

Far Beyond Expectation

The Story of the International Development of
Christian Women Communicating International

by Jean H. Raddon
foreword by Grace Collins

Acknowledgements

Every rule has its exception, and the saying “Too many cooks spoil the broth”, definitely had no application to the production of *Far Beyond Expectation, the International Story*. Rather than creating a muddle, the many hands that assumed part of the task enhanced the flavour of the book.

The delightful sketches that illustrate these pages were drawn by Betty Tyler, a CWCI member from the United Kingdom. Joan Suisted and Eunice Bewsey (Presidents of the New Zealand and United Kingdom National Management Boards, respectively) and Lyn Green (Chairman, Regional Board in Scotland) cheerfully supplied a rough draft and assisted during the revision process on the material covering their countries. Similar help for the section on Australia – plus a sharp eye for historical accuracy – came from Beth Creber and Grace Collins (founding members and Director Emeritus of CWCI).

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The project was coordinated by Sharon Mackenzie (International Office Administrator). She was ably assisted by the office personnel, particularly in the necessary and exacting routine of typing, retyping, proofreading and checking the manuscript.

To each of these, my co-workers, I extend my thanks and praise for a job well done.

Jean H. Raddon

The work of CWCI is directed by an International Board composed of representatives from those countries where National Management Boards have been established. These National Management Boards nominate delegates to attend the biennial meetings of the inter-national body; women from other participating countries may also be included as observers.

There are six office bearers on the International Board: the President, Vice-president, Secretary, Director of Finance, KYB and Promotions Director and the International Development Director. Their responsibilities are the promotion of CWCI worldwide, the overall development of the movement and the oversight of the work in all affiliated countries.

As of 1992 the International Board of CWCI has responsibility within the following areas:

Countries with National Management Boards – Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom;

Countries with National Committees – Fiji, Holland, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Zimbabwe;

Countries in which KYB classes operate – Belgium, Bolivia, Chile, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Nauru, Paraguay, Philippines, Romania, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Tanzania and Turkey.

“A little one shall become a thousand...” (Isaiah 60:22a).

Who would have thought that this prophecy could be demonstrated in the life and work of CWCI? That this woman-to-woman ministry would spread, under God, from Sydney (The biggest city in Australia), coast to coast across the largest island continent in the world, inland to some of the most isolated areas, large parts of which are desert; across the Tasman Sea to New Zealand; across the world to the United Kingdom and from there to European countries; later to South East Asia and the Pacific Islands; east to the West Indies and, more recently, to the continents of Africa and South America, reaching women of many different nations and completely different cultures.

These moves worldwide and the blessings which followed resulted:

Firstly: Because of the leadership of the movement down the years and the skills put into God's hands by many women whose names and faces flash before my mind as I write.

Foremost among them is Miss Jean Raddon, worldwide speaker and representative of CWCI. For a number of years Jean has devoted her time and gifts to promoting the work in the founding country and internationally, by introducing and extending Know Your Bible courses which have become the vibrant centre of CWCI, supplementing conventions and increasing the depth of the Christian lives of thousands of women, as well as bringing many to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Secondly: The quality of our speakers, gifted and dedicated women. In the beginning Miss Margaret Cook and Mrs Alice Chambers set the standard of ministry and many have “followed in their train”. Miss Cook went to be with the Lord in 1976 and Mrs Chambers has stayed with us through the thirty-three years we have been operating. Mention must be made also of those who have come from overseas, especially Mrs Millie Dienert (known through her work with the Billy Graham Association).

Thirdly: The administration and management by those who have made it all happen, doing the work entailed with hundreds of committees and thousands of KYB classes – Board members who have added these commitments (as do our speakers) to their already busy schedules. Their love and loyalty have meant a great deal to those at the heart of things.

This book will give an insight into the opportunities afforded and the need for prayer for seed sown, current activities and each forward move. The future is bright with the promises of God.

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised ...” (Psalms 48:1a).

Grace Collins
Founder CWCI

Oh bliss! to move to Australia from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for three whole years, become lost in that vast continent and have a rest from “traditional women’s work”. Would I have come if I had known the plans the Lord had in store regarding my future involvement in CWCI? (That answer – had it been given in September 1970 – will remain unknown, because the Koontz family *did* move to Australia “for three whole years”, so we thought!)

About one-and-a-half years later a friend asked, “Would you care to attend a Christian women’s convention with me? I can never get anyone to go along.” These were the words that would lead me to a fifteen-year “hands-on” involvement with CWCI. To say I had been “dragged kicking and screaming” to my first convention in 1972 would be quite accurate. On that occasion the Lord dealt with me through his Word, ably expounded by a “Miss Jean Raddon, former missionary in Nepal”, using the gift he has so-evidently given her to SHARE THAT WORD. In a spiritual sense, I have not been the same since.

The following pages of history (HIS STORY) of CWCI show clearly what God has been pleased to do through this movement which has confronted city, town, country and outback women with the claims of Christ ... showing them that HE meets needs, wherever and whatever they are.

It has been my blessing and privilege to see first-hand, through conventions, KYB and safaris, how the acceptance of these claims has changed the lives of so many – in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Fiji and other places – and to know how he has deepened this initially-reluctant servant’s commitment to him. What wonderful friends have been made in him for all eternity ... what a privilege to have served him through CWCI. Read on ... you too will see as Jean unfolds the story of CWCI. As National and International KYB and Promotion Director, Jean Raddon has been on the front lines of the forward movement of CWCI; there is no other better equipped to tell us of this.

**Marilyn Koontz
First President
International Board**

I sat on the floor of my mud house in the middle of the beautiful little land of Nepal. A great wave of fear rushed over me as I read the letter I had just received from Australia. CWCI had accepted the offer of my services and for one terrible moment I thought, "Am I making the biggest mistake of my life?"

As I sat there a strange thing happened to me. I seemed to be in a boat, my fellow missionaries all around me. It was safe, easy and comfortable. Then I heard the Lord, very clearly, say "Come out of the boat."

The water looked dark and unknown. I said, "Lord, I want to stay here."

His voice replied, "It is I. Be not afraid."

A dream? A vision? Imagination? I do not know, but I stepped out of the boat into the greatest adventure of my life, and it was a step I have never regretted.

In 1970 I joined Christian Women's Conventions International, an interdenominational work amongst women, in a full-time capacity.

It was a big step of faith for the movement. They had no paid full-time worker at that time and it meant they were responsible for my salary.

As I look back over the last twenty-two years of working with this movement, I feel a deep gratefulness to God. CWCI had its origins in 1957. The founder, Mrs Grace Collins, and I wrote a book about the exciting challenge of the ministry from its inception until 1977. We called the book, *Beyond Expectations*, and in the introduction Grace wrote this: "In the methods and messages of all the convention work we try to be relevant to the days in which we live, to be positive and helpful. We have discovered that women in all kinds of situations really want to know whether or not 'God has something to say to them, and if so, what'."

Since that book was written, CWCI has advanced nationally and internationally. The original name – Christian Women's Conventions International – has been changed to Christian Women Communicating International. The office has become the international headquarters. Many new ways of helping women have emerged such as workshops, seminars and a variety of themes for conventions.

Underlying it all, of course, are the main aims of the movement: to bring women to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and to deepen their Christian faith.

Three countries – Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom – are now controlled by national management boards. Other countries, such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Holland, have national committees as their controlling bodies. All other countries which have CWCI working in them are responsible either to Australia, the United Kingdom or New Zealand.

At the last meeting of the International Board, with representatives from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Jamaica, Fiji, Malaysia, Zimbabwe and Holland, it was decided that a further record of God's marvellous leading should be written. I was invited to do this.

To cover completely the adventures of CWCI I have incorporated some extracts from *Beyond Expectations*. It provides the necessary background to this story of ordinary women working and walking with an extraordinary God.

I remember so clearly the apprehension that filled the hearts of Grace Collins and me when we were first asked to write *Beyond Expectations*. We felt inadequate, vital and thrilling. We decided to go to a friend's holiday cottage for a few days where we could be free from interruptions and the daily routine and prayerfully consider this undertaking.

The word God gave us for that book has fresh emphasis now. God said to Ezekiel, "Can these bones live?" Ezekiel answered, "O Lord God, thou knowest," and God caused the dry bones to live and have breath from the four winds (Eze 37:1-10). Words need the life-giving breath of the Holy Spirit to make them vibrant. As you read these words, written with a great sense of dependency, I trust he will make them live and thrill your heart at the greatness of our God.

The whole purpose of this book – apart from keeping a record – is to give God the glory for what he has accomplished through CWCI. We want to affirm, “What he’s done for others, he’ll do for you.”

Some time ago I was pushing my trolley through a supermarket when a woman excitedly called my name. She told me she had just read *Beyond Expectations* and said, “What really thrilled me about it was that it was all about ordinary women like us.” That is what CWCI is about!

CWCI is unique in that it is administered entirely by women and the whole work is directed to and for women. It has given women, thousands of them, new openings for leadership. It has equipped them to be helpful workers in their churches, has given those who have never been involved in missionary work a vision of God’s great world in need of Christ, has opened their eyes to the wonder of God’s Word and has brought hundreds to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Living in Australia as I do, it has been a heart-warming experience to see this movement, so obviously started by God himself through obedient women, extending its ministry to so many countries. As it is difficult to mention the names of everyone concerned, only those people directly involved in the commencement of the work in each country will be given.

It has been my privilege to visit nearly all the countries connected with CWCI, except some in the European region. So, the story will be written in the first person, sharing the experiences I have enjoyed and some of the exciting happenings I have witnessed.

Although this is a history book we trust it will bring great joy and blessing as it is read. I have realised in doing the research for this book that one fact is surely true: All over the world, through the ongoing and ever-spreading work of CWCI, ordinary women are opening their lives to God and finding that, for each one, he is indeed “able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that [they could] ask or think” (Eph 3:20).

Jean H. Raddon

Preparing the Ground

So often projects that are to be greatly blessed of God have small, insignificant beginnings.

The monthly Ladies' Evening Fellowship was over and the women were standing around in little groups. A mother and her married daughter stood talking to Grace Collins. Strangely, they were not discussing new recipes, husbands or grandchildren! They were talking about their need to know their Bibles better.

The mother had recently come back into Christian fellowship and the daughter had just realised her need of a Saviour and given her life to Jesus Christ. Grace Collins – a missionary (along with her husband, Arthur) on assignment at the organisation's headquarters – was a member of the same congregation.

Part of Grace's duties for the mission included speaking to Christian women's groups in the Sydney area. Collecting the best of their ideas, she shared them with a number of motivated women at her church. Together they had established a fresh, progressive initiative – the Ladies' Evening Fellowship.

Few people realise the far-reaching consequences of that simple conversation between three ordinary women. The Fellowship, however, recognised their need for something more and their next step was to begin a monthly Bible study.

The study had been meeting for almost two years when, one night, their discussions bogged down. As they were reaching the point of exasperation someone suddenly had the bright idea that perhaps they could go away together for a weekend and invite a woman Bible teacher to come and help them.

This all happened in 1957 in a suburb of Sydney, Australia, and in those days it sounded a big adventure. They did it, though, and had a wonderful time. To have Bible teaching from a woman was a new experience. It was not that their pastors and leaders were not sharing wonderful things, but the woman-to-woman outlook was to prove both stimulating and challenging.

The beginnings of CWCI can be traced to that first weekend. Because the fellowship was so enriching the women wanted to share their experience with others. The thought took root, and it was decided to open the next weekend to all who wished to come. It was then that the idea of a gathering for women of all denominations was born. A name was required: 'convention' sounded impressive. So the fledgling group became the "Women's Christian Convention".

That first full-scale convention was certainly in the good timing of God. It was held in the month following the 1959 Billy Graham crusade. Among those attending were women who had been led to Christ from the vast crowds at the Sydney Showground and who were brought to the convention by friends. Sixty women stayed for the whole weekend and one hundred came as day visitors. Over fifty-five churches were represented at this, the first officially-interdenominational convention.

CWCI commenced with a clear definition of beliefs, the doctrinal statement modelled on that of the Keswick Convention in England. In time a constitution was drafted and the body registered in Sydney as a non-profit organisation. Our motto became, "All One in Christ Jesus", a clear indication of the core around which women from different denominations could gather for fellowship and growth.

As you read this, realise the wonder of what was happening. That little group of women, under the leadership of Grace Collins, were not extraordinary people but ordinary people with an extraordinary God. Their initial step of faith has provided glorious fulfilment for thousands of women all over the world. At those early conventions the splendid, Bible-based, relevant, hard-hitting messages were to change countless lives.

Note that the movement had no financial backing. In *Beyond Expectations* Grace Collins writes, "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 first interdenominational 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."¹

They took that step, and in all the conventions that followed the women were reminded: "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."

