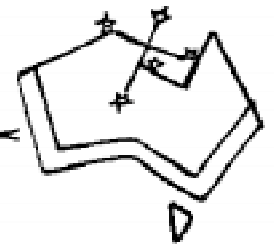


WATAC INC. NEWS



FEBRUARY 2006

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Be Part of the Formal Review of WATAC

As I indicated in our last Newsletter, WATAC has embarked on a Formal Review of the organization. 2006 marks twenty years of existence for us so it seems very fitting to both celebrate our life and to take a good look at who we are and how we are. Those words are easy enough to say but the process is much more demanding, which is why we decided to get some help with the doing of it. Paul Bullen has agreed to provide an objective look at WATAC and what we do and the way we do it. The WATAC Inc. Committee has met with Paul a couple of times in order to enable him to get a feel for WATAC and our hopes and dreams.

As a result of all this, there is a survey included with this Newsletter which we are asking you to take time out of your already too busy life to fill in and return to us. Please, please, please fill it in this week so that it does get done and into the post so that we can put the information together and channel the findings back to you in as short a time as possible. Without your response we can't do this, so we are urging you to be a positive part of this activity. Be part of our twentieth birthday activities of which this is our first! Thank you so much—WATAC is its members.



Dates for Your WATAC Diary

Wednesday 8th March	International Women's Day Breakfast (UNIFEM) 7 a.m. - 9 a.m.
Tuesday 14th March	Slavery Today - Human Trafficking. Gleeson Theatre, Australian Catholic Uni. Strathfield. 7 p.m.
Friday 28th April	N.S.W. Ecumenical Council Dinner at Canterbury Race Course Convention Centre 7 p.m.
Saturday 6th May	Gender Commission Workshop "The Audacity to Hope" Canberra CACW Therese Vassarotti 10 a.m. - 3.30 p.m.
Saturday 13th May	Gender Commission Workshop "The Audacity to Hope - Women Dreaming Together". St Scholastica's Conference Centre, Glebe Point 10 a.m. - 3.30 p.m.
Tuesday 16th May	WATAC Luncheon at NSW Parliament House 11.30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

WATAC Luncheon at NSW Parliament House

This is always a significant and most enjoyable event, so we are giving you plenty of time to put the date into your diary: Tuesday 16th May.

Because this year marks twenty years since our very first grassroots WATAC Group meeting, we are looking at this Luncheon as an opportunity to celebrate this milestone. It would be great the various WATAC groups were able to make it a day to celebrate their group life together.

As you know we always invite some Yr 11 & 12 students and their number is growing each year. Their teachers always accompany the students as they bring a special atmosphere of hope and enthusiasm to our gathering.

WATAC organizes this Luncheon in Parliament House each year as a symbol of our decision to enable the voice of women to be heard and with the intention of being visible in this House which is the People's place. This Luncheon is also our major fund-raiser for the year so we urge all WATAC-ers to come if you are able and to bring some friends with you in order to make this a really successful as well as a very enjoyable event. Thank you.

Broken Bay Reflecting on New Beginnings

Things seem to grind to a halt during the Christmas break, so it was good to get back into the swing of things for 2006. Six of us were able to come together with Bernice for the first meeting on Sunday 5 February and, as always, enjoyed the conviviality of our 'communion' lunch.

We started, appropriately for a new year, with a very moving 'Reflection on New Beginnings' including the uplifting "*You Raise Me Up*" from the "*Secret Garden*" CD called "*A Red Moon*"

Our reading of the editorial from National Catholic Reporter, 'A little flexibility regarding Limbo' reminded us of how far we have moved in our own faith journeys – to think we used to believe that rubbish! There was too a wonderful quote at the end of the article which gained our wholehearted enthusiastic agreement. Then an article from *The Tablet*, 'Amid the cold, signs of a thaw' by Elena Curti and Michael Hirst, reporting on a recent colloquium at Durham University, UK, found a few encouraging signs of ecumenical dialogue. However, the Catholic Church's still rigid opposition to women's ordination comes as no surprise. Continued on page 3.

