

A more recent step in faith was the dinner held in a city hotel in 1975, with Mrs Millie Dienert as speaker. To committee members' delight, amongst the 500 who attended there was tremendous number of unconverted women.

An Adelaide committee member describes an unexpected development following the 1976 Central Weekend Convention:

"Our committee members have always been available to counsel women at Conventions, but at the 1976 Weekend Convention at Victor Harbor, more women than ever before sought help. Many, however, needed continuing help and support, and some appeared to require specialised advice.

"Feeling inadequate in this area, the committee began to pray about the best way to help such women. A friend of one of the committee members was an experienced supervisor of voluntary help and counselling at one of Adelaide's psychiatric hospitals. He joined us in a committee meeting, and taped a discussion when members shared their questions.

"As a result, the superintendent of the hospital, who is a Christian doctor, graciously offered to meet with our committee each month to answer questions and lead discussions to help our understanding of some problems encountered while counselling.

"These meetings have proved tremendously worthwhile. But we still sense a great need for suitably trained people to whom we can refer many women for extra help."

One of the comments often made by C.W.C.I. committee members is, "Even if we had never held a Convention, we would not have missed the fellowship on the committee for anything."

Central committee members of South Australia often expressed surprise at how much they enjoyed the committee meetings. The unity and harmony was really heart-warming.

So Conventions in S.A. have gone on from strength to strength. People have been converted, homes have been transformed, missionary interest has been increased, and women have attempted great things for God.

We have traced the many avenues into which God has led C.W.I. in South Australia. They though in the beginning, "How can we start?" They stepped out bravely with God, and proved that working in this way with Him was certainly beyond expectations.

Two women previously unknown to each other were chatting at a garden party held in connection with the Melbourne Bible Institute. The conversation turned to Women's Conventions, and one lady, a visitor from Western Australia, began to ask about C.W.C.I., with a view to starting something similar in her home State.

So began the train of events which led to the commencement of C.W.C.I. in Western Australia. God was using women to spread the news of the blessing experienced by many, through Christian Women's Conventions. "The Lord given the word; the women that publish the tidings are a great host."¹

The other lady, a Victorian who became the first chairman for Melbourne's Day Convention, wrote to the Central Committee in Sydney about her new friend's interest, and the C.W.C.I chairman began to send Convention newsletters to Western Australia to encourage her.

In 1965, one of the Convention speakers, a missionary, was taking deputation meetings in Western Australia. On behalf of C.W.C.I., she contacted this woman, who later became secretary of the West Australian committee, then chairman, and later a C.W.C.I. speaker. During a long talk with three vitally interested women, the missionary speaker carefully explained the workings and programme of Christian Women's Conventions. These ladies then arranged for her to meet with a number of other women, who wanted to hear more about this new work for the Lord.

The missionary later wrote, "They are really keen to begin and it seems a group of women have been praying for something like this for quite a long time. They are eager to have their first weekend Convention next year." So the wheels were set in motion. A great many letters went back and forth from Sydney to Perth, and the new West Australian secretary was able to visit the newly started Convention in South Australia.

West Australia's first Convention was held in July, 1966, at the Crippled Children's holiday camp at Palm Beach. Mrs Chambers and Grace Collins travelled across "from coast to coast," to be warmly greeted by a very enthusiastic committee.

An unusual happening was that, several days prior to the Weekend Convention, an extension Day Convention was held at Bunbury, 130 miles south of Perth, at which Mrs Chambers spoke.

On the first morning of the weekend Convention, the chairman was anxious that all the committee members, who had worked so hard preparing that they were tired out, should rise on time for an early-morning get-together for prayer. So she set the alarm, which woke them all. Everyone was showered and fully dressed, and sitting sedately on the edges of bunks. When they discovered it was only four o'clock! The alarm had gone off two hours early!

The weekend was a time of great blessing. Many women came from faraway places. A letter from the chairman, written soon after the Convention, said, "Women have been writing from all quarters, or sending messages, to tell of blessing received. Some are already asking to be put on the list for 1967. We have booked the same site, and intend going down to investigate additional accommodation."

"We surely had a praise session when we met as a committee for the first time after the Convention," wrote the secretary. "We were all talking at once, relating the different testimonies we had heard since returning to the mundane things of life. More and more we feel that this Bible teaching ministry, geared to meet the needs of women, is desperately needed among us."

In the light of present day charges, it is interesting to note that the fee for that first Convention was £3.10.0 per person for the full weekend!

After the weekend was over, arrangements were made for the visit of Jean Raddon in 1967. Jean was arriving in Perth from Nepal, to commence a time of deputation work, combined with speaking at Christian Women's Conventions. The Perth committee very generously invited Grace Collins to return at that time, so that she could welcome Jean as she stepped on to Australian soil.

There was great excitement at about midnight that March evening on the upstairs observation deck of the beautiful Perth airport, as Grace, who had arrived from Sydney at 12.30 a.m., waited with members of the committee for Jean to arrive at 2.50 a.m. Unfortunately Grace had started to lose her voice and, when the overseas plane touched down and she leaned over to call out to Jean who was walking across the tarmac, only a tiny squeak comes out! (Jean tells more of this Convention in the first "Ventures of Faith" chapter.)

Numbers increased at this the second Convention, and the committee realised they would soon have to look for more extensive accommodation. In 1968 they had 220 registered for the weekend, and only 200 beds. So they had some quick thinking and planning to do! They began praying for a larger venue, as they did not like refusing applications from women who wanted to attend.

In 1969 a move was made by the committee to the Youth Australia League site at Araluen, in the hills. At this Convention 430 women, including day visitors, attended.

"There were many difficulties in those early days," says the present secretary of the Central Committee, "mainly in obtaining a suitable site, and in finding the finance needed to bring speakers from the eastern States and from overseas." Initially the committee members did all the catering for the weekend Convention, and so kept costs as low as possible. Even now some of them cook huge quantities of meat at home, and help in other ways with the meals.

To many people, the idea of Women's Conventions was something of a novelty, and possibly in the first instance some women who registered did so out of curiosity. However, they came back again the next year, with a very genuine desire to know more of the Word of the Lord.

One lady, who had recently arrived from England, was persuaded that the Convention could be a reasonably cheap weekend holiday. However, when she was showed the programme to her husband, he was convinced she would be unable to find anything to eat, with all those meetings, and so he arrived home from work with a couple of cooked chickens and some other delicacies, with which to avert the pangs of hunger!

A young nurse was brought to the Convention by fellow students from a country hospital. She looked with amazement at rows and rows of women who had come for the sole purpose of listening to talks about God. "All this talk about God and that, I don't get it," she said. But the next year she came again. At the present time, after having become a Christian and spending two years at Missionary Bible College, she is in full-time work for the Lorde.

At this time the Keswick Convention Committee offered the Orange Grove site for the use of Women's Conventions, but it was not until 1971 that this site was sufficiently developed to be used for our purpose. This came about in a remarkable way. When the Naval authorities had built their barracks for the men in Western Australia, they little realised they would later be used to house hundreds of women! For these buildings were bought by the Keswick Convention Committee, and transported to Orange Grove. The timing, as far as the C.W.C.I. was concerned, was perfect. The buildings were just what was needed for the weekend Convention.

It must not be imagined for one moment however, that they were spick and span. Far from it! The central committee set to work with good will to scrub, clean, dust, and polish. The kitchen equipment all had to be installed and cleaned. But the women worked with great joy, in a togetherness that comes from the deep desire to share Christ with others.

For many years, until the lovely auditorium at Orange Grove was built, the Convention meetings were held in a large marquee, where thousands of women were blessed. From that Central Convention grew many other Conventions, especially in areas to the south of the State. Conventions at Bunbury, Albany, Gnowangerup, and Esperance were among the first, with women coming in from surrounding districts, such as Jerramungup, Wagin, and Kojumup. It was encouraging to watch God reward the faith and hard work of the different committees, as they forged ahead with various activities.

The vast distances to be travelled in this State have caused the committees to pray about the best means of transport. Realising that speakers can be very weary after long car drives, they have used small planes with great success.

An overseas speaker has visited the Orange Grove Convention when possible, and this has meant much to the women of Western Australia. Our own much-loved speakers have also been warmly welcomed and cared for, as they, too, travelled from Convention to Convention in this State.

A training seminar was held, one year, for all committee members and any other women who felt they would enjoy participation. Lectures were given on leadership and various aspects of the work. Again it was felt to be well worth while, specially in the sphere of equipping women for service in their local churches.

National Safaris have opened the way for C.W.C.I. women to travel, once a year, north and north-west into the Kimberley and Pilbara regions.

Know your Bible Postal Fellowship originated in West Australia, as it related in a later chapter, and the headquarters is still based there. These quotations from letters tell of the blessing this outreach has proved to be to women in their own State.

"I am interested in doing a Bible study course. The problem is that I have never studied the Bible, or even looked into it. I have never received God into my life, and do so want Him. I am eighteen years of age. I really know nothing about religion, so would have to start from scratch. Please help me!"

"It gives me great joy to tell you what wonderful things I have learnt from the Bible through this course. It would have taken me years to have learnt all this without your help. When I started, I was quite ignorant of so many things God had promised, and now I love reading God's Word, and find great joy in knowing Him. I know He will never leave me or forsake me."

"The course changed my whole life. I have put my faith in Jesus, and left my sins at the Cross. I now live in Jesus, and He in me. When you accept Jesus into your life, you want to read the Bible, and learn how to pray, and live a life that pleases the Lord. I could have been working myself into the grave, trying to work for my salvation, but these lessons have shown me the true way. Through doing this course, I can now find my way about my Bible, which I never could do before."

"Just before I worked on this particular study, I was in a complete state of doubt, and facing a big crisis, due to the non-arrival of an important letter. Being a chronic worrier, I had worked myself into a terrible state. To my amazement, as I have done the studies, I have gradually ceased to worry, and have really been able to cast everything on to the Lord. Even more than that, I used to lie awake at night worrying, but now I enjoy a fair night's rest, instead of tossing and turning as I used to."

“God has been pleased to use the ministry of C.W.C.I. to bless many women in Western Australia,” wrote the chairman of one of the country committees, “thereby enriching their church fellowships and family circles.”

The work has grown and expanded until now there are seventeen Conventions throughout the State. Each year more of the women in the outback, as well as in the cities, have the opportunity of hearing the claims of our Lord Jesus Christ set before them, and we praise God for all He has accomplished since that small beginning twelve years ago.

It was in the days of hats and gloves that Victoria's first big day of meetings was held in the Assembly Hall, Melbourne, arranged by a committee in connection with Australian Christian Women's Conventions, as it was known then, in October 1966. A big step in faith, backed by much prayer and preparation resulted in a most successful day, with a programme that sparkled with interest for the crowds of women who attended. They came into a foyer and hall made beautiful with bowls of spring flowers arranged by one of the committee members.

A report written at the time said, "Mrs A. M. Chambers of Sydney, who has been speaking at Christian Women's Conventions for nine years, gave two practical addresses with deep spiritual insight, a means of blessing to many. A stimulating and unusual session was a Women to Woman Panel."

The questions submitted to the panel reflect the thinking of the day (which, after all, has not changed so much from the old days), questions such as:

"What safety valves are there for a Christian woman to bear strains and tensions?"

"How do we cope with emotional stress?"

"How far can Christian women enter into friendships with non-Christian women?"

This was such a successful day that the committee decided to aim at a similar day of meetings the following year, 1967, in the Collins Street Baptist Church, and again in 1968 in the Assembly Hall. Both were days of great interest and blessing to the large numbers of women who came.

An inaugural luncheon held in 1967 at the Kew City Hall had been a wonderful occasion, in spite of several small disappointments. A last minute hitch was the late arrival from Sydney of a huge map of Australia, which was cut out of masonite, and which lit up by means of bulbs, showing the forty Convention centres in Australia at that time. Due to carrier trouble it arrived an hour later than arranged, just before the luncheon was due to start. Providentially there was a young man, who had been helping with other tasks, on the spot. He stayed, unpacked the map, screwed in the bulbs – and it lit up! The little lights glimmering in various places spoke of progress and the Lord's blessing on the work. Women remarked they had formerly had no idea of the extent of Christian Women's Conventions.

Since arrangements for meetings in the city were becoming more difficult, the venue for the City Day Convention was changed to the beautiful Kew City Hall, five miles from Melbourne, where it has been held each year since, organised by the Victorian Central Committee.

"It was wonderful," wrote the secretary of their second Convention held at Kew. "In answer to prayer, God sent the women, gave us a fine day, and tremendous blessing. And there were no transport strikes! At about ten minutes to ten there weren't too many women present, but suddenly they came, hundreds of them. Three buses arrived, cars rolled up, and seats were quickly filled. We started punctually at ten. No hitches, no confusion. The Lord was with us and we felt His presence. I don't think there could have been a better Day Convention anywhere! Many women spoke of blessing received, and we continue to hear of those whose hearts were touched."

A minister's wife wrote, "Please pass on my thanks for the excellent Day Convention held at Kew last week. A number of our younger women, some quite new Christians, attended the meetings, and found them a great inspiration and blessing. The whole day was a real stimulus to their faith. I know such a day involves much work so we want you to be assumed that it is much appreciated."

As a result of the move to Kew, there was plenty of room, room for the books to be displayed in the foyer, room for the meetings and room for the serving of lunch and afternoon tea, as well as facilities for the children. The C.W.C.I. Conventions in Victoria began to increase as a result and many women were blessed and helped.

Then another great venture was undertaken. The idea of a Weekend Convention for 1971 was born, and in faith the committee booked the Keswick Convention Auditorium at Belgrave

Heights, together with the speakers' lodge and denominational and missionary conference centres for house parties. Their planning was brought to a sudden halt, however, when the Keswick Convention office, on the day of their committee meeting, advised them that the auditorium and grounds had been double booked to a Sunday school for an annual picnic.

After the initial shock the committee members took this as a call to prayer. They felt they should also investigate other venues, in case the Sunday School could not change their picnic date. But there was nothing suitable for a weekend Convention anywhere. Finally they heard that the Sunday school had agreed to change its picnic to another date, and the committee praised the Lord for His help.

On the Friday afternoon of their first weekend, some of the women involved in the organization went to look at the auditorium – huge, empty, stark. Their hearts failed them for fear for a moment. How many would come? What if it rained?

But their fears were needless. A beautiful sunny day dawned, and hundreds and hundreds of women arrived. The auditorium was beautifully decorated with flowers, and the heart-warming motto, "All One in Christ Jesus," hung across the platform, with bookstalls placed each side of the seating. The whole weekend went with the kind of swing that only God could put into it. "The speakers, Mrs Millie Dienert, Mrs Marj Saint Van Der Puy, and Miss Jean Raddon were truly outstanding and the different parts of the programme blended perfectly together. The blessing snowballed. Woman everywhere were talking about the weekend," wrote the secretary.

Country Conventions were commenced, and area training days for committee members were held. The enthusiasm spread, and all over the State there was remarkable growth in C.W.C.I. activities.

One suburban committee held their Convention in a lovely little theatre. The flowers, the colourful dresses of the women, the gold seats and purple carpet, all added to the picture. The beautiful singing and the powerful word of God combined to make it a day hundreds of women will never forget.

In 1974 seventeen Conventions and thirty-two other functions were held. Twelve places were visited for the first time. Over sixty women had travelled in connection with C.W.C.I. in Victoria during the year.

In 1977 twenty-eight Conventions and approximately fifty other functions were held, among them the country Weekend Convention which was at Hamilton for the second year. Enquiries about holding Conventions have been recently received from two other important areas. Members of the Central and Affiliated Conventions Committees have driven hundreds of miles to help form new committees, and to encourage those who are making enquiries. They have brought a real sense of being cared for to women in many of the country areas of Victoria.

An exciting outreach with great possibilities is the Convention Women's Outreach to New Settlers (WONS) in Melbourne. It originated with a committee of women most of whom had been converted since coming to Australia. This is why they are so burdened for other migrant women, who are relatively easy to reach during the first twelve months in this country. The Convention is held in the Church of All Nations, where there are facilities for translation. Two Conventions have been held, and on both occasions the messages have been translated into Spanish, Italian, Greek, Yugoslav, and Turkish. There were items in Russian and other languages. Hymn sheets featured the verses in some of the languages. The first year our committee combined with the WONS committee. In 1977 the committee became affiliated with C.W.C.I., and it is hoped to enlarge this service.

Another venture in recent years of the Central Committee at Belgrave Heights has been the Missionary Faith Promise offering, to which women have given liberally. As a result many interdenominational missions have been helped financially.

Women wrote in enthusiastically after the 1977 Central Convention:

“We are really praising the Lord for the Women’s Convention at Belgrave Heights last weekend. About twelve women from our fellowship clearly heard the voice of the Lord on heart-searching subjects such as attitude, awareness, perspective.”

A generous offer came from a woman who wrote, “Although I have paid my fee to attend the Convention, I am not well enough ... Last year I attended for the first time, and was looking forward to going again this year. I loved it last year and am sure it strengthened and helped me to love God more, and to read and understand the Bible better. We now have two Bible study groups going here. I am writing to say it would give me great pleasure if you knew someone, perhaps in difficult circumstances, who could go in my place. If C.W.C.I. can make someone as happy as it did me last year, that’s all I ask.”

Across Bass Strait to the Apple Isle

“C.W.C.I. and K.Y.B. have become a telegraphic code in Tasmania,” says the person who was used by God to start the work there. “Mention a Convention, a speaker, a Safari, and the antennae are out and tongues wagging!”

This has not come about suddenly, but through a steady growth of interest, fostered by the faithful leaders who were, as she said, “women who were not afraid to step into the water and get their feet wet.”

This interest has been increased through the ministry of speakers from the mainland as well as from Tasmania. As well as this, since 1967 there have also been international speakers. Mrs Millie Dienert’s visit in 1971 reached 1500 women around the island, who became increasingly enthusiastic about Christian Women’s Conventions.

However in 1965, when Grace Collins first talked about C.W.C.I. to the woman who later became the initiator of the movement in Tasmania, it was a completely new concept. She was already more than busy at the Bible Training College where her husband is Principal, and with outside Bible study groups, but she invited a dozen women to hear Grace tell about C.W.C.I., and became the chairman of the original committee.

Her outline of the growth of the work makes fascinating reading. Following is her description of how it happened.

“The newly-formed committee arranged an inaugural dinner in 1966 to make C.W.C.I. known, and a Live-in Convention at the Christian Youth Centre at Ulverstone, which sixty attended.

“The next move was that five representatives were appointed along the north-west coast to pray and plan for future activities. A Business Girls’ Committee was formed in Launceston. Interest began to spread and functions were arranged in other areas. Nucleus groups meeting for prayer led to the establishment of four more committees so that in 1971 seventeen Conventions and dinners were held throughout the State.

“Through the increasing momentum of local Bible studies which had been building up for several years, interest and attendance at annual Live-in Conventions slowly rose. Jean Raddon had noticed the expansion of these studies over the years and when the local leader suggested to her that the groups become affiliated with C.W.C.I. she discussed the matter with the administrative committee. This resulted in the completion of a circle! C.W.C.I. which had started with a Bible study, expanded to Conventions, now launched into K.Y.B. groups which augment the Convention ministry by providing daily and weekly study for thousands of women interstate.

“Here in Tasmania each committee appointed a K.Y.B. supervisor. Area supervisors superintend the work in each of the three zones of the island and oversee the district supervisors. At the time of writing, about 300 women are involved in leadership of groups with approximately 2000 women participating in the classes. Two Bible study weekends are organised each year, and leaders’ seminars are arranged in every area each July.

“Each year we plan a Live-in Convention with an international speaker in February, as well as a Day Convention in each centre, so that there is a major function every month of the year. Each committee has its own ‘self starter’, promoting coffee hours, luncheons, dinners, and Conventions in its own area.

“We enjoy excellent liaison and fellowship with C.W.C.I. Central Committee, and the Annual Area Committee Conference is a highlight of fellowship and vision each year.

“Many women are realising that God has a specific task for them, as individuals, and are becoming involved in outreach to neighbours in prayer and counselling groups. Hidden talent has come to light, and women are more vitally involved in their local churches and

committees. Through missionary sessions at Conventions many have become aware of needs beyond their State, and prayer and support for Safaris is spontaneous.

“The growth has been exciting as women who have found the Saviour have accepted new responsibilities, and found joy in ministry to others.”

Other women have made the following comments.

After attending C.W.C.I., “I’ve never realised how self-centred I was until this weekend. The speaker’s ministry has made me confess this to the Lord and I’m going home to pray about the Lord’s will in my daily life.”

“Bible study really made me come alive. I shared what I learned with my husband and together we sought God’s guidance about rearing our family for Him.”

“I’ve always been impatient. But in the study group I’ve discovered so much about my sins and shortcomings and learned how to bring them to the Lord for cleansing so I can walk in fellowship with Him.”

“I used to find church-going so flat. But now the Bible has come alive for me, and I really *enjoy* going to church. It has become a vital part of my life.”

In the meantime, C.W.C.I. spread to southern Tasmania. The chairman of the first committee in the south describes the development there as follows.

“In 1966 an interested woman invited the leader from the north of the island to tell an interdenominational Bible-study group about C.W.C.I. Those present suggested other interested ladies, whom we invited to meet with us at a later date. However the date of that proposed meeting was the day of the great bush-fires in Hobart! The phone ran hot cancelling the meeting, as everyone was busy coping with water hoses and people in distress, or working at the City Mission helping to clothe families who had lost everything in the fires. Some had even lost loved ones. This experience gave many of us a deeper insight into the spiritual needs of women around us who had lost all material things, and many of whom had no-one to uphold them in such a trial. We were more anxious than ever to start C.W.C.I.

“Eventually we did meet together, in early 1967, a committee was formed and we planned a dinner, which was a great success, and a wonderful answer to prayer. About ninety women attended, many of whom had no church connection. This encouraged us to go forward with coffee mornings, dinners, and Day Conventions.

“We have had frustrations due to delayed air flights and cancellations. One group, which included interstate speakers, set out to travel from the north by car where they had been speaking at the first Live-in Convention. Unfortunately the vehicle broke down, leaving the party to hitchhike about fifty miles! They arrived looking very crumpled and weary, just in time to give the message! However it was a wonderful evening of thanksgiving.

“Our first Live-in Convention in Hobart in 1968 gave us many headaches and late committee meetings, but the Lord over-ruled our shortcomings for His glory. The organization of this Convention is now so streamlined that we wonder, looking back, how we ever got off the ground!

“When we consider the increasing number of coffee mornings, Day and Live-in Conventions and Bible-study groups, and the many women being helped to grow in love and knowledge of the Lord, we members of the first small group can only say, “This is the Lord’s doing; It is marvellous in our eyes.’ “¹

The secretary of one of the committees in the south has also written as follows.

“To those who find committee meetings a chore, let me say they can be fun! You see, our committee began through four of us getting to know each other through the very first K.Y.B.

group in Hobart. We get on extremely well and have huge laughs as we plan our activities. I've never enjoyed committee meetings so much!