The financial situation was tight. As Mrs Collins writes, "We had the charge [for the first convention] 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 that God had met our deficit. [The registrar wrote,] 'I have good news to relate. After Mrs Collins' word [to those attending] 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 pounds 14 shillings and 5 pence as a start for next year."²

So it has gone, with the generosity of women enabling the National Management Board in Australia now to finance at least six teams travelling into the outback each year, to send KYB notes to countries where the women are not able to pay the full cost of the books, to pay the office staff (of which there are seven, full-time or part-time) and to pay rent for the offices (which house the administration of both the general work and the production of *Christian Woman* magazine). The movement can only praise and thank God for his leading.

Laying the Foundation

Since its inception CWCI in Australia has taken many steps of faith.

1960 – Interest in the movement began to increase as women from further and further afield attended the yearly conventions in Sydney. Caught by the potential, they returned home to spread the news and form local committees – first in the Hunter Valley (160 kilometres north of Sydney), then all over New South Wales and interstate. So enthusiastic were the women that conventions began to be organised in every state of Australia: Queensland (1962), the Australian Capital Territory (1963), South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria (1966), Tasmania (1967) and the Northern Territory (1971).

1963 – At an early convention in the Sydney area CWCI launched what was, to many, a new concept in missionary giving. It was suggested that the women should be prepared to think of others, especially those who were reaching out in missionary effort. Grace Collins said, "You may want [to give], but haven't come prepared. The Lord may want you to give a bigger amount than you can give here today."³

Thus, the women were encouraged to act in faith by waiting on the Lord to reveal the amount he would give them and then to write that amount on a slip provided in their programmes. There are many wonderful stories of God's blessing and provision to women as they, in faith, trusted him for their pledge.

One woman wrote, "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 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.”⁴

So thousands of women have been exposed to the challenge of accepting money by faith from the Lord for the sole purpose of giving it to mission work. In the intervening years since 1963 a sum in excess of 500,000 dollars from the Sydney convention (now Stanwell Tops) alone has been passed on to inter-denominational missionary societies affiliated with the Evangelical Missionary Alliance, providing aid and encouragement for countless missionaries worldwide.

1966 – CWCI had been keeping in touch with its ever-increasing membership in Australia by means of a monthly newsletter. In 1966, however, an opportunity arose for the organisation to purchase the publication known as *Christian Woman* (then with a circulation of 2,000).

This magazine had been established twelve years earlier by a young woman – the wife of a manager of a secular-cum-religious bookshop in Newcastle (150 kilometres north of Sydney) – who began wondering if a Christian magazine for women would find a readership. Moved by God, her aim was to provide a vehicle by which women could help other women. The result, *Christian Woman*, featured testimonies, Bible studies and practical ideas for Christian living.

CWCI had no funds readily available, yet with interest-free loans and a generous gift of 250 pounds from a young chemist and his wife, the purchase was made. Under the capable and dedicated direction of their different editors the magazine has continued to flourish. In 1974 it received an award from the Australian Religious Press Association for the most improved Christian magazine produced in Australia.

Many are the stories told of God speaking through this publication. One woman told me, only today, of the terribly sad and difficult year she has had – but inspiration every month from *Christian Woman* has helped her keep her going. She said, “I look for it eagerly each month. There is always something in it which speaks to me personally.”

Not only does the magazine bring help and encouragement to its readers but it carries in its pages which I believe is the very source of the blessing CWCI has enjoyed through the years. I refer, of course, to the prayer calendar. There are often two, or even three functions or conventions mentioned each day, plus items of a general nature. As the circulation of the magazine is now nearly 12,000, this means CWCI has tremendous prayer backing.

Building on the Foundation

The ministry in Australia continued to grow, with hundreds of committee members getting involved. Day and weekend conventions, coffee and dessert functions and all sorts of events became the means of equipping Christian women and bringing non-Christians to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. As one mediates on that growth one can only be spurred on to greater deeds for this great God of ours.

1967 – CWCI faced a difficult problem. Grace Collins writes, “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 [of an auditorium that] 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] be willing to travel so far? ... Since there was no public transport, how would everyone get to Stanwell Tops?”⁵ They did get there, in their hundreds. Each year now over 2,000 women attend, with 750 women living-in.

One aspect of this particular convention should be noted. There has always been a strong emphasis on music at our conventions. Bright and meaningful hymns and choruses always feature, from the harmony of the smaller, intimate groups to the magnificent rising chorus of the crowd at Stanwell Tops. Women have taken the melodies and messages of these choruses home to their families and church groups. Soloists, singing groups and choirs; pianists and organists have brought a holy hush and a spirit of worship, preparing the way for the spoken message.

That year – the tenth anniversary of CWCI – saw a second new venture of faith: that of bringing a woman speaker from overseas for the main conventions. With their depth of experience and slightly-different outlook, each has brought fresh insights to the teaching of God's Word.

My first exposure to the work of CWCI had been in 1964 during a deputation tour for the mission with which I worked. I attended my first convention – quite a startling experience – and was introduced to Grace Collins. Little did either of us realise then that we were to be drawn together in a delightful way in God's work. In 1967 CWCI invited me to come to Australia as the first international speaker. That trip was to establish a connection that eventually led to a full-time position with CWCI.

1970 – With all these exciting developments the need for a more formalised administration began to grow. Looking back over the time I have been involved (from 1971) I can see the fulfilling of God's promise to our leadership back in the beginning: "As thou goest step by step, the way will open up before you" (Pro 4:12 Heb. Translation).

Even the story behind the office accommodation shows, once again, the care of a loving heavenly Father for his own. When CWCI began, all the office work was done at the headquarters of the Aborigines Inland Mission where Grace Collins lived. Indeed, most of the work was done at a small desk in the corner of Grace's bedroom. Eventually – as their sons grew and moved from home – more space became available. (Arthur, Grace's husband, was the secretary of the mission, and mention must be made of his tremendous support as Grace led CWCI.)

Once a month we invaded the main rooms of the house. Then twenty-to-thirty women came to wrap *Christian Woman* before it was posted. What heart-warming opportunities for fellowship and fun those days were. There were real pangs of regret when the growth of the magazine meant it had to be wrapped professionally.

As CWCI expanded the administration grew too large to be contained at the mission headquarters. It was a direct answer to the prayer that a woman already involved in CWCI phoned to say that the Lord had told her to make her home available to the movement. *Christian Woman* was installed in the new premises and another prayer had been answered, another need met.

At the time of writing (1992) CWCI in Australia has a well-appointed headquarters, with modern equipment, that is staffed five days a week. It is now also the international office of CWCI.

1971 – Mention should be made here of the safari work, which is still a unique ministry. CWCI's first safari was a great venture for God. At the invitation of women from the Northern Territory, a group of seven travelled by coach from Sydney, through the north of Queensland, to Darwin and the centre of Australia. Over 10,400 kilometres were covered and twenty convention meetings and fourteen other events held along the way.

It was not a sight-seeing tour. The hours were long, the journey arduous and we were often tired, grubby and dusty.

I remember so well stopping for a meal at an outback roadhouse. It was very hot. We were thirsty and asked if we could have some cold water. When it came one of the team said with delight, "Oh, look, they've given us pineapple juice!"

Knowing the outback, Grace Collins dryly said, "My dear, that is the water!"

We found it hard to sleep sitting in the coach and harder still to look as though we had not been travelling all night. Still, we did our best to look presentable. Later we were astonished to hear a report that the "team" (as we were called) "had descended from the coach with not a hair out of place."

Many delightful stories could be told of the help and inspiration brought to isolated women. At a panel session in one big centre a question was asked about husband/wife relationships. As the discussion closed Grace Collins, who was chairing the meeting, said, "How long is it since you told your husband that you love him?" The women laughed, but at lunch time one woman rushed downtown. 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 one night meeting a woman said to the speaker, "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 brought 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."⁶

That first venture into safaris was a step of faith. From it, however, a question arose. Travelling to coach had proven hot and generally unreliable. How could we best transport future safari teams? Was there a model of travel that would reduce the toll of stress and fatigue?

The problem became more complex as invitations began to arrive for visits to other areas. Some were isolated indeed. It was at a weekend convention in Queensland that I met a woman whose husband had flown her and three friends to the event in a small plane. "He is our man!" I thought, and sure enough he was. Since the time that first little plane carried a safari team into the outback, several other aircraft have been put at our disposal by private people or mission groups. Although some factors – such as the weather – remain unpredictable, travelling by air has provided a generally safe, comfortable and reliable means of covering the vast distances involved in safari work and made it possible to visit many places not serviced by the larger commercial airlines.

At the time of writing six or seven teams are sent out every year, consisting usually of three women. This type of ministry – which brings comfort and encouragement to those of the outback who face long periods of isolation – is greatly valued. Women around Australia have been generous in their financial support, thus enabling this ministry to continue.

1972 – The story of CWCI in Australia would not be complete without a mention of the blessings Bible Study Fellowship brought to the movement. Although a completely separate organisation, it was introduced to this continent by CWCI.

Lives were being changed by the convention ministry, but not all the women came from churches where they were encouraged to read and study the Bible. Follow-up of these women became a matter of concern.

The founder of BSF was CWCI's second international speaker in 1969. Coming from the USA, her stories of the benefits brought by consistent, systematic study of God's Word convince Grace Collins that this was the answer we sought. After some consultation it was decided that Grace and I should go to America for training in the format of BSF, returning to launch it in Australia.

Many parts of the programme impressed us: the amount of time some of the women gave to be in leadership; the disciplined format of the lessons, which actually attracted women (instead of turning them away); and the provision of a ministry to the women's children. Most thrilling were the delightful stories of people – husbands and families included – whose lives had been converted and changed.

Time was to separate Bible Study Fellowship from CWCI, largely because CWCI began to realise many areas of Australia would be better served by a slightly-different method. Nevertheless, a close and warm bond remains between the organisations.

With the introduction of KYB (Know Your Bible) in 1972 to replace the BSF method, the work leapt forward. Our idea, in the beginning, was to have a course for perhaps eight weeks to follow a convention, but we had no idea of the great thing God was about to do. Eight weeks passed and the women wanted more! And more they got.

The first course was based on Paul's letter to the Ephesians from notes prepared by the Reverend Egerton Long. I see his secretary spending many nights in the flat of our home

duplicating the first few lessons. Later the residents of a ladies' retirement village spent hours laboriously stapling together the hundreds of lessons.

As demand for the lessons outstripped supply we were able to put the printing of the studies on a business basis with a Christian organisation prepared to print and store the material. Finding enough space became a headache, however, and I remember the awful feeling on January when the company called to say they needed the room where the lessons were stored. It was a busy time for me and my two helpers, and we felt like saying, "Oh God, what are you doing?" He knew.

The garage of the home which earlier had been made available to *Christian Woman* was no longer being used and we realised that it would be ideal for storage. Shelves were quickly installed, and in great haste, the notes were moved. The following day the printing plant was flooded.

Although Know Your Bible was helping many, there were still isolated areas where classes were not available. Increasing numbers of working women were also finding it difficult to attend a class. So, in 1970 the Bible Postal Fellowship was commenced, eventually to become the Know Your Bible Correspondence Courses. Now, each student is assigned to a personal tutor who checks the lessons and corresponds with her. Not only do the students receive great blessing but a friend of mine who is confined to a wheel chair finds great joy and purpose in life from her role as tutor to fifteen-or-so students.

1973 – A recognisable need for good Christian literature gave rise to the vision for a book shop. In 1973, with very little capital but with a great deal of faith, The Christian Women's Book Nook was established in a suburb of Sydney. Under able management this shop continues to flourish, not only as a retail outlet, but also by organising and stocking bookstalls for many CWCI functions, and shipping books via mail order all over Australia.

Reinforcing the Structure

1975 – To provide a Christian aspect to the International Year of Women CWCI held a rally in the Sydney Opera House on a Sunday afternoon. Nearly three thousand women packed the Concert Hall, including a massed choir of almost 200 voices which thrilled us with their singing of "The King is Coming". So impressive was this event, it was reported in a leading Sydney newspaper.

1976 – Because Australia is such a vast country, the population is highly diverse. Although the many committees of CWCI were united by a common bond – reaching other women for Jesus Christ – some felt quite isolated and had no real idea of the size of capability of the movement. For this reason a major conference was organised.

So, "Let's Mix in '76" as held at the Australian National University in Canberra. Over 400 CWCI committee members, KYB leaders, and panel speakers came together from every state in Australia for a time of inspiration and training. Other successful national conferences for sharing and training followed: "Let's Combine in '79" and Let's Share More in '84" (the first combined event for the Regional and National Management Boards).

