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Combatting Domestic Violence, A Church Responsibility

By Revd Jenny Chalmers



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A long time ago, in 1982, I joined with a group of women and men in Lower Hutt to provide a place of refuge for women and children who were the victims of domestic violence. We worked hard buying, outfitting and staffing a large house which seemed to be pretty much always full. I volunteered on Friday and Saturday nights to collect women to take them from their situation to the Refuge. On these nights I generally picked up bruised and battered women and frightened children, from the police station.

We worked with the local police sergeant to change the police attitude from the dismissive 'it's only a domestic' to one of taking seriously the (common) assaults that women and children were experiencing. We felt a huge sense of achievement when this happened and when it became national policy. It remains so to this day.

I went on to sit on the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges and I felt we had come of age when the first Co-coordinator, Rosie Ashe, received a Queens Service Medal for her work. I believed we were making progress,

and that once people understood the illogic of violence, they would overcome it within themselves.

I was naïve, but even so, thirty years later I am dismayed to read that the latest New Zealand figures show that a third of all women experience domestic violence. There is no doubt that there will be episodes of violence amongst Anglican

clergy and parishioners, because we know that violence and particularly intimate partner violence transcends race, class and income.

There is an extensive body of international research that clearly indicates that domestic violence is gender-based (i.e. disproportionately affects women and girls) and that the force behind this is unequal power relations between men and women, and an adherence to rigid gender stereotypes, within a broader culture of the use of, and acceptance of violence. The ideas behind the film *Once were Warriors* are more prevalent than we would like to admit.

Statistics provided by both the New Zealand Police statistics and the New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey are slightly misleading because the term 'Family violence' does not acknowledge that violence within the home is primarily male violence perpetrated against women and children. While Domestic violence is a complex issue and while the context of gender equality is the framework within which violence occurs, violence also needs to be considered in conjunction

Grandmother Esther and Daisy Esther. Daisy recalled her grandmother as someone who was strict but who loved her dearly. She stayed with her Grandmother in her simple little home. She slept in her feather bed and ate biscuits thickly spread with Jersey butter.

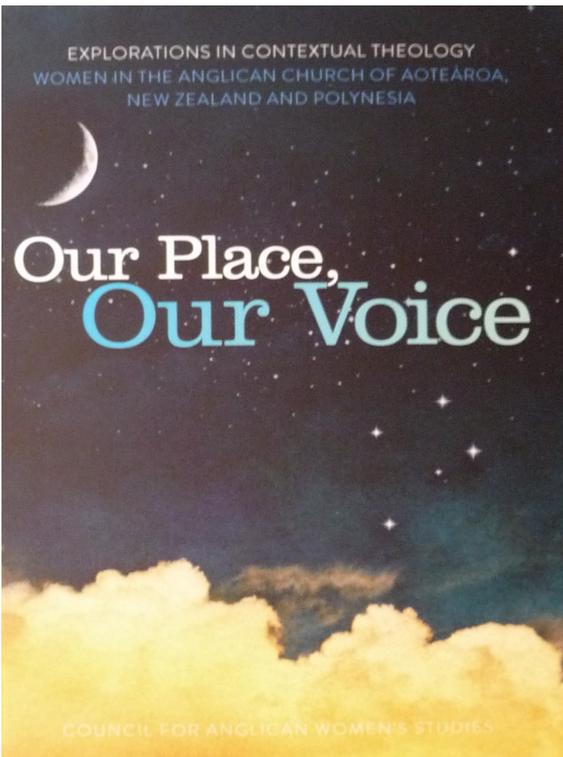
The Methodist Church was part of family life. John and Henrietta took their large family to the Methodist Church at First Tower. Faith was nurtured and Daisy enjoyed singing. She had beautiful soprano voice and sang solos at an early age. She continued singing throughout her life and sang in this Cathedral Choir. We sang Methodist hymns in her last hours. I asked her favourite 'Just as I am, without one plea' she said. The Cathedral Choir sang that in Fijian as she was brought into the Cathedral today.