"It's a thrill to see how God undertakes. Invitations are issued but one never knows how many ladies will come! I think of our first coffee-and-dessert evening. Very apprehensively we arrived at the hall, set up tables and chairs, and waited. We could hardly believe our eyes as the people came, and kept coming! The four of us went to bed that night, weary and footsore from waitressing, but so thrilled!

"Belonging to a big organization is a great help as we get to know other committee members and benefit from shared experiences. In a wonderful way, C.W.C.I. Central Committee has really 'mothered' us, yet never 'smothered' us, and the help and advice given has been absolutely invaluable."

In many homes throughout Tasmania, women are finding new help in their daily lives because they have drawn closer to God at Conventions and in Bible-study groups. One lady wrote after attending a Convention.

"I'm going to put all my spare coins in a bank and try to provide for someone else to come with me to next year's Convention. This is too good not to share!"

The Challenge of the North

The stars in the blue velvet sky seemed to be bursting with light. In the darkness, broken only by torch-light, the occasional bark and scuffle of dogs and the gentle murmur of voices indicted quite a crowd in the shadows.

Suddenly the singing began. Unaccompanied, the joyful sound of God's praises burst forth in this remote part of the Northern Territory. The singing was led by an Aboriginal man, and then the gentle Aboriginal pastor welcomed the C.W.C.I. women who had travelled to that isolated area to minister God's Word. It was only a small group, but here again was evidence that everywhere one goes, one finds God's children.

Silence fell, and even the dogs seemed hushed as the glorious story of Christ and His love was told again. When the meeting was over, everyone crowded round to shake hands, to smile at each other, and to have the inevitable cup of tea. How this ministry has spread since the Darwin committee was first formed!

For the commencement and growth of C.W.C.I. in the Northern Territory has been wonderfully interwoven with the outreach of Safaris. The story is recounted in the chapter on Safari beginnings, "It's a Wonderful, Wonderful Life," of how God led women living in the other States to undertake to pray that a Convention would be held in Darwin at the same time as several women in Darwin were also praying for this.

Difficulties were encountered because of lack of knowledge of C.W.C.I. procedure. No-one in Darwin at that time had ever attended a Convention. The distance from C.W.C.I. headquarters seemed an almost insurmountable obstacle to close communication.

But, as described in the first chapter on Safaris, in a remarkable way God sent someone to help. The committee moved forward, but encountered another difficulty – the lack of suitable venues for such gatherings. However they stepped forward in faith, and, in conjunction with the committee in Sydney, who were also launching out in faith in the initial stage of Safari work, began to plan and prepare for the first Darwin Convention.

This was held in September, 1971, amidst great excitement. The team arrived from Sydney and was given hospitality by committee members and friends. This first Convention in Darwin was not only the beginning of a work among women, which has grown steadily over the years but it also gave rise to further outreach into eastern Arnhem Land, to surrounding islands, and inland. Committees were formed in five centres, with growing interest in other centres. Further outreach was planned.

"We feel that all our C.W.C.I. work has been a great step of faith," wrote the secretary, "in finance, and in finding leaders for K.Y.B. study groups, in contacting women ready and available to cope with the work involved in a moving population. Busy Christian women are experiencing the joy of working together under the motto, 'All one in Christ Jesus.' This is a tremendous blessing in Darwin. We need one another."

The Northern Territory is unique in many ways. One reason is that many people go up there to escape their problems, only to find that the problems go with them.

One woman, for example, happened to sit next to the speaker at a luncheon, and, as they chatted, suddenly started to put out her story. Though she was married and had a family, she had fallen in love with a man younger than herself. Deserting her husband and children, she had come to live with the other man in the Northern Territory.

This relationship was breaking down, and she was burdened with her guilt about her past. Her husband had divorced her, and her whole life was desperately unhappy.

The claims of Christ are strong, and as far as we now she was not able to take the steps involved in following Him. She is still out there somewhere, bewildered, selfish, frightened

and guilty, and needing God above everything else. She is only one of many like this in Australia, to whom C.W.C.I. reaches out with loving care and concern, longing that they might come to know Him, whom to know is life eternal.

So much could be written of this fascinating part of Australia, and of the way C.W.C.I. has touched the lives, not only of women but of men as well.

A young man looked a little lost as he waited for the speaker after the morning service. He had been attracted to the meeting by the theme, "The New Society." Restless and dissatisfied with the society in which he lived, he wondered what the New Society was all about. He was an intelligent and seeking young man, and talked with the speaker for half an hour about the things that really matter.

It was good to see the interest in his face, and it is more than likely that by now this young man has taken Christ into his life, and become a member of the New Society. He was intrigued by the discipline, the morals, and the hope of the Bible, and saw that if one is to follow Christ, one must accept the standards of the Book of books.

When the news broke about the disaster of Cyclone Tracy in December, 1974, folks in the south thought there would not be a Convention in Darwin in 1975. But Darwin was courageously carrying on. Homes were shattered and many people had been evacuated, but those were left determined that life should go on as usual. Many functions, such as cocktail parties, dances, and card parties, were still being held. C.W.C.I. committee observed this, and decided that for them too, it would be 'business' as usual.

The indomitable committee forged ahead, and although the venue had to be changed to one of the least damaged churches, and although they were only able to hold a lunch-hour and an evening meeting. God honoured their faith and hard work, and there was much blessing. Women seemed more open to the Christian message because of having been through so much trouble and uncertainty. To have had everything one could want, materially, one day, and absolutely nothing the next, really caused many to think about the passing nature of this world.

The Know Your Bible study courses have been a great blessing in Darwin, as elsewhere. There were two groups in 1975. Now there are fourteen in Darwin, Katherine, and Nhulunbuy, and many women are being helped in their daily living as they meet regularly in these study groups.

One woman who attended the Convention and spent time talking over her problems with the speaker, is now attending a K.Y.B. class. Her marriage is restored and she is praying for her husband's conversion. As she said "What if there had been no Convention?"

The Northern Territory women were the first, after Tasmania, to launch a Know Your Bible weekend. It was held in the lovely library of one of the schools in Darwin. The programme was tightly packed, and an open evening on the Saturday gave great joy to everyone concerned.

Five women from Groote Eylandt and two from Nhulunbuy had planned to come over, but to everyone's dismay the airline pilots decided to go on strike. However, God says that He will make the wrath of men to praise Him, and on Friday afternoon seven excited women arrived, saying, "We are four hours earlier, and six dollars richer!" That wonderful organization, Missionary Aviation Fellowship, had come to the rescue and flown them over.

All were helped in the discussion periods that followed their homework, as well as in the summing up of the whole passage by the speaker. The song leader was concerned that there was no piano, and wondered how they would cope. But they finished up with a small orchestra, a flute, a guitar and a harp! The singing warmed their hearts, and they were full of praise to God. At the end of the weekend a sharing time showed that the Holy Spirit had really been at work.

A coffee morning held in a home in the Northern Territory was attended by many lovely young mothers. As the coffee was served, the person who was to speak felt very apprehensive. The young women did not seem to be interested in spiritual things at all, and

she wondered just how she should present the glorious message of salvation to make it relevant.

She spoke very simply. There were many interruptions with the babies, a cup of cordial was spilt on the carpet, and a man arrived to mend a tap. Someone called up to know if the hostess needed bread, and the young woman opposite the speaker looked bored to tears.

Inwardly rather despairing, but seeking to trust God, the speaker pressed on. As she closed in prayer she thought, "Well, Lord, I really don't know if you have been able to get through here."

She had no sooner opened her eyes than the young women who had looked so bored came over to her. Though brought up in a Christian home, she had turned away from everything spiritual. She really had been 'turned on' by the talk and, realising how far away she had slipped, spoke with real enthusiasm about her need for Bible study. And so the speaker left with joy.

Innumerable stories have been told of the generosity of the women in the Northern Territory, of wonderful times of fellowship with missionaries, and of the delight of seeing women encouraged and helped. The Safari team and committee members have been challenged and blessed too, by some whose lives have been changed, and by the Christian Aboriginal women assisting on teams and in the translation of messages.

Members of the Darwin committee, now the Central Committee of the Northern Territory, have served on Safari teams. But the first and second chairmen of the committee have taken a good deal of responsibility in arranging the itineraries of the Safaris. One year, two teams met in Darwin, one team then turning east to Arnhem Land, and the other turning to the north of Western Australia.

Missionaries needing refreshment have appreciated the visits of Safari teams. One missionary said, "When our mission sends a Bible teacher they send a man. It is wonderful to have a team of women. They are like a breath of fresh air."

It is thrilling for C.W.C.I. to see more Aboriginal women taking part, leading the singing, teaching the Word, and sharing with their own folk their very real experience of the power of Christ in their lives.

The meetings are certainly different. Time is not always important, the fellowship is always very warm, and sometimes the meetings are in the open air. The church floor is sometimes sand, which is quite soft and cosy to sit upon. The messages are often given by translation, but the hush of the audience tells so clearly that they are getting the message.

Round a camp fire after one such meeting, the speaker was talking to two lovely young Aboriginal women. Feeling a little shy, the speaker noticed one of the girls was carrying a bag with a "Smiley" face on it. She commented on this, and the other girl gave a big smile and said, "She has more than a Smiley bag – she has a smiley face. She has just accepted Christ as her Saviour!"

While on a flight taking a team back to Darwin, the plane landed to pick up a sick woman at a tiny clump of houses. Very few people lived there, but the cry in the heart of the speaker was, "They are people, people for whom Christ died."

One can only pray that God will continue this outreach to the Northern Territory through C.W.C.I. What vision that Central Committee in Darwin has, and what faith! They press on in spite of difficulties, and the results will only be fully known in eternity. But we may be quite sure that their labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Grace Collins outlines the expanding organization of C.W.C.I.

The story of C.W.C.I. is a story of growth. Looking back over 21 years, we realise how wonderfully God has prospered and multiplied this Convention ministry amongst women. The Word of God in Isaiah, "A little one shall become a thousand"¹ has indeed come true.

There is no end to the stories of women whose lives have been changed by the Lord. Who has worked through dedicated speakers and enthusiastic committee women. And there is no end to the enrichment that working together in Conventions has brought into the lives of those vitally connected with the organization and responsibility of this fast-growing work. As we have seen women "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"² we too have grown in faith. Often in wonder we have seen God at work, and Conventions continuing to spread in an almost unbelievable way. At one stage C.W.C.I. was said to be the fastest growing Christian movement among women in Australia.

C.W.C.I. commenced with a clear definition of beliefs, in a doctrinal statement, which was modelled on that of the Keswick Convention and was acceptable to all evangelical denominations and Bible-based organizations. We drew up a constitution, and registered in Sydney as a non-profit making company. Our motto became, "All One in Christ Jesus," and as women met together on an interdenominational level, they began to say, "We had no idea there were so many wonderful Christian women in other denominations!"

Organization is an important part of our work. "Let all things be done decently and in order,"³ was one of our favourite quotations in the early years. The timing of all sessions is carefully planned and adhered to. A young married woman, who told her mother she did not want to go to yet another women's meeting, finally attended a Convention. She said the fact that the sessions started and finished on time impressed her, and "got her in." Today she is the chairman of one of the Central Conventions.

As the work of Conventions spread interstate, Central Committees were set up in each State, and in the Northern Territory, to take the responsibility for the over-all work on C.W.C.I. Affiliated Conventions Committees were established to set up new Conventions and to help the new committees move along according to the policies and procedures God had shown us. For He had given C.W.C.I. a pattern for this work. He spoke to us also, as He had spoken to Moses, "See that you make (or do) everything according to the pattern which was shown you ..."⁴ Since the pattern is His, it meets the varying needs of different women.

The great majority of women are grateful for the help and advice given, especially when establishing new Conventions. Some who have asked for a Convention for their area have wanted to run it in their own way, not realising that Conventions are different – they have an atmosphere of their own. One woman came to the speaker at a Safari meeting in the north of Australia, and said, "I have had the thrill of being at big Conventions in the south and, do you know, there is the same atmosphere here in this little meeting today."

As the Conventions grew in number, gifted and dedicated women accepted the invitation to join our official speakers' panel. To maintain the standard set by our first speakers, these women needed to be especially equipped by God for this work. Over the years He has given us wonderful Christian women, who have added the ministry at Conventions to their already busy schedules in the denominations and missions to which they belong.

These women have travelled thousands of miles in Australia and New Zealand, undertaking strenuous trips to many city and rural areas, without sparing themselves. For hours in between sessions, or until midnight, they have counselled women, some with very real problems. In all their ministry they have set a high standard and an example for us to follow.

C.W.C.I. speakers, whose names are listed in the Appendix, give messages especially geared to women's needs, using illustrations of real relevance to women. It would be impossible to estimate the number of women they have helped, with their down-to-earth, practical messages. We thank God for every one of them, knowing that without them Convention work would not have been possible. Our speakers have been used by God to awaken many women to their need for commitment to Christ. They have also provided spiritual food, so that Christian women may grow in their faith, learning to face the day-to-day pressures, strains, and problems of a women's life, in the strength which Christ can give.

Rev Alan Redpath, a speaker at the English Keswick Convention and other Conventions around the world, has said, "The conversion of a soul is the miracle of a moment, but the manufacture of a saint is the task of a lifetime." This has been our belief, and our experience, as we have watched women grow in their faith, under the ministry of God's faithful servants, our beloved speakers.

With growth came problems. It was inevitable that there would be "growing pains." One practical problem was that we needed a headquarters building. Someone in Queensland asked one of our lovely young Aboriginal woman where the head office of C.W.C.I. was located, "In Ma's bedroom," she replied. And indeed it was. Most of the work was done at a small desk in the corner of our bedroom at the Mission's headquarters. That had to be changed.

Then, too, the outreach of our magazine, *Christian Woman*, had grown tremendously. More equipment was necessary. One of the main helpers had been keeping the thousands of cards and stencils, as well as the addressograph machine, in her home.

The need for more room lay heavily on our hearts as we met for our yearly Prayer Retreat in July, 1971. Sydney and nearby country committee members gathered at Gilbulla, a Church of England Conference Centre, in a beautiful setting on the outskirts of Sydney, to pray for God's leading and provision.

Imagine our joy when, the day after we returned home, a woman already involved in C.W.C.I. phone to say that the Lord had told her to use her home for Convention work. The whole delightful story has been published in *Christian Woman* magazine.

Another woman gave a very large donation, enabling us to purchase an electric addressograph machine, which greatly speeded up the work of addressing the thousands of magazine wrappers. The front room of the house and garage were converted into an office and workshop, where voluntary workers are able to assist the *Christian Woman* office staff in its time-consuming work. Here also the hundreds of thousands of pieces of literature, brochures, invitations, and counselling leaflets, used by committees, are stored and sent far and wide by the woman in whose home all this activity is located.

Meanwhile, when our two sons married, more space for offices became available at the Mission headquarters where we lived. We were also able to engage part-time, and then full-time, office help.

Growth is possible only through involvement. More and more women are becoming involved in the organizational side of C.W.C.I. to help us. Some set up offices or desks in their homes for special departments of the work, such as editing, book-keeping, and travel arrangements.

With the rapid extension of C.W.C.I. work, we realised we should do all we could to maintain the high standard with which Conventions began. Many of the new committees needed help in organization, and many committee members needed to glimpse a wider vision of all that could be accomplished through this woman-to-woman ministry. Scores of women were delightfully willing to be used by God in this work, and longed to be better equipped.

With these special needs in mind, we began to arrange area conferences, which have already been of great benefit. Committee members from surrounding areas are invited to a central place to meet with two or three from the Central or Affiliated Conventions Committee for a day of special meetings. These are times of fellowship, as members from different

committees get to know each other; or inspiration, as God's Word is shared briefly at each session; and of new understanding, too, as problems are shared and prayed about.

These are also days of training, when women learn the art of chairing a meeting, and the value of punctuality and working according to the manual provided. The need to keep meetings fresh and vital, and the importance of every aspect of Convention gatherings are stressed. Guidelines are given to help the committee members understand the needs of women who come to Conventions, and to encourage integrity and open-ness with each other.

Area conferences bring great encouragement, as women realise they are not on their own, they are part of a team. Perhaps above everything else, they are enriched as they glimpse afresh the glory of the message we have to share with others. Some women come rather hesitantly, wondering what an area conference is all about, but the fellowship and training of the day sends them home renewed in vision and filled with enthusiasm.

On the organizational side, it became evident that both Australia and New Zealand needed a committee, formed of representatives from all States and Regions, which would be responsible for the work of Conventions on a national level. So the initial stages were accomplished, and separate, although similar, constitutions were drawn up. National Boards in New Zealand and Australia came into being in March 1970 and April 1970 respectively.

On March 13th, 1973, executive members of the New Zealand National Board and the Australian National Board met in Sydney, to discuss the formation of an international board. A draft constitution was drawn up, and left with the executive members of each National Board.

At the inaugural meeting of the International Board on October 9th and 10th, 1974, at Auckland, New Zealand, when five representatives from each of the two countries were present, the constitution was adopted. It was agreed that the board should meet triennially, and that a promotion officer should be elected to deal with requests from other countries for Conventions.

In August 1970 our first *Administration Manual* was produced for the guidance of committees, so that as C.W.C.I. extended and involved an increasing number of women, the movement would keep its distinctive character and be of the utmost service. This manual was prepared by key women, using their background of experience in Convention work, under all sorts of conditions and among a diversity of women.

In 1972 the Manual was reprinted, and in 1975-6 it was revised to include an international section as well as national sections for New Zealand and Australia.

We thank God for every one of our committee members. We realise that as new Conventions are commenced, the committee women need to have a clear picture of C.W.C.I. aims, and how to implement them.

These aims are simple, and yet profound. They are:

To establish Convention Committees and Know Your Bible Study Groups, and through these to build up women in their Christian faith, at the same time highlighting the need for a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

To encourage women to study the Bible, and to take a more active part in the work of their own church.

To reach women outside the church through coffee hours, dinners, and similar functions, and to point them to the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

To assist missionary work.

Although C.W.C.I. is interdenominational in character, every woman is encouraged to have a church affiliation, and to share in the responsibility of making Christ known to her family, friends, and neighbours.

Conventions and Know Your Bible classes are promoted to deepen and enrich the spiritual lives of women, to help them cope with life in their homes, their work, and communities, to enable them to play a more effective role in their church and in all their service for the Lord. C.W.C.I. teaching majors on the theme that personal victory is possible in the day-to-day life of every Christian. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him ..."³

The following story was related to me just as I started to write. A young missionary couple was visiting another young couple in charge of a country church. The missionaries asked the young minister what he was doing about church growth in his rather large parish. "Church growth?" he repeated. "My church growth is coming from Christian Women's Conventions. Several women have converted and recently joined the church." Even while the missionaries were there, a couple, who had been contacted through C.W.C.I., came in for counselling.

And so "The Word of God grew and multiplied."⁶

1 Isaiah 60:22 A.V.

2 2Peter 3:18 A.V.

3 1 Corinthians 14:40 A.V.

4 Hebrews 8:5 R.S.V.

5 Romans 8:37 A.V.

6 Acts 12:24 A.V.

Grace Collins describes C.W.C.I. Outreach to the Outback

The coach was moving along at a steady pace in the beautiful Queensland sunshine, one spring afternoon in 1971. Conversation lagged and we were beginning to drowse a little, when suddenly we all sprang to life. "Childers!" announced the friendly driver, "twenty minutes."

"Childers", we repeated. Seven women hurriedly scrambled down the coach steps and, as the other passengers watched in amazement, hurried over to a picnic table under a large tree. It was laden with all sorts of scones, cakes, tarts, pies and sandwiches. Half a dozen women, several with small children, here waiting to serve us a scrumptious afternoon tea.

Who were they? We had never been to Childers before. How did we know them? we didn't. These ladies belonged to the Bundaberg C.W.C.I. Committee and, as the coach didn't stop at Bundaberg, they had travelled over forty miles to greet us and cheer us on our way. Our Central Queensland Committee in Brisbane had told us these wonderful women would be doing this but hadn't mentioned that the afternoon tea would be so lavish! We counted twenty-seven plates of 'goodies.' Will we ever forget the pumpkin scones? Or the precious time, chatting with these generous women, who were helping us on our way because we all loved and served the same Lord. We were truly 'All one in Christ Jesus.'

We literally staggered up the steps into the coach and were very quiet for a while. Then, when the shadows of the trees began to lengthen on the road, the driver said through his loud speaker, "Let's have a little sing-song. What about those ladies down at the back of the coach starting us off?" We looked at one another and at our song leader, who led us in our theme-chorus for the whole trip:

*"It's a wonderful, wonderful life,
When you know the Lord above.
It's a wonderful, wonderful life,
When He's saved you by His love.
There's a joy that you never once new,
And a peace in the darkest night,
As you travel along,
In your heart there's a song.
It's a wonderful, wonderful life."*

Miracle Melodies No. 4. 56

There was silence in the coach as we finished, and then the other passengers called out, "Sing is again." So we sang it again and several other choruses as well, and then joined with them in singing favourite folk songs.

It was a great adventure for God – seven women setting out by coach from Sydney bound for north Queensland and the Northern Territory, stopping along the way for Convention-type meetings with other women, spreading the good news of the Gospel. It was not a sight-seeing tour. We were often tired, grubby, and dusty. We found it hard to sleep sitting up in the coach on the overnight trips and harder still to look as though we had not been travelling all night when we were met by bright faced women who had arranged formal and informal lunches at the various stop-overs. But we did our best to look presentable and were astonished to hear later that the "team" (that's what we were called) "had descended from the coach with not a hair out of place."

Why was all this happening? Four years earlier a large group of women had sent their names up to the platform at Stanwell Tops saying they were interested in praying for a Convention to be held in Darwin. All had lived in Darwin at some time or another. So we began to pray. Three years later a missionary in Darwin felt led to speak at the Women's World Day of Prayer about the blessing Christian Women's Conventions had brought to many women throughout Australia. Afterwards women came to tell her they too were keen to do something about holding a Convention.

But Darwin was so far away. How could we afford to send someone to guide the Darwin ladies in forming a committee? For this was our policy. As we prayed, God reminded us, "As thou goest step by step I will open up the way before you."¹ The next step was that a N.S.W. Central Committee member generously suggested she could come home via Darwin from a World Congress of her denomination being held in Japan. In this way she was able to meet with a group of women, some of whom became the nucleus of a committee. They began to plan as well as pray.

At the Sydney end we were beginning to plan too and talk over the possibility of sending a team to Darwin. Finance was a big consideration. Air travel cost too much, and so we decided to travel overland by coach. As we looked at the route we realised there were places along the way where there were women interested in Conventions.

This was to be another big step in faith. We saw how a trip could be planned to Darwin and back calling in at Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville, Mount Isa in Queensland and Katherine and Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. It would take three and a half weeks. Seven women were prepared to go, three paying their own travelling expenses and one taking her holidays. We were urged on by a striking verse given to us by the Sydney Committee member who had called in at Darwin to help form a committee: "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward"² This verse had been in her family daily readings the week we left.

There were thirty names on a list of donors pledged to give towards trip expenses and we knew that hundreds of women were praying for us.