1977 – By this date 7,000 women were attending KYB and to make twenty-one years of CWCI in Australia, another celebration rally in the Sydney Opera House was held. This year also saw the formation of a National Management Board and the division of Australia into ten regions, with the appropriate structures of leadership to provide better administration.

1982 – This was our silver jubilee – twenty-five successful years of ministry to women by women! To mark the occasion, and as a joyful community witness to the goodness of God, the Sydney Opera House was booked once more as the venue for our celebrations.

This year also saw the commissioning of our Bible study and book coaster, "Phoebe" (and, later, "Phoebe 2"). Together a co-worker and I have travelled far and wide, sharing encouragement, spiritual refreshment and good literature as we went.

1984 – The work continued to grow as shown by these statistics:

Eleven regions in Australia

Approximately 180 CWCI committees in Australia with 2,000 members

Approximately 2,000 KYB classes with some 15,000 women attending

1985 – Using the theme, “Let’s Share”, CWCI’s regional boards held conferences around Australia. At these meetings committee women were not only better equipped to serve, but were also encouraged to reach out and share the Good News with others in new and innovative ways.

1986 – Our name was changed from Christian Women’s Conventions International to Christian Women Communicating Internationally – believing this better reflected our now wide and diverse ministry. The Lord was proving his sufficiency in many practical ways.

1987 – In this year Grace Collins, founder and Director Emeritus, received the Medal of the Order of Australia from the Australian government. It was a wonderful occasion and Grace, in her usual gracious manner, accepted the honour, giving all the glory to God.

1988 – Another rather lovely recognition for the movement came during this, Australia’s bicentennial year. *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, a well-known magazine in this country, presented a medallion to CWCI for their bicentenary project, “Around Australia Safari”. Our journey covered 20,000 kilometres – into the centre, up to the north and down to Tasmania. We sold thousands of dollars worth of Christian literature and had meetings – small and large – in many places.

1990 – For many years the outreach of a radio ministry had been a burden on the hearts of several CWCI Board members. It was with a great sense of God’s leading that in 1990 an invitation was received from Trans World Radio (an international Christian radio organisation with at least thirty-six years of broadcasting experience). The invitation was to produce a weekly or daily radio programme for women presented by women.

A sub-committee of the Australian National Management Board was formed and has organised the work to date. Several women from the CWCI Panel of Speakers are involved in producing the programme; two others have been appointed to answer my correspondence. Letters have been received from India, Taiwan, Nigeria, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Hong Kong and Singapore telling of the positive impact of the broadcasts.

1992 – The statistics for this year are a clear indication of the continuing need for and interest in the ministry of CWCI:

Eleven regions in Australia, each administered by a board, and two regional committees
(all answerable to the National Management Board)

Approximately 180 committees with over 2,000 members

Almost 12,000 subscribers to *Christian Woman*

Approximately 2,500 KYB classes with some 21,000 women attending

Remembering that all women involved are ordinary women: housewives, nurses, secretaries, business women, teachers and many other occupations, the steps of faith they took are amazing.

Looking back as we have plotted our progress over the years, we are able to say, “Praise God from whom all blessings flow”. So let’s keep our vision on our heavenly Father, that we might be guided into the future by his almighty hand.

Now let’s leave Australia and see God moving through CWCI to many parts of the world.

¹*Beyond Expectations*, pgs 16-17.

² *Ibid*, pg 18.

³ *Ibid*, pg 151.

⁴ *Ibid*, pg 157.

⁵ *Ibid*, pg 28.

⁶ *Ibid*, pgs 88-89.

It is always good to remember in our walk with Christ that he has told us, "The steps of a good man [woman] are ordered by the Lord".¹ Having been blessed in Australia through CWCI, a missionary doing deputation work in New Zealand stayed in the home of Betty Scott. Betty and her cousin were so impressed, as she told them about CWCI, they asked her to let them have all the details she could about the movement. Little did that missionary know what she was starting!

Betty Scott soon had a committee formed in Auckland and they began enthusiastically to plan to invite a team to come and share what was happening through CWCI in Australia.

I well remember that first visit. It was a wet, cold, windy day in May 1965. I had been in Australia at the invitation of CWCI for their tenth anniversary and felt rather sad at leaving the country where I had enjoyed such wonderful fellowship and been shown so much loving hospitality. Two other women – one of whom was Grace Collins – were my companions in the team. As the plane landed in Auckland the sun was shining, everything looked green and beautiful, and so began what was to be a never-to-be forgotten experience.

The committee had arranged for the team to visit eight different centres. Betty Scott was overseas when this first tour took place but, in absentia, she was appointed the first National Chairman. (Interestingly, I travelled to the United Kingdom after the New Zealand tour and while in Britain attended the Keswick Convention. I found myself next door to Betty Scott! You can imagine how excitedly we talked about CWCI in New Zealand.)

It is important to realise that hundreds of women were praying for the Lord's guidance and blessing as the team departed for New Zealand. One realises, more and more, what an important part prayer has played in the whole work.

Interest in the movement grew rapidly as the team travelled around the country. Many women attended the meetings because friends – helped and inspired at other centres – had written urging them not to miss such a wonderful experience. One woman in Australia wrote to twenty-nine friends in New Zealand encouraging them to attend.

Hundreds of women attended the final event in Auckland. After the day session they went home to prepare the evening meal for their families. It started to rain heavily and the team thought sadly the evening meeting would be spoilt. Their lack of faith was certainly rebuked. As they entered the huge venue the women were pouring in. Grace Collins said to some of them, "I didn't think you would come back again in all the rain".

They quickly said, "But *you* did!"

Grace laughed, "But I had to."

"So did we," was their answer!

In 1972 a properly constituted National Management Board was appointed. Continuing growth led to changes in structure, and in line with developments in Australia, Regional Boards were introduced. KYB classes had commenced but at the beginning there was no formal structure for an ongoing development.

1979 saw the appointment of a KYB Director. Her hard work and enthusiasm effectively established the work of KYB on a proper basis. Groups began to spring up all over the country and letters began to arrive telling of the blessing women were receiving through the studies.

In those early years the main emphasis was on the convention ministry. Their impact was seen as letters like the following came to the National President: "In 1982 I was invited to a weekend convention at Paunawea. I had never heard of CWCI. The speaker spoke from Romans 9:20, 'Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?' I knew God was speaking to me directly through the whole weekend. My Christian life changed considerably as a result and it was good to share with people that God had used the speaker to put me back on the 'way'."

Another woman wrote, "I had, for a number of years, appreciated the functions organised by CWCI. I enjoyed the teaching and wonderful fellowship of other Christian women. In March 1980, I was not coping with life very well. I was feeling miserable and anti-social as I

had been trying to cope with three small children and an alcoholic husband. It was not long since my husband had served a prison sentence for drink-driving related charges. A few close friends knew I needed a break and they encouraged me to attend the CWCI weekend convention at Pleasant Valley near Dunedin.

“The speaker’s theme was ‘How to Be Set Free’, free from resentment, fear and anxiety. As I listened I realised she was addressing herself directly to my situation. I had been a Christian for many years but as I listened it seemed to me I had not really trusted the Lord or relied on His strength to see me through my problems. In fact I had grown hard-hearted and stoical, even proud of my ability to cope with my husband on my own. I had been blind to my own failings and desperate needs.

“During that weekend I capitulated and quietly handed my life over to God. I had come to see that through Christ’s work on the cross I could be set free from the bitterness, resentment and anxiety that had consumed me.

“Something ugly and twisted inside me had been straightened out and cleansed. So began a new phase in my life. The Lord gave me a new attitude towards my lifestyle. It took many years and a lot of heartache but my husband now too knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour and is now in sobriety. So I praise and thank God, for both the work of CWCI and His goodness to me and my family.”

The enthusiasm for KYB groups continued to grow. So great was the response it has become the main thrust of the movement in New Zealand. The many delightful stories of lives changed and women converted through the studies would fill a book.

One KYB leader wrote, “Joy told me how coming to the KYB group had changed her life. She has been coming for about three years and when she first started she had little Bible knowledge and was shy and quiet and took no part. Now she says she has assurance and confidence about the future and she has come to a personal and intimate knowledge of the Lord and talks to him daily as she does her studies. She is a changed person and it shows to all of us who study with her. She is a delight. She is a widow and lives alone.”

One heart-warming aspect of the KYB groups and committees is the way in which women learn to support each other in times of need. I remember so well the shock and grief that went through all the women connected with CWCI when, in 1991, the beloved KYB Director in New Zealand returned from the International Board meetings in Australia to be greeted with bad news by the police. Her husband had been killed in a car accident. She speaks warmly of how she felt upheld and strengthened by the prayers and letters of all the CWCI family.

An excellent development was the introduction of *Newzlink* which keeps the committees and KYB leaders in touch. One rather lovely story in *Newzlink* was of a woman who started a KYB group but was disappointed that only two women attended. However, they both came from a church which does not have much teaching and they were hungry to learn the truths of the Bible and excited to study the in-depth KYB material. They both said that the studies enriched their lives and made their commitment to the Lord more meaningful.

One of the women, whose husband is a shy, quiet man asked if he could do the questions with her each morning. They do this and he waits for her to come home from the class on Tuesdays so they can share what she has learnt.

The movement in New Zealand has been keen to involve Maori and Samoan women in all aspects of the ministry. There are at least four Maori KYB groups, and a Maori serves on one of their regional boards, plus Maoris and Samoans on committees and two Maori women on the panel of speakers. All that is encouraging.

Great steps of faith have been taken by the New Zealand Board in inviting international speakers to their beautiful little country. As you read later about the tremendous developments in Fiji you will see that CWCI’s ministry there started with an outreach from New Zealand.

When CWCI began, the main emphasis was on conventions. These were obviously meeting a real need, as evidenced by the consistently-large attendances. Changing social and economic conditions over recent years have meant that while whole-weekend conventions are still valued for their teaching and fellowship, day conventions are no longer

practical. There is a great emphasis on evening functions, outreach programmes, specialist workshops and seminars. Greater emphasis is also being placed on the ongoing ministry of KYB. Many women have shared in this work over the years and we thank the Lord for them, knowing that he will grant them their reward. Only eternity will reveal the full results.

CWCI in New Zealand praises God for what he has accomplished in the past. Moving forward with confidence, they also trust him for the future.

1 (Ps 37:23)

In the Beginning

Hundreds of women at a Bible teaching convention – you'd never see that in Britain. Impossible!" That is what an old prayer partner in Plymouth, Devon, said to me in 1969. I had just told her about my first exciting speaking trip for Christian Women's Conventions in Australia, while still serving as a missionary in Nepal. "Could it really happen here?" asked Miss Carr and I assured her it could. So, in March 1969 the first Women's One Day Convention (WODC as it was called) was arranged in Plymouth by Miss Carr, with a programme similar to the conventions at which I had spoken in Australia.

Two young women – one by the name of Lyn Green – were invited to take part in a session of that first convention. Both are still active in CWCI today in different parts of the country. A twelve-year-old girl present at that first event wrote inside her Bible, "Imagine women having their own Bible study weekends! I wonder if it will catch on here? If it does I want to be part of it."

Well, it did not catch on immediately. I returned to Nepal and Miss Carr continued arranging two conventions a year in Plymouth attended by over 300 women from the West Country.

I visited the United Kingdom again in 1974 and 1978 and was able to share at several places about the ever-growing and exciting work in which I was now involved, and especially about the development of KYB. I longed to see far more women in Britain experiencing the thrill of small group Bible studies, as we were in Australia and New Zealand. Was this possible in the United Kingdom? I knew it could be done.

Some women, who first heard about KYB from relatives in Australia, began to wonder if there were not benefits in being linked with CWCI and being able to use the studies. Eunice Bewsey discovered that I was planning to tour early in 1978 and invited me to speak about CWCI to a group in Cranleigh, Surrey. This was an exciting opening. I told Eunice about the conventions in Plymouth, passed on the names of some women involved in Bristol and suggested a get together to consider starting CWCI officially in the United Kingdom.

Well, on 13 June 1978 twelve ladies, who had never met before, came together in London. There the Lord confirmed the rightness of establishing CWCI. The word he gave was, "Whatever he says to you ... do it ... for with God nothing is impossible"¹ – nobody too inadequate that he will not use, nothing too ordinary that he cannot transform, nothing, however small, if given to him that he will not use and multiply!

So the United Kingdom National Committee was organised in fear and trembling – a real *green lot*, they said, but so aware of the leading of the Lord. To set up and get official printing done would require 1,000 pounds, so that was the first step of faith. Impossible? Not with God. He honoured that first shaky step.

One diary entry for that day said, "I reckon we're at the heart of a snowball about to get rolling. I wonder just how far it will roll and what the Lord will do with us! It's quite exciting, yet awesome, when I think of what has happened in Australia. Ordinary women but with God ..."