There was a special bond between Daisy and her father whose birthday was on 17th April. Daisy felt she was her father's birthday present. "How did you know he loved you?" I asked recently, "Did he tell you?" "He never told me, it was the look in his eyes!"

One of the greatest tragedies in her life was the death of her beloved father. He suffered a blow to the head which proved fatal. John Querée was on the Jersey docks when a beam of timber unloaded by a crane swung and hit him. His head injury meant he died slowly in pain. Sand was put down outside West View to deaden the noise of traffic. He died on 17th April, his 49th birthday. This was a huge tragedy for the large family. The death of her beloved father shattered the young Daisy's world. She missed him always.

Older brothers and sisters were helping and Daisy left school to earn a little to help her mother care for the family. Eventually she worked for Jersey Dairies. She became a beautiful young woman. In her early twenties, she met a handsome English man (born in Rotherham, Yorkshire) who came to do seasonal work digging potatoes and stayed to work for Jersey Dairies and play football. John White brought her bunches of pansies and won her heart forever. Some did not approve of this Englishman. John brought prospective mother in law the Methodist Henrietta the occasional bottle of brandy needed "strictly for medicinal purposes" and may be won some approval that way.

John left Jersey to find better employment in Plymouth, England. John and Daisy became engaged by post. John sent an engagement ring which Daisy wore with pride. Larger events were occurring, the rumblings and beginnings of World War II. The Channel Islands near the coast of France were vulnerable to invasion as German armies advanced. Channel Islanders who could were advised to evacuate. Daisy had the opportunity to leave on a Cement Boat. She talked to her Mother and expected her family to follow. Dick Perchard (sister Olive's husband) took her down to the docks on his motor bike. A recent recall is that her leg was burnt on the cylinder of the bike. With



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others she spent time in the hold of the Cement Boat in a hazardous crossing the Channel waiting outside Weymouth because it was the time of Dunkirk when little ships crossed the Channel to rescue thousands of troops from the beaches of Normandy. It was May 1940. Some have commented on Mum's "indomitable spirit", some would say "the Dunkirk spirit". Daisy was 22 when she left Jersey to find her fiancé. German Occupation of the Channel Islands began on 1st June.

Disembarking, Daisy found herself on the docks which were teeming with activity. There was a man in uniform directing. She approached, discovering him to be her father's younger

brother Wilfred, a retired sea Captain she hadn't seen since her father's death. He took her to a train bound for the south west of England. She shared a compartment with soldiers who were kind, offering sandwiches and cups of tea. They reached Plymouth at night. An Officer offered to take her to her destination in his taxi. She tried to wake the household where John was stay-

Workington she made interesting friends and did War Work. She worked in a steel factory checking ingots of steel. She remembered being told at work that the Islands had been liberated.

After hospitalization in Calcutta, John returned from the War. The War had taken a huge toll. He was broken in health both physically and psychologically. He wrote to Adele (Mum's older