We were greatly encouraged when we reached Brisbane, where our Central Committee, as a send-off along the way for the team, had arranged a dinner at the Canberra, which was attended by a capacity crowd.

Blazing the trail for Convention work, we travelled 6,500 miles, holding twenty Convention meetings and fourteen other meetings. We were feted at barbeques, lunches, and afternoon teas. We came into touch with many needy women and found a great heart-response everywhere we went. Darwin women said our visit was all too short. A small group of women who arrived the day following the Convention, when several very co-operative men were dismantling awnings and tables, demonstrated this. They had come, they said, for a second day's sessions!

After we had left the coast and travelled inland, we found, to our dismay, that conditions on the coaches left much to be desired. We were awakened sometimes at two-thirty, sometimes at four-thirty in the morning for refreshments, after having at last dropped off to sleep the night before! This seemed bad enough but we also found that, in the inland, delays in departure and arrival times were the rule rather than the exception. We had engagements to keep in every place and the uncertainty of arrival times on several occasions made our schedule extremely tight. Coaches broke down on three separate occasions. The water tank ran dry and wasn't refilled on one leg of the journey when we were on the coach for twenty-six hours, including a two-hour wait in the middle of the night for a driver. Mechanical trouble caused other delays. Although the coach had been advertised as being air-conditioned the window fittings were faulty, letting in the hot air.

At one stop-over in the Northern Territory, where we had been assured by telephone that the coach would be leaving on time at one-ten in the afternoon, we waited in the main street of the town for more than two hours in the above-century heat with no shelter and nowhere to sit. We almost wore a path to a tiny shop where we were able to buy iced coffee, taking it in turns while the others waited anxiously for the coach. When it did

eventually arrive the driver told us flatly that we were not booked on that trip and there wasn't room for us! That was the last straw. There was no other coach that day and we had a meeting arranged at a place further on for the next day.

Jean Raddon, who was along the street buying a battery for her torch, overheard a woman saying, "There's one of that group of women up at the office asking for the phone number of the coach company in Sydney."

Jean thought, "That sounds like Grace Collins," and flew back to find out the worst. However, my request for the Sydney phone number had evidently changed things. By the time Jean arrived the driver had discovered that we *were* on his list after all! We had been booked on that particular trip for weeks.

This constant uncertainty, together with the physical strain of such arduous travelling and the need to be fit and ready to take the meetings, convinced us that if another such trip were to be undertaken it must be by air, at least over the longer stretches.

We had good meetings at Alice Springs and it was with a great sense of relief that we boarded the plane there and made our way back to Sydney. It was sheer luxury to see the miles flying past, hundreds of miles every hour, instead of thirty or forty! When we reached Adelaide we were greeted by a group of five happy women from our South Australian Central Committee, along with three of their daughters who'd come to cheer us on our way home. They shared our excitement as we related, during the short time we had with them, some of the lovely stories of God at work in women's lives. Just two of those stories are recounted here.

At the panel session in one big centre a question was asked about husband-wife relationships. As I closed the discussion about it I said, "how long is it since you all told your husband's that you love them?" The audience laughed heartily. At lunch time one woman rushed down town. She came back saying breathlessly, "I've just been down to my husband's office to tell him I love him. I've been so busy trying to win him for the Lord, I've forgotten to love him!"

After a night meeting a woman said to Jean Raddon, "You won't remember me, but I was at a big Convention down south when you held up your Bible and said you believed every word of it. I said to myself, 'Yuk, how can she?' I went home, and during the next few days I couldn't get what you had said out of my mind. So I bought a Bible and began to read it. I came to know the Lord as my Saviour, and then my husband did. Now we are here in the north working for Him."

These are typical of the happenings which make Conventions so very worthwhile and which compel us to go on year after year.

The day we left on our second Safari, the following year – 1972 – could have been a day of disaster for us but, instead, miracles happened. We thought we had put travelling troubles behind us by deciding to go by air instead of road. Four women made up the team. This has since become the regular number, except where the available small planes seat only three passengers. We arrived at Mascot airport soon after seven o'clock in the morning and waited for our flight to be called. The time of departure came and went, and the crowds increased until there was barely standing room. We were mystified until an announcement over the loud speakers informed us that a number of plane trips would be cancelled owing to a strike.

The hours went by slowly. We kept saying to each other, "So many women are praying. The Lord won't let us be stuck here when we should be in Rockhampton for their Convention tomorrow morning." Rockhampton was 1000 miles north. Then the announcer read out the flight numbers of twelve planes that were to be cancelled. Ours wasn't among them so we sat tight, while hundreds of disappointed passengers picked up their baggage and struggled out of the airport lounge.

Our plane was one of four that would go, "some time" according to the announcer. Afterwards we heard that only two interstate planes left Sydney that day. I phone my

husband and he contacted the Brisbane Committee. But we still waited on. When our flight number was finally announced, travellers from States further south were called first. Then one of our team members was called. Arriving at the ticket counter she told the officer in charge that three others travelling with her just had to get through. He replied, "Well, there are just four seats left, if you don't mind sitting right at the rear." "We'll sit in the aisle if you'll just let us get to Brisbane." We thought that if we could only get to Brisbane we could drive through the night to Rockhampton – over four hundred miles, as there was no hope, we heard, of getting on the train.

At Brisbane airport we rushed off the plane into the arms of the Queensland Central Committee secretary who was waiting to snatch our tickets. A small thirteen-seater plane was unexpectedly going to Rockhampton, she said, and if she hurried she might get seats for us. She did! The four remaining seats, out of thirteen. None of the other passengers knew why that little plane had been put on, but we did. Women were praying for God's help for us, little knowing how much we needed it. We were going step by step and the way was opening up before us, as God had promised.

The thirteen-seater was very different from the big plane. By this time it was dark and cold, and the wind blew through in icy blasts. It seemed a miracle when the man who evidently assisted the pilot produced hot coffee in paper cups and delicious sandwiches from a little cubby hole in the back of the plane. We were greatly cheered and fortified and more so when, after what seemed a long, long trip, we saw the lights of Rockhampton in the distance.

We arrived ten hours late, at eight-thirty at night instead of at ten-thirty in the morning to find husbands of the committee members waiting to take us to their homes where hospitality had been generously provided. The Rockhampton women had needed to pray and exercise faith too as they wondered what they would do if no team arrived. What a story of God's faithfulness we had to tell the women at the Convention the next morning! Over 200 women filled the attractive, bright hall, in spite of the fact that petrol was very scarce as there was a strike on, and many had had to come long distances. It was a good day.

The day before we had left Sydney on our first Safari, a telegram had arrived from women from Longreach in central western Queensland asking whether we could include them in our itinerary. Sadly, we had to reply that we couldn't. Later that year Mr E. Morse of the Outback Aerial Mission flew his wife and two other women down to the Queensland Central Convention at Margate. The idea came to us that Mr Morse might be willing to fly our 1972 team part of the way to places in Queensland where commercial planes did not go or where connections were not suitable for the timing of our schedule – July 31 to August 22. Several more stop-overs had been added to the previous year's itinerary and we were delighted when Mr Morse agreed to help. He met us at Rockhampton and from there we flew in his lovely Cessna to Townsville, Palm Island, Cairns, Longreach and Mt Isa.

In a circular sent out in early June to many women involved with us in Convention work we had said, "The estimated cost of all the travelling to be done this year by our Safari team is \$1,600. This seems a very big amount to pray for but when we think of the thousands of women attending our Conventions in the south, we realise that it would easily be covered if every woman gave a little.

"In the vast States of Queensland and the Northern Territory there are many thousands of women who do not have the opportunity of getting the spiritual help most of us enjoy and depend on so much. Some of them have very great need of teaching and of fellowship.

"Will you uphold the team in prayer and, if the Lord so leads, have a share in making this ministry possible? We go again this year at the request of women who were so richly blessed by last year's Safari."

We found travelling in the Cessna a wonderful experience. Flying low over the islands off the north coast of Queensland, we looked down on the beautiful coral reefs. The enthusiasm of committee members, their concern for our comfort, and the response of the women who came to the Convention at Townsville and the coffee mornings at Cairns to which women came from all over the Tablelands, was overwhelming.

While we were at Longreach we asked Mr Morse about payment for the expense of the trips. He told us that just that day he had received an anonymous letter in the post containing one hundred and twenty one-dollar notes with a little note, "To fly the girls around." Someone had evidently saved the dollars for this purpose.

As we flew across the hundreds of miles from Cairns to Longreach our pilot would show us a lovely homestead miles from anywhere and say, "The woman who lives there is coming in to the meeting tonight." Another isolated speck on the ground would be pointed out as a school where he gave religious instruction regularly, and another a farm house where he held meetings. Such is the ministry of the Outback. The women who came that night to our meeting didn't seem to want ever to go home.

It took three and a half hours instead of the usual two hours to reach Mt Isa from Longreach, as there was a strong headwind, and so we had to go almost straight from the plane to a talkback programme on the radio which had been arranged by the Mt Isa committee. How thankful we were it wasn't T.V.

Actually the trip right from Cairns had been a very smooth one, right until we neared Mt Isa. So uneventful it was and the terrain so monotonous that we had sung most of the way. When we asked our pilot whether he sang when he was happy, he said, "No, this is what I do when I'm feeling happy," and began to roll and dip the plane. It didn't make us feel exactly hilarious, and we didn't ask for another demonstration.

After happy meetings at Mt Isa, where the hospitality was very warm, as in all the places we visited, our team divided, two members going across by coach to Katherine for meetings, and two flying to Darwin. How good it was to be in Darwin again where we enjoyed the fellowship of the committee and renewed acquaintance with many of the women we had met the previous year. Three team members went on across to the east to Gove (Nhulunbuy), Yirrkala, and Groote Eylandt, an outreach our Darwin Committee secretary had arranged. This was an exciting development in Safari work and one which has been continued and extended. The team had a glorious time with the missionaries and with the lovely Aboriginal women in these places. Reluctantly they turned homeward, back to Darwin, then on to Alice Springs for worthwhile Convention meetings, and finally home, having travelled over 7,500 miles in all, 1,500 of these to new areas.

The safari Committee had begun to see that one team could not reach all the places opening up to us. Another step was taken in faith and two teams set out on C.W.C.I.'s third Safari. Four women from New South Wales went to towns in the north of Queensland, including Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, Palm Island, Atherton, Longreach and Mt Isa. Mr Morse of Outback Aerial Mission again helped wonderfully by flying them in his Cessna over most of the miles in the north.

The second team, also four in number included two from Victoria who had gone via Alice Springs for Convention gatherings. They met up in Darwin with two from New South Wales who had flown to Katherine and Bamyili for meetings. After a tasty smorgasbord and a wonderful night meeting, followed by a Day Convention in Darwin, the team continued their itinerary into Arnhem Land (Yirrkala, Nhulunbuy, Numbulwar and Groote Eylandt) and the north of Western Australia (Kununurra, Derby, Broome, Port Hedland and Roebourne). This was an extended trip and included thirty Convention-type meetings in fourteen places. The team was indebted to the Darwin Committee chairman and secretary for contacting the centres on the itineraries to the east and west as well as the clergymen in the north of Western Australia for the on-the-spot arrangements and also to the women who helped in each centre.

We walked from the plane at one stop-over in the north of Western Australia, knowing no one, but glad to be there. Suddenly a clergyman appeared in front of us with a quizzical look on his face, asking, "The Best for Every Woman?" This was our theme for the trip, so we nodded happily and immediately felt at home. We heard later that he had put signs in shop windows in the town with the heading, "The Best for Every Woman" and underneath in large capitals, MEN. Below that in small type was the message, 'Mind the children so that your wives can attend this special gathering for women.' And evidently a good many men did just that, for we arrived, almost straight from the plane, to find a half full of women!

Eight ordinary women from ordinary homes and backgrounds had stepped out in faith, trusting in an extraordinary God. They had travelled over 13,000 miles in Northern Territory, and north of Western Australia and north Queensland, reaching over 4,000 women.

The teams needed to be adaptable. They slept in many different beds, met different people in different climates, experienced different rising and retiring times, and even came across different languages. But through it all they kept well and energetic, and managed to look fresh and well-groomed, even though such things as hair-dos and personal washing had to be fitted in around the tight programme. Each meeting kept to schedule, which sometimes meant stepping straight from a plane on to a platform with no time for more than a quick comb-up!

From every place came stories of God's meeting with women at their point of need. Their faces in the meetings were fascinating to watch. Some sad, full of heartache. Some bright with joy, taking in every word. Some uncertain, bewildered. Some tearful.

Everywhere women came needing God, and many found Him. Some messages were interpreted for Aboriginal women. Mothers who had left their children to be minded by others for the first time, listened with rapt attention in the quietness of the meeting. Some meetings were for missionaries only, when both team members and missionaries were encouraged by the warmth of fellowship.

There were moments of hilarity when the confused team could not remember where they were or what day of the week it was. There were poignant moments as when five different women in different places, who had been on the brink of suicide, sought advice and help. There were surprising moments such as when the team was hurrying to the plane and a man rushed to thank them for the spiritual help his wife had received at the meeting that morning. And there were positive moments as when a woman decided to go home and pray for her neighbour.

Some of the posters advertising the Conventions were printed in English and Aboriginal languages, and it was encouraging to meet Aboriginal languages, and it was encouraging to meeting Aboriginal women who are taking a leading and active part in the work of the church.

Unexpectedly, a team was able to cross 129 miles of deep ruts, rivers, and unsealed roads to take a meeting at a day's notice, because of the generous offer of a man and his wife to drive them. The journey was made in heat, dust, and bright sunshine, and the return journey in brilliant white moonlight was an experience the team will never forget.

Many young women found the Convention meetings helped them in meeting problems they faced at their stage of life. Older women were just as convinced that the Good News of Jesus Christ, as it was presented, was geared for them. The literature tables were well patronized and the magazine, *Christian Woman*, was packed into many a bag to be read at home.

One woman who was asked whether she had a question for the panel to answer, replied "No, I don't have anything to do with religion." But later she borrowed money to buy the magazine, *Christian woman*, and copies of every counselling leaflet available, complaining that there were not more!

A minister's wife took the Bible reading at one session of a Convention, but could not stay for the remainder of the meeting. She talked with a committee member as she was leaving, and with tears in her eyes confessed that she did not know just what she

believed. The secretary gave her phone number inviting her to ring later. Although she had not heard the panel, the testimony, or the speaker at the Convention this woman had been made aware of her need for God.

One very elderly lady was introduced by her Christian name only, as was everyone else at a Convention Dinner. She pondered on this for a while and then said "Christian names? Of course, that's right for Christian Women's Conventions."

In between sessions, a woman attending one of the Day Conventions was walking to the crèche, a short distance away. She said to another woman going in the same direction, "Do you have a child in the crèche too?" "No," the other woman replied, "I have a friend a few doors up the street and I just have to get her to these meetings."

Was it all worthwhile? All the expense, time and energy spent? The tiredness, dust, and heat?

To see the faces of the women as they enjoyed the singing and the messages, to hear them say, "I've lived here for forty-five years and never experienced such fellowship," or, "What you have said is all such common sense. We have never thought of religious things as common sense before," made the team members realise how very worthwhile it was.

For them it was good to get home. They were tired, and happy to see the families and those who had coped in their absence. They were glad to sleep in their own beds, and to stay in one place for a while! But already they were planning next year's Safaris, praying that it might be possible to reach even more lonely women as they would set off again trusting in their extraordinary God.

And afterwards ...

A letter received from one of the islands, after the teams had returned home, said, "I am an ordinary everyday Christian housewife. I want to say that the encouragement we received from the team and the fellowship we shared with the ladies from Christian Women's Conventions will never be forgotten."

The chairman of a committee in the north wrote that a deaconess had told her that women on her visiting list, frequently mentioned the blessing received at the Convention.

A missionary sent a thank-you note from the most isolated place we visited saying, "We did enjoy so much the visit of the team here. Philippians 1:3 says, 'I thank my God in all my remembrance of you.' That is true of all here. I speak from my heart also, as your visit was such an encouragement to me. Please pass on our grateful thanks to the women who made the visit possible by their gifts. Thank you too for telling the women down south about the work here and for enlisting their prayer support. We see it as another blessing from your Safari."

1 Proverbs 4:12 A.R.V.

2 Deuteronomy 2:3 A.V.

Grace Collins continues the story of C.W.C.I. Outreach to the Outback

MEETINGS GOING WELL WOMEN RESPONSIVE TEAM REJOICING

were the words of a telegram received at C.W.C.I. headquarters in our fourth year of Safaris, when three teams went in north and north-westerly directions in Australia.

Number One Team headed for north-western Australia. They started with Convention meetings at Mt Isa, and then went on to Darwin, Kununurra, Halls Creek, Derby, Cockatoo and Koolan Islands, Broome, Karratha, and Roebourne. Port Hedland was on the itinerary, but had to be omitted owing to delay in planes.

Number Two Team went to the Northern Territory, visiting Katherine, Darwin, Groote Eylant, Gove (Nhulunbuy), Yirrkala, Elcho Island, Maningreda, and Oenpelli. In all these centres team members had fellowship and meetings with Aboriginal women as well as missionaries.

Number Three Team found good preparation by C.W.C.I. committees and good outreach in the coffee hours held in new centres. They visited Rockhampton, Blackwater, Emerald, Longreach, Mackay, Townsville, Atherton, and Cairns.

Where was the money coming from for all these trips? We had started out taking the first step in such a small way financially, even though at the time it seemed a big venture. By 1974 the costs had risen to thousands of dollars.

With our national treasurer I sat in my office looking at the accounts for commercial air-fares which had to be paid within a day or two. Forty-four dollars more were needed. Just then the mail was brought in and we opened a letter from a woman enclosing fifty dollars for Safari expenses. This is one of the many thrilling stories of God's provision. Committee members and other women in the south gave, while those along the Safari routes were generous in their giving of hospitality as well as their finance. Men were also beginning to give. Husbands and wives often sent in donations with assurances of their united prayer for the work. The son of one of the team members gave a large amount towards the cost of the Safari team with which his mother travelled, saying, "We trust and pray that God will richly bless this programme."

It seemed that we had to take steps in faith, one by one, and God met us at each step of the way. But we had to take the steps first. We were tremendously encouraged as we knew that the travelling expenses for twelve women had all been supplied.

One letter and gift which touched our hearts came from "an old miner," as he called himself. He was specially interested in the iron-ore country of Western Australia where he had once mined, and was praying, he said, that C.W.C.I. women would eventually reach out to the women there. His prayers have been answered, for in the last three years teams have gone into these areas.

More States were being represented in the personnel of the teams and this gladdened our hearts. Women from Queensland, South Australia, and the Northern Territory were ready and willing to go. Another step we took was to invite an Aboriginal missionary from Queensland to join the team members going to the Northern Territory where they would meet many of her people. Aboriginal women as well as mission staff would be involved in the meetings and this well-experienced woman would be able to make a contribution because of her rapport with her own people and through her testimony. The great blessing of the meetings would be increased also by having Aboriginal women interpreting the messages.

One of the missionaries told us a lovely story about two of these interpreters, both bright young women married by tribal law to old men who do not always treat them well. One day the missionary came across the two girls seated on a large rock quoting Scripture versus to comfort and strengthen each other. No wonder they are radiant Christians.

A team member wrote before leaving, "I have a wonderful family who are thrilled at the prospects of Mum going on this Safari, but at the same time are green with envy. My mother is coming to look after the family, so they will be in good hands."

Frustrations are so often part of the Devil's plan to hinder God's work. From one town a member of the team wrote, "We were to leave at 7.10 p.m. yesterday and just as we were about to go home after the afternoon meeting I was called to the phone in the minister's home next door to take a trunk call from our next stopover, to say the flight had been cancelled because of a strike! The man of the house where we had tea went to the air office and found there would be a flight at 4.25 this morning, so it was decided we would rise at three a.m., and his wife would pick us up at four to take us to the airport. We rose, stripped our beds (we were staying in the visitors' cottage at the hospital) and disappeared into the dark and fog, only to discover that the pilot hadn't been able to see the landing strip so had gone on. I was wishing I had a camera to get a picture of all our faces. We came back, knocked up our poor hostess, the matron of the hospital, and fell on our beds. I've rung the air office several times, as they said there would be a flight later this morning, but our hopes have faded and we think we'll be very late for tonight's meeting." In fact, they did not arrive in time for any meetings in that centre.

On the brighter side, the same team was able, with the help of Mr D. Robertson of Aerial Enterprises, to visit two islands where iron ore was being mined. One of their letters said, "The time on the islands was tremendous. Only small numbers attended, but it was a thrilling experience to talk with the women. Almost everywhere we've been, someone has said, 'If I'd known what it was going to be like I would have brought my friends.' One woman sat with tears running down her cheeks as the soloist sang, 'Jesus Is All the World To Me,' another team member accompanying her on a borrowed accordion. She said afterwards, 'They were good words in that song.' It was exciting to be in touch with these small places and to be reaching women there for Christ."

We were proving again that "A great door and effectual is opened unto us, and there are many adversaries."¹ Postal strikes made it impossible to have our literature, sent by second-class mail, arrive in time. Plane strikes, petrol strikes, bus strikes, and delays in departure of planes were some of the hindrances, but all the teams came home feeling that every mile travelled and every cent spent were so very worthwhile and would count for eternity.

The teams could not have accomplished all this outreach to women without the help of interested men. The husbands of many of the women involved, both on the teams and at the centres visited, as well as the ministers in many areas, encouraged and helped. We have been able to reach many more places because of the generous and willing help of the pilots of small planes belonging to the Outback Aerial Mission in Queensland, Aerial Enterprises, and the Bible Society in Western Australia, and the Missionary Aviation Fellowship, and the Church Missionary Society in the Northern Territory.

We are including below some of the very stimulating comments made to the teams, which they relayed back to us at C.W.C.I. headquarters.

"There's something in your faces that is different."

"I wish you could stay two weeks, not two days."

“Everyone on the team seems so natural. I can’t get over women speaking in public so easily.”

“Give me a copy of everything you’ve got (counselling leaflets and *Christian Woman* magazines) and I’ll give you a cheque.”

And from a dear old Aboriginal woman came the comment, “I love the same Lord as you do.”

How encouraging it was to those who had ‘stayed by the stuff!’ I had written to the Queensland Central Convention secretary, “I am feeling very relieved now the Safaris are actually under way. It has been a ‘long pull’ getting three organised. I don’t know what we would have done without the tremendous help of your Affiliated Conventions Committee secretary and the chairman and secretary in Darwin.”

In April of that year Miss Dorothy Steel had joined our staff as National Co-ordinator and she helped me a great deal by typing the many letters that had to be sent because of the growing expansion of the work in so many different directions. The following year Dorothy assumed responsibility for co-ordinating the Safaris, with the substantial help of the organisers in Queensland, Northern Territory, and Western Australia. This tremendous outreach, now forms a very vital and important part of our work.

Again in 1975 the number of Safari teams increased. Each year the financial needs have been met and team members have returned with glowing reports. This year Western Australia joined Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and the Northern Territory in sending team members.