Milton WATAC Makes Plans for 2006

Our first meeting for 2006 was held on Saturday 18th February from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. We were excited about our year's programme and together we set topics for the remainder of the year's gathering, which are arranged for a Saturday in each alternate month of the year.

There were about fifteen women gathered at Anna's little corner of Paradise on Saturday. The day itself was truly beautiful, as ever the garden was spectacular and the group was totally full of enthusiasm and anticipation. Because one of our members was only able to be with us for the morning, we decided to maximize the time and jump into the discussion first.

Joan Chittister's "In the Heart of the Temple" provided the material for our animated sharing, questioning and the exchange of our wisdom gained over the years. Not everyone's experience of Church was the same, some are not Catholic, some have become Catholic and others are at all places on the continuum so this enabled us to explore even more widely the issues raised.

Lunchtime was as always a fulfilling experience (in many senses of that word), and it was quite difficult to make the move into the afternoon session, but we managed it!

Aнна led the planning session and we gave time to a beautiful Prayer - Reflection moment before looking at dates for coming events. The concept of celebrating 20 years of WATAC at the Luncheon at Parliament House on 16th May captured everyone's imagination, so we have plans of getting a Milton table together for that event.

Reluctantly, we drew our first WATAC meeting for 2006 to a close - the day just never seems long enough.

Penshurst WATAC Welcomes New Faces

Our last meeting of 2005 was also our Christmas get-together held at Bernice's home where she had prepared a beautiful, festive table for our party contributions. We had a very enjoyable gathering with good food and good company. We left happy and with hope for a successful 2006.

On 23rd January we had our first meeting of the New Year. Betty Kavanagh brought along two friends from her Meditation Group. This led to very lively and enthusiastic discussions on a number of topics. We read "What can Christians learn?" from Joan Chittister's new book. The following sums up Joan's hope for a saner world:

A Reflection on New Beginnings

We seek a world free of war
and the threat of war.
We seek a society with equity
and justice for all.
We seek a community
where every person's potential
may be fulfilled.
We seek an earth restored.

Continued from page 2

Later this year we should also celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the first WATAC group meeting in Gynea in - I think - July or August 1986.

Our next meeting will be on Sunday 2 April and we will discuss the chapter 'Equality' from Joan Chittister's book *In the Heart of the Temple - my spiritual vision for today's world*, copies of which were distributed
Margaret Knowlden 02) 9449 7275

Maureen Flood 1935 - 2005

We rejoiced in her life, were enriched by her friendship, enabled by her leadership, inspired by her spirituality and deeply saddened by her death in December 2005. Maureen was a convinced and committed WATAC member, was President of WATAC for several years, worked on the WATAC Inc. Committee, spoke at our Conferences on several occasions and addressed us at our A.G.M.

Maureen made a difference, just by being Maureen. WATAC says a very sincere Thank You Maureen", we know the words are totally inadequate

Maureen Flood :

...Pain and alienation are 'inevitable for all of us women of the Church. We are in the crucible of our faith -that which gives deeper meaning to our lives. Until recently, our faith has been constructed for us in our Church, almost exclusively without our true and equal participation, without proper respect for the use of our name: 'Woman'.

I sometimes feel what Judith Beveridge expressed in her prose poem, 'My Name'. it begins 'Someone is prowling around the borders of my name. They have been there for days. I can't see them or hear them because in the house of my name is a room of silence and a huge window of fog. But I know they are there I am afraid for my name's safety'. (Penguin Book of Australian Women Poets, 1988, p.255)

It is a long time now since we began to break the silence and scatter the fog and refuse to be afraid. But smoke screens continue to be thrown up! Recently Cardinal Ratzinger was at pains to point out that 'Not without reason did the Second Vatican Council emphasise the **indissoluble bond** between the *sensus fidei* and the guidance of God's people by the magisterium of the pastors. These two realities cannot be separated.' That teaching from Vat. 11, quoted by the Cardinal, is in itself quite wonderful and we Joyfully agree with it. But then the fog comes up as this teaching is used in an attempt to silence the 'faithful', the custodians of the precious '*sensus fidelium*'. An 'indissoluble bond' has to be worked at with equal respect given to all who are thus bound together.. ..