And on the next day, 14 June 1978, reading 2 Corinthians 3:5-6: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves ... but our sufficiency is of God.' Praise the Lord, or as the Living Bible puts it, '... not because we think we can do anything of lasting value by ourselves. Our only power and success comes from God.' Praise him for this, in relation to our great step of faith yesterday setting up CWCI in the United Kingdom."

Within a few weeks there were orders for KYB studies. Eunice took the first batch of CWCI publicity to the printers, in faith that the bill would be met. When the printer asked, "How many?" her heart cried, *What shall I do, Lord?*

Trust me, came the answer. Her Bible notes that morning had said, "Sometimes we need courage to trust God even when we can't understand. It's only as we move out that we are

able to see what God HAS done.” Yes, he did provide. Within two weeks 750 pounds were received towards the first printing.

The woman who became the KYB National Distributor was one of the original group setting up CWCI in the United Kingdom. She recorded that the Lord kept saying to her, *Fear not, I am with you*, each time she began to worry about the size of the task and the speed of growth. To her human eyes it seemed impossible.

The Early Years

Committees in Plymouth, Woking and Bristol began planning their first official CWCI conventions in November 1978. Well, that is not strictly true. Bristol planned a coffee evening. How it became a convention for 600 women on board the Operation Mobilisation ship, Doulos, shows the hand of God in the impossible business. It also shows how not to choose a speaker and arrange a CWCI function!

Lyn Green had been invited to speak at the planned coffee evening. Thinking it was to share about the work in Plymouth, perhaps to encourage the Bristol ladies to put on a convention, she agreed to come. Later, a member of the Bristol committee wrote to Lyn, “In spite of Jean Raddon’s comments to *Think Big*, I find most of us are rather overwhelmed at the prospect of forming a group and feel very inadequate.”

Lyn was overwhelmed too when the date, venue and function changed to be a Bible teaching day for 600 women. This was impossible, even crazy. One stone lighter (with worry) and feeling ill, Lyn set out for Bristol. She had tried to visualise the logistic problems of getting 600 women on and off the ship – not to mention fed – in the short time between sessions! But that was not her problem. She had a bigger one. Would God really enable her to do what she knew was impossible?

Imagine her reaction, at the foot of the gangway, at being told that the generators were being cleaned that day and the ship was without water and electricity. Then she was glad she was not on the committee!

Lyn had never spoken with a microphone before and there she was, confronted with a great bank of mikes with just enough space between them to see her much-needed notes. Then, a gentle male voice behind her said, “Don’t worry, don’t move more than two inches from that mike or someone somewhere will lose the sound. Don’t turn your head to the left or right.” Talk about a baptism by fire!

That male voice gave Lyn the confidence to go on. (Later it offered to record and tape all the CWCI functions. Since that incredible day on the Doulos, that generous man has travelled the length and breadth of the country with his wife, recording every CWCI event and bringing blessing to hundreds of women.)

Yes, God did enable in every possible way. Looking back on what could have been a series of disasters, the committee saw how God had overruled everyone, even to prompting one lady to buy a huge slab of fruit cake on the way to the ship, though she did not understand why. It helped make up for the lack of suitable food due to the energy problems. As a committee member noted the following day, “Haven’t we so much to praise the Lord for? Isn’t it wonderful to be able to laugh and rejoice when things don’t go according to plan? Jean would have appreciated yesterday!”

Looking back, Lyn realised she had to be thrown in at the deep end. She would never have accepted such a task with no previous speaking experience. While it is not a path she would have chosen, she is grateful to the Lord for all that has opened up for her as a result of that impossible convention in Bristol (even to the greater impossibility of being the international speaker in Australia in 1985).

In the next year, 1979, Grace Collins and I visited the United Kingdom, speaking at the established conventions and meeting women who were already benefiting from CWCI. Grace was thrilled to see how God was blessing and expanding the work. In June we met with the National Committee in London and had the great joy of over-seeing the establishment of the first National Management Board for that land.

By 1981 there were over fifty KYB classes. Conventions had also been started in Truro (in Cornwall) by a few women who – having attended the Plymouth conventions – longed for the same practical Bible teaching for the women in their area.

That same year Eunice and Lyn travelled to Australia to see CWCI in full swing. Being among the 2,000 or so women at Stanwell Tops was a never-to-be-forgotten occasion. They were thrilled to talk to so many women whose lives had been changed through coming to know the Lord and enriched through KYB. Attending the Belgrave Heights convention, being invited to observe the Australian National Management Board meetings and then attending the International Board meetings, convinced them beyond all doubt of the inestimable privilege of belonging to CWCI. Applying the CWCI structure and pattern of ministry in the United Kingdom would certainly bring tremendous benefits.

One or two ladies from the Torbay area had been attending the Plymouth convention and began to wonder if it would be possible to start CWCI in Torquay. In July 1981, a young mum wrote to Lyn to ask if she and the KYB representative from the Plymouth committee would come to introduce KYB to a small group. She also said, "I have been much in prayer about the ladies' conventions coming to Torquay. I still feel very strongly that they should be developed in this area. At the moment there is one other person who has shown interest in such a project. I feel sure if we stepped out in faith there would be others willing to help. Perhaps you would give it some thought and prayer and consider including us in 1982?"

Sixty women turned up for that introductory evening. Soon there were over 300 ladies doing KYB in the Torbay area.

That young mum did step out in faith. The next year, 1982, saw the start of conventions in Torquay, then regional residential conferences at Brunel Manor, Torquay. She later became chairman of the first regional board in the south-west, then served on the National Management Board and as a speaker at conventions. Just one young mum, available to God, convened that others would know and love the Lord, has been used to be a blessing to many.

A Time of Development

The work continued to grow. Reports began arriving about changed lives and a new love for God's Word as women studied it together through KYB. One young Christian attending an introductory session was rather taken aback to discover she was expected to do homework. She went away saying she would have to think about whether she would come again. She was back the next week, beaming all over. "It's just what I need," she said. It was thrilling to hear of women, who considered themselves inadequate, leading groups and enjoying it.

Further progress came with the appointment to the National Management Board of a KYB Director, who soon put her skills to good use. Several training days were held in 1982, as well as the first three-day training conference in Bath.

A woman, from Northampton, had been revelling in the conventions in Woking, Surrey, where her daughter was involved. How she wished for the same in her area but it was impossible for her to do anything, she thought. Having had major surgery she was not expected to live long, a widow of nearly seventy, living in a retirement complex. Impossible ... too late ... she concluded. She went to two more conventions, still aching to start one in Northampton. If only she could get help. Maybe it would be possible.

Then, at the next Woking convention, Eunice Bewsey was promoting CWCI. She said that if anyone felt God was asking them to start a convention in their area but could not do all the arranging, she would supply the chairman, speaker and pianist if a local group would cope with the practical side. The woman wondered, *could she do this?* Yes, she could and did, bless her. A convention was arranged and another and another – in fact, one every six months since the first in September 1983. That same widow, who has celebrated her eightieth birthday, has managed to attend and take part in most of the conventions. By her availability, despite her disability, she has brought spiritual life, joy, help and encouragement to hundreds of women who have come to the conventions and joined KYB.

By 1985 there were conventions in ten areas and over three hundred KYB classes. It was appropriate that Marilyn Koontz, President of the International Board, was able to be at the residential conference in Bath when the movement's new name was announced – Christian Women Communicating International. This change was welcomed as the work in the United Kingdom, as in Australia, was developing beyond conventions.

Soon there were six convention committees in the West Country; the time was right to set up the first regional board. Conventions also started in Camberley, Andover, Teddington, Yeovil and York. Eunice's home had become the office, with a *proper* secretary badly needed. The KYB Director had shed part of her load (and cleared some of her garage), freeing herself to do more training. To cover the remaining work, a National Distributor was appointed. Now there was a squeeze in her home as the KYB stock threatened to take over any spare space!

Greater national publicity came through exhibits at Christian resource exhibitions and at Christian holiday weeks in Filey and then Skegness. Further exposure came when CWCI was invited to co-operate with the Telephone Prayer Chain ministry who were hosting the visit of Evelyn Christenson to the United Kingdom.

A Time of Expansion

Early in 1988 Lyn Green found herself living back in her native Scotland due to her husband's new job. After thirty years in the south and all the joy of involvement with CWCI there, this move was not totally welcomed. But God meant it for good. A young Australian mum, living in Scotland, had been restored to the Lord after several years of backsliding. Somewhere in a drawer she had discovered some information about CWCI (sent to her via a praying friend in Australia) and she wondered if there was anything going in Scotland. Was it possible for her to start a KYB group? Yes, it was and she did. Imagine her joy and Lyn's, when the KYB person from the Plymouth committee also moved to Scotland, to the very town where she lived! Impossible? Not with God.

So those three got together and started praying for the development of CWCI in Scotland. Early in 1989 the Scottish Regional Board was organised, and what a delight it was for me to visit Scotland in November 1989, speaking at many venues and meeting those who had been so recently introduced to KYB. Lyn and a co-worker were able to do a *mini-safari* around the Aberdeen area, but in very different conditions from Australia. They took off in snow and had to cope with a blizzard or two, but the thrill of meeting with small Bible study groups in country towns made it worthwhile. At each place the response was the same: "Fancy you being willing to come to us." It was just the same as in Australia: women from CWCI, putting themselves out for the sake of those in difficult situations, taking to them the Word of God and the encouragement of fellowship.

In 1989 a woman, from Edinburgh, was visiting her son in Sydney. She met some keen KYB students and was most impressed, even jealous. Could there possibly be any groups like that in Scotland? She did not wait to enquire but wrote to Lyn, wanting to know where the nearest KYB class would be, saying she was spiritually starving and putting in brackets – and I am eighty-seven! What a pleasure it was for Lyn to visit that Sydney group in 1991, taking the love of this woman to them and recounting how she has been used to encourage others, even at nearly ninety.

It has always been CWCI policy in the United Kingdom to offer help to places where there is an interest in the movement – a few KYB classes, perhaps – but not the personnel to put on a function. Through this understanding, several opportunities have been taken up in Holland. I had the delight of speaking there in 1982 and several day conventions have since been held. (Now a national committee has been organised, but that is another exciting chapter.)

A missionary working in Eire knew about CWCI through her late husband who was a New Zealander. Although a young widow with two children, she felt God wanted her to stay in Eire and reach out to the women. She contacted Eunice, asking for a speaker for a day conference. Lyn went, taking with her KYB books and CWCI tapes as a gift from the

National Management Board. The woman has become CWCI's representative there. My co-worker and I were able to visit several groups in Eire in 1989; others have since been as speakers.

A young Australian, living in Malta for two years, longed for her new friends to know about KYB. Was it possible? She wrote to the United Kingdom asking for help and in September 1990, a team of three went for a week, talking at a coffee morning, a Bible teaching seminar and other gatherings. At the end of the Bible teaching seminar one young lady who said she was not a Christian exclaimed, "I feel as if I've got a great big hole which God needs to fill." About a month later, after she had joined a Bible study group, God filled that hole when she put her trust in the Lord as Saviour. All this occurred because one young, hesitant woman, who had known the blessings of KYB herself, asked for help.

Eastern Europe is opening to spiritual opportunities for women. CWCI in the United Kingdom wants to be ready to take up this challenge. With the recession, many more women have had to return to work; it is becoming harder to find personnel available and able to reach out. There is such a hunger for the Word of God. The ministry of CWCI is geared to meet that need, so prayer is asked that, somehow, no request for help will have to be refused.

With the growth of CWCI in the United Kingdom the appointment of an office administrator has been a relief. She is the National Management Board miracle minutes person, typing them up before the rest of the National Management Board have finished their last cup of tea!

So many ordinary women, so few mentioned in this brief history. Yet each one proves the truth that, with God, the impossible can be done. He can, and will, equip, enable and transform.

Eunice Bewsey is one such example. Despite severe and painful physical restrictions she has fulfilled her responsibilities with courage, faith and perseverance. Her skills in administration, her time, possessions and encouragement – all have been given generously to the movement. She could have quit years ago, but she did not. Her life of service clearly demonstrates what God can do, when we are available to him.

Fourteen years on, since the establishment of CWCI in the United Kingdom, the Word of the Lord is still as real ...

With God nothing is impossible.

The setting was Auckland and Mavis Albrecht, a missionary on furlough from Fiji, was really enjoying the weekend. As she listened she suddenly thought how wonderful it would be if CWCI could extend its ministry to include Fiji. The thought kindled a spark which was to grow into a bright and living flame, burning and spreading, touching lives in such a way that they would never be the same.