The itineraries were as follows:

Number One Team went to north Western Australia: Exmouth Gulf, Karratha, Port Hedland, Broome, Derby, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Koolan and Cockatoo Islands, and Kununurra.

Number Two Team went to the Northern Territory: Darwin, Oenpelli, Groote Eylandt, Maningreda, Elcho Island, Katherine and Alice Springs.

Number Three Team went to North Queensland: Mackay, Proserpine, Townsville, Ayr, Cairns, Innisfail, and Atherton.

Number Four Team went to Western Queensland: Gladstone, Rockhampton, Blackwater, Emerald, Springsure, Longreach and Mt Isa.

We shall let the members of the teams tell you their impressions:

“It has been really inspiring to see how the committee here in Darwin forged ahead in spite of terrible obstacles caused by Cyclone Tracy. I think all committees would do well to visit Darwin and see what determined faith can do. Determined faith has been amply rewarded.”

“There was a lovely spirit in each meeting. One woman gave fifty dollars with this note attached, ‘God spoke to me at a Convention three years ago and revealed to me that I needed Him in a deeper way. I thank God for Women’s Conventions and all that they have meant in my life!’”

“We have had a wonderful start to our Safari. The dinner last night was excellent, with 154 ladies present about one third of whom had never attended a C.W.C.I. function before. The venue was superb and so was the food.”

“Our meetings here are now over and all went very well. Between sixty and one hundred attended the meeting last night in the open air, not counting babies or dogs or men in the background. This morning, about fifty or sixty Aboriginal women and eight European women came to the church hall. The message was interpreted and they listened very intently. We even used our signs, ‘All One in Christ Jesus,’ and it looked good.”

“Our team members are really working well together, and everything is going beautifully. Why not, with so much prayer behind us? We are truly conscious of it. To think that women all over Australia are praying for us and have given that we might come. Well, we’ve had a wonderful start, and if the rest of the meetings go as well, we’re in for a great time. At one place the folk didn’t want us to leave. They want two Safaris a year!”

“Ruth, the Aboriginal team member, spoke at an open-air meeting and barbecue, and the Aborigines were so interested they came afterwards to the missionaries’ meeting where Ruth gave her testimony.”

“Silently, comfortably seated together in orderly rows, rugged warmly against the biting wind, were women. Their faces were hidden in the semi-darkness of the open-air theatre, but there they sat, almost the entire female population of that Aboriginal community in eastern Arnhem Land. This was the sight which greeted the C.W.C.I. Safari team when they arrived for the first of two scheduled meetings.

“At the beginning of the meeting a local girl called Jangu led the singing of hymns and choruses in her own language, accompanied by guitarists. One man observer commented, ‘It’s the best singing I’ve heard for ages!’”

“What a thrill for some of the ladies who met again, after twelve years, their friend and relative, Ruth Paul, to hear her speak of the need to have Jesus in our hearts! One woman was in tear.”

“A women’s meeting? Yes, but besides the usual pet dogs exchanging greetings, on the fringes sat several men!”

“We’re now in the M.A.F. plane. We had very good meetings at our last stop. One woman came into real assurance. There were better numbers than at last year’s meetings so they said, and they were very encouraged.

“The afternoon panel session was very much appreciated. At the night meeting at Banyan Shelter ninety attended, plus children and dogs. We started with a Singalong, led by a group of Aboriginal women and men with guitars, which went from seven-thirty or thereabouts until eight-forty-five. You would have loved the meeting with the Aboriginal folk last night. I felt that God really spoke to many.”

“We’ve talked with many women, who have appreciated everything so much it nearly makes you cry. After church last night we went with the committee members to a home for supper – they just wanted to talk and talk. Then we had a time of prayer. They are a great committee and put a lot of preparation into everything. About fourteen women flew in from outlying islands for the weekend.”

“At one place we were warmly welcomed by an Aboriginal lady who said how glad they were to have the team there. Great noddings and smiles came from the other women.

Talking with one of the men missionaries afterwards, we found that God had met with this woman three years before on our first Safari, and her life had been revolutionized. She had even stood up to the Village Council and told them they should not show a film on a certain night because it was Bible study night. When another woman decided she did not want to study the Bible any more, as she knew it all, this woman got hold of her and told her, 'You read the Bible until you die. That's what it's for!'"

We were all saddened when Mrs Ruth Paul, the lovely young Aboriginal team member in the Northern Territory team, went to be with the Lord after an operation just two weeks after she had returned from the Safari. She had been a real blessing everything the team had gone. A team member put it this way, "Having Ruth Paul with us certainly added power and joy to the outreach in the north. She had a most engaging smile, an easy friendly manner, and was gentle in her approach. Moreover she had real experience of the Lord Jesus Christ."

From the hospital Ruth had written, "I thought I'd write a letter to tell you how much I enjoyed the C.W.C. Safari. Yes, for sure, as our Lord said, He is our leader. I enjoyed preaching the word of God and singing the hymns and choruses. I enjoyed the fellowship with the team. They were so good to me." (Ruth had been to Bible Training Institute in the south. Her 'home town' was Borrooloola on the Gulf of Carpentaria).

"There was a tremendous, almost awe-inspiring, sense of God's working in the last meeting. The committee here are fine. We were so thrilled at their excitement and anticipation about everything."

"At each centre the Lord has prepared one person to be led to Him, so that we now look over our audience and ask ourselves, 'Which one here?' We have a meeting tonight with nurses and teachers. The latter have stipulated 'No preaching at us!'"

"I am so thankful to have been a member of a team. It was a unique experience. As you see on the enclosed map there are other places inland which would benefit by a visit."

"We are on the last 'leg' and, though dirty and dishevelled to some extent, we are rejoicing in what the Lord has done, and we also have lots of contacts and situations to pray for. There have been a few unscheduled 'extras' but the Lord has kept us all intact."

"I will never forget the sight of men and women sitting with rapt attention outside the store in a tiny town while Jean Raddon's familiar voice boomed over the loud speakers. The cassette a woman had bought at the meeting the night before had interested her husband. He said it was good and insisted on playing it over the loud speakers. So here were the men, at a man's request, listening along with the women. We would love to have taken a picture!"

"It was interesting to see that the Gospel message meets the needs of all age groups. A young woman sitting in the audience nearly fell off her seat when the speaker said, just in case there was a non-Christian present, she wanted to assure her that the talk was for her from God with love. This young woman did not know Him, but I believe she knew Him before we left. Then a middle-aged woman who felt a failure and unable to cope, realised that God could supply all she needed to cope with the job in hand. Several women of all ages spoke with tears of a revolution in their thoughts about prayer."

"Today about seventy ladies came, and while the committee had expected more, we felt it was worthwhile, and that hearts were definitely touched. The new committee members are young women, and a real joy. They are so keen."

“There is a great work being done here behind the scenes. God is not dead!”

“I believe the Lord has really blessed the meetings and many women have been helped. There are some lovely young married girls in these places. The team has behaved very well. No problems. In fact we have really had a ball.”

“It rained this morning and, because of thick cloud, we were four hours late leaving. But God showed His plan. We were able to go to the radio station where our speaker was interviewed. The interview was excellent. The testimony given in each place has met a real need and the solos have been very much appreciated too.”

WOMEN WHO GO! WOMEN WHO CARE! WOMEN WHO SHARE – JESUS CHRIST!

Our 1976 Safaris involved five teams – the most till that time. Nineteen women from six States of Australia travelled thousands of miles by air and road to reach isolated women with the thrilling message of God’s love and His provision in Jesus Christ. Here are the places they visited:

Number One Team: Northern Territory, Darwin, Groote Eylandt, Numbulwar, Nhulunbuy (Gove), Yirrkala, Elcho Island, Maningreda, Oenpelli, and Katherine.

Number Two Team: North Western Australia (Kimberley). Kununurra, Wyndham, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Derby, Looma, Koolan and Cockatoo Islands, One Arm Point, and Broome.

Number Three Team: Central Western Australia (Pilbara). Carnarvon, Cue, Newman, Paraburdoo, Tom Price, Port Hedland, Dampier, Karratha, Roebourne, Wickham, and Exmouth.

Number Four Team: North Queensland. Cairns, Atherton, Innisfail, Townsville, Home Hill, Ayr, Bowen, Moranbah, and Mackay.

Number Five Team: Western Queensland. Chinchilla, Roma, Charleville, Longreach, Mt Isa, Cloncurry, Barcaldine, Emerald, Springsure, and Blackwater.

Some of the comments by women in different centres are as follows:

“Please stay longer – we want to know more from the Bible.”

“Must we wait ANOTHER YEAR for fellowship like this?”

“I brought my cousin along, because she wants to become a Christian.”

“If these ladies are here much longer, I’ll be up to my neck in work for Christ.”

“This is wonderful ... we will start to pray and plan towards the visit of a team in 1977!”

Here are some comments from team members en route:

“It would be true to say that in every place we have been, faithful Christian women have prepared, planned, and paved the way in prayer for the ministry of the team.”

“One lady drove 200 miles and another 120 miles. There is a nucleus of Christians here who are really keen.”

“One young school teacher who had come back to the Lord three weeks ago had been really troubled about forgiveness and the message gave just the needed assurance.”

“These are harder areas than most as wages are so high and materialism is the dominant thing, but it’s absolutely thrilling to meet such keen Christians in these places and see what God is doing behind the scenes.”

“Many Christians who come to the north, do not seek fellowship and soon slip into a state of carelessness.”

“We have found such a wonderful bond of love together within our team.”

Since returning home a team member has written:

“As I look back over the last two weeks, I just praise the Lord for those who prayed so faithfully. I personally felt prayer surrounding me like a big tent. Wherever we went we were so conscious that our speaker was God’s messenger. Many women came to us and said “That message was just for me!””

The welcome given to the teams at each centre was really spontaneous and always there was a pressing invitation to return.

A committee member at one centre expressed her feelings as follows, “We just praise God for C.W.C.I. He has answered many prayers and our hearts are rejoicing that we are able to share in this work. We do appreciate the ladies who come each year as we realise how much work is involved in Safari preparation.”

Again an Aboriginal woman who was included on the Northern Territory team, was able to tell her people in every place visited how God had changed her life. Word came from one place visited that the Aboriginal team-member gave a message at the ten o’clock meeting on the work of the Holy Spirit, using a chart to illustrate her talk. At night she shared the way in which the Lord had taught her that a Christian should not smoke, drink, gamble or hate. “He takes all the rubbish,” she said, “and makes us do good things.” Another member of the team said about her, “She is so fresh and real in her relationship with the Lord. She has been a blessing wherever she has been, a real delight to all of us on the team.” Another added, “I can’t begin to tell you what this Safari is meaning to me. We four have found such a wonderful bond of love together. Our Aboriginal sister is very precious and we’ve come to love her very much.”

It is June 1977 and Safari time again. As I sit here writing this chapter, letters are beginning to come in from the Safaris. The stories are in some ways similar, yet in other ways very different, from the ones we have heard in other years.

One comes from the far north. A woman, whom we shall call Doris, was cooking on her son’s prawning trawler in the clear waters off northern Queensland. Caring for the crew at sea for three months, she really missed the Christian fellowship she was used to, for none of the crew was a Christian.

The engine of the trawler broke down unexpectedly, and her son decided to put in for repairs. This wasn’t his usual port for repairs, and imagine Doris’ delight when she heard that the C.W.C.I. Safari team was coming to town! However, to her keen disappointment, the engine was scheduled to be ready for putting to sea three days before the team was due to arrive. She shared this with the Lord. Each day there was a delay in the repairs and they were still in port when June the third dawned bright and clear and the team arrived.

Throughout the three meetings she sat expectantly on the edge of her chair, drinking in the Lord's message in song and word. Revived, she added some new books to her library, and several copies of *Christian Woman*, praying the Lord would use them to speak to the crew about their need of the Pilot Who would lead them to their eternal port.

Other letters come from team members. Below are extracts from some of them.

"I just thank the Lord daily for allowing me to come on this Safari and for His assurance that 'The joy of the Lord is your strength.'² We have counselled many women. Some are depressed, some have been under tremendous strain and tension, and I shall never cease to be amazed at how the Lord has undertaken for me as I have tried to help them."

"We have had a joyful time and great blessing as we have moved among the women of the far north. The women have been eager to sing and it has been a joy to stand in front and lead them. Never once have I felt it was hard work. At one meeting we had three Aboriginal women and they really led the singing."

"In Cairns we had a wonderful experience. One of the committee members offered to drive us home in the bus. Along with us in the bus were about twenty Aboriginal women. As we drove along they started to sing the hymn, 'Out of my Bondage', in perfect three-part harmony. Their voices were rich and warm and full of love for the Lord. Then they sang, 'Through each Perplexing Path of Life.' The music rose and fell, the harmony perfect, and the heart of each woman full of love for the Lord. We left the bus with our hearts very moved and our eyes full of tears. The Lord had been very real to us as we sat with those wonderful women and listened to them sing."

"I'd like to share with you the way the Lord has welded us together into a team, four women with different personalities, backgrounds, and ministries. We *are* a real team. A pattern has emerged that, after almost every meeting we have each had counselling to do and in every case a particular type of person has sought out just the right person to help her."

What makes a C.W.C.I. Safari?

Take the team, the committees, the men who fly the planes, the husbands who stay at home and take over extra responsibilities, the women who give, the women who go, the women who come to the meetings, and the missionaries who need encouragement. Add the perfect co-ordination of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Word, the prepared hearts of all – and there you have it.

The team consists of four women: leader, speaker, song-leader-cum-soloist and a fourth member, who usually gives her testimony, is a member of the Panel, and looks after the *Christian Woman* magazine and counselling leaflets.

Many people think that to chair a meeting is mere routine. We have not found this to be true. Warmth, love, and humour on the chairman's part are what bring a ready response. At one place, a woman was so touched by the loving words of welcome that she said she felt it was all addressed to her personally. The song-leader-cum-soloist draws the women out in praise to God, and when to this is added the reality of the presence of Christ, you realise what a voice give over to God can do. The personal testimony often has more effect than any other part of the programme.

This type of outreach by women to women is unique in Australia and, as far as we know, in the world. The teams travel thousands and thousands of miles, mostly by air because of the limited time team members can give. Only eternity will reveal the full impact for Christ upon countless lives due to C.W.C.I. Safaris.

1 1 Corinthians 16:9 A.V.

2 Nehemiah 8:10 A.V.

The Call of the Hills and the Valleys

There is an old hymn that says, "Anywhere He leads me I can safely go." C.W.C.I. has surely proved that during the past seven years of Safaris. Following the opening up of outback areas of Australia through the Safaris, many people began to ask if it would be possible for a team to visit their area too. Missionaries had been helped, and prepared for their return to the field, at Conventions in the south. Among these were women from Papua New Guinea, and letters inviting a Convention team to visit that country began to arrive at C.W.C.I. headquarters.

Although many felt a Papua New Guinea Safari would be a great opportunity, at first it seemed impossible. Convention work was expanding rapidly, and the pressure on headquarters staff became almost more than they could take. Women all over Australia had already committed themselves very generously to support the Australian Safaris. This Safari would be different, because not only was Australia involved, but New Zealand as well.

As the International Board thought and prayed about the queries and difficulties, board members felt that 1976 was the year to make a move. So, with faith in the God Who is able to "do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,"¹ the planning, praying, preparing team went into action.

Friends in P.N.G. were delighted and excited. The response of Australian and New Zealand women was beyond all expectation, and gifts of money began to come in to support this new outreach. As usual, the team consisted of four women, New Zealand supplying one of the members, a woman who was already in Christian work in P.N.G.

So the first International Safari got under way. It was decided to limit this first visit to six main centres and assess the response and possibilities for the future. Realising that P.N.G. at that time moving towards independence, was in a state of change, C.W.C.I. was keen that the team should reach out to the nationals. The six centres chosen were Port Moresby, Lae, Ukarumpa, Banz, Mount Hagen, and Wewak. Women in each of these places undertook to make the necessary local arrangements. Both the Missionary Aviation Fellowship and the Summer Institute of Linguistics had indicated their willingness to fly the team where commercial flights were not available.

Slowly but surely everything began to fall into place. One of the wonderful things about C.W.C.I. is knowing that thousands of people the world over are using the prayer calendar, for prayer continually brings inspiration and peace to those who bear the brunt of planning and organizing.

One very real answer to prayer was seen in our arrangements with M.A.F. Due to local circumstances M.A.F. planes were grounded when the Safari team arrived in P.N.G. However the day before the team had their first flight booked with M.A.F. they were operating again! The thousands of people praying little knew how God had answered their prayers.

To all outward appearances the day was much the same as any other day at Port Moresby airport. Actually something very exciting was beginning to happen as the first member of the Safari team walked off the plane from Sydney. The heat immediately hit her, although by Port Moresby's standard, it was really quite cool. She was met there by another member of the team who had flown from Brisbane. The other two team members were already in Lae. As the new arrivals stood talking to the ladies who had met them, a lovely young lass moved forward and told one of them that she had met her before, at a Convention in Queensland. It is heart-warming to realise how far the work of C.W.C.I. has extended and how many lives have been touched. One never knows just what God has in store. This team member then found herself sitting in the plane next to a young P.N.G. man who plied her with questions about Christ during the whole journey. This was an encouraging start!

The team members felt nervous. They were conscious that they were in a country which had a completely different culture from their own. Knowing that some of the meetings would be by interpretation also made them feel somewhat apprehensive. However God had spoken very clearly to one of the team through His Word as she was preparing for the Safari. She had asked Him for a word of assurance, but the word she received had really shaken her. It was "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."² As she looked at it, she suddenly realised what a firm reminder God had given. The team would always be found wanting, but she also knew that God, who does the impossible, would never be found wanting. Their trust was not to be in anything, or anyone other than Him. As the team shared this encouragement and prayed together, their hearts were warmed and uplifted.

Altogether they were to take thirty-one meetings, meet with six committees and travel over 4,684 miles before each member of the team was back in her home. They took a while to adapt to the climate, and seemed to spend a good deal of time having showers, using masses of hair spray, talc powder, and deodorants!

The meetings were different in each place, but the enthusiasm was just as great everywhere. The team members were fascinated by the pidgin English and felt they had really accomplished something when they were able to say "Nam belong me ..." which of course means, "My name is ..."

The countryside, with its hills and valleys, was very beautiful, and although it was often wet and misty, the team enjoyed seeing it all. While the team members were at Banz, at the Christian Leaders' Training College the staff there felt it was very unlikely the plane would get through, in order to fly them back to Wewak where they were due to speak that night. Wewak was an important place for the team, for they knew that missionaries were coming in from the hills and surrounding country to attend the opening meeting. The leader called the team together and they prayed, claiming definitely that God would clear the weather. One of the team glanced at her watch. It was just on 12.45p.m.

Some time later the call went out that the plane was coming, and so off went the jubilant team to the airstrip. Flying over the terrain from Banz to Wewak made the team realise what a real lifeline M.A.F. provides for isolated missionaries. As they were talking with the pilot, he told them that he really had not expected to make it from Wewak to Banz to pick them up. He had started off, but the weather had been so bad that he had felt he should turn back. Then suddenly the whole sky had seemed to clear up. "What time was that?" the team asked eagerly. He looked surprised and told them it had happened at about 12.45 p.m. How they praised the Lord for answered prayer!

At the Wycliffe Bible Translators base at Ukarumpa a little group of enthusiastic ladies greeted the team members and rushed them off to a most comfortable guest house overlooking lovely green hills. After a quick shower and change of clothes, they met about twelve women, Americans, Australians, and New Zealanders, who joined them in a delicious lunch and then outlined the programme.

The men were left at home, manning the schools, offices, pre-schools, and nurseries, and coping with other jobs so the women were free to attend the meetings. The women later heard that the children in the pre-school very much enjoyed having 'Daddy' look after them for a change!

As the meetings commenced there was a great sense of expectancy. The team members were astonished to see a grand piano, which one of the workers played with great skill and zest. The singing was tremendous, and although the speaker was nervous, the director's wife, who "turned the talk," seemed to get the message across to the women and there was a real sense of God's presence. One lovely P.N.G. lass came to the team afterwards and said, "Your words made me feel so warm and sweet inside."

Many different things happened to warm the heart everywhere the team travelled. At one place where a panel was inundated with questions, the answers given really met specific needs in women's hearts. So many mentioned the way God had spoken as if just to them. At one session a sharing time brought a holy hush on all those gathered.

The visitors were fascinated by the countryside, with its beautiful hills, made even more beautiful by the cloud effects. They were fascinated by the little houses perched on the hillsides. Their hearts constantly warmed to the friendly people who greeted them with obvious enthusiasm as they walked in single file along the roads with loads balanced on their backs by a band around the forehead. The members of the team laughed at seeing the big cockroaches. They suffered attacks of hay fever as insect-killer was sprayed liberally everywhere they went.

Many facets of Convention work came to the fore as this Safari team moved around P.N.G. There was the missionary's wife, who felt hemmed in because of her little children, God brought into a place of freedom. Then there was the lovely young national pastor's wife, who said she had never really enjoyed being a woman. God had shown that day what a wonderful thing it is to be just that. And there was the educated, beautiful woman, who told one of the team that she had been away from God for some months. She had come back to Him that evening. Missionaries were renewed and strengthened in fellowship. One missionary gave a testimony of God's working in her life through C.W.C.I. Her life had been revolutionized at the South Queensland Central Convention, she had gone to Bible School and later married, and was now working with her husband in P.N.G.

Then suddenly it was all over and the team was flying back home. Yet was it over? Was it not just beginning, as all the people God had touched began to love out what He had shown them? The ripples of a Safari like this were spreading far and wide, and only God knows what the results will be for eternity.

One of the letters received brought joy and inspiration to the hearts of all who had had a part in sending this team to P.N.G. Here it is.

"How wonderful it was to be re-acquainted with the C.W.C.I. ministry at Ukarumpa, Papua New Guinea, in September last year.

"Way back in October 1964 I attended my first Christian Women's Convention at Margate, Brisbane, after driving 340 miles down from Monto with women who were all strangers to me. During the sessions each listened to God talking to us in a special way. That weekend was the start of my 'growing in the Lord,' as I had been a Christian for only five months and was just waiting for spiritual food. The trip back was so different. We were strangers no more, we were 'all one in Christ Jesus.'

"Because of this contact with C.W.C.I., I was asked to go on the planning committee for the first Papua New Guinea C.W.C.I. Safari two-day Convention at Ukarumpa, the base of operations for Wycliffe Bible Translators in P.N.G.

"We enjoyed the greatest co-operation and encouragement. Our directors were right behind us, even allowing fathers to care for the nursery and pre-school groups. By their involvement on the home front, all our menfolk encouraged the women to take the opportunity of spiritual refreshment. Even though we didn't shift out of four homes, and the meetings were held mid-week, we still had the feeling of a weekend Convention.

"I was very much involved with the meeting for Papua New Guinean women – employees, employees' wives and friends from the nearby villages. It was exciting to lead the song service, as I could see who was coming in the door! Miracles happened that morning; just so many women attended who are usually not interested in spiritual things.