. ... We are the Church talking among our own people. We, women, are involved in the slow and detailed work of recovery and discovery: recovery of ourselves - our female bodies, our language, our imaginations, our minds, our voices, symbols and rituals; discovery of a feminist reading of Scripture, beliefs and practices. Some aspects of our exploration put us in conflict with some other members of our Church. That is not a bit strange or in any way unusual in the history of the Church, It is, nevertheless, painful..

As we are Church, our responsibility to ourselves and to the whole Body of Christ, is to act justly: to ourselves and to all others by speaking our truth and working for justice in the world without fear or favour. On March 6" so many women spoke of WATAC in terms of friendships, sharing, nourishment, support and action - a good description of Eucharist! Let us go ahead as a truly Eucharistic Community.

Maureen Flood WATAC A.G.M. March 2000

'She came to eschew mediocrity and the institutional structures that bound rather than freed people. Sister Vianney Hatton.

Engadine WATAC Explores "In the Heart of the Temple"

As ever, when we gather at Engadine we ran out of time on Monday night, but there was still a mountain of words we could have shared. The inter-action, the thinking, the questions, the laughter and shared searching were priceless and precious.

Since this was our first meeting for the year, we had lots to catch up on including several people's amazingly wonderful holidays in Canada, England, Europe and the South Coast!! Then we got down to the serious business of discussing Joan Chittister's article on "Equality" from her latest book, "In the Heart of the Temple". Marg Keyes had sent us all a copy, so we were fired up for the discussion. The book is so good—a "must read" for all WATAC-ers. It would be a good present for yourself, your friends and perhaps those you would like to change a little (or a lot!).

The particular part of Joan's article that fired us up was a few paragraphs towards the end. When she is writing about the success and failure of the "women's movement". She writes:

The woman's movement has done much in society but most important of all, perhaps, the woman's movement has brought the theology of the church to a point of new development without which social structures will never change.

John XXIII in the encyclical "Pacem in Terris" called the shifting role of women one of the 'signs of the times' along with the emergence of the Third World and the plight of the poor. And, good Pope John also writes in that document, that "those who discover that they have rights have the responsibility to claim them."

It is the claiming of those rights in the image of God, it is the development of a theology of humanity that will determine either the success or failure of the woman's movement. it may at the same time determine the future of the church as well.

The woman's movement raises the most important questions of life. It forces us to face and think about and deal with the nature of relationships, the nature of humanity, and the nature of God. There can be no real holiness without it.

The implications are clear: If we do not go beyond this mountain, we cannot reach the Way.

It is time to realize that because we have not seen women as persons, full of grace, made in the image of God, that we have a world governed by one-half of the human heart, understood by only one-half of the human mind, and grown to only half the stature of the human soul. We are a handicapped people and a handicapped church.

We have done quite well considering our affliction, but we are not well, we are not whole, we are not totally human yet.....

**WOMEN SAY YES
TO PEACE**

You are invited to join a peaceful gathering of women in the vicinity of the office of the United States Consul General, outside the MLC Building, Martin Place, Sydney

International Women's Day

This International Women's Day event is being co-ordinated by members of Women in Black (Sydney) as part of the 20:03 Peace Initiative.