Mavis Albrecht and Betty Scott, President of the New Zealand National Management Board, prayed much about CWCI in Fiji. In 1980, as a direct result of their vision, they and I were invited to form the first safari team to that land. This venture – plus subsequent safaris – was sponsored by the New Zealand National Management Board. Mavis' diary entry of that trip makes good, if amusing, reading.

"Betty and I did not know each other very well and were amused the first night we were there as we had to share a bed. However, the Lord had put us in the right place as our hostess, an Australian lass married to a Fijian, needed help and encouragement. Later in the day we saw that God really did have a purpose for CWCI in Fiji. The women were hungry for God's Word and at that first meeting there were Fijian Americans, Indians, Germans, Australians, Britishers and New Zealanders. Most of the meetings were by translation, but the message seemed to get home as we talked. The first time we did a bus tour the driver was explaining a bit about Fiji and, at one stage, said that the people of Fiji used to be cannibals but then the missionaries came 'so now we are Methodists'."

Fiji is an archipelago composed of more than 300 islands spread over 18,275 square kilometres. Two larger, and 104 smaller islands are inhabited; the population is approximately 750,000.

Having first been evangelised by a Methodist mission, slightly more than half of the nation is Christian. The remainder are largely Hindu (forty per cent) or Muslim (nine per cent), though paganism and traffic with the occult exist. Within the church, denominationalism is strong – a fact which increases the difficulties involved in establishing the type of ministry offered by CWCI.

Fiji is also a nation of varied ethnic groups (about fifty per cent Indian, forty-five per cent Fijian and two per cent Polynesian, with Chinese and European minorities). Under its banner, "All One in Christ Jesus", CWCI is helping these lovely people work towards unity and understanding. Women of all races and denominations have begun to identify with one another, recognising that all have the same needs, the same hurts, the same longings for love. CWCI, as a movement, highlights the wonderful bond of fellowship, faith, love and hope that is found in Christ.

Marilyn Koontz, President of the inaugural International Board writes, "We tend just to think of Fiji as a playground ... a rather idyllic South Pacific island. The primary aim of my visit [in 1982] was to 'just keep in touch', but of course it quickly became more than that.

"While the aeroplane was landing, passengers were given a small blue card to fill out, and being one to 'always read the fine print', [I] turned it over to see, in very BIG black letters, *WARNING, HOLDESRS OF VISITORS PERMIST MUST NOT, WHILE IN FIJI, 1. Behave in a manner prejudicial to peace and good order.* (I didn't think I was going to be in trouble on that one), but the second point was that *holders of visitors permits should not engage in any business, profession or employment, whether for reward or not, and should not engage in religious vocation, etc.* I really couldn't say that I was going there just for a holiday, as my visit did have to do with so-called religious purposes. No further questions were asked.

"When I got to my destination in Suva, I enquired of Mavis Albrecht, the chairman of their committee regarding this. She did say that there had been a gentlemen just the week before, who had come to Fiji 'to engage in religious vocation' who did not get the proper permit and who had been arrested, his picture blazoned on the front page of the newspaper because he hadn't received the proper permit! Apparently there is no great problem obtaining permits, but the Government is very strict about the fact that if you're going to take

part in these kind of activities, **you must have had prior OK** to do so. I relate this incident just to show that all is not as free in some parts of the world, for Christians, as it may appear.”

As time passed, committees were formed in a number of locations: Suva (central Fiji), Savusavu and Lobasa (in the north) and Latouki (to the west). While some struggled to establish themselves, others attained a good level of efficiency, with the members showing considerable potential for leadership. In Suva, the committee progressed to organising an excellent annual weekend convention (attended by almost ninety women in 1986).

Such was the development of the work that the first national committee was founded in 1986. In that year, many women started to study God’s Word using the KYB method.

In 1987 a political coup threw the country into chaos. All meetings had to be cancelled and the Christian camp where the weekend conventions had been held was devastated by vandalism. All activities required prior approval and permits from the interim government, so organising and holding meetings became more difficult. The women of CWCI persisted with faith and joy, however, and the ministry continued to expand to include workshops and seminars for KYB leaders. Great blessing was experienced.

The KYB scene was particularly encouraging, with steady growth in the number of classes. By 1990 staff at two banks had classes in their branches in Suva, bringing the number of classes to fifty.

As the number of KYB classes increased it became apparent that many of the women could not pay for their books. The solution was set a nominal charge for the material; the remaining costs are subsidised by the International Board, with added support from a number of classes in Australia.

In November 1990 CWCI celebrated ten years of service in Fiji. May Albrecht was invited to speak during a week of special meetings. One gathering, in Suva, was an outreach in the form of a Christmas banquet. Each KYB member brought a friend; over 300 women attended. (Only about 200 had been expected but there was still abundant food.) Following the meal the speaker, a committee member, presented the gospel in a powerful and challenging way. The entire evening was of a high standard and honouring to the Lord.

It has been helpful to invite women in the Fijian leadership to observe the biennial International Board meetings in Australia. Such exposure to the full scope of CWCI has given them useful training. This, in turn, has meant further growth in the ministry in Fiji. An example of this training in action is the increased profile of the convention ministry. Attendance at the national convention, for example, was 185 women in 1991. Such was the demand for accommodation, the National Committee is examining the possibility of switching to three regional conventions in the near future.

There is a considerable number of gifted, spiritual women committed to working through CWCI in Fiji. Their vision for the future is tremendous. They hope to have the KYB notes translated into Fijian for use in the villages. Counselling services in a properly-equipped office are to be set up in Suva. Another proposal is to sell Christian literature, used clothing, crockery and so on to assist the less fortunate women in their society.

The first safari to Fiji took place in 1980; the first national committee was formed in 1986. Progress has, at times, been slow, and the organisation continues to face certain challenges. With two radically-different national groups (Fijian and Indian) of roughly the same population size, cross-cultural understanding and communication is not always easily established. Neither is the training of women (however gifted) for leadership a quick process.

Yet CWCI in Fiji has a particular contribution to make in breaking down cultural and denominational barriers. There has been steady growth – in spite of setbacks and difficulties – in its outreach. Guided by an able team, the organisation has made an impact. By the grace of God, it will continue to do so in the future.

Holland – properly called the Kingdom of the Netherlands – is a nation of about 16,000,000 living in an area of 41,548 square kilometres. Much of the country is flat. Such is the industry of its inhabitants, seventy per cent of the land is cultivated (though one third lies below sea level). This gives the corner of the world a population density of over 430 people per square kilometre (as opposed to Australia which has two in the same space)!

The first contact we had with Holland was in the late seventies when I visited at the invitation of an expatriate who had attended a CWCI convention in New Zealand, (her homeland). It did not seem the proper time to begin a programme of ministry in that area, but we did encourage those we met to start praying for the women of Holland.

God often moves in a mysterious way to achieve his purposes. An Australian businessman, with his wife, took up a post in Holland. She had studied KYB in Australia and started a class in Rotterdam. Then, in 1982 Eunice Bewsey and I visited and had encouraging meetings with those attending KYB. The group showed a strong interest in the other facets of CWCI.

One of the people we met was Shirley ten Cate, an English woman married to a Dutch man. In 1985 she was invited to Australia to observe the International Board meetings and under her enthusiastic leadership, the work in Holland began steadily to grow. Six KYB classes were functioning by 1986; another avenue of outreach was the distribution of audio and video cassettes. Conditions seemed right and the first national committee was established in 1987.

However, when Shirley returned to England following the death of her husband, the expansion of the work became less coherent. A small team did their best to look after the classes that were functioning. The task was begun of translating the KYB notes into Dutch. In spite of their difficulties, lives were being touched.

In 1990 Geertje Kuik, who had served on the first National Committee, attended the International Board meetings in Australia. A deeply-spiritual person, but very shy, Geertje was greatly blessed at this conference. She returned to Holland with a new vision and enthusiasm. The International Development Director visited Holland the following year, and under Geertje's leadership the National Committee was reformed in 1992.

On paper, progress has been slow for CWCI in the Netherlands. The number of KYB classes has grown to seven; two new workers are translating the notes. Besides KYB, National Committee is conducting a series of coffee mornings designed to raise the profile of the organisation amongst the church.

Lack of exposure is the greatest problem the movement faces. Although thirty-six per cent of the population is Roman Catholic and thirty-one per cent Protestant, there is not a strong tradition of interdenominational work. Thus, Geertje relates, "There are many Bible studies available in the churches. [We find] they only want to do the [KYB] studies, they don't want to become involved in the organisation."

A lack of knowledge can create an atmosphere of wariness. The committee has often encountered resistance (because CWCI is a 'foreign' organisation) or suspicion (because it is a movement for women). Such pre-judgements take time to disarm and correct. The prayer support of CWCI worldwide would be of great assistance in this task.

What is exciting, however, is the commitment and enthusiasm of those who are involved. CWCI has made a difference for them; now Holland is their mission field. "We want to grow and start more Bible study groups," Geertje says, "letting the women know how important it is for them to come to the Lord and to read the Bible. [God] really changed my life, and he can do it for the women of Holland as well."

Progress may be slow, but we serve the God of the impossible. By his grace, we believe we will see further developments of the work in Holland.

In 1978 one of the speakers on the Australian National Panel visited Kuala Lumpur for other speaking engagements and talked about CWCI. Mrs Betty Tan became interested and it has been her tireless enthusiasm since then that has inspired all the efforts made in Malaysia for CWCI.

In 1981 CWCI became active in Malaysia. Betty Tan writes, "We had conventions in five towns: Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, Ipoh, Penang and Kuantan." I well remember the excitement and enthusiasm of those meetings. The women were so hungry for God's Word, and I had noodles for breakfast every morning!

Before CWCI formed its national committee in Malaysia, Betty had started Friendship Bible Coffee Studies from the USA. After discussion and a reading the material, I could not see the sense of introducing KYB. So the studies used by the women there are the FBC studies.

Betty Tan writes, "In October 1981, we commenced FBC studies among the local women, and it has kept on multiplying joyously! The first study was on 'Christ in the Home' with a group of ten key women in my church. The homework questions included those for husbands as well as wives. The women requested studies for the husbands too! We prayed for two years before [the] husbands agreed to join such a study, and a male guide [was] found to guide the group. That was the beginning of couples' Bible studies on 'Christ in the Home', and its sequel 'Communication', and on to book and topical studies. Marriages have been saved, or grown better and enriched, family relationships improved, and live Christians added to the church as working members!

"Non-Christians have also been added to the church as they have been brought to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ! Very often it is the women who attend the Bible studies first, and then [have] interested the husbands."

At the time of writing, there are thirty-six to forty Bible studies functioning.

It has been my privilege to visit Malaysia for CWCI several times. One visit is outstanding in my mind. The theme they had chosen for the coffee and dessert event was "More Precious Than Jewels". Thinking the programme through carefully, the committee had someone reading the Word (Precious Words), someone playing the harp (Precious Music), someone giving a testimony (Precious Experience), someone talking about diamonds (Precious Jewels), and then I was to finish with my talk on "More Precious Than Jewels".

The woman who was to talk about the diamonds evidently did not understand what the meeting was all about. She rang Betty and asked who was this woman who was speaking about something more precious than jewels, why had she been given thirty minutes on the programme, and how was she going to sell her diamonds?!! Betty tactfully put her off and managed to find a Christian lass who gave a lovely talk about diamonds, pointing out that every diamond is unique.

In May 1992 my co-worker and I were privileged to visit Kuala Lumpur again. Though but a brief visit, it was greatly encouraging to see the enthusiasm of the Chinese women there to share God's Word. We had two meetings, both of which were inspiring. About thirty potential leaders met on the first evening and we talked about leadership. The next day, over 200 enthusiastic women sang joyfully, listened to a panel answering questions and then drank in God's Word. Their hunger and enthusiasm were infectious, and we both felt uplifted.

Betty's vision for the future includes establishing a cassette ministry. Tapes are offered at each meeting which the women may buy at a reduced cost. It is an effective means of outreach, though somewhat handicapped at present by a lack of a person to oversee the programme.

For many years Betty and her co-workers were restricted in the promotion of CWCI's ministries because the organisation was not registered with the government as a recognised society. This made it difficult to organise outreach functions and meetings of that nature.

Despite these problems, the National Committee in Kuala Lumpur continued working while waiting for official recognition.

At long last, however, we can report that official registration of CWCI in Malaysia has been received. Betty writes, "The approval has finally come!! Thank you for praying, but do continue to do so, that now as an official body we'll be guided aright."

Having lived for many years in the mountainous country of Nepal, flying over the hills of Papua New Guinea brought back memories of that lovely little country. Papua New Guinea is well described in Deuteronomy: "A land of hills and valleys" and CWCI was to be privileged in touching the lives of many of its women and the expatriates working there.