"Then God undertook in a special way. Through the interpreted message God spoke to many hearts. Most of the P.N.G. women are very shy about sharing, so it was really special to me when one dear friend said that God had spoken to her that day about her life, and that she had been obeying what He had said.

"To me personally the whole Convention was truly 'spiritually refreshing.' The session for the P.N.G. women was especially wonderful. God helped my unbelief in such a marvellous way. I had prayed that some of those 'disinterested' women would come and yet I was surprised to see them come! A lovely way for the Lord to treat my unbelief! Praise God.

“From the women of Ukarumpa, thank you so much for all your prayers, and financial help, and especially for organising the Safari to Papua New Guinea. Only God knows what the final result will be.”

1 Ephesians 3:20 A.V.

2 Daniel 5:27 A.V.

The results of the service C.W.C.I. has given to so many down through the years could never be estimated. In a work like this only the tip of the iceberg is seen, while hidden away in hundreds of lives is the evidence of what God has done and is doing. Into the headquarters of the movement almost daily there come letters from women who have been helped and touched by God through the meetings, Conventions, and Bible studies that are offered by C.W.C.I.

These chapters tell of some of the lives that have been changed. All who pray should be encouraged as they read of the great working of God's Holy Spirit in so many hearts. The thrilling thing is to see that God has wonderfully worked in so many different areas of people's lives. Women who have sought the truth for years have found Him. Teenagers far away from God have been brought back to Him as mothers have suddenly caught the vision of prayer. Homes which have been like hell, with the marriage 'on the rocks,' have been stabilized. Family relationships have been put right and old grudges and bitter feelings have been cleared up. These and many other facts of life will be touched on in the following stories as we can only reiterate that it is all certainly "beyond expectations." We sometimes forget that the God we serve is able to do "exceeding abundantly" above everything that we ask or think.

The blessing that comes from God reaches out to people in a way far beyond our comprehension. This story tells of a speaker who had been very discouraged for some time. Perhaps she was too busy, and perhaps physically a little below par. It is true that for speakers many meetings come and go, involving hours and hours of thought and preparation, with little or no apparent result. This particular speaker was wondering whether she should continue on the Convention Panel or resign. She asked the Lord to give her some sign to reassure her about both her speaking at Conventions and her own personal relationship with Him.

Only one other Day Conventions was on her speaking list for that year. This was to be held on the coast of New South Wales and with her faith high, her preparation complete and the joy of the Lord in her heart, she set off.

Among the two hundred women present at the Convention was a young woman who was at the end of her tether because of domestic trouble. Meeting this young woman, outwardly wanting for nothing, beautifully groomed and well dressed, one would never have guessed the turmoil within. She had everything, in one sense, but in another sense she had nothing, and had been searching, searching, searching for years for something to fill the aching void in her heart.

As the speaker told the story of the Samaritan woman who met with Jesus this young woman listened with a pounding heart and yearning soul. When the session was over she sat on, thinking how wonderful it would be to talk to the speaker. But sadly she realised she would never have the courage to go to her.

Her whole life was such a mess. Brought up in an affluent home, and never knowing financial need, she had been taught to attend church regularly, and had even become a member of the church. In one sense she really loved God, but had slipped right away from the way of Christ. Young as she was, she realised the depths of sin and degradation into which she had fallen. She felt hopeless and utterly confused. She had never heard of the need of personal salvation, had never realised that in God's sight she was a sinner. But the message that morning had given her a clear picture of herself as a sinner, but a sinner for whom there was forgiveness and cleansing in the precious Blood of Christ.

Everyone was moving around drinking a cup of tea and so she slowly made her way to the table. As she pushed past a woman in the aisle she started, for it was the speaker. Before she knew what she was doing, she blurted out, "Please help me. I need help so badly."

Cup of tea forgotten, she went with the speaker into the counselling room. She had wildly prayed before leaving home in a distraught state that God would provide someone with whom she could identify, someone who would pray with her in her loneliness and confusion, someone to whom she could turn for help and guidance. How wonderful God is! The speaker's need was fulfilled as she led the young woman to the Lord, and the young woman's need was met as, helped and guided by the speaker's counselling, she turned to Christ and became a new person in Him.

New life in Christ was nurtured over the years. There were many stormy days, when she felt her faith would fail, but He proved able to hold her fast. The new 'mother' she had found in the speaker has been able to pray for her and stand with her, and together they have seen his patience and love manifested. Today that young woman's life shows true evidence of a personal relationship with a Heavenly Father.

It is very stimulating to study God's Word and to see all the promises made to the widow. A woman of sixty-five years of age who had been a widow for some years, was a regular church-goer and often very busy helping other people. She was living in South Australia and was invited to Western Australia for a wedding. This visit proved to be a turning point when life took on a completely new dimension. While staying with her friends for a few days she heard about a C.W.C.I. Live-in Convention and on the spur of the moment decided to go to the Saturday morning session. It surely was God's timing. As she listened she instantly saw her need of a Saviour. With feeling she confessed that although she had been in the church all her life she had never known the truth of personal salvation. Counselling over a cup of tea saw her enter into a reassurance of salvation and her face was radiant as the second session started. At midday, when it was time to leave for the wedding, she left, in her own words, as a 'new woman.'

The widow and the speaker have never met since, but correspondence has kept them in touch. This widow's joy and love for the Lord, her vision and earnest desire to be used by Him over these years, in spite of many trials, sorrows, and ill health, her consistent and warm-hearted support of the missionary movement, have all been a challenge and joy to those whom God used to bring her to Himself.

A young woman set free from loneliness and confusion, an older widow touched and renewed by God's love ... and then there is Joanne, (not her real name,) typical of the many young marrieds who are drawn to a living faith through C.W.C.I.

Joanne was a happily married young woman from a good background who was always looking for a bit of excitement or something different. Church was a now-and-again affair, although she regularly attended the Young Wives' Fellowship. Several things happened through this group. One was that she heard a tape of Bishop Chandu Ray's conversion, in which he told how he had tried all the religions of the world before coming to know Christ. As she listened, Joanne realised that Christianity was not just an out-dated religion of two thousand years ago, but was for life in the world of today. She began to think.

Her girlfriend's life also touched her. The church they attended was formal and traditional, and Joanne privately thought her friend's zealous attitude to religion a bit excessive. She decided she would never become "like that." However little things kept speaking to her heart. A tubal pregnancy nearly resulted in death. A posy of flowers brought by her friend at this time touched her deeply and she watched with wonder the love of Christ coming through her friend.

When her friend, with a couple of other girls, formed a Bible study group Joanne began to attend. Here she came under deep conviction of sin, not so much by what was said but by the lives of the other girls in the group. She realised she was doing her 'own thing,' that her life centred around herself, but when the girls tried to explain that she could do nothing, by her own efforts, to please God, she just could not understand what they were talking about. Two excellent books on assurance of salvation were lent to her but she still did not understand. At this stage, Joanne was invited to attend a weekend Convention, staying in a caravan on the beach with her friend, and accepted because it would be something different.

Joanne was caught up in a very materialistic world. She loved pretty things. Her husband was away on business during the week prior to the Convention. Joanne had a very busy week because she was determined to have a bigger and better home. They were already up to their ears in debt but this did not deter her. Joanne found what she thought her husband would consider a lovely spot for a bigger and better home. She was so excited she could hardly wait for her husband to arrive home on the Friday. By this time the excitement about going to Convention had become a dull apprehension. In fact, she hoped John would be late arriving so she could make the excuse of looking after their two small boys for not going to the Convention. She would be able to show him the land. But John arrived early in the afternoon, and so, having no excuse, Joanne reluctantly packed her bags and set off for the Convention, little dreaming she would never be the same woman again!

As they went to the meetings she felt like a fish out of water and clung to her friends. She did not realise that they, and many others, were praying continually for her. During the Saturday afternoon meeting God really got through to her. The speaker spoke on the Robe of Righteousness, using illustrations about clothes, of which Joanne was very fond. She began to see that she needed to be correctly attired to come before the King of kings. In a very quiet way it dawned on Joanne that by being 'in Christ' she was attired in His Robe of Righteousness and therefore she was acceptable in God's eyes. She saw that it was not what she tried to do but what Christ had done that brought her salvation.

One of the first things Joanne noticed on her return home was that all fear of death had gone. She picked up her steam iron and for the first time she was not afraid of it. The second thing she noticed was that she was no longer interested in the block of land or the bigger, better home.

Joanne's whole life, thinking, and outlook has been changed. She is fully involved today with C.W.C.I. and active in her own church.

The whole family came to know Christ as a result of Joanne's conversion. But it was not easy at first. Her husband could not accept her new beliefs, and Joanne says she is sure that she did everything a wife should *not* do to win her husband to Christ! However God worked and to her delight he eventually found Christ as his Saviour.

Reading Joanne's story, one is filled with wonder at God's working and can see many of the factors used to bring her to Himself. It was not just the Convention. God had been working in many ways before that. Praying people, the practical love of friends, the testimony of a converted Hindu, a sense of emptiness because of what was to her meaningless worship. God took all these to bring Joanne to Himself.

A posy of flowers touch a person to the depths? A cassette played at a meeting started a person thinking? Truly it is marvellous and wonderful to see how God works, and His longing is that we might all be available, in the big things or the little things, for Him to use us so that He can get through to others in the way He wants to.

Continued

A young woman stirred lazily in bed, wishing she could have just five more minutes. Work was calling however, so she climbed sleepily out of bed, not realising for one moment that this was going to be a day which would change her whole life.

About ten miles away another woman drank her morning cup of tea and wondered, "Shall I or shan't I?" She wanted to invite a certain young woman to come to the weekend Convention which she was going to attend but felt very nervous, realising she would think it was just another women's meeting – which, in a way it was, and yet, in another way, it wasn't.

Hundreds of miles away another woman took out a slip of paper and started to pray for the Convention. She asked that young women would go and that their lives would be changed, as they found Christ as Saviour and Lord. She felt strangely stirred as she prayed, and although a little bit sad because she was so limited physically with arthritis, thanked God for the lovely gift of prayer.

The woman who was to speak at this Convention gave a great sigh. Was this the right message? Did God have something else to say? She stretched herself and yawned. Having got up so early she really needed a cup of tea! Sipping the tea she jotted several thoughts down on the paper in front of her, not realising that these words were to revolutionize at least one life in the great weekend that was soon to come.

The phone rang in another home in that area and two bookings for the weekend Convention were tentatively requested. As the Convention registrar allocated bunks to the young women she prayed that they would be in the right places and that those sharing the dormitory would all fit in amicably.

So the scene was set. The girl whose life was about to be completely changed answered the phone and her friend invited her to the Convention. She did not know what to say. Imagine being with all those women! Imagine them all talking about their husbands and children! She was only nineteen. Wasn't she a bit young? Her friend assured her there would be many other young women at the Convention and so she was persuaded. She had no sooner put the phone down than she regretted her decision. But, shrugging her shoulders, she resigned herself to going.

The great weekend dawned fine and sunny. The young girl was there with the friend who had invited her. The woman who had prayed so much for the Convention was there full of anticipation, eager to see what God would do. The speaker was there, still feeling very nervous and inadequate, but quite confident in God. The registrar was bustling about, showing people to their allotted bunks. None realised that God was setting the scene to change a young life that was to influence many other lives for God.

There was a hush in the auditorium as the speaker expounded the Word, praying all the time that the message about being available to God would touch hearts. The young woman listened spellbound. Her mind was in turmoil. There was within her a conviction of failure and of wanting her own will, and a doubt that this call to surrender all was really for her. At the same time she felt a deep longing to be her best for God. At last she quietly said, "Okay, Lord. Whatever you want, I will do."

Her friend did not realise what was happening. The speaker had no idea to whom God was speaking. The woman who had prayed at home was still praying, and praising God for all He was doing. The registrar was just thankful that every bunk had been occupied! And everything was overruled by God – all the insignificant details, all the longings, all the rebellion, all the physical limitations, all in preparation for bringing one girl to her place of commitment.

She left the Convention a changed person. Within a very short time she began to study in a Bible Institute where she met her husband. They are now happily serving God on the mission field.

The incredible thing about C.W.C.I. is that it has brought so many women into a place of realising their potential for God, of realising that Psalm 139 is true, and that He has His hand upon us before we are born. Many women have discovered the astounding fact that there is fulfilment and satisfaction for everyone who will dare to give her life over to Him.

All the women mentioned in this book are ordinary women. However, there is nothing ordinary about the God to whom they have surrendered their lives. He is extraordinary. He has a plan for each life.

A local Christian leader put down the phone and said aloud, "Well, I would never have believed it! If C.W.C.I. has been used for the transformation of this woman alone it is all well worthwhile."

Who was he talking about? Let's call her Ruth. She was a person with plenty of go, but she was very insecure. Well known for her tantrums, jealousies and unreliability, she was a menace in most circles, because she was so unpredictable. The family never knew what mood to expect and the result was a tense household with children growing up not knowing what way to turn.

Ruth was constantly longing to be a different person but knew she was fighting a losing battle. She did sometimes wonder if there was something in the "religion business" but did not have any idea how to go about seriously investigating that possibility. Anyway most people seemed to think that God and the Bible were 'out', and really not quite the thing to talk about.

What Ruth did not know was that someone was praying for her. Not only praying, but also watching for an opportunity to reach her for God. A friend who knew Ruth's reputation realised that underneath all the social gaiety and moodiness was a deep emptiness which nothing seemed to fill. Ruth herself was feeling an increasing sense of failure in everything she put her hand to. Her home, marriage, and family were just breaking up and she felt powerless to do anything.

C.W.C.I. arranged in dinner in Ruth's area. This was just the opportunity Ruth's friend had been waiting for. She felt she could invite Ruth to come because there would be a good programme along with an excellent dinner, and a speaker with a message. Ruth accepted the invitation but became really nervous as the time approached. At the dinner she smoked whenever there was a lull in the conversation or while they were waiting for the courses. At last it was nearly over and there was just the speaker. Ruth decided to let her mind wander, but as the visitor spoke Ruth became really annoyed. Why, the friend who had invited her must have told the speaker all about her! She listened with growing irritation as the speaker described her and her ways. Ruth would have left but was afraid to make too much commotion.

Suddenly conscious of a deep hush in the hall, she listened. Surely this could not be true. The speaker was saying that God really loved her and was interested in her, that the past and all her failure could be put right! Her irritation increased, and directly the speaker concluded she turned to the friend who had invited her and snapped, "What did you tell the speaker about me?" Her friend looked at her and said "I've never spoken to the speaker, let alone told her about you." Ruth was silenced.

At home that night she tried to remember what the speaker had said about the reality of God. Not being able to remember she suddenly decided that if she read the bible she might find something that would help her. Where could she get a Bible? One of her children had one, somewhere, but she could not find it. By this time she was growing desperate and decided to ring the friend who had taken her to the dinner.

Very nonchalantly Ruth asked her friend where she could get a Bible. Just as nonchalantly, but with a deep excitement inside, her friend offered to give her one. What was more, she went on to say, if Ruth was really interested there was a group of women in her street having regular discussion about the Bible. So Ruth obtained her Bible and was introduced to the Know Your Bible Course. At first she did not say very much and then slowly but surely God's wonderful love penetrated her heart. With tears in her eyes she

confessed her sin to Him Who is all mercy and forgiveness, and entered into a new life with God.

The home is not perfect yet! There are still times of strife but slowly and surely Ruth is changing from the unstable, insecure person she was into a calm, peaceful, radiant God-filled woman. No wonder the Christian leader said C.W.C.I. was worthwhile!

Many other people, from widely differing walks of life have also found Conventions tremendously worthwhile. Here are some of their comments:

Hindu student: "I realised through C.W.C.I. that I can serve a God Who is really alive, and walks and talks with me."

Housewife: "I was a worried harassed woman. Through C.W.C.I. I have come to know Him Who is able to carry my burdens for me."

Married Woman: "I certainly did not want to go to hear an unmarried woman speaking. How could she relate to me? As I listened, I understood that she was not trying to relate to me, but was letting God relate to me through her. My whole life has been changed."

Doctor's wife: "I did not think I needed God. I had everything I needed. But as I listened to a cassette from C.W.C.I., God entered my life like a streak of lightning! I have never been the same since."

Farmer's wife: "I bought what I thought was a magazine, but on opening it, I found two records. Rather amused, I played the talk about the twenty-third Psalm, God's presence filled the room. I knelt, there and then, and took Christ as my Saviour. He has never left me since."

Committee member: "I had always hated committees until I joined a C.W.C.I committee. The fellowship we have is just great, and that committee meeting date is always a *must* in my diary."

Business woman: "I've always been ashamed of being single. Through the teaching of the Conventions I have come to realise that my single state is as much a gift from God as is the gift of marriage, I have found myself, or perhaps it would be better to say, He has found me."

Older church woman: "After searching for the truth for twenty-five years, I have just found Jesus Christ as my Saviour."

Country church woman: "No one will ever know what C.W.C.I. has done for our town. I had never been in any church outside my own denomination until the Convention started. C.W.C.I. has brought us all together in a wonderful way."

Missionary: "I cannot say how excited I am about your Safari coming to us. My whole thinking and outlook were revolutionized by the one Convention I attended while I was on furlough. I can't wait to have you here."

Husband: "I had to come and meet you. My wife, who is normally very quiet, has not stopped talking since she arrived home. God surely blessed her!"

Young married woman: "I had thought Conventions were all for the 'oldies', but this has been a wonderful weekend. There surely is no generation gap with Him."

Nineteen-year-old: "I am in Bible College now, but I would not have been if the Lord had not given me a real push through C.W.C.I."

A Minister: "Please let me have a bundle of brochures advertising your weekend. One of the women from our parish went last year, and came back such a transformed person and so easy to work with in the church, that I want all my women to go next time."

Mother of four: "I went home with a great hunger and thirst for His Word and started family devotions, my husband and two teenagers joining in happily."

Elderly woman: "I could not believe my ears when I heard that Jesus actually loved *me*."

Husband and wife: "We have been richly blessed as we have listened to the cassettes. Our whole marriage relationship has become a lovelier thing."

Wife with an unconverted husband: "I started the Bible study but found the questions a bit hard for me and so I asked my husband to help me. It has really 'turned him on' for Christ."

Missionary using Know Your Bible studies: "We have big problems with the language. But the Lord is undertaking and showing many of these people that they can read their Bibles and find real spiritual food. For that we praise the Lord and look expectantly to the future."

Another woman writes at length and her 'letter' is quoted below:

"Several years ago my husband retired and we moved to a small country town. As a Christian woman, I had a strong desire to serve the Lord in this new environment, but no doors seemed to open. Even the church we attended appeared self sufficient, and offered no opportunity for involvement.

"For almost two years I experienced a waiting period when I felt starved for spiritual fellowship. But, unknown to me, all this time God was working and preparing His plans for C.W.C.I. in this area. I shall never forget that joyful day when I answered the telephone and a voice at the other end said, 'We are forming a Christian Women's Conventions District Committee. Can you come to the meeting?' Could I?

"Not only did I attend the meeting, but I also became the secretary of the committee. Knowing full well that the long-awaited door had swung wide open, I unhesitatingly walked through.

"The ensuing years have been full and rich, overflowing with God's purposes and blessings because of all the avenues of service I have found within C.W.C.I.

"House-to-house visitation when preparing for the Convention proved to be one very rewarding avenue. Often the invitation brochure (we) offered became a wonderful passport into a women's home and life – as well as bringing her to a Convention.

"This service has also led to my helping a little woman with heavy burdens and problems who was prohibited from attending church by her husband. Eventually, through continued prayer, she was allowed to accompany me to C.W.C.I. meetings. Today she belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ and is experiencing comfort and peace she has never known before.

"The telephone prayer service is another avenue of service within the orbit of C.W.C.I. It helps women with all kinds of problems: desperate situations, 'up-tight' re-actions to family circumstances, and problems of every kind. What a terrific opportunity to witness for the Lord, when the telephone conversation climaxes in prayer!

"Counselling services are carried on in many ways – by person-to-person contact, by telephone and by letter. All seek to focus the eyes of the one being counselled upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

"God through C.W.C.I. has created countless avenues of service, but only His love and power can enable me to use these opportunities to His glory."

Enter Jean Raddon and Dorothy Steel

For several years Christian Women's Conventions leaders had been conscious of the need for a full-time staff worker. The number of Conventions and associated functions was increasing, and there was a very real need for more Bible study and counselling among the women being contacted.

There were two basic problems facing those who saw this need: the finance required to step out in this way, and, more importantly, the right person to fill the gap. They were confident, however, that the Lord would supply all that was needed to support the person of His choice.

No-one doubted it was God's will that the work should go ahead. What was needed was an assurance as to His time for this forward move. When should C.W.C.I. launch out in faith to make this expansion of the work a reality?

Meanwhile, unbeknown to C.W.C.I., God had been speaking to Jean Raddon in Nepal, about the need of women throughout Australia.

In 1969 Grace Collins wrote asking Jean to consider travelling via the U.S.A., on her next visit to Australia. C.W.C.I. wanted her to learn about Bible Study Fellowship and pass on the knowledge to women in Australia. Jean realised that the call had come from God, so she then wrote asking whether there was a place for her in Convention work.

As the National Board had not then been established, the Central Committee in Sydney took this as a wonderful answer to prayer, and God's seal on their stepping out in faith to take the responsibility of supporting a staff worker.

Several years of happy association and fruitful service followed Jean's entry into the work. C.W.C.I. continued to expand, until the need arose for more full-time help. As the Lord had singled out Jean in a wonderful way, so too, He brought Dorothy Steel to C.W.C.I. as a second full-time staff worker. She left a good, secure, senior position in the State Government, fully assured that this was what the Lord required of her.

With their individual gifts and training, each has made a tremendous contribution to the work of the Lord through C.W.C.I. For our part we can truly say, "There hath not failed one word of all His good promise."¹

¹ 1 Kings 8:56 A.V.

Jean Raddon tells of God's unmistakable call

People often ask whatever made me leave Nepal and come to Australia. For the person who is alive to the working of God in one's life the answer is a very 'pat' one. It is simply that God led me to leave Nepal and come to Australia. The leading was not a sudden bolt from the blue, a cataclysmic experience of God's leading, but a steady gentle fulfilment of that familiar word, "As thou goest step by step I will open up the way before you."¹

Little did I realise as I left Nepal to come to Australia for my first visit in 1964 that it was eventually to be my home. I came here on deputation work for the Nepal Evangelistic Band, as the Mission with which I worked was then known. During my stay I visited my first Convention, at Margate, Queensland, which was a startling experience. The sleeping room came up to Nepali house standard as far as numbers, snoring, and grunting were concerned! There too I first met Grace Collins though I little realised then, and neither did she, that we were to be drawn together in a delightful way in God's work.

As I moved around Australia a strange something was going on inside me. I felt more and more that God had given me this exciting gift of being able to share His Word. I felt the pull of this type of work but believed that this was to be with the Nepali people among whom I loved to live and work. It did not enter my head that God was going to move me from Nepal.

