



December 2023

### *From The President*

Welcome to first Circle Newsletter. I hope you will enjoy the articles on the theme of Advent and other AAW news. As we approach the season of Advent may we reflect on the celebration of the Lord our Saviour's birth and the Nativity story. Let me take this opportunity to wish you a very happy Christmas with family and friends and a safe and healthy New Year. I would also like to thank you for being members of our organisation.

### **The Commercialisation of Christmas**

When I chose the theme of Advent for my first Circle Newsletter as your NZAAW President I went to the Anglican Website. I see the ease with which my grandchildren turn to this medium for information and inspiration and I was not disappointed. I came across an excellent article by the Venerable Keith Dean-Jones Rector of the Anglican Parish of Bundaberg Archdeacon of Burnett Australia. He writes: *"We live in a culture that commercialises Christmas"*. In New Zealand it can start as early as August with Christmas trees in Supermarkets. He refers to Advent as a *'Cinderella Season'* *"Symbolised by tinsel and coloured lights"*. However, this can be an opportunity to rediscover the true meaning of Advent in the face of materialism. He urges us to turn away from distractions and self-indulgence. It recognises Jesus as "Emmanuel" or "God with us" and to repent of self-absorption. He goes on to speak of our Eucharist and concludes with the following: *"I feel that the 'real presence' of Jesus that we experience in our own lives and the 'real presence/experience' in gathering, word and sacrament is a 'real presence' when we minister in his name. Jesus wants us to gather before we are scattered, to listen before we speak, to receive from him before we give, and to meet him when we care for our friends and neighbours"*.

### **Church Events**

#### ***Interfaith Service***

On 15 October 2023, I attended a service at St Matthew's Church in Hastings. The Reverend Dorothy Brooker, (an AAW member), presided over the service. It brought together people from different religions to celebrate their faith and religious beliefs. It was an opportunity to highlight the religious diversity in our Hawkes Bay region. There were representatives from the following faiths: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Bahai Faith, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh. An explanatory booklet published by the Religious Diversity Centre

Aotearoa New Zealand offered an outline of each of these religions. This was particularly helpful for me to appreciate the religious diversity represented. Peace was the theme. Each of the religions shared aspects of their religious beliefs. This occurred through words, chants and music. I was particularly impressed with the young people (supported by adults) who took part. At the conclusion there was an opportunity to light a candle for peace with those present at the service. With the war between Israel and Palestine in early October on our minds, (and the conflict in Ukraine) this was a poignant reminder of the need for peace in our world.

### ***Hamlin Fistula NZ***

In November I attended a meeting hosted by my local Church, St Luke's Havelock North, on Hamlin Fistula NZ. The latter is named in honour of the Co-founders, Nobel nominee Dr Catherine (an Australian) and her Kiwi husband Reginald 'Reg' Hamlin (a Kiwi from Napier). She explained what Obstetric Fistula is: "One of the worst things to happen to a woman or girl is an Obstetric Fistula, an internal injury caused by an obstructed labour when adequate maternity care has not been available, that leaves her incontinent, humiliated and often cut off from her community". The speaker, a trained midwife gave a first-hand account of her experiences working for the organisation in Ethiopia. She explained that pregnant women from isolated locations, face difficulties of distance to receive maternity care and this can result in the risk of obstetric Fistula. "Tragically over 90% of women who suffer Obstetric Fistula will give birth to a stillborn baby, often after an agonising obstructed labour that has lasted several days".

If you would like further information you can contact: Hamlin Charitable Hospitals Trust.

PO Box 6395 Christchurch 8442, Phone: 020 4100 9412 Website: [www.hamlinfistula.org.nz](http://www.hamlinfistula.org.nz)

I would like to acknowledge Hamlin Fistula NZ for the information for this article.

### **Possible Closer Relationship Between NZAAW and Mother's Union**

Recently I had an approach by e-mail from the Reverend Sarah Pigeon. She is the National President of the Mothers Union for New Zealand. Like me, she is embarking on a three-year term. She was approaching me on the possibility of having a closer relationship for our two organisations. I thanked her for her initiative to contact me. At the beginning of November, we had our first Zoom meeting and we discussed some ways we could get together. She suggested International Women's Day to be held on Friday March 8, 2024. I have had a positive response from NZAAW Executive. After consultation with her Executive, she had a positive response also. Sarah and I will be making arrangements for how both our organisations can celebrate this important Day. I will keep you posted!