Wednesday 8th March
12 o'clock onwards, ends 5.00 pm

For further information
<http://twenty-o-three.info/>

All Welcome

For Women in Black
Contact: Annabel Brown 9280 1578
0406 187 655

THE GENDER COMMISSION IS CELEBRATING IN 2006

Did you know that the Gender Commission of the NCCA is enthusiastically celebrating as 2006 dawns? Why is it so? You ask. Answer: We have received a grant from the Glenburnie Foundation to support our project to present six Workshops entitled “The Audacity to Hope – Women Dreaming Together” on an interstate basis this year.

The Gender Commission is excited by this possibility of working at the grass-roots with groups around Australia in 2006. Last year we dreamt the Workshop as a possibility of widening the influence of the Gender Commission. We organized three days in rural NSW at Gosford, Newcastle and Casino and they were dynamic and exciting Workshops with hopeful outcomes. Hence, it is energising to begin the New Year with plans to organise Workshops early in 2006.

Why do we need these Workshops? There are issues which we know need to be addressed.

Bishop Guy Deroubaix (France) in 1996, in a Pastoral letter, wrote that it is essential for Christians today to commit themselves to actively hope for “A Church where the audacity to do something new will be stronger than the habit of doing things as they’ve always been done.” That is our hope and dream for women and supporting men.

While some dates are tentative at this stage, we are planning days in Adelaide on 28th April, in Canberra on 6th May, in Sydney on 13th May, Melbourne on 20th May and Ballarat on 27th May. We are also in dialogue with the Queensland Ecumenical Council in March with a view to planning future workshops in regional areas.

This is only the beginning, and we are dreaming of the geographical growth of Workshop presentations and of the Gender Commission spreading information about it and its activities.

It is an energising Workshop which captures imagination, hope and vision. If you are interested why not contact us and help us to organise an ecumenical day in your region or join in with the Ecumenical Council in your state and register to attend the Workshop they are organizing locally. We are also looking at possibilities in Western Australia, Northern Territory and Tasmania but haven’t any dates yet.

The hope is that you can be inspired by these sessions so that together we can be the Church we dream of now and into the future. Help us make that happen.

The Audacity to Hope

Women

Dreaming

Together



***You are Invited
to Participate
in this Workshop***

**It will be held at:
Good Samaritan Conference
Centre
2 Avenue Rd., Glebe
On Saturday 13th May, 2006.
We will gather at 9.30 a.m. for
10 a.m. start and conclude at
3.30 p.m.**

Cost: \$15

**PLEASE Return this form to:
Bernice Moore
5/30 Grove Ave.,
NARWEE 2209
Ph: 02.9534.8527
Fax: 02.9534.8528**

TO REGISTER

for this Workshop please complete form

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....P/CODE:.....

PH (H):.....

FAX:.....

EMAIL:.....

Please make cheques payable to NCCA Inc. Gender Commission.

If using Credit Card please complete the following details:

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Or I will pay on the day

SOME IDEAS TO BEGIN WITH....

As all the WATAC Groups begin to meet and start thinking about their programmes for 2006, a few of us thought it might be useful to “brain storm” about some useful and topical issues. The following are a few of the ideas we came up with - some of them might (or might not) be a useful starting point for your group.

Inter-faith dialogue - why? how? who? Should it be encouraged? Should we get involved? How? Women and inter-faith dialogue / action. Is it worth the effort?

Freedom of expression - democracy - Are there limits? Tolerance—how much? Why? Who decides? Male / Female perspectives. Should believers be worried when their faith is debunked? Humour could be a first step to humility. Laughter and religion are uneasy bedfellows

Significance of women’s voice in Parliamentary Debate - Lessons to be explored re women and systems. Recent debate in Parliament on RU486—What was it all about? Why a conscience vote? Is it good or bad to have open debate? Did it make a difference that there were women in Parliament? Parallels with Church?

Decreasing number of vocations to the Priesthood—worldwide—Australia—country / city reality. What does it mean? Does it matter? What do we do about it? What is a “vocation”? Women’s voice in this? Role of Laity in the Church?