While in Victoria I attended the Belgrave Heights Convention where, in those days, they held a meeting specially for women. The person who was to have spoken at the meeting

was taken ill. Imagine my consternation when the chairman rang to ask if I would be willing to speak! The very thought of it froze me, but I agreed. I remember being very amused at what happened after the morning session when the women's meeting was announced and my name was given. As we left the auditorium two young women were discussing whether they would go to the meeting in the afternoon.

"Who is this Miss Raddon anyway?" said one. "Oh," said the other, "I don't know, but it will be one of these spinsters trying to put us married women right!"

Nothing could have been further from the truth. I often wonder whether they did go to the meeting, and if so what they thought of the speaker!

It was rather an awesome experience for me. As I prepared for the meeting, God's Holy Spirit 'reeled off' the message as a whole for me. All I had to do was write it down. This same experience has happened often since, but that first time was very wonderful. Nothing sensational came out of the meeting, but two people present that day were to have a profound effect on my future life.

I learned a good deal during the six months I was here in Australia and more and more felt the longing to be free to teach the Bible. Yet I really loved nursing and work in Nepal. Somehow I could not see the two working together. However, God's ways are so often not our ways. He leads where He pleases and always in the best ways.

I returned to Nepal and had been back some time when C.W.C.I. invited me to come to Australia as the overseas speaker for 1967. It was the tenth anniversary for C.W.C.I. and God had given the leaders the faith and vision to invite a speaker from overseas for the first time. The Mission was happy about my going and so began the correspondence which was eventually to lead me into my present delightful post.

It all sounded exciting but I was certainly filled with fears at times. God never fails to encourage us through His Word. As I, in fear and trembling at the thought of the responsibility of this visit to Australia, cried to Him to guide me, He suddenly spoke in a way that I shall never forget – through His words to Moses. "If thou shalt do this thing and God command thee, then thou shalt be able to endure and all these people shall go to their homes in peace."² This word came with warmth, with love, and with reality to my heart, and I knelt to worship Him who had bothered to make quite sure there was some word that exactly met my need.

May 6, 1967 in my diary reads: "Perth. Here I am sitting in the Convention room, shivering in my shoes but trusting Him. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."³ I am listening to the women who are all saying what a wonderful time they had last year with Mrs Chambers, and how they could never have a Convention like it again! Help, Lord, please!"

The evening meeting was a never-to-be-forgotten experience for me. I seemed to be standing outside myself and it seemed as if someone else was speaking. Someone was! I retired to bed full of praise to Him. Over and over again the diary reads, "Feel sure God is in all this, but what, Lord, what?"

Back in the United Kingdom, the thought of returning to Australia began to burn in me. There were many aspects to think through. The Mission was coming to a point where leadership was badly needed. In any case Christian Women's Conventions had no full-time workers, so if God were calling me to Australia I could hardly just say, "Well, Australia, here I come!" Then there was the matter of finance. I had worked with the Nepal Evangelistic Band since 1952. Although the N.E.B. was, and still is, a "faith" Mission, relying on God to supply all needs, I realised that this little work was my security. The Mission would always look after me and even if I had to retire at some point, I knew that, because I belonged to the family, I would be provided for.

What really shook me about my thoughts was I wondered whether I would be willing to step out with nothing behind me if God asked me to do so. I really had to search my motives and thoughts. I had always talked so happily about trusting God for everything. Was I *really* willing to leave all my security and trust Him? Eventually I saw how stupid I was and I remember kneeling down with tears and asking His forgiveness with words something like this, "Of course I'll trust you, Father, and if you want me to go to Timbuctoo with nothing

behind me, I will go – *as long as You are with me.*” I rose with a strange peace in my heart. Two days later I received my first letter indicating that C.W.C.I. was looking for a full-time worker, God’s timing is really very wonderful. He is always on time, never behind, and never too early.

The entries in my diary show that my feelings were very mixed. In one sense I was ready for this move, but the thought of leaving Nepal was very hard to accept. Grace Collins wrote to say that C.W.C.I. needed someone for the follow-up work of Conventions – which was exactly what God had laid upon my heart.

While staying at a friend’s house in the U.K., I was amused by her reaction to a phone call from Australia. “Sydney calling,” said the operator. “Sydney?” said the friend, “I don’t know anyone called Sydney!” It was a call from Grace Collins asking for my decision about coming to Australia. I think C.W.C.I. felt I was dithering, but I did want to talk with the Mission Field Council first, so gave no definite reply.

While at a Convention in England I had a strange experience which once again was a confirmation from the Lord. I was just about to speak and the people had left the platform. Suddenly I heard a voice saying, “*This is your ministry.*” The voice was so real I turned to see who was speaking but of course there was no one there. After the meeting, a woman whom I did not know came to me and said, “Miss Raddon, I know you are a missionary nurse, but as I have listened to you I realise that this is your ministry.” Another confirmation from the Lord!

Many people did not feel happy about my leaving Nepal but were gracious and loving about it. The Council on the field felt God was truly calling me and this finally decided me.

Just two other incidents completed for me the call to leave Nepal and come to Australia. As I thought with sadness of giving up the medical work I loved and leaving my missionary and Nepali friends, God brought such a lovely thought to my mind, I had always enjoyed missionary work. It had cost me nothing. Rather, it had enriched me beyond my wildest dreams. I thought of the words of David, “Neither will I offer ... unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing.”⁴ Even to this day when I miss Nepal, my medicine, my colleagues, which I don’t very much because I am so happy and fulfilled, I just look up into His dear face and say “Well, Father, for the first time I can offer you something which costs me just a teeny weeny bit.”

The other incident occurred on the day I received the letter from the Board of C.W.C.I. accepting the offer of my services. I sat on the floor of my mudhut and a great wave of fear rushed over me. What had I done? Surely I had made the biggest mistake of my life. Suddenly a strange thing happened. I seemed to be in a boat. My fellow missionaries were all around me. I was snug and safe. Then I heard the Lord say, “Step out of the boat.” The water looked dark and unknown. I said, “Lord, I want to stay here.” His voice said, “It is I, be not afraid.” A dream? A vision? Imagination? I do not know, but in obedience I stepped out into the warm, loving fellowship of the C.W.C.I. and I have never regretted it. His leading is wonderful, His service perfect joy, and I know that obedience is the key to so much of the wealth He wants to give.

1 Proverbs 4:12 Heb. Tr.

2 Exodus 18:23 A.V.

3 Proverbs 3:5 A.V.

4 2 Samuel 24:24 A.V.

Dorothy Steel shares the way God led her into C.W.C.I.

It looked like a baffling assortment of strokes and circles to me, but I was determined to work it out. I was at business college, battling with the basics of writing in shorthand and the typewriter keyboard.

One day I made a bargain with the Lord. I said to Him, “If you will help me, I will use this gift for you.”

He answered my prayer, and as I worked in many situations my aim was to serve Him right in the place where I was.

While living in Tasmania I formed a friendship that was to be an important link in my future. Several happy years in New Zealand enlarged my understanding of people. Over the years I worked in a number of interesting offices – in legal work, as a personnel worker, in a local Government office, and in radio. Finally a good, secure, senior position in the State Government made life full and interesting.

I had no desire to move out of my position and yet the question persisted, “Is this really where God wants me to be? Or should I be involved in a position where people are being reached with His message?”

Unknown to me, a friend in Tasmania gave my name to Jean Raddon, who was at that time the national co-ordinator of C.W.C.I. telling her to look out for me as I might be able to help in the work of C.W.C.I. Jean Raddon stuck my name on the board in her office and thought no more about me.

My home situation completely changed and I found myself free in a way I had never been before. The deep longing to have greater scope in my relationships with people was very real, and I began to pray definitely that God would show me the way.

I did not know, of course, that the way was already being prepared. We so often forget that He is always “silently planning for us in love.” At that time C.W.C.I. was looking for another worker, as the outreach of Convention work had grown so much, and many were praying about this matter.

A Bible study group was commenced at Enfield, and I decided to go to it. Jean Raddon’s eye fell on my name, and she began to pray that if I was to join the work of C.W.C.I. I would be ready to do so and that they too would be assured that this was indeed God’s purpose. Several weeks later I was approached by the C.W.C.I. executive director who stated that they needed a person to be the national co-ordinator of the work. I did not think I was suitable for that position, but agreed to pay about it.

Several weeks later an approach came from another large organization, outlining their need, and inviting me to join their staff. I had hardly started to consider this, when yet another invitation came from a third direction! Out of these three invitations one thing came through clearly. God really was moving me out! As I prayed, He encouraged me through His promise, “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not fail you, nor forsake you.”¹

I pondered for a long time, but C.W.C.I. kept coming to my mind. I realised that I must take a step of faith, and on New Year’s day 1974 I made my final decision and rang Grace Collins to tell her I would accept the position.

I felt happy to have made the decision, but I was advised by someone not connected with C.W.C.I. to do some hard thinking. Did I realise that this was the year of the great recession? Was I not foolish to give away my material security? What about the future, and superannuation, and so on? it was a time of real heart-searching. But I went to the Lord and asked him for help and assurance from the Word. I must say I could hardly believe my eyes when I read these words in my regular daily reading, “If the Almighty is your gold, and your precious silver, then you will delight yourself in the Almighty ... you will decide on a matter and it will be established for you and light will shine on your ways.”² How my whole being was warmed!

So I moved forward trusting that the Lord would do all He had promised. I joined C.W.C.I. in April 1974 and stepped into the most challenging years of my whole life. I have found a deep devotion and love for Him amongst those with whom I work. I have travelled around Australia seeing the needs of women and meeting the dedicated committee members. I have had to adjust to new situations and to do things I have never done before. Every day brings a fresh challenge and I continue to learn new lessons. I have learned a new security

in Him and have found once again He is the God Who cannot lie, and Who fulfils every promise He has made.

1 Joshua 1:5 A.V.

2 Job 22:25-28 R.S.V.

Jean Raddon writes about further
VENTURES OF FAITH

When a person steps out with God, spiritual enrichment beyond all expectation follows. Many women have been led into blessing through C.W.C.I., as they have stepped out with God into areas which seemed difficult or impossible. They have learned that in this walk of faith you certainly face the facts, but you do not let them frighten you. You turn your eyes away from facts, and fix them on the promises of God.

One of the promises given over and over again has been, "As thou goest, step by step, I will open up the way before you."¹ There is no doubt that as C.W.C.I. has moved forward from one venture to another, it has been the dynamic leadership of Grace Collins that has inspired the movement to take so many steps in faith.

The launching of *Christian Woman* magazine in 1954 was a venture in faith for Janet Brooks, an American married to an Australian who managed a secular-cum-religious bookstore in Newcastle, N.S.W. In her account, Janet has written, "There were numerous magazines of a secular nature for women, but it suddenly became my hope that a Christian paper or magazine for women would also find readers. I was right, and more than that, the time was right. God was moving to inspire the Christian women of today.

"For more than two years the paper was duplicated, and a team of women helped with wrapping each copy for posting. The circulation grew steadily."

When her husband began training for the ministry and they moved to Sydney, the magazine was printed, and more than 2,000 copies were wrapped by friends in the churches they served, and sent out to women throughout Australia and other countries of the world.

In 1966, however, Janet Brooks became unable to carry on, because of a serious spinal condition. She and her husband returned to U.S.A., where he has pastored churches for over ten years.

There had always been a very good relationship between *Christian Woman* and C.W.C.I. The editor had very generously given advertising space and news of our Conventions, and Grace Collins had helped with the management of the magazine for two-and-a-half years while the editor was overseas.

C.W.C.I. had kept in touch with the ever-growing circle of interested women by means of a monthly newsletter, but when we heard that *Christian Woman* was available for us to publish, we realised that here was an opportunity for expansion of the ministry of both *Christian Woman* and C.W.C.I.

It was a tremendous step in faith to say we would purchase the magazine as, at the time, we did not have any funds we could use. However, when we made the need known at an area conference of committee members in Sydney, some of the women, realising the potential of such an opportunity, gave us interest-free loans. We were delighted to be able to pay them back more quickly than we had thought possible. The final amount of \$250 was generously given by a young chemist and his wife.

God had an editor ready "in the wings." June Bosanquet, an experienced writer and journalist, who had recently moved to Sydney with her family, was looking for a job to do for the Lord. It was a further answer to prayer that, as we took over the magazine, an honorary editor was thus made available. For ten years *Christian Woman* flourished under her very capable and dedicated guidance, and the circulation reached the 10,000 mark with an estimated readership of 30,000. In 1974 the magazine was given an award by the Australian Religious Press Association for the most improved Christian magazine produced in Australia.

This year, 1977, has seen the entrance of a new editor, and eight more pages have been added to the journal, with the subscription list still increasing. An associate editor has been on the job for several years and given much valued service.

Dedicated volunteers have, over the years, greatly assisted our staff. Without them we could never have coped with the ever-growing amount of tedious work to be done behind the scenes in processing subscriptions, preparing wrappers, checking queries and so on. With so many thousands of subscriptions, this is a mammoth task.

A team of women come one day each month, to insert the Prayer Calendar in *Christian Woman* before wrapping the magazines for mailing. This Prayer Calendar is the lifeline of all the activities of C.W.C.I. It outlines the movements of speakers, lists Conventions and other functions, and relates points for praise and prayer regarding these and also K.Y.B. groups. Everything connected with C.W.C.I. is thus prayed for by thousands of women, and this gives great impetus to all our work for the Lord.

Many women have contributed articles to the magazine over the years. Many have written their thanks for help received through their messages. One comment, which touched our hearts, came from an isolated country reader who called it her "friend in the mail-box." We quote several other comments as follows.

"Thank you so much for the article, 'My husband is not a Christian.' This article is such a help and comfort."

"Your articles helped me through a most difficult year of terrible physical, emotional, and spiritual strain ... helped me to accept my divorce, move home, grow closer to my parents, and give more in my work of teaching mentally and physically retarded adults. For all this help, please accept my thanks." (From the U.K.)

"I enjoy your little magazine and wish it were twice as big." (A remark repeated often.)

"I am enclosing my subscription to cover a further three years. Like others here on this little island, I very much enjoy my copy of *Christian Woman* ... I am always glad to have it handy if someone is looking for a magazine to read."

The tenth anniversary of C.W.C.I. saw a new venture of faith being taken by the movement: bringing a woman speaker from overseas to speak at the main Conventions. The cost entailed seemed tremendous, but as C.W.C.I. leaders prayed, they realised they were being led on by the Lord.

That first overseas speaker stayed in Australia for several months, and the committee saw at once that this was a real service to the women. A woman from overseas, with experience and the ability to teach the Word, can bring to the women of Australia and New Zealand a fresh insight into many things.

So it is that each year since 1967 women speakers from overseas, (some years there have been more than one) have brought great blessing to thousands of women. It is a two-way blessing, however, because when the speaker returns to her own country she takes back the blessing she has received from serving the women of Australia and New Zealand.

One speaker wrote, "This morning I was asked to share in the Morning Clock, a live talk-and-music session in Chicago, about my recent trip to the land 'down under.' I took my koala bear and wore my kiwi brooch to add a touch of authenticity. And of course there wasn't nearly enough time to tell all I wanted to say. In fact, the host of the programme, who is also a local pastor, said that I was a bit like that oil geyser in the North Sea, which kept pouring out and was hard to shut off! It was such a delight, though, to be able to tell the listeners about the vital work of C.W.C.I."

So yet another venture of faith has paid dividends in thousands of lives, both in New Zealand and Australia. The movement has had speakers from Nepal, America, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, and Malaysia. We look forward to 1978 when we hope the speaker will be a lady doctor from India.

God has used various Christian women to provide ways and means by which He can speak to hearts. In December 1973 He used three women to establish a bookshop. One, who has been connected with C.W.C.I. since its beginnings, had the vision of what a bookshop could mean in spreading the Good News, another made an interest-free loan, whilst a third woman helped in other ways to get the shop "off the ground."

Four years later we look back with praise to God for those women and for others who have helped in a voluntary capacity. We now have a flourishing Christian Woman's Book Nook in a shopping area in Eastwood, in the northern suburbs of Sydney, which employs one full-time worker in the shop, two part-time assistants, and some voluntary help as well.

One woman who came into the shop said she had prayed for years for a Christian bookshop in that area. It not only serves that district, but the staff and other helpers provide bookstalls at Conventions and coffee hours elsewhere about once each week.

From a very small beginning, the sales have increased greatly. As a result, God's Word and good books are being distributed in many different directions. When the step in faith was taken, God's blessing was given, a witness to the way in which the Lord honours those who venture out in His name.

Imagine the large hall of the Sydney Opera House packed to capacity with nearly 3,000 women, and a choir of 160 voices! Imagine the silence as Grace Collins stands in that C.W.C.I. meeting during Women's International Year, to speak of true liberty. Imagine looking out on thousands of faces filled with expectancy, with worry, with joy, and with sorrow as Millie Dienert spoke of the Christian's Hiding Place.

Who would have thought that C.W.C.I. could not only fill the Opera House for a Christian meeting, but have it booked out three months in advance? The great step of faith had been taken and as the glory of the song, "The King is Coming," was sung by the choir, not only those who had been involved in that step of faith, but the whole audience stood to praise the Lord.

It was not only in Sydney however that this true liberation was shown forth. In Melbourne at the Dallas Brooks Hall, in Launceston at the Queechy Auditorium, in Adelaide at the Maugham Methodist Church, in Canberra at St. John's Hall, and in Brisbane at the City Temple, large meetings were held involving thousands of women. Mrs Dienert then visited New Zealand, speaking at similar gatherings in Wellington and Auckland. In Western Australia the special gathering for International Women's Year was held when the Safari team was in Perth. This united venture of faith showed the world that there are thousands who believe in the true liberation of Jesus Christ. "If the Son ... shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."²

Scattered across Australia there are over 1,400 C.W.C.I. committee members. They come from all walks of life. Some live in country towns, others in the cities, some on farming properties and others in isolated areas. They have one common bond – they want to reach other women for Jesus Christ. Some feel very isolated, and have no real idea of the size of the movement to which they belong. It was for this reason that the National Board decided that a conference for all committee members should be held in our national capital, Canberra. "Let's Mix in '76" was the name chosen for the conference.

At first it seemed impossible. The expense, not only of the travel from all over Australia, but also the cost of accommodation would be enormous. However, when a thought is given from God it continues and, as they prayed, the board members felt more and more certain that this was of the Lord.

Here was a great opportunity to offer every committee member a weekend of training, inspiration, and mind stretching. The thought that all Know Your Bible class leaders should also be invited was prayed about too, and led to an invitation being extended to them. All the speakers on the C.W.C.I. panel were also invited.

The news of this ambitious plan began to spread. At first people were hesitant. One committee wrote to say that its members thought it was wrong to spend so much money.

Other committees were thrilled, and their members began to pray that God would supply the money to make it possible for them to attend.

At an area conference, one of the staff was telling the women about the proposed venture. As she talked she looked at their faces, thinking to herself that they would never be enthused. "Well," she said at last, "I guess you are all sitting there thinking you could not possibly do it, time-wise or money-wise."

The women looked so surprised and one replied, "Well, actually you are quite wrong, because I have been sitting here wondering how much it would cost to charter a plane to take us all to Canberra!"

So the enthusiasm grew and applications began to come in from all over Australia. As time went on the sense of expectancy increased.

The National Board decided that the conference would be held on the campus of the Australian National University in December 1976. Some women came by coach, and others by car, some pulled caravans all the way from Western Australia, while others travelled by plane. But they came – over 400 of them – from every State, although not from every committee.

Across the Tasman, in New Zealand, an older committee member had decided it would be of greater benefit to C.W.C.I. if a younger member could go to Australia instead of her. So she offered to pay for a younger person to go. The younger woman was thrilled, though a little nervous about travelling on her own.

When the chairman of the local C.W.C.I. committee told her husband about the offer, he immediately said, "Why don't you go too?" So the chairman and young committee member travelled to Canberra together, and a third member also came along, with her husband. They really enjoyed all the activities.

Two of them drove home with Jean Raddon. They stopped to have a meal at a restaurant, and Jean thankfully sat down saying, "Isn't it wonderful! We just get served and don't have to queue as we did at the conference." The girls looked quite surprised. "Oh we enjoyed that. We met so many people as we waited for the meals; it really was exciting!" This was the reaction of many delegates.

At the last meeting of "Let's Mix," the chairman looked out over the sea of faces and realised that all too soon the women would be scattered again, all over Australia. The National Board had stepped out in faith and God had honoured them. They then took a further step. All notes of the talks given were printed and bound, and then sent to all who attended. Every committee also received copies.

Soon letters of appreciation began to pour in. One committee chairman wrote, "I should have written long ago to say what a blessing 'Let's Mix' was to the three of us who attended. But now it is even more meaningful, because we have seen what we learnt being worked out in practice in our Convention work. We were just so much more aware of the way things should be done. Because of the inspiration of that weekend, we were all the more determined to make our C.W.C.I. diner a night the Lord could use and bless in ladies' lives. I'm sure the committee will feel the effects for a long, long time to come. The book of notes on the lectures and messages is a magnificent production – a real treasure-house for us to keep referring to."

So the National Board praised the Lord for all who helped, looking forward to the time when God will again lead them out into such a venture.

"The just shall live by faith"³ is a good word to take hold and live by. As C.W.C.I. has grown over the years, it has moved on in faith. Jesus once said, "Did I not tell you that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?"⁴

C.W.C.I. has stepped out in believing faith in so many areas, and continues to see the glory of God demonstrated in thousands of lives.

1 Proverbs 4:12 Heb. Tr.

2 John 8:36 A.V.

3 Hebrews 10:38 A.V.

4 John 11:40 R.S.V.

Grace Collins describes the response of women to the missionary challenge

“Back the Attack” was the title of a powerful address given by Miss V. M. Sullivan at one of four early Conventions at Thornleigh, N.S.W. She pointed out that there are not two standards of sacrifice – one for the missionary and one for the women at home – basing her remarks on Numbers 32:6-7, “Shall your brethren go to war, and shall yet sit here?”

It was in real fear and trembling that in 1963 C.W.C.I. launched what was to most of us a new concept in missionary giving. We had been praying about this during the months since the previous Convention when the attention of the women had been focused on missions world-wide. We felt that there was more that we, and they, could do, and knowing the principle of “faith promise giving” we had become sure God was leading us to take another step of faith into the unknown.

Convention attendance had outgrown the chapel of Thornleigh, N.S.W., where, as someone remarked, it had become “wall to wall women, not wall to wall carpet” and we were now in a hired marquee.

As I stood to talk to the women about giving by faith, all I had prepared to say vanished from my mind. I opened my mouth and no words came. “This can’t be me,” I thought. One of my brothers has always said, “Grace just keeps on talking until she thinks of something to say,” and in C.W.C.I. work I have often found that to be very useful. There I stood in utter confusion. At this moment of panic I looked at the crowded marquee. Some of the committee members on the outskirts were, I think, as anxious as I was. I saw their heads drop, one by one, and realised they were praying for me. Suddenly words came.