The first safari to Papua New Guinea took place in 1976 in answer to an invitation from missionaries. Small-to-medium sized aircraft are the main form of transport in this wild and rugged country. That presented difficulties for CWCI, due to the distances and costs involved. Nevertheless, the safari was planned, trusting the Lord for funds. The expatriates organised the tour; there were three of us in the team, plus a woman already in Christian work in the country.

It was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. We had enjoyed a warm welcome – weather-wise and people-wise! – in Port Moresby where we were accommodated in Mapang, the comfortable mission guesthouse. From there we flew to Ukarumpa, where Wycliffe Bible Translators have their headquarters. Our hearts were filled with expectancy, and it was great to be welcome as warmly there.

During our visit the men of the town took over all the shops, pre-schools, schools and any other activities in which the women were engaged, so they could attend our meetings. The ministry of the Holy Spirit touched many.

One lovely Papua New Guinea lass, with tears running down her face, said, "Oh, your words made me feel so warm and sweet inside."

One of the expatriates, who had been going through a time of depression, wrote, "To me personally the whole Convention was truly 'spiritually refreshing'. The session for the nationals 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! ... Only God knows what the final result will be."

There are many joyful memories of that first safari. One of the team members, whose daughter and husband were working in Wewak, was delighted to be able to see her little grandson. At Wewak a couple of German expatriates were spiritually refreshed after a long, hard year at their isolated mission station. After the meetings were over, what an exciting experience it was to go for a moonlight swim fully clothed! It was not until we were out of the water that a local person told us sharks were often seen in the vicinity!

I remember on that first visit Mount Hagen and the Christian Leaders Training College at Banz were on the itinerary. At Mount Hagen they had organised an informal coffee and dessert evening. There the team members were interviewed and the Word shared that way. Again we saw the potential for giving help to both expatriates and nationals.

At Banz we met with the wives of the students for several meetings, and we realised how well CWCI could be used to help these wives of national pastors. There were plenty of opportunities for the pastors to have teaching but little thought seemed to be given to the wives. These women were delightful. Mostly simple village women (but with a great love for the Lord) they were thrilled at our woman-to-woman ministry.

In 1981 it was officially decided to affiliate with CWCI and the first national committee was formed. Other local committees came into being and KYB classes began to be established among the nationals.

In 1986 a Port Moresby committee was formed. From this committee a KYB co-ordinator for Papua New Guinea was appointed. At this time there was a great deal of political uncertainty and unrest. There had been a curfew and women were still uncertain as to the wisdom of attending the meetings. However, there was, and still is, a hunger after God's Word and the first meeting that was held saw a turnout of at least one hundred ladies. They were not disappointed by what they heard or the fellow they experienced.

Also in 1986 – five years after the formation of the first national committee – a member of the International Board conducted an extensive tour. Her intention was to assess the

situation and make suitable recommendations, supervise development of a new national committee, and introduce the concept of a workshop ministry. These workshops – titled, “Grow Where You Are Planted” – proved particularly helpful and were well accepted by both expatriate and national women. With the diversity of nationalities and the mobility of the people of Papua New Guinea, women needed to hear that God has a special purpose for them and that he would help them to grow where they are planted. The funny side of this is that in Papua New Guinea when someone has died and is buried, they say he or she has been “planted”!

While the concept of a convention ministry seems not to be appropriate for Papua New Guinea, the idea of workshops obviously caught the women’s imaginations. Such events are quite suitable for cross-cultural communication (given the right subjects) and there are many gifted women who would be capable of leading them.

In 1989 another team from Australia toured. The women of Papua New Guinea were truly inspired by God through this team. A great interest in KYB was the result and a number of KYB classes were formed.

At a meeting in Port Moresby (where there were about 200 nationals) the team were impressed with the leadership of one of the women. After discussion and prayer it was decided to approach her to fill the position of KYB Administrator of Papua New Guinea. This invitation she gladly accepted. She was then brought to Australia by the International Board to observe the functions and methods of KYB. Unfortunately, the situation has since proven not to be entirely satisfactory. At the time of writing, the position of KYB Administrator (as co-ordinator of all the work there) is under review.

The International Board later decided, on the advice of the Papua New Guinea women, that the lessons needed to be translated into Pidgin English. While classes have used the simplified English studies (which seemed to meet their needs) one KYB course has been translated and is being used. Other translations are in progress. We hope their use will increase in the future.

The women of Papua New Guinea, on the whole, struggle financially. This has meant that the cost of the KYB books has had to be subsidised. The generosity of many of the classes and individuals in Australia, who have sent gifts, has enabled the International Board to provide the books cheaply.

Again, Papua New Guinea’s wild and rugged terrain makes it difficult to help and encourage these classes. Distance and high costs also make it hard to reach the more isolated women. Nevertheless, the committee there writes, “We believe that CWCI has met and will continue to meet the needs of the women in Papua New Guinea. Through the movement we believe God will continue to meet with many needy women and change many lives.”

God often works in individuals, with the people concerned having no idea that he has plans to use the events in their lives to bring about great happenings for him. I see this clearly as I look at the story of CWCI in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe's population (eleven-and-three-quarter million) is comprised of three main groups: English speaking, white Zimbabweans – some 90,000 of them – make up one in ten of the total. A second group, the Shona (who speak Shona) live primarily in the north and north-east of the country. The third group, the Matabele (who speak Ndebele) occupy the south-east.

Phyllis Todkill, a person active in CWCI in Australia, retired and applied to go as a missionary to Zimbabwe. Having been heavily involved with KYB, she thought the programme would be useful there. However, she found it difficult to get started. She had limited time and was rather frail physically. This meant she also needed someone who would head up the work when it did get started. Wisely she kept praying and waiting to see how the Lord would lead.

At about this time Irene Osborne, who lived in Harare, decided to visit her daughter in Brisbane. While she was there she was taken by her daughter to a KYB class. She loved it and began to wonder if this particular method of study would be suitable for Zimbabwe.

Meanwhile, my co-worker and I had decided to visit a missionary family in Botswana. Having kept in touch with Phyllis we suddenly realised that perhaps we could help her and Irene to get KYB off the ground.

Through the correspondence which followed, two nights in Harare (with a meeting during the day at which we would inform the local women about KYB) were arranged. Phyllis and Irene did a great job publicising the meeting. Fifty to sixty women attended and we shared the joy of KYB. There was a great response and strong interest in starting classes. An extract from my diary tells of the stimulating time we had.

August 25, 1989: "a beautiful, cool, sunny day. The KYB meeting was really exciting with about fifty women present. We were really praising the Lord as thirty women signed the form wanting more information. We met with several women over lunch who would form a committee to organise the work. It's good to have Phyllis here who is so well informed about KYB and will be a great help to Irene who is so enthusiastic."

Following our visit Irene and Phyllis planned training days for class leaders so the work would start in the right way. The two women realised the trainees needed to know that KYB is a *method* of Bible study and not just notes to be used as they liked.

Soon, under such splendid leadership, the number of classes began to grow. Irene did a great deal of travelling in different areas, the International Board paying her expenses. The decision was also made that it would be more convenient for the lessons to be printed there (a missionary society allowing them to use their facilities).

Irene's enthusiasm is certainly contagious! Her husband's work transferred them to Bulawayo and Irene, seeing this as an opportunity to expand the work, immediately organised a meeting to share KYB with the women. An extract from Irene's letters gives a vivid picture of the way the work developed.

"I am praying very hard about KYB each day and must really learn to 'wait upon the Lord' and be led by Him and not get so impatient ... I got an application form from a woman in Tengwe (another one for your map); she is starting up a Bible study class with 6 ladies there. But in Bulawayo there is still just one study class going, but interest is spreading and I get quite a lot of enquiries. Just continue to pray for us."

In 1992 a member of the International Board visited Zimbabwe. The primary aim of her trip, as International Development Director, was to encourage the formation of a national committee. To do this meant meeting the women involved in KYB, a journey of more than 2,000 kms by car.

Six places were visited and each, according to reports, was a stimulating experience. Gwanda – south-west of Harare, close to the Botswana border and badly affected by the

drought – proved fruitful in that the black ladies there wanted to become involved in CWCI by forming a KYB class. Masvingo (south-east of Harare) has a flourishing CWCI work through a KYB led by a missionary.

Let me quote directly from the Director's report about Mutare. "Mutare is an old town at the foot of the Vumba Range [to the east] which forms the border with Mozambique. Only one of the two groups could join us but what an afternoon we had. The nine black women all came from the same church. They had such enthusiasm for winning women to Christ and yet were a disciplined, organised group. They run two classes, one for the village women who do not speak good English so the leader translates into Shona, the other group being conducted in English. They have developed a strategy for training more leaders so they can open more classes in 1993.

The remaining places visited – Harare, Gweru and Bulawayo (both to the south-west of Harare) – were encouraging, although the work in Bulawayo was hard to get off the ground. Nevertheless, an African woman set up a series of coffee mornings and a KYB class for potential leaders is now functioning.

It was possible to set up a national committee in Zimbabwe and the work is in capable hands. There are also plans to form a committee (comprised of three or four women from each ethnic group and led by a woman who was in Australia for some years) to translate the studies into Shona and Ndebele.

Phyllis Todkill – who was such a help in the beginning – has had to return to Australia due to bad health. Meanwhile, Irene's vision extends to that of reaching out to South Africa. She was able to attend the International Board meetings in Australia in 1991, and her enthusiasm and joyful expectancy of what God is going to do, through KYB, in that part of the world was an inspiration to all.

The ministry of CWCI in Australia did not originate in its present multi-faceted form. Neither did it develop overnight. The movement's progress, under the direction of God, is indeed beyond our expectations – yet the beginnings of CWCI were small. In fact, Christian Women Communicating International is a direct consequence of events that seemed anything but significant at the time.

That pattern has continued in the expansion of CWCI internationally. Today the movement is well-established in New Zealand and the United Kingdom; there are encouraging signs of growth in those countries directed by national committees. Yet each began in a small, quiet way. Full development took time.

In almost every country, commonplace events brought the first exposure:

- a woman would write to a friend overseas, speaking enthusiastically of the blessing she had received at a convention.
- a wife, transferred with her husband to another country and missing the help and support of KYB, would reminisce to her neighbours.
- a woman, entertaining a visitor from overseas, would take her along to a CWCI function.

A satisfied customer endorsing a favourite product – but the seed would be planted. The idea would begin to grow in the mind of the friend or neighbour or visitor that, perhaps, something similar could be done in her homeland. Perhaps *she* was the person God had chosen to begin the process. Soon the first small steps would be taken.

In recent years the beginnings of CWCI in a new country have frequently centred around the introduction of KYB. There may be several explanations for this. A class can begin with a minimum of six students – seemingly an easily-reachable target. The structure is well-defined and the lessons already published – presumably requiring less preparation. And the weekly format of KYB offers a regular source of support and encouragement to those who attend.

Beginning a successful class is not quite that simple, of course. KYB brings the most benefit when the method is followed carefully and precisely, and leadership is always a challenge. The rewards, however, are well worth the effort, and it is a place to start, a step to take in faith.

Today, KYB operates in isolation (that is, apart from any other ministries of CWCI) in twenty-two countries: Belgium, Bolivia, Chile, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Nauru, Paraguay, Philippines, Romania, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Tanzania and Turkey. Time and space do not permit a discussion of each area; I have opted to write about five (those with which I have had the most personal contact). I have also included a testimony written by the woman God used to plant the first KYB classes in Switzerland. Their stories are representative of all.

Without the numbers and support systems enjoyed in other lands, leading these classes poses difficulties unique to their situation. Expansion is not automatic. Nevertheless, with God all things are possible. By his grace, and with the prayer support of CWCI worldwide, we believe these classes have the potential of being the commonplace beginnings of a fully-developed, multi-faceted programme in each land.

Several years ago someone sent a copy of *Christian Woman* to a missionary from Canada working in Bolivia. She was experiencing a traumatic time in her life, and there was an article in the magazine that particularly helped her. When she wrote to the office in Australia to thank them for the article they forwarded to me. So began my correspondence with the missionary in question.

As she read *Christian Woman* she noted that in Australia we send six teams a year on safari into the outback. In one of her subsequent letters she wondered if we could send a team to Bolivia. Not even knowing where Bolivia was, I rushed to the atlas.

I discovered that Bolivia is land-locked and mountainous and is credited with being the poorest country in South America. Roman Catholicism is the state religion, but there is a freedom to practise other faiths. Protestants number about six per cent of the total population.

So discussions began as to whether a team could be sent to Bolivia. The Board decided to take a step of faith (and it was a step of faith, money-wise) and I and a soloist were invited to form the first safari team in 1982. Able to sing and to play the piano, my travelling companion was to prove a wonderful partner in every way. She had a daughter – who had been working in a Spanish-speaking country – who willingly gave us a list of words in Spanish.