“I Dream a Church” - What is the Church you dream of like? What do you want / not want? Why? How can it happen? Do you think there is any difference in the women’s and men’s vision of Church? What if we all want different things? what does it mean to say, “We are the Church? Is it different from saying “I am a Catholic”?

Ecumenism - What is it? Why does it matter? World Council of Churches meeting—14th—23rd February, N.C.C.A. in Australia / NSW Ecumenical Council / Catholic Church position / pressing issues: Anglican Church ordination of women and now women Bishops / Homosexuality - Anglicans have an openly gay Bishop - these issues could split the Anglican Church.

Eucharist - “Source and summit of the true Christian Spirit” (John XXIII).

“To communicate to modern people the mystery of the Eucharist, it is not enough to strictly enforce the rules and regulations regarding the celebration of the Sacrament” (Bishop Peter Kang U—II of Korea)

What does it mean to me? Is it the words / the people / the sacred moment / the mystery / the nearness of God / the peace / the sense of doing what’s right and good? What is essential to it for me? Does it sometimes feel more / less meaningful / enjoyable?

Sin - What is it? Who says what it is / isn’t? “too much virtue can even hurt you” (D. O’Leary). Could this be true? Can we live without sinning? How can we get beyond it? What is forgiveness? Who gives it? How do we know we’re forgiven? Is guilt good or bad for you?

“God is Love”- What does this mean? How does it translate in your life? Is it only words we say? what is /is not “Love”? How does anyone know? Is God essential to love? Pope Benedict’s first Encyclical is entitled, “God is Love”. How significant is this topic at this stage?

Racism - What is it? Where does it come from ? How does it show itself? Is it O.K. / not O.K.? Why? What do we do about it? Should we just ignore it? Are we **really** racist or is it a media beat-up?

Some Worthwhile Resources

The Possibility of Belief - The Challenges and Prospects of Catholic Faith - Edited by Richard Lennan

Becoming Fully Human - Joan Chittister

In the Heart of the Temple - My Spiritual Vision for Today’s World - Joan Chittister

The Sins of Scripture - John Shelby Spong

Exploring the "Strength of Women"

Greetings from the Queensland and Therese Flynn-Clarke's WATAC Group. Our 'little' group has been meeting here at my home in Bannockburn since 2000. WATAC has had a few groups meeting around Brisbane on and off for about 10 years but I think we're now down to 2 groups.

Our WATAC group meets the first Sat. of the month in the afternoon and we take it in turns to prepare 'something' for our discussion and prayers. This month we looked at 'the strength of women' and began with a video "Surviving Shepherd's Pie" about women of varying ages who live in very isolated places in Australia and their life stories. (Carolyn was wondering how on earth we were going to connect it to religion!)

It was interesting to hear all our different responses to the each of the women's stories. Stefanie spoke of a German article she'd read which tried to explain the ongoing conflict between Islam and Israel. We spoke of the hard life Sarah's servant Hagar had when she was sent to live in the desert after the birth of Abraham's illegitimate son. And then we discussed how it was in Genesis 21:8 that the 'birth' of the Islamic faith occurred.

Then our 'conversation took many interesting twists and turns as it often does! We spoke of Racism, the issues related to the indigenous culture, the Cronulla 'incidents' and even Cognitive Behavioral Therapy! We concluded with a prayer that we be 'women of strength' and we used symbols of wine, water, and oil. We concluded with a cuppa and even more chat! Our group looks forward to having Bernice attend our next meeting in March.

Therese Flynn-Clarke

Christmas Cheer in the Glebe Group

The Inner City Group met at Glebe a few weeks before Christmas, including some new members and a visit from Bernice. Following a previous and successful experience, we had decided to each bring an article, poem, reflection or story related to Advent. What a feast that was, with many inspiring stories, poems and memories told. We also shared a traditional feast, to celebrate the coming of Christmas, with chicken, salads and wine. Bernice spoke about the consultancy and survey being undertaken to explore future directions for WATAC. As I am living away from Sydney for the month of February, the Glebe group will probably not meet until March. Contact No: Sr Helen Anderson at St Scholastica's ph no.9660 1877.