“We are receiving, I trust, something extra this weekend in blessing. Shouldn’t we also give something extra so that the Word of Life may go out to others? You may want to do this, but haven’t come prepared. The Lord may want you to give a bigger amount than you can give here today. It may be \$2, and you just can’t spare that today. It may be \$200 and you can’t imagine where you would get that kind of money. You may not want to give this way at all. You may be thinking, ‘This is not for me.’ But if you do wish to give, there is a form in your programme which you may fill in as God leads you. You should not let this affect your giving to your own church. We have been concerned that some will think if could.

“This is an interdenominational gathering. We come from all denominations. God has raised up mighty interdenominational missions which depend for their support on God the Holy Spirit prompting people like us here this afternoon to give – over and above what they give to their own church missions.”

When I asked whether any women wanted a form, if there wasn’t one in their programme, to my delight, and relief, hands went up all over the marquee.

One woman felt constrained, our first missionary treasurer told us, to promise \$100 although she had no visible means of being able to give it. After the Convention her employer, for whom she was working part time, offered her an extra day’s work each week. The extra day’s wages for twelve months totalled \$100!

From a total amount of \$100 in C.W.C.I.’s first cash offering, the offerings went up that year to over \$500 and then continued to increase steadily each year. In 1976, when the words ‘inflation’ and ‘unemployment’ were on everybody’s lips I asked the Lord, “How can the women give more?” but the amount promised by faith almost doubled that of the previous year totalling over \$40,000 all of which has been given! This year, 1977, the total cash and faith-promise offering at the N.S.W. Central Convention reached \$58,000.

In three States the Central Conventions are now using this faith promise method of giving which is a means of blessing to the missionaries who receive and also to the women who give.

Read for yourself what some have written about the ways in which the Lord has supplied the money. It seems the blessings along the way are so wonderful that the money itself is also incidental. It *IS* more blessed to give than to receive.

“We have had a very mixed sort of year in our family, and have finally come into real blessing, with a business which is being truly blest of God. So I am glad to be able to double my commitment and hope to be able to help again in the near future.”

“I promised God I would give Him any money which came in from my singing, as my voice is His gift. Nothing came at all until just this week, when this amount has come, due to singing I have done. So now my promise is fulfilled.”

“At the time of my faith promise it seemed such a large sum and I did not know really how to get it together. I did not save up for it, I just trusted God would help me honour this promise. And He did! With His help I got a wonderful job late last year and can now afford to send you this cheque.”

“God has indeed been gracious. I’m an unemployed teacher! But I was able to get work one night a week at a technical school, and so I promised a month’s pay to the missionary offering. Since then I’ve done five days of relief teaching and so God has not only provided me with the amount I promised but extra as well.”

“I am a widow now on the pension and so do not have as much money to handle as previously. Last week I was cleaning out a cupboard and there underneath my rubbish was a \$- note. I must say I rarely clean cupboards and did this one only because of the feeling that it had to be done right there and then. Once again our Lord is wonderful.”

“I am thrilled to be able to enclose my faith promise offering, when it was suggested that we give this way, I (like most women, I guess) quickly thought of how little I would have coming in, and when the Lord put \$- into my mind I quickly dispelled the thought, replacing it with less than half that amount. So I came home with the idea of giving \$-. Then quite unexpectedly the first amount fell into my hands. You can imagine how I felt. Next time my Father tells me to commit myself, no matter how unrealistic it may seem at the time, I will certainly be heeding Him, as I trust and obey.”

“I asked the Lord in faith to provide \$- miraculously through me for the missionaries. I told Him I would not specially save week by week but wait for Him to give me the lump sum (quite a large amount). Praise Him, he most surely did. If only I had asked for thousands!” (From an elderly servant of the Lord.)

“I am enclosing a cheque for \$- for the Missionary Faith Promise fund. This has been my first experience of this fund and it has been exciting to see the Lord’s leading and working. At the Convention I promised this amount, not having any idea where it would come from. The Lord reminded me that I had some shares that I could sell. This I did and the results was a little over the amount promised. I am going to the Convention next year. I have nothing else to sell, and so it will be exciting to see what the Lord can do. Although I have been a Christian for nineteen years, it is only during the past thirteen months that the Lord has been teaching me to lead a full life of faith and trust in Him, and it is thrilling.”

“By shopping around I saved this much on a washing machine. Prices varied so much.”

“Three years ago my husband left his job to join a Christian organization. It is a faith ministry. We have to find our own financial support and with five young children this is a real challenge but the Lord has met our needs in a wonderful way during these years. During the missionary session at the C.W.C.I. Convention I felt led to promise \$-, which I thought was quite a sum to save over the twelve months. On the Saturday evening I made a phone call home to see how the family was managing without me. When I opened my purse I found a piece of carefully folded paper in with my loose change. To my utter amazement it was a cheque for more than the amount I had promised. It had been placed in my purse by a Christian friend at a meeting the previous morning – a friend who had never done anything like that before. All I could think was, ‘Lord, You had a whole year to give me that money. You didn’t have to give it straight away!’”

“I have been in hospital for seven weeks, which was free, and so I am enclosing my Faith Offering from my pension which I save. It was a thrill to see so many missionary societies represented at the Convention. They all need our prayers and our support.”

“I am happy to enclose my cheque for \$- being the amount of my Faith Promise. I really had to rely on the Lord to meet this promise as I had no income of my own for the greater part of the year. An invitation extended to a friend to attend a coffee-and-dessert evening arranged by C.W.C.I. led to a friendship, which in turn led to employment for me and the money I needed. Grateful thanks to God for all His blessings.”

“I promised, in small faith, \$- for missions. Here is \$- (twice that amount) which I have earned in the last few weeks by caring for a little boy in the Family Day-Care service. He is a lovely child and has been a terrific companion for our own three-year-son who was beginning to become frustrated with his small sister. A friend suggested a companion might help our son and indeed he has, and at the same time has enabled me to keep my faith promise. We never know how our God will work next. What an exciting life the Christian has!”

“I am very happy to be able to forward a cheque for \$-. The Lord has been wonderful to me over the past ten years since I became a widow. I can truly say, ‘surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.’”

“It is marvellous to see the way God does provide for our needs when we put Him first and trust in Him. I have proved this because I am single and have not been well enough to work for sixteen years and live on my own. I have some wonderful stories of the ways the Lord has provided.” (A large amount was enclosed.)

“My cheque for my Missionary Faith Promise made at the Convention earlier this year is enclosed. At the time I didn’t know how I was going to earn my money and rather hesitantly promised only \$-. Since then a lady, whom I did not know then, came in need of daily transport for her daughter to attend the same kindergarten as mine, and insisted on paying me. I didn’t really want to accept this payment as I was happy to help her out. She has just had a new baby. Then I began to think that perhaps this was my missionary money. When I explained to her what I was going to do with the money she was delighted. I found out then that she is a Christian too and we both feel that we have been used by God to further His plan, if only in a small way.”

“Months ago when I made the promise I had no idea of the way the Lord would guide me in getting the money. But about six weeks ago I heard of a cleaning job, a fill-in for a month, at a boy’s home. Apart from earning the money I feel that God wanted me to become aware of the problems involved for the couple in charge, as well as for the boys, so that I could help by praying for them. So it has served a dual purpose as it has certainly been a ‘growing’ experience for me in my relationship with my Saviour.”

“Like many others I wondered how God was going to enable me to give. Then a young relative from the country coming to the city for employment couldn't find board. We offered to have him until he could find suitable accommodation. We made up a bed in the family room as we don't have a spare bedroom. We do not feel we can charge him normal boarding rates but from what he pays I am able to send this amount. It really is marvellous the way God enables us to support His work and he truly meets our every need.”

“At this last Convention I decided to really make a faith promise and leave it to the Lord. A large amount came to mind and I said, 'Lord, I'll leave it to You.' My mother had been knocked over by a car and subsequently died last year. The solicitor had advised me of the amount of compensation but the end result was very much more than I expected. Enclosed is a cheque for that amount to be used for the Lord's work. It is a great thrill when one gets such definite answers.”

“Having been a deserted wife for some years, this is just a little return when compared with the way the Lord has provided, cared, and given me the health and strength to work and support my children over these years.”

“The only stipulation I gave God was that this money had to come in an unexpected way. My husband was in a theological college and I had to leave work at five months to have my baby. Someone suggested I apply for special benefits from Social Security as I would be classed as a breadwinner under our circumstances. I did and, surprisingly enough, was accepted. Hence the \$-. What a wonderful Father we have! Not only had I prayed for that amount but also for a baby!”

“As I feel that this offering should be from myself and not from my husband, I've been praying for some way to fulfil my promise. The Lord has led my husband to work for a Christian organization full-time. Little did I think that they would ask me to help in the office when they are extra busy. So, praise the Lord, He has given me the wherewithal to meet my promise.”

“Here is my 'promise gift' for the wonderful work of the many missionaries supported by C.W.C.I. Thank you for the opportunity to share in their, and of course, the Lord's, work. As I am working the giving of money is easy. So I decided to give that extra I get from my on-call work at the hospital. Each 'extra' now is for His work.”

“It was my first Convention and it was the first time I had heard of a faith promise. As I have no personal income and we have been under financial strain for the last two and a half years, I told the Lord it would be up to Him to arrange for me to be able to send the amount I promised.

“About nine months ago, a bank manager friend asked my husband to do some work for a client of his. As I did the typing he said to tell my husband I could have the money. As time went on I completely forgot about it. My husband never really expected to hear from him again.

“When I arrived home from the Convention I told my husband about the faith promise but not the amount. I said when I got the money I would then tell him, but until then it was between the Lord and me. Five days after that a cheque arrived in the post with a letter from the bank manager's client, apologising for not sending it sooner, as they had lost our address while moving. My husband handed the letter to me. As I read it and realised what it was, I practically froze on the spot. A cheque for exactly the amount I had promised and it was made out to me! You can imagine my excitement at being able to tell my husband and all my friends who were with me at the Convention. I will be there again next year.”

“Please find enclosed my faith promise cheque earned by my crocheting efforts. I went to crochet lessons for one term last year and was able to use this as a means of having extra money of my own. I’m looking forward to hearing that the offering has been fully met and even, God willing, that it has been more than was anticipated.”

“Herewith the \$- as promised. I am a widow and work part-time and contribute regularly through our local church to missions. I had never felt it laid on my heart to give to the Convention offering before. However while we were praying about it the Lord did speak to me and seemed to say, “Don’t you worry about finding the money, I will give it to you to five.’ Someone asked me to look after their farm for a few days while they were away and I was paid for it.”

“Enclosed is the remainder of my missionary faith offering. I opened a missionary bank account after the Convention last year and all sorts of odds and ends have gone into it. The result if my promise fulfilled.”

“It has been thrilling this year to depend on the Lord to provide the money I promised. It is the first year I have committed myself to give and now understand more of the way God works. I have earned the money by casual teaching. Thank you for the opportunity to share in giving and so receive so much blessing myself.”

“I asked the Lord to show me an amount to give and He seemed to say \$- a month. I had already increased my giving in another direction and I didn’t see how I could give that amount, but I put it down. Do you know when I returned to work I was given a raise – just the amount needed!”

“I’m a student at missionary college and am learning to depend on the Lord for material needs. Please find a cheque enclosed for \$-. I asked him specifically to supply this amount and, before long, there it was! We certainly have a wonderful Lord Who loves and cares for us in His bountiful grace.”

“I am so sorry that I could not let you have this cheque for \$- which I promised at the Convention last year. It is so true that as soon as you make a commitment to the Lord, Satan starts his tricks and this year has been full of one misfortune after another, but once again, with God’s help we see it through together. Now we see the sunshine after the whole year of stormy weather and doesn’t the sunshine look ever so brighter when we have been through the clouds?”

“The Lord is mighty indeed! I had been asking for the Lord’s supply for some months when I came to realise He had already answered prayer. He had given me the ‘talent’ to cut my own and the rest of the family’s hair. I have had no training and it is quite a miracle that I can cut my own so successfully. This has enabled me to send you this cheque, asking God’s blessing on your work and thanking Him for the C.W.C.I. See you at next Convention.”

“My daughter is resting at my home after returning from the mission field in the tropics. Because my unemployed son has brought in his first cabbage and silver-beet out of this garden plot in our yard, I feel God will help me to give this small offering as my first gift for this year. May He keep on showing me ways in which I can send following amounts before next year’s Convention. I have already started saving to go to the next Convention.”

Not only are the women blessed themselves but the C.W.C.I. missionary treasurers, especially the one who stepped out in faith with us at the beginning, have told me over and over again that their Christian lives have been deepened and their faith strengthened by the letters they had received from women.

The letters we receive from missionary societies and missionaries also make us realise how worthwhile it all is.

One young missionary, the mother of four children, wrote, "Thanks to the C.W.C.I. for the financial support you sent to our Mission. This has been received gratefully, and used to help families like ours whose financial support has been at a low level."

One Mission secretary put it this way, "We have been privileged to receive regular amounts from your missionary fund. These gifts have deeply moved us because we realise that women have given sacrificially so missionaries can be helped to give the Gospel message to those who are perishing.

"Your gifts have been a great encouragement to our missionaries. They realise that the giving has been possible only because so many women are receiving the money in answer to prayer and therefore they can give to missionaries. In a very real sense we are 'workers together.' May the Lord continue to bless and prosper the work of C.W.C.I."

The story of C.W.C.I. would not be complete without mention of the warmth and joy that Bible Study Fellowship has brought to the movement. Although Bible Study Fellowship is a completely separate organization, it was through C.W.C.I. that it was introduced to Australia.

For many years the leaders in C.W.C.I. had been concerned about the follow-up of hundreds of women who were being touched for God by the Convention movement. Many came from churches which were alive and keen, where they were really encouraged to read and study God's Word. Many however did not have this help.

Then Grace Collins came into contact with Miss Wetherell Johnson, the Founder and Executive Director of Bible Study Fellowship through a vice-chairman of the N.S.W. Central Committee, who had attended one of her B.S.F. classes in U.S.A., and Miss Johnson was invited to be the second overseas speaker for C.W.C.I. in 1969.

As Miss Johnson spoke of all that was being done through B.S.F. a great feeling of joyful relief filled Grace Collins' heart. Surely here was the answer they were seeking, the way to help the women get to know their Bibles better and express their faith and share it with others, and above all to lead them into a deeper relationship with Christ. Just at this time Jean Raddon was thinking of coming to Australia. In consultation with Miss Johnson it was decided that Grace Collins and Jean Raddon should go to America for training in the format of Bible Study Fellowship, and then come back to launch it in Australia.

A cold and wintry Oakland, California, greeted the two women as they arrived in January 1970, but the warmth of the welcome more than compensated for the weather. During six weeks spent there they were shown every angle of B.S.F. It was a tremendously exciting time. They visited huge classes of both men and women and were thrilled to see what God can do as people really begin to read the Bible for themselves, express what they think in writing as they do homework, share with others what they have found, and really begin to grow in Christ. They visited a number of the classes and heard so many stories of changed lives everywhere they went. It was heart-warming to see how Americans loved the Australian accent, and Grace Collins was often asked to talk – "Just so we can hear what your accent sounds like!"

So many things impressed the two from Australia as they moved around: the fact that some women would give up two mornings a week to be involved in leadership, that strict discipline did not turn people away but rather brought them along, and that so many of the women's husbands and families had been converted and changed. Another thrilling aspect was the children's side of the work. Everywhere they went they heard delightful stories of God's moving in children's lives. One such story tells of a little fellow who asked the Lord Jesus into his heart through listening to the story. Some weeks later this child had to go for an X-ray of his chest. As the little fellow was lifted on to the X-Ray table he looked up at the Sister and said, "I asked the Lord Jesus into my heart a while ago. When you take my picture will you have a good look and see if you can see Him?"

Many stories like this, and the testimony of so many women whose lives had been changed, confirmed that B.S.F. was what God wanted for Australia.

During those hectic, but joyful, six weeks, Jean Raddon, who was just stepping into work with C.W.C.I., felt in fellowship with Grace Collins a deepening sense of excitement at the calibre of the people with whom she was going to be working. And Grace, too, was given a deep sense of God's leading as she talked and enjoyed fellowship with Jean. Surely God was on the move and C.W.C.I. was moving with Him.

Then there was the joy of fellowship in some lovely American homes where they received such an abundance of kindness. There were precious moments such as breakfast out among the beautiful redwoods in California with the sun making the winter morning just so beautiful. The delightful faith and trust of 'ordinary' women was demonstrated in times of rich fellowship, such as at Seattle. Some of the B.S.F. women wanted very much to take the two visitors from "down under" to lunch and to see the delightful view at a lovely revolving

restaurant in Seattle called the Space Needle. One of the women invited said, "Well, I'd love to come but I would need three 'seals'. Firstly I would have to get three loads of washing on the line. Secondly I'd need to get my hair fixed as it's in curlers and the phone usually won't let me stay under the drier! And thirdly I need to find the money from somewhere!" It was great to realise she knew her Heavenly Father was interested in such mundane details.

Well, the washing was done, and the phone did not ring at all and so her hair was dried. Only one problem remained – the money. Suddenly she remembered something. A few months earlier her mother had given her a birthday gift of cash which she had hidden for a rainy day and, wonder of all wonders, had forgotten! So when Grace and Jean arrived, not knowing all the background, they met a smartly dressed woman, hair beautifully groomed and full of fun, and together they enjoyed a great time of fellowship sharing the goodness of the Father to them.

The whole visit was enriching in many ways, but then came the time to return to Australia. A thousand and one questions flooded their minds. Would Australian women like group discussion? Would they discipline themselves as did the American women? Where would the leaders be found? What about the children's side of it? But as they returned to Australia, both Grace Collins and Jean Raddon were convinced above everything else that, if B.S.F. was of God it would "go", and if it was not of God, well, who wanted it to go anyway? "If God be for us WHO can be against us?"¹

C.W.C.I channels began to publicise the Bible Study Fellowship, and the work commenced in Sydney at St. Paul's Anglican Church, Chatswood. That first class was an awe-inspiring time of joy and faith, of pressure and panic, of wondering and planning, the children's leader was found, and the whole of C.W.C.I. prayed and praised God as the first class really got going. Wonderful things were to happen during that year. Women were made hungry for God, were converted and changed. The leaders found that women did come, week after week. As the winter months came, the staff wondered whether numbers would drop. But the cold did not deter the women. They brought their rugs and some even brought their heaters, but they came.

So many stories could be told of changed lives through that first class. One hundred rang to say his home had been hell. He was either screaming at his wife or she was screaming at him. Then a neighbour had taken his wife to the class. His voice broke as he said on the phone, "I don't know what's happened to her, but she's become so nice!" He went on to ask how he could become 'nice'! What a joy it was to guide him into a men's class.

Many letters were received telling of enrichment and blessing, of renewed love in relationships, of difficulties in homes being worked through, and C.W.C.I. praised the Lord for His timing and His leading.

Other classes were commenced and Victoria had a wonderful beginning to their class. C.W.C.I. rejoiced to see God fulfilling the plan and pattern given in the early days of the work, "to build women up in their most holy faith."

Time was to bring a separating of the Bible Study Fellowship from C.W.C.I. although there will always be a close and warm bond. B.S.F. goes on from strength to strength in Australia, but as a completely different organization from C.W.C.I. How this came about and why is told elsewhere in this book, sufficient to say it has all been to the glory of His name.

¹ Romans 8:31

“Know Your Bible” Study Groups

The response of women to Bible Study Fellowship was really beyond expectations. Everywhere we went we saw a great hunger on the part of women for God's Word. Several young married women spoke to Jean Raddon saying they were not looking for faith for themselves, but they did want something they could pass on to their children. So they were hooked! The Bible study offered them a means of getting to know God. Although they did not realise it, this meant that personal contact with Him was established. This was necessary before they could help their children to faith.

The increasing permissiveness of society was worrying more and more people, who were beginning to think, if not say, “Is there something in this God business after all?” C.W.C.I. began to realise that many areas of Australia would need a method different from that of B.S.F. to reach them effectively.

As the Safari Teams travelled around they saw great opportunities for encouraging isolated women to study the Bible.

We were excited because this was what Conventions were all about. The work had come a full circle, starting with a small Bible Study Group in one place, spreading right round Australia with Conventions, coffee “dos” and other functions, and finally being brought to the point where a course of Bible study that would suit most people's needs could be offered to women, anywhere and everywhere throughout the whole country. At the National Board meetings at Hardy's Bay N.S.W. in 1972 the pattern and plan was outlined and the Board was ready to take the step of faith.

The first course was prepared under great difficulties. The idea in the beginning was to have a course for perhaps eight weeks to follow up a Convention. In actual fact, the women did not want to finish after eight weeks. They clamoured for more. The first course was based on Paul's letter to the Ephesians with notes prepared by Rev. Egerton Long who was happy for Jean Raddon to use his material. His secretary, one of our N.S.W. Central Committee members, spent many nights duplicating the notes. And so the Know Your Bible Course was launched! Later the residents at a Ladies' Retirement Village spent hours laboriously stapling together the hundreds of lessons.

Who could have foreseen the demand there was for us to start so many groups? The staff were inundated with letters and applications. The whole thing was thrilling beyond words but also almost too much for the administrative side of C.W.C.I. However, with the coming of Dorothy Steel into the work, Jean Raddon was released to be much more involved in the preparation of the studies, the training of those who were leading classes, and the general oversight.

Each course took at least a month to prepare. After the actual writing of the lessons they had to be typed and checked. The ready co-operation of Mission Publications of Australia in the actual printing of the material helped tremendously.

As the demand for classes grew, a State Organiser was appointed in each State, and this helped to decentralise the K.Y.B. Each State Organiser soon needed help and so State Distributors were appointed to share the load of distributing the lessons. All the completed lessons were stored in a home on the Blue Mountains and dispatched from there. As the work expanded help was provided for packing all the parcels to be sent to each State. It became obvious that a National K.Y.B. Council was needed to help in all the administration, and this was duly formed. The number of groups continued to grow and a great wave of blessing spread out to thousands of women across Australia and New Zealand.

A thrilling venture which had been functioning for a while, now began to grow in a wonderful way. This was the Know Your Bible Postal Fellowship. Tutors were appointed in each State and applications for lessons began to flow in to Western Australia where a Committee had been formed. (See story at the end of this chapter.)

The whole concept of C.W.C.I took on a new and enthralling dimension as K.Y.B. classes were initiated all over the country. By 1977 over 7,000 women were using the courses, some meeting together weekly, some fortnightly, and others only monthly.

Another new outreach began when men became involved. One day an amusing letter came in to Headquarters, addressed to Jean Raddon, which said, "I hope you will forgive me, but I am not a woman, I am a man." He had been conducting a very successful K.Y.B. course but all the correspondence he had received had been addressed to him as "Mrs So and So!"