Bolivia is unstable politically, as most countries in that area are. There are coups and counter coups. I remember with amusement that as we were preparing to go, we heard on the news that there had been a coup. The person who was coming with me as soloist rang to say her husband was concerned. Was it safe to go? When I was able to contact the folk in Bolivia I was told that if we waited for a time when there was no coup, we would never go! The country has had 182 revolutions in 160 years.

Once organised we travelled via Los Angeles and Lima. With some hours to wait in Lima we wanted to find the toilets and a cup of tea. Meanwhile, a friendly young man had attached himself to us. He spoke no English, and there we were, clutching our card with the Spanish words clearly written on it. So, by signs and words, we were able to get to the toilet and then to a café.

The toilet left much to be desired, and I decided there and then that my pioneering missionary days were over! The café was clean but when the order came, we were amused to discover that our friend had ordered three bottles of beer! We wondered what our prayer partners would have thought had they been able to see us.

The flight into La Paz, the highest airport in the world, with its backdrop of the spectacular Andes Mountains will never be forgotten. We had a brief stay there but were soon on our way to Cochabamba. There we were greeted with warmth and enthusiasm by our contact and her colleagues.

We immediately began to talk about the programme, a conference for missionaries being the first item. The organiser told us that three two-hour sessions had been arranged for each of the three days. I thought this was rather a heavy programme, but she looked at me and said, “Jean, many of us are starving!”

Once again I saw the tremendous potential of CWCI. The women at our event, flown in from faraway places, loved the three days we had together. The songs performed by the soloist, who is a beautifully-gifted musician, carried a real message and I often saw tears in the eyes of the women as she played and sang.

That conference over, we had a series of meetings with the national women. How colourful they were with their bright blouses, numerous petticoats and many coloured scarves. I spoke by interpretation and they seemed to be helped and encouraged. They were particularly delighted with a couple of brief songs the soloist performed in Spanish.

Class distinctions are quite marked in Bolivia. Thus, an afternoon tea was held for the more wealthy and the professional women. What a great time it was. Sitting at tables of four, beautifully dressed and so friendly, about fifty women drank in the gospel message.

One woman, a doctor, was invited by one of the missionaries. When I had finished speaking, she turned to her friend and said, "I've heard that before but I could never find anyone to tell me more."

After several good talks about the Lord we went back to our flat – hot and sticky, tired, and wondering what we had accomplished. We heard later that a hairdresser came to know the Lord. In gratitude she later gave us a shampoo and set and even did our nails (the first time in my life)!

Bolivia consists of low plains in the east with ranges of the Andes mountains rising to over 7,000 metres in the west. The river Beni, over 1,300 kilometres in length, flows north to join the river Marmorí. Working in a place called Trinidad on the banks of the river were two women missionaries. They were keen to have us visit and hold meetings there.

We flew to the lowlands in a tiny plane. What a delight it was to meet with two of God's stalwarts, dedicated saints. Their living quarters were simple, but we were served a delightful meal.

As we talked I began to realise how much they need our prayers. They were rather disappointed that there was so little opportunity for them to witness in that isolated place but even as I write these words, I realise they undervalued their service. I saw that simply by serving and living for Christ, they were telling forth his Good News of love and compassion.

The two meetings we held were delightfully informal. We sensed again the hunger of the women for God's Word. The flight back was hair-raising as we had to fly high to miss a sudden and terrific storm. For the first time in my life I had to use the oxygen mask. Scary as it was, we landed safely in Cochabamba. I have no doubt that many were praying for us.

In 1992 the same soloist and I were invited to pay a return visit to Bolivia and Paraguay. As aspects of CWCI had already been introduced in Chile it was decided to include that country as well. How we praised the Lord for the modern innovation of fax machines as the system made communication and planning so much easier.

We arrived in La Paz during a terrific snowstorm. As we had just left warm, sunny Miami we were hardly dressed for such weather. My companion was able to open her case and retrieve her boots. I did not dare open mine as I was sure I would never get it closed again! so, hoping that if anyone did look at my sandals they would think they were special snow shoes, I stepped out bravely into the snow towards the domestic terminal. There we soon learnt that one must adjust to the culture one is in as we sat all day waiting for the plane to take us to Cochabamba.

Seeing the smiling faces of the missionaries there was heart-warming. The guest house in which we stayed was comfortable and we were soon hearing all about our upcoming programme.

One of the openings God has given to CWCI is a ministry to women missionaries. Usually, when a mission sends someone to minister to their staff they send a man. The women really appreciate the opportunity to hear a woman speak – especially if she has been a missionary herself.

The first conference, attended by about seventy missionaries, lasted five days. It was an uplifting time for all. The soloist's ministry will continue as she was later able to send tapes to the women. Thirty-two applications to know more about KYB were received.

An afternoon tea for nationals was held in a beautiful café with about 170 women. We spoke through a translator, and God touched the hearts of many of the women.

In La Paz we had the heart-warming experience of meeting a woman who, with her husband, had been with the American Embassy in Canberra for a number of years. While there she had led a KYB class. When the couple were sent to Bolivia she started a study there. What a joy it was to have coffee and dessert in her lovely home and to meet with a group of women, mostly American, who attend her class.

The next day a tiring four-and-a-half-hour bus drive over the Andes took us to a beautiful hotel for a day retreat. Unfortunately the bus broke down. By the time we arrived at the place where the retreat was to be held it was virtually time to retreat home. However, the fellowship was great and all the women seemed encouraged by the brief meeting we had. The sharing of God's goodness as we travelled, waited for bus repairs, enjoyed lunch

together, listened to the soloist and studied God's Word made it an exhausting but memorable day.

Our return trip to Trinidad in the Beni was enjoyable. Usually the weather at that time of year is beautiful. However, just before we arrived there had been torrential rain. The roads were cut off and thick mud made gaining access to the churches almost impossible. A narrow plank, placed over the mud, proved to be the entrance to one. One's heart was in one's mouth as one could envisage what it would be like if one fell in! In spite of these difficulties the meetings were well attended. One tea meeting held in a hotel attracted 110-115 people – a thrilling event as it was the first time that women from all the different denominations had come together.

Our time in Paraguay also proved to be profitable. A small missionary convention, and then a great afternoon tea with seventy missionaries from various societies, showed again that CWCI does have a special contribution to make in this way. I came away from these two countries thrilled with the potential of CWCI to reach out and help both missionaries and nationals. They all need the encouragement which the sound teaching of God's Word brings.

My co-worker and I stepped off the plane at the airport in Santiago, Chile, in 1992 with great expectation, but some anxiety, in our hearts. However, as I prayed about Chile while in Paraguay the Lord had given a clear and heart-warming word: "I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do" (Ex 4:15b).

Eight years ago, in 1984, Veronica Godfray and her husband moved to Australia from Chile. During their time in Australia the most wonderful thing that ever happens to anyone happened to them. They came to know Christ as their personal Saviour and their lives were radically changed. Veronica was introduced to CWCI through a KYB class in which she studied for several years.

The family returned to Chile in 1991 and Veronica had a longing to start KYB there. As the lessons were already translated into Spanish, directly she arrived in Chile she enthusiastically began to promote the studies.

At the time of our visit, five classes were already functioning with several women having been converted. Two meetings were held and at least forty women took promotional literature on KYB. Since our departure, several able women have come forward; it is hoped that soon Chile will have a national committee. Two women have been invited to attend the International Board meetings in Australia in 1993 to see CWCI in full operation.

I was privileged to spend three years working in India during the war. During that time I developed a great love for the Indian people. In 1983, at the invitation of an Indian pastor's wife, I returned with a co-worker to that vast country. I was glad to have a companion as we both felt severe culture shock while we were there. Nevertheless, the women were delightfully friendly, and the whole visit, while tiring, was well worthwhile. The hunger for God's Word was acute and the women drank in all that we shared with them.

In Bangalore (in Southern India) a committee organised a public reception. There we met with Hindus, Muslims, Christians from different international groups, and women's groups from the university. We felt like royalty as we were introduced to everyone, given beautiful garlands and generally welcomed. This was the first time that such groups had met together in that way.

During our four days in that area there was a conference and a retreat for women, another retreat for professional workers and a meeting with pastor's wives and Christian workers at a dinner.

It is great to see what Christianity can do, as far as the caste system of India is concerned. Socially, most of the women to whom we talked in Bangalore were high caste – the wives of well-to-do business and professional men. We were also asked, however, if we would go out and speak to the 'poor' people – which we were only too glad to do.

Having been driven to a country area, we found a thatched, mud church in the middle of a sea of muddy water. I think they had thought of carrying us into the building, until I climbed out of the taxi. They then changed their minds! So, we removed our shoes and waded through the mud, trusting that there were no hook worms!

I was greatly moved when I reached the church. A little, elderly Indian woman was there with a jug of warm water, a towel and a basin. As she gently washed my feet my mind flew back to the One who took a towel, girded himself and washed the feet of his disciples. How we enjoyed that service with those simple people. They seemed to sing with such joy out of hearts full of love for God.

During our time in Bangalore we also conducted a Bible study workshop. There was a great deal of talk about Bible studies and the women wanted help to write their own. The disciplined format of KYB did not appeal to them, so we did not attempt to introduce the method. That the KYB studies would be useful and helpful I had no doubt. The future was to show this to be true.

I also went to Karala, for a period of four days, and to Kattayam (both in the south). We then travelled to Delhi (in the north) for two days of meetings. Another two-day interdenominational retreat followed, all done by translation.

At each stage of our trip we felt a tremendous need for an understanding of their cultural backgrounds, in addition to speaking through interpreters. A lot of wisdom was required in the area of Bible studies and in that of establishing links with CWCI. It is always such an unknown, when an invitation comes from overseas, as to how appropriate a connection may be with another country. In every case CWCI has to cross cultural barriers. (We've been astounded, for example, that there have been differing interpretations of words in our communication with the United Kingdom. English-speaking people should understand other English-speaking people with ease, and yet words such as "class", used in a KYB study, mean something entirely different in the cultural concepts of the United Kingdom. These are factors that we constantly face, not only with a completely different culture, but even in the semantics of words.)

Following the visit to India, it seemed that establishing a convention ministry would not be appropriate for the present. Indeed the trip appeared to have no visible results (as far as CWCI was concerned). We have no doubt, however, that work was done for the Lord which only eternity will reveal. At one retreat (attended by English-speaking women) we gave a quiz. Each person was given eight verses of Scripture which had a term associated with Jesus in it. I then asked them to write, in less than ten words, what that name meant to

them. General discussion followed. When we finished four Roman Catholic women approached me. Christ's title of High Priest had really struck them, and they told me (one with tears in her eyes) that they had suddenly realised that because they had Jesus, they did not need a priest to mediate for them! It was worth going to India for that.

As I write this I realise that I am thinking only of that area. One of the big problems, as far as CWCI is concerned, was that all the meetings were conducted by Roman Catholic and Protestant women. According to our constitution, this would not be feasible on a regular basis. That all of those involved had a deep love for the Lord I would not doubt. As you will not from later developments in India you will see that in other places there is scope for all the aspects of CWCI.

Two KYB classes, attended by nationals and expatriates, now function in the Madras area (on the southeast coast), started by missionaries who have been exposed to KYB in Australia. With the enthusiastic letters coming from these classes it has been suggested that I, as International KYB and Promotions Director, make a visit to India with the thought not only of promoting CWCI through KYB but also of suggesting that the International Board can help them to organise conventions and even weekend camps. The potential for expansion is great.

CWCI has, in each country where there is a national management board, a panel of speakers. One member of our organisation – who has been on the Australia panel for many years – is married to an evangelist who travels widely. By travelling with him, she has visited many countries of the world, including the USA. It was while she was there in the early seventies that she met Fran Young and her husband, missionaries on furlough from service in Jamaica.

During their time together, the conversation turned to KYB. As soon as Fran read the material she realised its potential for the women of Jamaica. Classes were started, following their return to the field, and Fran was thrilled as she saw what God could do through systematic study of his Word.

Sometime later the evangelist and his wife visited Jamaica. Her letter to me describes what happened as Fran introduced the studies.

“I’ll never forget those early meetings on the verandas, Sister Davis’ gift of the orange and purple beads – and the meetings first at Bethel. They had a forty-four gallon drum with a cloth as ‘pulpit’ and the seats just boards across the cement blocks. Dear Sister Davis came in ... walking with some difficulty because she is a big lady. Just as we were about to begin she sat down heavily on the back section and there was a crack and a groan and Sister Davis was end up, petticoats and all, and the seat broken through. Poor old dear was helped up and re-located. ‘I’m alright Sister Francis,’ she said and to everybody’s relief, just adjusted her glasses and opened her Bible and we got on with the meeting. Never a dull moment in Jamaica.”