Margaret Cody

World Council of Churches Assembly

Representatives of the US Conference for the World Council of Churches (WCC) addressed a message to the WCC's 9th Assembly on 18 February saying that the US-led Iraq war was a "mistake", and apologized to the ecumenical community for failing to raise a prophetic voice to prevent it.

The Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, moderator of the US Conference for the WCC, made up of 34 US churches that are members of the Council, told a 9th Assembly plenary, "We lament with special anguish the war in Iraq, launched with deception and violating global norms of justice and human rights."

Speaking at a press conference earlier, Kishkovsky said the delegation was making the statement to the ecumenical community to "show repentance and solidarity with those who suffered".

President of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the US, Rev. Michael Livingstone referred to solidarity shown with the US over the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001, saying, "In a number of ecumenical settings, we were deeply moved by post 9/11 visits, where we were offered sympathy over the tragic loss of life."

Nevertheless, the statement says, the US responded to the attacks "by seeking to reclaim a privileged and secure place in the world, raining down terror on the truly vulnerable among our global neighbours.

"Our leaders turned a deaf ear to the voices of church leaders throughout our nation and the world, entering into imperial projects that seek to dominate and control for the sake of our own national interests. Nations have been demonized and God has been enlisted in national agendas that are nothing short of idolatrous."

Presented in the form of a prayer of repentance, the message continues, "We confess that we have failed to raise a prophetic voice loud enough and persistent enough to call our nation to global responsibility for creation, that we ourselves are complicit in a culture of consumption that diminishes

The statement says that while global warming goes on unchecked, the US refuses to acknowledge its responsibility and rejects multilateral agreements aimed at reversing disastrous trends.

It says, "Starvation, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the treatable diseases that go untreated indict us, revealing the grim features of global economic injustice we have too often failed to acknowledge or confront."

"Hurricane Katrina," it continues, "revealed to the world those left behind in our own nation by the rupture of our social contract. As a nation we have refused to confront the racism that infects our policies around the world."

Rev. Dr Sharon Watkins, president of the Christian Church Disciples of Christ, who supported the statement, said, "This letter is not an attempt to undermine American troops. They are brave men and women who are our sons and daughters and our neighbours. But here we gather with Christians around the world, and meet the parents of other sons and daughters."

Visibly moved, she said, "We come face to face with brothers and sisters who suffered because of choices our government made, and we are making the statement to acknowledge solidarity with the suffering."

The statement itself affirms, "We mourn all who have died or been injured in this war; we acknowledge with shame abuses carried out in our name." "We come to you seeking to be partners in the search for unity and justice." AN EXTRACT

WATAC NEWS

If Undeliverable return to
Women and the Australian Church (WATAC)
9 Casey Close, Kurri Kurri 2327

I wish to book forpeople for the WATAC Luncheon at NSW Parliament House 16th May 2006 at \$60 per head.

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....PHONE[H]:.....

Please make cheques payable to WATAC Inc. If using Credit Card please complete the following details.

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PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM WITH PAYMENT TO : The Secretary WATAC 9 Casey Close, Kurri Kurri 2327
Fax: 02.4936.1109 Before 5th May 2006



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NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____ SUBURB: _____ P/CODE _____

PHONE[H]: _____ [W]: _____ FAX: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

BASIC MEMBERSHIP \$50 GROUP MEMBERSHIP \$150

Please debit my credit card for \$...... at the beginning of January each year.

SELF RELIANCE MEMBERSHIP \$75 \$100 \$150

Please make cheques payable to WATAC Inc. If using Credit Card please complete the following details.

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Ph: 02.4937.2019 Fax: 02.4936.1109 Email: watac@watac.net

I would like to continue to receive WATAC News but am not able to contribute at present.