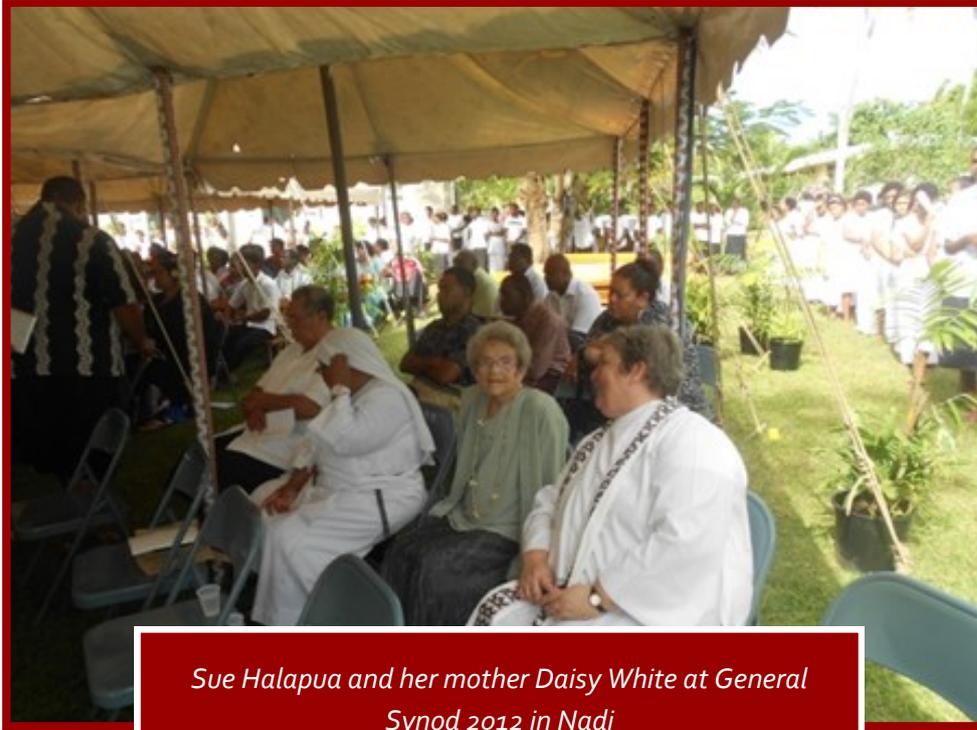
sister) saying that he didn't know how he would adjust to ordinary life after his experiences. John who had been in the peak of health was told he would never work again but the Government was obliged to take on a certain number of ex service men and he struggled to go to work. There were often long bouts of sick leave. Daisy stood by him always "For better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death us do part." "Why are you so good to me?" he asked towards the end of his life. "Why do you think I am good to you?" She loved him.

After the War, there was rationing. It was hard to make ends meet. The arrival of a baby girl was another challenge to a couple struggling with the dislocation and effects of the War. There was renewed

contact with the family who had been through the German Occupation for five years and had known great hardship. Visits of family and visits to Jersey were always very important, also trips to Hampshire and then Cranbury Park to May and George. In Jersey we stayed often with Olive and Dick (my godparents) and once with Ray and Josie. Mum kept wonderful contact with her sisters and brothers and nephews and nieces throughout her life. They were all special in their way to her.

Among the many things Mum taught me was care for older people and surprisingly in the mono-culture in which I grew up, she fostered an interest in people of other lands, colours cultures. This was to have huge consequences in my life!

Mum once confided that she had wanted to marry a minister and be a missionary. She would never have owned to being anything as grand as "a missionary". But at the age of sixty five she gave away or sold the little she had and came to the other end of the world to live with us and be part of life and ministry in Fiji. She came to our wedding in 1977 and courageously "gave me away" to Winston. She came to stay in 1983 when Anthony was small and Joseph was months old. We owe her an enormous debt of gratitude for her quiet and strong help in bringing up her beloved grandsons. She also helped the work in the Church in so many ways unseen and humble ways by providing hospitality and being supportive of us and the many activities.



Sue Halapua and her mother Daisy White at General Synod 2012 in Nadi

ing but was reduced to sitting on the doorstep. She was questioned by a Policeman who at first was dubious about her story. Eventually the Policemen banged on the door with a truncheon and she was reunited with John.

It was war time. John and Daisy were married in a Registry office. "We made sacred vows that day." They had to run to an air raid shelter soon after the ceremony. Ten days after the wedding, John was called up. He joined the Royal Artillery and eventually saw action in the Burma Campaign. John and Daisy were separated for a traumatic four years.