As the classes grew, Fay Singh, a Jamaican national, became Fran’s helper. They made a great team. As the letter continues, “The Lord really had His hand on some of these ladies who have so many difficulties and yet so much joy in the Lord – and real faith. It is a privilege to know they pray for us.”

The island of Jamaica is part of the West Indies in the Caribbean Sea. Cuba, the Bahamas and many smaller islands make up the rest of the archipelago, the whole area covering about 152,950 square kilometres. Colonised by the Spanish from 1494 onwards, large numbers of Negro slaves were imported to work the land. The British established a colony there in 1655; the country gained independence in 1962.

Jamaica itself covers 6,833 square kilometres. It exports bauxite, sugar and bananas. The population is roughly 3,000,000 and the major language English. Protestants are in the majority of the Island’s religions.

It was my privilege to visit Jamaica in 1989 and to meet the local women personally. They are all poor, and Fran has to provide transport each time there is a study.

I was amused at my first sight of their minibus as it had no door. Asking where it was, I was told it rattled so much they removed it!

Arriving at the first meeting place, Fran, who was driving said, “You all get out and I will hold the handbrake on.” (As we clambered out they told me that the week before, while sitting on the veranda having their class, they had looked up to see the minibus gently rolling down the slope!) A large stone was then placed under each front wheel, and we proceeded into the class.

How heart-warming it was to hear these women share.

The Holy Spirit had made the KYB material as relevant to these women of a completely different culture as to the women for whom the notes were originally written. Each class member told what KYB had done for her; their testimonies were the same as those from other lands.

“I thought my husband was the difficult one in our marriage, but the Lord showed me it was me.”

“The Bible has really come alive, praise the Lord!”

“These studies have changed my whole lifestyle.” I saw afresh the power of the Holy Spirit to interpret the Word in exactly the way we need it, regardless of culture or background.

The women were overwhelmingly friendly and took me all over the island. Although the KYB classes, at the moment, are all in and around Kingston, we believe God is going to open up the whole area. Fran and Fay were able to attend the International Board meetings in Australia in 1991. They returned to Jamaica determined to reach all the different denominations with the studies.

It has been great to see how the women of Australia have responded to the need in Jamaica. Contributions keep coming to the International Board from those who want to help subsidise the notes that are sent regularly from Australia.

In 1992 I was able to visit Jamaica again. Fay Singh, who has assumed leadership of the work, met my co-worker and me at the airport. Unfortunately we were not able to visit the classes as they were in recession.

It was very hot, but no one hurries there, and we had a delightful time in every way. The most encouraging time occurred with twenty-three warm-hearted, friendly, Jamaican women. The time spent sharing what God had done for them through the KYB lessons was just great. Several of the women were not familiar with the KYB method and Fay was encouraged as they asked many questions about the study. We left Jamaica, joyfully anticipating what God is going to do there. We trust we were an encouragement to those women who love the Lord with all their heart.

A Testimony

As a young girl in Switzerland I was shy and I suffered because of that. With my work as a secretary I started to get more confident, but was still self-conscious inside. My teenage dreams were to have a loving husband, children and friends, and to visit other countries.

Some years later I was married with three children (then aged five, two and one) and was living in Sydney, Australia, overlooking the harbour down to the Pacific. I remember standing on the balcony, looking at the marvellous view, knowing that my major dreams were fulfilled yet there was still an emptiness within me. I didn't know what was wrong with me, and it was easy to forget the feeling because I had lots of work with three lively children.

The first few months in Australia were wonderful. Then came winter, and with it illness. We were sick for weeks, one after the other. In the end I was exhausted and had broncho-pneumonia. My husband was away on business in New Zealand, and for the first time I could not cope alone; I had to ask for help.

Although I had a Christian education in Switzerland I didn't even think of asking God. I felt I was living in a black hole without light. With the help of two women I got on my feet again, and after a family holiday prescribed by the doctor, life was back to normal.

One of these women invited me afterwards to a Bible study – a KYB class. It was beautiful to have one hour a week without children! But the first time I went I was shocked to learn that everybody was meant to talk about Jesus and the Bible. I was never disinterested in religion but I had only listened – never talked. At home I answered the questions and that gave me courage to go again. After a few weeks I realised that we were all different but there was a special love which I had not experienced before.

Soon after, God showed me that all my worldly success was worth nothing in his eyes. A few days later, God made me realise that not only did he love the whole world but he loved me personally, and the Bible was true and his personal word to me. This changed my life, after ten years of searching.

The empty space within me was filled with Jesus, with a God interested in all my problems, big and small. Life did not get easier, but a light, a joy and a peace was within me now.

I was excited, but my husband was rather shocked when I tried to give him the same experience. Through bitter months I learned: never, ever try to change your husband. We can, and should, pray for our husbands, but only God will work on them in the right time. We should be ready to be changed by God ourselves, and love and accept the husband as he is.

I was eager to learn as much as I could. One year later I was asked to be a KYB leader. I felt completely unworthy and unsuitable, but eventually I accepted. Today I know that this helplessness was good – I had to rely completely on God's help. I often prayed, and still pray, this prayer: "Lord, you put me in this situation. Now help me. I am unable to do it, give me the right words and thoughts" – and he never let me down. It's an exciting way of living.

After four years in Sydney we had to go back to Switzerland. First of all I complained. In Sydney I could work for God, was learning a lot about the Bible, had beautiful Christian friends; I definitely didn't want to leave. After a while I learnt that God didn't promise us a nice, agreeable life within a Christian circle, but that he wants to use us. As soon as I told him that I was happy to go back, as long as it was his plan, I felt a wonderful peace. I was sure that God could use me, but I didn't have a clue how.

Back in Switzerland I needed that certainty. I was all alone. The local Protestant church had only a few old people, there were no Bible study groups, no women's groups, no nothing. The thought started to grow that I should begin something myself. For three months I prayed and didn't say anything; after that the doors suddenly seemed to open to talk to my neighbours about my faith. We started a small Bible group. I prayed for more

women and a book that would be suitable. In amazing ways God gave me all I asked. I had worries and doubts, but looking back I can only marvel at how God can lead if only we trust his guidance.

A week before I started the bigger group with about nine women. I felt more and more scared. What on earth had I done? I scarcely knew the women and they didn't know each other. The only relief was prayer. God had organised it and I prayed that this group would be bonded together.

I didn't want a chatting group where everybody shows her best side, but a caring group with Jesus in the middle. From the first day this prayer was answered. As we studied Bible-based books about ordinary women, the group was amazed that the Bible had answers for today's problems. I started to translate the Acts and John and Jude studies of KYB into German. Both courses were a great success.

When I think of a possible new lady for KYB, I invite her first to my house for coffee and ask God to lead the discussions. If I feel there is a misunderstanding or problem with one of the women, I first of all pray, then phone or meet her alone and talk openly with her. In that way we have never had a major problem in our groups; I encourage all the women to be open and honest towards each other.

Two major things I learnt through the years:

1. My family comes first, and then the outside Christian work.
2. I should only do the jobs God wants me to do.

To all other requests I have to say no. Often I need a lot of prayer till I discover if something is God's will for me.

I'm happy with my two groups but I have a strong desire to find a prayer partner who feels the same longing. I pray for women who have the time and are willing to lead groups. The women I know are either newly converted or too busy already; but God knows the solution. Prayer is all-important and often I enjoy praying. But I also have days and weeks where I have real problems in settling down to pray. So I am thankful for all the prayers that other people pray for us!

Our perception and appreciation of God's activity in the world is, at times, limited by our humanity. Either we fail to see his hand at work, or grow frustrated at protracted delays, or feel blocked by circumstance. In such instances it can be easy to quit, to assume that the end we desire is 'not God's will'.

That can be a false or illogical assumption to make. Isaiah 55:8 states, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." We will never fully understand God's plans. It is also a fact that God wants all of humankind to acknowledge him as Saviour and Lord and to grow to maturity in their relationship with Christ (2Pe 3:9). He is always working towards that aim.

Thus, we may – or may not – be facing a dead end. In the purpose and will of God, other options also exist: the result we seek may eventuate through a different means; it may come at another time. The outcome is God's; our responsibility is to remain committed to ministry, to do what he asks us to do – in spite of difficulties or delays.

The point I am making is well-illustrated by the story of CWCI's preliminary contacts with the Solomon Islands.

This tropical paradise lies south-east of New Guinea. It is an archipelago, covering an area of 29,000 square kilometres, with a population of 200,000. Ninety-two per cent are Melanesian, and six per cent Polynesian. (I don't know what the remaining per cent are, as that doesn't quite come to 100!) They speak seventy-eight distinct languages.

The problems of taking the gospel to these people are many and complex. Yet, seventy per cent of the population is Protestant, mostly Anglicans, also Methodists. There is also the South Seas Evangelical Church. Eighteen per cent are Roman Catholic; the rest practise animism.

The Solomon's acquired independence from Britain in 1977. While the economy is under-developed and dependent on foreign aid, it does have good agricultural potential.

Considering the island and tribal loyalties which divide it, this newly-independent, little nation could develop acute difficulties. Continued peace and freedom for the spread of the gospel is a definite need.

The church is strong and has many believers in all walks of life. There are some talented, spiritual Christian leaders who have influence far beyond these islands.

The church there needs discernment in knowing the true from the false. Local and foreign sects are making great inroads. The people also need to be freed from tribalism and division within the churches. With so many small language groups, translating the Bible is a colossal task.

I was invited, as International Promotion Officer, to visit the nation in September 1984. The invitation actually came from a gentlemen but was made on behalf of the Christian women there!

When I was there I visited seven different centres. Travelling and living conditions were extremely primitive but – believe it or not – I spoke at twenty-seven different meetings. At most places an interpreter was required, but there was never less than 200 to 300 women present. Each event lasted two to three hours, and all the meetings were attended by men. This is a ministry by women to other women – but sometimes it's hard to keep the men away!

Six hundred women came to the last meeting. Suddenly the pastor's wife who was leading the proceedings burst into tears. When she became more composed she said, "This is the very first time in the history of the Solomon Islands that women have met together like this on an interdenominational basis."

For a variety of reasons, we do not envisage establishing CWCI, as an organisation, in the Solomon's for the moment. There was an acknowledged lack of Bible reading and personal quiet times, and KYB would seem to offer the ideal solution. The country's high rate of illiteracy and the large number of still-unwritten languages, however, are major

stumbling blocks. Does this mean we have reached a dead end, or are we facing nothing more than a detour or a minor delay?

In the future, it might well be that CWCI could develop and offer training seminars, with the thought of motivating people to adult literacy – thus encouraging the women to read their Bibles. The institution of this type of ministry developed by CWCI would also encourage the women to assume more responsibility spiritually, to take the initiative in a male-dominated society.

Yes, we certainly feel that we have much to offer these lovely people, but we must wait on the will of God. He will accomplish his purposes, in his own way, in the Solomon Islands. Our part in the process is two fold: to be faithful in prayer and to respond quickly and obediently as God leads. The timing is his to determine.

When one looks back and praises God for all that has passed, 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 to the changing world around us. CWCI 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 '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 women who are one-hundred percent 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 to God. We need those who are willing to be burdened for women worldwide, who will not be constantly concerned with themselves and their own problems and needs but 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 CWCI. We need to remember that we never stop learning. This world in which we live is constantly changing, and the thinking of people is changing rapidly 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.

The potential of the vast area of TV, radio and publishing leaves us gasping. We have a message that meets the need. The way the message is to be sent will often change, but the message itself will never change. We need to be constantly alert for the moving of the Holy Spirit. He can, and will guide us in different directions. The opportunities are there, and we have to move with him.

Never forgetting the aims of CWCI, let us look to him of whom it is 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 66:8-9 LB).

Beyond Expectations

by Jean H. Raddon
foreword by Grace Collins

The 1977 publication telling the story of Christian Women Communicating Intl.
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Since the writing of *Beyond Expectations*, CWCI has advanced nationally and internationally. The original name – Christian Women’s Conventions International – has been changed to Christian Women Communicating International. The office has become the international headquarters. Many new ways of helping women have emerged such as workshops, seminars, an expanded tape ministry and even radio broadcasting.

Underlying it all, of course, are the main aims of the movement: to bring women to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and to deepen their Christian faith.

At the last meeting of the International Board, it was decided that a further record of God’s marvellous leading should be written. I was invited to do this.

Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom now have their own national management boards. Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Holland and Zimbabwe have established national committees to administer the work in their countries. Additionally, CWCI is currently represented in 22 other countries around the world ... exciting developments.

Although this is a history book, we trust it will bring great joy and blessing as it is read. I have realised in doing the research that it is surely true that God is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”.

Jean H. Raddon