*Cynthia Prince, President*

### **Overseas and Outreach**

How can we raise money for our sisters in Uganda who are linked to the Rwenzori Special Needs Foundation?

Advent is a time of potential. Women's fundraising can falter at this time, but try if you can, to start your group process. While we AAW face challenges such as gender bias, tiring family commitments, some mobility challenges for our older members, and limited access to technology, we can still plan now, how to meet our aim of \$10,000.



## Fundraising Ideas:

- For a slow and almost painless process: Encourage your AAW members to use a small jam jar to put all one-dollar coins in it. It's amazing how they add up over the year until next November.
- For a one day special: Have a women's market day, with car boot and stall sales. This will need wide community advertising and a good organiser.
- Another one-day event: Have an art day – where each member of your group brings a painting she has done or one she no longer needs in her home to sell. Use a Facebook boost to advertise in your area.
- For a couple of weekends: Have your group members bring and sell their baking or plants in your local market or your church.
- Free flow timing: Give each member of your group \$5.00 and challenge them to multiply it in any way they can before November 2024.
- Share your ideas on the NZAAW Facebook page and we'll all benefit.



*Advent blessings to you all.  
Raewyn Dawson, Overseas & Outreach Co-Ordinator*



## Social Concerns

As we all get caught up in the pre-Christmas rush and feel the associated stress, (imagined or real) charitable organizations are facing their hardest time of the year, in a year that has seen increasing levels of hardship for greater numbers of New Zealanders than ever.

It is however the resilience of these organisations that shine through at this time of their year and their ongoing determination to make sure that all New Zealand families get to share in the joy of the Christmas season. There is a promotion by one particular charitable organization which features a young boy saying that if he could receive one thing for Christmas it would be a decorated pavlova that he could share with his whole whānau - not a toy or gift but a food item for sharing. Children, it sadly seems, are aware of the financial hardships their families are facing.

There are thankfully many charitable organisations doing amazing things such as the Auckland City Mission and other city missions throughout New Zealand. **Auckland's Angels** is an initiative which encourages people to be someone's angel by hosting a food and gift drive, setting up an Auckland's Angel online donation page or ordering gifts online to be delivered direct to the Auckland Mission.

Donations of children's gifts and nonperishable food items are called for as usual and drop off points are conveniently located at Council library and recreation centres.

Another organization that has Angels in its title is **Bald Angels** - a Northland based organization that focuses on putting smiles on children's faces at Christmas by distributing Gifts of Angel Aroha such as Angel Bears, Angel Sacks and Wool for Warmth and addresses teen's needs by providing Teen Hygiene Packs. The organisation's mission is 'Being an Angel – because **ALL** kids deserve to thrive'.

**Give a Gift of Hope** is the title given to The Salvation Army's Christmas outreach programme. As well as donations of kai and presents for under the tree, givers are being encouraged to buy **Gifts of Hope** that bring about real change for people such as a lifestyle programmes that empower Kiwis with life changing self-development, fosters self-esteem, resolves issues and boosts mental wellbeing. The gift option of 'Whānau support- Shape a child's future' which provides access to early childhood education and seeks to empower parents through positive parenting programmes demonstrates Salvation Army's recognition of the importance of laying down a strong foundation in childhood to support positive lifelong outcomes for individuals and the wider community.

As well as the large charitable organisations reaching out at Christmas it is great to see the work of smaller local charitable organisations making a difference. In my local community The Coast Community Trust recently held a fundraiser event called Dining for a Difference. It was great to be in a room filled with so many people supporting the work of this trust to bring positive change to the lives of many people who live in my local community.

Take time to check out what local and nationwide charities are doing in your community this Christmas and how you can contribute. Your contribution will make a difference!

Meri Kirihimete!

Julie Walker, Social Concerns

### Christmas Craft – from Pat Vincent, Wellington Diocesan AAW President

For our November meeting St John's & St Michael's AAW Group made Christmas tags. Lee Sheppard, one of our committee members, provided the wonderful kits and direction. We all had lots of fun making some lovely tags. Although we were all provided with the same materials, we were surprised by the individual creativity shown. Hopefully there will be some very nicely decorated Christmas presents.



Merry  
CHRISTMAS