More and more mixed groups started and young married couples found stimulus in studying together at home. The National Board was quite open to this innovation as long as the men were content to use the method laid down by the K.Y.B. Committee. Although K.Y.B. is interdenominational in character, several church groups started to use the courses for their own people, with really wonderful encouragement. Over and over again those seeking to organise the movement quoted the verse we have proved since the beginning of C.W.C.I., "This is the Lord's doing: it is marvellous in our eyes"¹

Each study was developed in ten lessons and the emphasis was placed on studying books of the Bible rather than themes or characters. Some books, of course, were impossible to put into ten lessons. The Psalms, rich in content and so applicable to our lives today, were developed into three sets of lessons giving a whole year's course of thirty lessons.

It became difficult to keep close personal contact with all the groups. This has been overcome by dividing the States into areas, each of which has an Area Supervisor, whose job is to oversee the area, visit classes from time to time, get to know the Class Leader, and help her in the teaching of her class. Training days or weekends have been very satisfactory and more are being planned.

C.W.C.I. is also helping the local church. Women who have never taken leadership in any way are beginning to express themselves. Some are beginning to lead groups in their own churches, while others have become involved in Scripture teaching in the schools. Many areas without Bible classes have been helped to start one. Over and above this, women are being encouraged to think, to read the Bible daily and to express themselves in writing as they do their K.Y.B. homework.

We have been encouraged by the response to K.Y.B. from leaders in Christian circles. One Principal of a Theological College wrote, "There does seem to be a real hunger for authoritative study of the Word of God and it is encouraging that in this study area you have been able to do so much."

Encouragement has come also from hundreds of stories of changed lives and homes, changed attitudes and thinking, and a really deep hunger in women's hearts. What we hear is only the "tip of the iceberg" and one can be quite sure that the sum total of blessing will not be revealed until Christ returns and everything is made plain.

One of the main things behind all the success has, of course, been prayer. Every person involved is prayed for daily. The prayer bulletin issued by C.W.C.I. highlights particular needs of the K.Y.B. organization. As it reaches over ten thousand women we believe thousands pray for this work.

Many stories could be told of lives which have been changed in the last few years since Know Your Bible was born. Real names have not been used in the following stories.

A Roman Catholic young woman of twenty-four was separated from her husband and had the care of her two young children. Her neighbour invited her to the Bible Study and she soon began to realise her need of Christ as a Saviour. As she began to grow in faith, a concern for her husband started to worry her. She talked with Christian friends who urged her to try to see whether the marriage could be rescued. She was reluctant. She had made a life for herself and the children and the thought of the consequent upheaval was too much. At last she reached the point where she was willing to make some attempt to return to her husband but she did want to be sure it was God's plan for her. While praying one day she asked God to speak to her clearly so that she would know what she would do. You can imagine her surprise and joy when she read from the Bible reading for that morning, "Take up your bed, and go unto thine house!"² She did not hesitate. Contacting her husband was

not easy, but she did it, and they set up home together once more. When asked if the arrangement was working her eyes filled with tears. "Yes," she said, "It is. We still have our moments, but since I have come to know Christ He has shown me what a greedy, selfish, intolerant person I was. He made me, and is still making me, into a new person. My husband sees this and, although he is not converted yet, he is helping me with my Bible study and we read the Bible together."

Mary's husband has been ill for months with cancer. When he died she found she was able to face the crisis with peace and courage. She said, "It was only because of the study and the discussions that I was able to face all the loneliness that came. God had become just so real."

Ruth was happily married, with two little children. Church time was agony because she could not keep the children still and so was unable to concentrate. When invited to a K.Y.B. group, where the children were looked after, Ruth was able to give her full attention to the lessons. She said that the whole study had kept her faith strong at a time when so many young mothers were just "going under."

In one country district a lady who was unable to read or write was brought by a friend to the group. She has not only been taught to read and write by the Class Leader but her answers to homework questions are tremendous, and often better than the answers of some who complain about too much homework. This particular person just loves doing it! Perhaps we take too lightly the ease with which we can read and write!

So many people at the end of their tether find, as they study God's Word, the glorious revelation that He is interested in *them*. That He actually cares for them! Anna was a person like this. Nerves at breaking point, pressured almost beyond endurance, she passed a Scripture Union bookshop and, seeing a book title that caught her eye, went into the shop to have a look. While Anna was talking with the woman behind the counter they somehow got on to the subject of the Bible. Anna was surprised that this very "with it" looking woman ran a Bible study group, and accepted the invitation to attend the group. The studies proved to be something she had never dreamed of. The friendliness of the group was healing to her shattered nerves, her life was transformed, and at one of the C.W.C.I. Conventions she was gloriously converted and has never looked back. Who would have thought a book title could have brought all this about? It's great to realise that you never know what God is going to do!

Sally had been a Christian for years. There was not much you could tell her. Then one day at the end of a lesson in her Know Your Bible group she burst out, "Oh, I feel so ashamed. I nearly refused to come. I thought to myself, 'Huh – Mark's gospel, that's just too easy for me. I know that book back to front.' Now I feel I have learned, and am learning, so much. I just did not realise how much teaching there was, even in the first chapter." There were tears in her eyes as she spoke, and her obvious emotion was shared by all the women in the group. Now Sally really enjoys the studies and never misses a class or an opportunity to share what God has done for her.

The Know Your Bible Course continues to grow. It has spread to New Zealand, is being used in Papua New Guinea, has flourishing groups in Borneo, and has been translated into Chinese. We stand back in wonder at God's working. We are seeing more and more what God can do with His Word.

He takes hold of anyone, anywhere, and when that one will walk in step with Him He opens up undreamed of opportunities of sharing Him through His Word.

1 Psalms 118:23

2 Matthew 9:6

Coming alive through the post

Her husband had just climbed into the truck, ready to go into town. She ran out to him, suddenly remembering something she wanted him to do. "You won't forget the post, will you?" she asked. "My lesson might be in it." He smiled and then gave her a quick kiss, started up the truck, and drove off along the dusty road. How his wife loved these lessons, and what a difference they had made in her life! They really had changed their whole home. As he drove along he thanked God for those who had set up the Know Your Bible Postal Fellowship, which reaches to places where teachers cannot reach, helping people study the Bible.

The Postal Fellowship, another outreach of C.W.C.I., started in a very small way, as so many of the movements begun by God do, with just one person who was completely open and available to God. Although not a success story as the world thinks of success, the Postal Fellowship has succeeded in the way the things of God are measured. This success is not counted by numbers or measured by material things, and the full story will be revealed only when Christ comes for His own. The results of this outreach are seen in hundreds of lives which have been delivered from uncertainty and fear, and in the many homes which have been touched and changed. All because one person was ready and willing to let God have His way with her.

A young woman who was working in a correspondence school little realised that her work was a preparation for what God was going to ask her to do for Him. She was deeply concerned that false cults were grasping many people's minds. Some groups were offering Bible correspondence courses which led the student into a wrong understanding of God's ways, and often led them into confusion and error. Her heart ached for these people who, seeking the truth, were becoming very bewildered. As she thought and prayed about this the idea repeatedly kept coming. "Why do we not have a simple Bible-study correspondence course that would lead people to life in Jesus Christ?"

The more she thought about this idea the more she felt it was of the Lord. She knew there were excellent courses already produced by highly qualified and well known people, but she longed to provide personal, friendly help through a two-way sharing of the Scriptures, which would not only provide a planned teaching of the Word but would also provide friendship, love, and fellowship for those who were isolated or unable to go to other Bible studies. There were many difficulties, as there always are if one is going to do anything for God. Hudson Taylor once said that if God wants to do something really wonderful, He starts off with something that is impossible.

The young woman had much to discourage her, but she was not in the least daunted by people who said it would never work. She looked to the Lord for guidance – this was His work and if He had planned it nothing would stop it. She was very businesslike and so she asked God that if this was in His will and plan, He would definitely show the means by which all the costs would be covered. For those who step out in faith, God does wonders. Imagine her delight *she* herself was suddenly given a substantial pay rise! On hearing the news she was jubilant, because she knew this was of the Lord and was the leading she needed to go ahead.

Taking her faith and courage in both hands, this young woman put the money into the production of a very simple course of study designed primarily to lead people into a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. She was encouraged by another young woman who came on the scene, adding her time, talents, and wholehearted support to the preparation of the first course. However, the people through whom they had hoped to launch the course rejected their material, and they were 'back to square one.' But it took more than that to daunt their faith. They knew the Lord had plans for the material and so they left the whole matter in His hands.

While this was happening in Western Australia, unbeknown to these young women God was working for them way over on the other side of Australia. In Tasmania, Grace Collins, who is now the Executive Director of C.W.C.I., was reading with excited interest the material they had prepared, which had been shown to her by a friend. Grace saw its potential at once, and very soon the Bible Correspondence Course, later to be called "Know Your Bible Postal Fellowship," came into being and those young women, their faith rewarded, really praised the Lord.

Other people have been drawn into sharing God's Word in this way. These are the tutors, who receive the students' lessons, mark them, and return them with helpful comments to the student. Thus a warm fellowship is built up between the tutor and the student. Within a year of launching the course there was at least one tutor in each state in Australia and one in New Zealand. The number of students has averaged one hundred each year since 1970. Letters telling of blessing and changed lives continually come to the initiator of the Bible Correspondence Course and the committee which now helps her. A writer with a gift from God has come into the work, and she is producing more and more courses as the work develops.

The financial side of Postal Fellowship makes a story of its own. One would have thought that rising postage costs would have sounded a death knell to the whole work, but again God was a step ahead. A man who was available to God offered to do all the duplicating free of charge as a gift to the Lord. God was planning everything for them, and even lightening the financial load when, naturally speaking, it would have increased. That is the kind of thing our God is well able to do!

There are several tutors in each State now. They find enrichment and joy as they sacrificially give their time to counsel students and to follow them up with interest and prayer. The day has come when people are beginning to want to read and study God's Word, as the increasing sales of Bibles show. God has given C.W.C.I., through the undaunted faith of these women in Western Australia, a method of sharing fellowship in studying His Word wherever one lives. It is thrilling to realise that C.W.C.I. is on eth move in yet another avenue, and that people are coming alive through the post.

The following extracts from letters show something of what God is doing through this ministry.

A woman living in a very isolated area wrote,

"I have found the lessons thought-provoking and soul-searching. They have helped my understanding of this wonderful Book which gives meaning and purpose to life. I have enjoyed the course and will refer to the lessons again and again."

A tutor wrote,

"This woman has received the Lord Jesus as her Saviour during the course. She had very little Bible knowledge before doing the course but tis now reading the Bible regularly and using other books to help her study. It is exciting to see her grow."

From a young married woman, with three small children, who is really seeking the truth, comes this word,

"The whole course has given me a much deeper realisation of the place Christianity has to take in my life if I am to gain a deep and lasting relationship with God and Jesus Christ. It has shown me the meaning of Scriptures which were not completely clear to me. Indeed, it gives me a joy in study that I have never experienced before."

A middle-aged woman wrote,

"Please send me the details of the course. I do want to be a Christian, but am not quite sure where to start. We live many miles from anywhere, so attendance at church is well night impossible. I do find reading the magazine *Christian Woman* to be a rewarding experience each month."

So many more could be quoted, such as letters from the teenage girl who had longed to become a Christian, the lonely widow who found great comfort as she did the study on her

isolated property, the man who wrote to say that the course had helped him to become a much more effective witness for Christ.

More courses are being prepared and the Lord continues to bring in many new students. Postal Fellowship courses are now organised by a committee of interested women. Their last meeting finished on a note of praise to God for the great things He has done, and is doing, through the Know Your Bible Postal Fellowship.

What of the Future?

A message to Christian women from Jean Raddon

When one looks back and praises God for all that is past, one wonders, with great expectancy, what is to come. As a movement we look to God for the future. Grace Collins, in her inspiring message at our 'Let's Mix in '76' Conference in Canberra, challenged us with the words, "We must tell out the message, changing our methods where necessary but remembering we have an unchanging message."

It would seem that all concerned must ever be alert in the changing world around us. C.W.C.I. is a positive movement for progress. It is obvious that we must not stagnate. We must beware of limited vision, and be open and sensitive to whatever the Spirit of God says to us. We need to be involved 'up to the hilt' wherever we are, so we do not limit God by our limited vision. He is always on the move. Let us be on the move with Him.

Stewart Dinnen, in his closing message at our Canberra Conference, quoted this story – "If ever a man had a 'right' to a limited vision it was Biswanath Chowdhuri. Brought to Perth, Western Australia, for specialised medical treatment after being totally paralysed in a Bombay Atomic Research Unit, this Hindu found Christ through reading a Gideon Bible. Through the long months of rehabilitation he grew spiritually, and when eventually he was discharged as a paraplegic he applied to us in Tasmania for missionary training! At first we said, 'This is impossible.' However God led us, through the advice of Christian friends, to accept him. Today he is in Bangladesh. He has started a Bible School and is training young men in discipleship so they can be evangelists in that land of seventy-five million Muslims."

As we look to the future, we can see that we need some who are 100 per cent available to God, willing to spend time with Him so that He can enlarge their vision, willing to take their eyes off themselves and their limitations and lift them up to God. We need those who are willing to be burdened for women world-wide, who will not be constantly tied up with themselves and their own problems and needs, but who will abandon themselves to Him for His great plan of reaching out to others.

The future is ever before us. There will be different openings, different strategies, different places, different people all around the world who can be touched by the ministry of such a movement as C.W.C.I. We need to remember that we never stop learning. This world in which we live is constantly changing, and the thinking of people is rapidly changing too. So we need to "get with it" in order to communicate with them while at the same time maintaining the basic standards and teachings of our textbook, the Bible.

Roger Collins, in his lecture on 'New Perspectives in C.W.C.I.' at the Conference in Canberra, said this, "As organizations grow in size and become older, people tend to lose sight of the objectives of the organization and concentrate on their own activities. C.W.C.I. has experienced phenomenal growth over its short history. You have also rapidly diversified your activities through Conventions, coffee hours, K.Y.B. groups, publications, and other activities and there is a very real danger that the people who are working within these different areas can lose sight of the original objectives of your organization. If you as a group are committed to the activities instead of the objectives of your organization, you could be dinosaurs in ten or twenty years' time. While the objectives of your organization are unlikely to change, your activities will. They have in the past twenty years and they will do so even. Do not fall into the trap of becoming so committed to activities that you forget what your original objectives were!"

So, with those words of warning ringing in our ears, we look to the future, constantly alert for new areas of service that we have not yet explored.

There are many areas where C.W.C.I. can act as a service mission. Strengthening the hands of those in the established churches is very essential and we must never appear to be a threat but always a help. Some people have felt that we take women from the local churches. As far as the Conventions in the capital cities themselves are concerned, there are rarely more than two functions during the year. Where the Bible study groups are concerned, more and more people are realising the enrichment that comes from studying the Word of God together. In one place the local minister said that the study groups had brought such enrichment to the area, in the lives of both men and women, that he had not actually needed to start a Bible study in his own church.

Then there are the ethnic groups in Australia, which open a very wide door to us. One Convention held in Victoria especially for these women has simultaneous translation of the message into Spanish, Yugoslav, Italian, Greek, and Turkish. The possibilities of this sort of work are far more reaching.

C.W.C.I. has become very involved in work among the Aboriginal women, by having an Aboriginal member in the teams which have travelled in the Northern Territory and north Western Australia. These women have been able to make contact with their own people in a way the other team members could not. Someone is working on K.Y.B. notes for Aboriginal women, using cassettes for those who are unable to read or write. It is good to see many fine Aboriginal Christian women who really Know the Lord and stand up for the truth as it is found in Him.

In the society in which we live many people in the cities and suburbs live in high-rise buildings, shut into their apartments with little contact with the outside world. There is a great need to reach into these places with love and friendship. Key people are needed to open their homes in high-rise buildings and to hold coffee mornings. It should be possible to start Bible study groups, so that men and women can be encouraged to read and study the Bible. There are literally thousands of people in these buildings who have no knowledge of God whatsoever.

When we realise that 45 per-cent of working women are married, we feel that they open up another very needy area. These women are often pressurized and have little time for the things of God. Surely there are avenues here that can be explored. Although they have little time many of them have a great hunger for spiritual realities. Perhaps lunch-time functions in places of work, or lunch-time meetings in the city could help working wives. Lunch-time Bible studies might meet a very real need in our society.

One of the biggest needs is that of the isolated woman separated from others by distance, often without transport. Cassettes and radio programmes do help, but love, fellowship, and friendship are greatly needed in this area. There is one very isolated group who pleaded that we stay just for one week and give them a week's fellowship and teaching in isolated areas is perhaps a good one. As well as this, we should be developing our cassette library and concentrating more on radio programmes.

Another area where C.W.C.I. could move more energetically is in the realm of books. A mobile book shop, for example, could move around country areas where books are hard to get, and where bookselling could be combined with Bible study. Two people could travel together to take this service to areas which would welcome it.

The potential of the whole vast area of T.V., radio, and publishing leaves us gasping. We have a message that meets the need. The way the message is to be sent out will often

change, but the message itself will never change. We need to be constantly alert for the moving of the Holy Spirit as He leads and guides us in different directions. The opportunities are there, and we have to move with Him.

Never forgetting the aims of C.W.C.I., let us hook to Him Who has said, "Let everyone bless God and sing His praises, for He holds our lives in His hands. And He holds our feet to the path." Psalm 66:9 L.B.

Questions Women Ask

Our Conventions began because women wanted to ask questions. So through the years we have continued to give them the opportunity to ask them at Panel and Question Box sessions.

As a Christian, I feel I fail miserably in my home. I am irritable, lose my temper with the children, and am always having upsets about money matters. What can I do?

My Christian daughter plans to marry a non-Christian. She has had Christian teaching, but prefers to marry an unbeliever rather than remain single. What should be my attitude?

Are we to believe that all sickness will be healed?

How far should a Christian trust her feelings when seeking the will of God?

I am a schoolteacher and find speaking for the Lord in the staff room difficult because private conversation is impossible. Other staff members walk out when I discuss spiritual things. Should I continue to witness or may it cause undue offence?

What can a parent do when a child is being influenced by an atheist?

Are accidents in the will of God when they are caused by man exercising his free will – e.g. as a result of drinking, hurrying, impatience, intolerance, temper, or breaking road rules or the laws of safety in the home?

What does the Bible say about homosexuals? Can they be helped?

What do you say to young people who want to live together before marriage, to see if they are compatible?

I've heard a lot of problems about women whose husbands aren't Christians. But my problem is that my husband is a very dedicated Christian, who feels he must do everything he can for the Lord, with the result that I am left alone to look after the children day and night. My husband never has time to help me or play with the children, and I'm not able to get to meetings often by myself. What can I do about this situation? Several of my friends are in a similar position.

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AUSTRALIA

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Mrs Leona Haldane, NSW	Mrs Beryl Wykes, NSW
Mrs Peggy Hill, Qld.	Mrs Irene Young, NSW

Miss F.M. Cook, our first speaker, went to be with the Lord in September, 1976, Miss V.M. Sullivan, the third speaker to join us, is living in retirement.

INTERNATIONAL SPEAKERS

1968 Miss Jean H. Raddon from Nepal
1969 Miss A. Wetherell Johnson from United States of America
1971 Mrs Millie Dienert from United States of America
1972 Mrs Jill Renich from United States of America
1973 Mrs Jean Rees from United Kingdom
1974 Miss Lucy Tan from Malaysia
1975 Mrs Elizabeth Newbold from the Philippines
1976 Dr Marion Ashton from United Kingdom
1977 Mrs Winnie Christensen from United States of America

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Armidale	Northern Beaches, Dee Why
Blue Mountains, Springwood	Northern Districts, Eastwood
Central, Stanwell Tops	Northern Tablelands, Inverell
Central Coast, Gosford	Port Stephens, Nelson Bay
Cobar	Propsect, Penrith
East Hills-St. George, Hurstville	Riverina, Wagga Wagga
Far North Coast, Lismore	Shoalhaven, Nowra
Far South Coast, Bega	Snowy Mountains, Cooma
The Forest, French's Forest	South West Slopes, Young
Harbourside, Lane Cove	Southern Highlands, Bowral
The Hills, Castle hill	Sutherland, Gymea
Hunter River Valley, Morpeth	Taree
Liberty Plains, Bankstown	Upper Darling, Bourke
Liverpool Plains, Gunnedah	Upper Hunter River, Muswellbrook
Macquarie, Cabramatta	Warilla, Shellharbour
Mid-West, Bathurst	Warrumbungle, Coonabarabran
Milton-Ulladulla, Ulladulla	The Western, Dubbo
Namoi Valley, Narrabri	Westlakes, Toronto
New England, Tamworth	Westside, Ashfield
North Coast, Grafton	West Wyalong
North Shore, Wahroonga	Wilcannia
North West, Moree	Wollongong

Australian Capital Territory

Canberra

South Queensland

Barcaldine	Murgon
Bayside, Wynnum	Near North Coast, Caboolture

Brisbane Valley, Lowood or Esk
Bundaberg, Bargara
Central, Mt. Tambourine
Charleville
Dalby
Gladstone
Ipswich
Kingaroy

Northside, Wavell Heights
Peninsula, Margate
Redlands, Cleveland
Rockhampton
Southside, Coorparoo
Sunshine Coast, Nambour
Toowoomba
Westside, Kenmore

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Mareeba
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Mid North, Balaklava
Mid North, Melrose
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Whyalla

Albany
Bunbury
Carlisle
Central, Orange Grove
Eastern Eheatbelt
Esperance
Geraldton
Gnowangerup
Kalgoorlie

Western Australia
Kellerberrin
Manjimup
Midland
Northam
North Eastern Wheatbelt
Pingelly
Pithara
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Deniliquin
Diamond Valley, Greensborough
East Gippsland, Orbost
Echuca
Geelong & District
Goulburn Valley, Shepparton
Hamilton

Victoria
Horsham & District
Knox, Boronia
Latrobe Valley, Traralgon
North Western Suburbs, Essendon
Peninsular, Frankston
South East, Hughesdale
Swan Hill & District
Warrnambool
Western Districts, Hamilton
Westside, Footscray
Women's Outreach to New Settlers
Yarra Valley, Lilydale

Burnie
Channel
Combined Southern
Devonport
Eastern Shore

Tasmania
Hobart City
Central, Launceston
Smithton
Ulverstone
Wynyard

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Know Your Bible Study Groups 1977

New South Wales	170	Western Australia	110
South Queensland	150	Victoria	92
North Queensland	29	Tasmania	90
South Australia	100	Northern Territory	18

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Know Your Bible Studies
Mrs Dorothy Hathaway, Auckland

NEW ZEALAND C.W.C.I COMMITTEES 1977

North Island

Northern Region

Auckland
South Auckland
Wellsford

Wellington Region

Golden Coast
Hutt Valley
Wellington City

South Island

Blenheim Region

Blenheim and districts
Picton

Christchurch Region

Canterbury districts
Christchurch

Southern Region

Balclutha
Dunedin
Gore
Invercargill
Oamaru

Western Region

Hamilton
Putaruru
Rotorua
Taumaranui
Tauranga
Whakkatane

Central Region

Hastings
New Plymouth
Palmerston North
Wanganui

Because of the geography of the country, and high mountain ranges, the South Island is divided into smaller regions, each responsible to reach out to surrounding untouched areas.