There was little if any news from Jersey. Daisy was left in Plymouth which was badly blitzed by German bombers. An incendiary fell on her bed, fortunately she was not in it. Nearby buildings were completely destroyed. (During a recent hurricane when we were battered down and the winds howled and branches and coconuts crashed, Mum recalled the black outs and the doodlebugs which whirred, crashed and destroyed.) With the family of her lodgings, she began to spend nights on Dartmoor. They camped in a removal van. Those who could were advised to leave Plymouth. At this time she was alerted to a Red Cross message in a newspaper from her brother Ray in Cumberland. Ray was the only other member of the family who had escaped the German Occupation. She left Plymouth to join Ray and Josie becoming close to them and their young family In

Mum was famous for her roast dinners, her mince pies and Christmas puddings, her cumquat marmalade and her knitting. Not long ago she knitted a penguin, (Pingu) for Aurora and she has completed a jacket and a hat for Maui – persevering and picking up umpteen dropped stitches. She wrote letters and cards and loved getting them.

She discovered a new family in the Halapua's. There was Winston of course, sisters Mele, Litia and Elenoa are here today and niece Lillian with her husband and Mum's namesake Daisy. Daisy carried the wreath, not daisies but white orchids with a golden bow.

When we moved to Auckland and I found myself Vicar of the Parish of Holy Trinity Otahuhu, Mum was "clergy wife", answering the phone, welcoming people, providing hospitality, helping the ministry of the Drop In Centre – the Rainbow Room. Here she made "heart connections". A former Parish Secretary, Alison Jacob, wrote the words on the Order of Service: "For a tiny person she cast an enormous shadow - well, maybe not a shadow but an all encompassing shawl of loving"

Throughout her life Mum made "heart connections". She was a shrewd judge of character but she believed in people. There are people who just knew they were special to her. This was true even towards the end of her life. We are grateful to Lusi and



In the garden at Bishop's House, Suva, Fiji

Aminiasi and those who were close to her in her last days. Willie Kinahoi from New Zealand and Rob Storey from Australia are here today and regard Daisy as their Grandma also. Dan Houg Lee from St Luke's Suva Point (that little Church dear to her heart) greeted her on our return to Fiji with words she cherished "Grandma, you have come back!"

From Auckland we returned to Fiji when Winston became Diocesan Bishop and Archbishop. Mum was in her nineties. Again she embraced change. She wanted to be with those she loved. It was good Joseph was with us initially and helped us settle. Mum chose a new adventure, was glad to renew some relationships, make others and liked being called "Grandma". She was glad to be present at the wedding of Anthony and Lorraine in Savusavu and to be Great

- Grandmother to Aurora and Maui.

A drive by the sea or sitting on the sea wall continued to give her enormous pleasure and, looking back, was a source of inner strength. Mum endured increasing frailty with frustration but also with courage and dignity. Mum was courageous and caring always. To her last breath she wanted us to care for one another. She has left us an enormous legacy, not in terms of money, but in terms of the way she cared. Mum, Grandma. We will go on giving thanks for you. Rest in peace and rise in glory.

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The Centre for Anglican Women's Studies, commonly known as the **Women's Studies Centre** was set up to serve and to advance the interests and needs of the women of this Church particularly those undertaking Theological training.

The Link Representatives from each Diocese and Hui Amorangi have been chosen for their leadership ability to identify, gather, facilitate, resource and encourage women in their educational preparation for ministry whether lay or ordained. It is hoped that the Women's Studies Centre can continue to enjoy the support of each Diocese and Hui Amorangi in this endeavour.

The issue of increasing numbers of women in representative positions across the councils and committees of the Church is seen as a high priority and the practice of intentional mentoring by those already in national and international representative roles is seen as a good way to expose women of this church to fulfill their potential as leaders.

Ensuring that women's voices and stories are heard now and in the future is also one of our continued aims whether it be by traditional methods of publication or using more contemporary technologies like website publication. We remain optimistic that through continued support, the needs of women throughout this Province will be valued and recognized.

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