

MOWatching

newsletter of MOWatch Australia

November 2008

Reg No A0008603A

Women of faith in action – and how!

A reflection on the 2008 MOWatch Conference from Pamela Turner

Against the idyllic backdrop of the Swan River replete with sunshine, made-to-order dolphins, swans and herons, Women of Faith gathered from all over Australia and beyond to meet and learn from each other. When one collects a group of able women together who are passionate about their faith and cause, one expects a positive experience. But what transpired at the 2008 *MOWatch* Conference was much more than this. It was a time of blessed renewal, affirmation and transformation.

Big words I know, but in talking to my new sisters (and a few honorary male sisters), I am not alone in this perception. What was activated at the opening prayers and reception kindly and graciously hosted by Archbishop Roger and Cheryl Herft, evolved and grew throughout the next three days. By the closing conference dinner, old friendships and collegialities were strengthened and joyous new ones made and forged.

What allowed this transformative interaction to happen? God's grace and inspiration of course. But at 'Ground Zero' there was something special happening! First, the Perth Committee of *MOWatch* really got it together. The overall vision, organisation, venue, daily administration, catering, print material, transport, efficient sound system, and accommodation were so efficiently and elegantly handled. Those women certainly have an eye for a fine conference. It's the planning strength and attention to detail that makes a conference able to function and be fruitful. *MOWatch* Perth Committee – congratulations!

Then of course the calibre of the keynote speakers came into play. What wonderful choices and diversity we experienced both from the three international guests and

from our own Bishop **Kay Goldsworthy** and **Ann Skamp**.

Dr **Esther Mombo** drew us willingly into her deep intelligence and faith. I felt myself awoken as she unfolded her own story and shared her struggles with a resistant, patriarchal system. We also felt her evident joy at what she is achieving through teaching, writing, and mentoring and in justice advocacy.

Esther spoke of the huge variance in priestly training throughout Africa and consequently how difficult it is to gain unity of mission and praxis. She underscored the seriousness with which we must take theological training in order to protect the church from wrong teaching and also to empower the powerless to speak for themselves. Good theological training can bring new meaning to Scripture in its changing cultural context. Esther also spoke of the 'Theology of Life' – theology that is life-affirming not life-threatening.

Dr **Jenny Plane te Paa** mirrored her 'sister's' commitment and loving determination. We were privileged to hear this leader speak with such gentle passion and intelligence. I was so engrossed that my pen lay idle. Jenny's Maori female experience of being a theologian, teacher and activist for women's rights was riveting. She reminded us that it is only in our continued naming and sharing of woman's experience of being human, that can we gently but persistently nudge and reform ancient systems and resistances. Our stories are our strength. Those of us who have been teachers would have all admired and celebrated Jenny's obvious zeal for teaching women and for her prayerful hope for the future of women in the Church.

Whilst the Revd Dr **Jane Shaw**'s experience is different, it is as dazzling in its efficacy and diversity. She is another passionate spirit, and I was likening



Dr Esther Mombo addresses the Perth conference

This issue of *MOWatching* is a little late, for a variety of personal reasons. It was originally planned to be given out at the Perth Conference, at which a brief version was distributed to participants. This issue includes that material, as well as information from the *MOWatch* AGM and Sydney MOW.

NB: please note the enclosed questionnaire, which is to be returned to Georgina Hawley.

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President's Column

Thank you, *MOWatch* members, for nominating, and electing me to role of National President. For me, it was one of those Godly unexpected things that happen when you love the expected God who is both that inner companion and the relational expert who works through other people, that is, the embodied God (that we can all have!).

I am extremely grateful to MOW for all their hard work over the past 25 years so that the likes of ordinary women just like me can be ordained priest. I was ordained a deacon in Perth in 1994, and while having a university lecturer's position worked for many years in non-stipendiary ministry both in parishes and hospital chaplaincy. This sparked an interest in researching spirituality from the perspective of people's experiences (using both Grounded Theory and Phenomenology). In 2002, when working in Oxford as a senior lecturer in research methodology and health care ethics, I applied to be made priest in the Diocese of Bristol, and this took place in June 2002. I continued to do both parish and hospital chaplaincy and was able to undertake several more pieces of qualitative research. In July 2007 my husband and I returned to Perth, where I am currently Rector of the Ministry District of Bassendean, and of Lockridge – Eden Hill (two parishes). My husband Bill and I have been married many years and have three adult children, eight grandchildren – and we also have two very active (and sometimes naughty) Burmese cats!

I have noticed, since coming back to Australia, that parish ministry for priests, deacons and laity has now become harder – in fact sheer hard work – especially when the culture can be hostile and resistant. Consequently, I would be interested in knowing how you cope with the daily situations and events in your life. For myself, I get great assurance and comfort by doing Morning and Evening Prayer from *A Prayer Book for Australia*. By committing my diary appointments to God each morning I am given hints and suggestions on how to handle the situations and events – these come straight from left field and are things I would not have thought about – so I know they must be from God. Such help and insight I find are invaluable to me as I try to be a living messenger of Jesus Christ. And then, there is the wonderful feeling of being able to hand over to God at the end of the day all the things I could not do – great stuff and well worth the try, if this isn't part of your present practice.

As Christians we are called to be 'living messengers' of God's good news, that is, to be disciples of

Jesus Christ. As we continue learning new patterns for living as disciples, we affirm and encourage each other in lives of faith that serve as a witness to others. In what ways are you already the 'living messenger' of faith for others? How might Christ be calling you and your church to become living messages for someone new?

For *MOWatch* Australia we have been excitingly busy these past few months. This commenced with a great conference in Perth, the Sydney MOW meeting, and synods in all dioceses around the country. I would be most interested to hear from either individual members or groups what happened at their synods, and if there is any way we can help.

When speaking on the steps of Sydney Town Hall on October 4th, I said that I did not believe that the situation was about 'winning' against the men of Sydney diocese who oppose the ordination of women. Rather, it is about recognising that although men and women may, at an abstract level, have the same spiritual needs of trust, hope, love and peace, the way these are expressed and desired in both men and women are different.

Consequently, women being ordained as priests is not a game about winning; it is about allowing personal growth for both men and women in order that they can find and develop their own embodied God. Also, it is recognising that the Church will be a better place when there are both men and women priests and bishops, who can minister to women, children, teenagers, men and our growing population of elderly people.

Later, in the Chapter house, I spoke about how for the first twelve hundred years of Christianity, women were ordained into various roles in the church (Macy, 2008).

"References to the ordination of women exist in papal, episcopal and theological documents of the time. The rites of these have survived. Yet many scholars, particularly in the western church, state that women were never ordained. In the early centuries of the church, ordination was both the process and the definition by which men and women went into new ministry – namely, *presbytera* (women priest), *episcopa* (women bishop), deaconess and abbess," Macy summarizes.

"Then in the middle ages a radical change occurred that not only removed women from the ordained ministry but also attempted to eradicate any memory of women's ordination."

Continued on next page

President's Column

So what happened? According to Macy, four factors contributed to the change:

- The Gregorian Reform Movement and its insistence on celibacy introduced a new and more virulent form of misogyny into Western Christianity;
- Roman law was read selectively to enforce the idea that women were incapable of leadership roles in the church;
- The biology and politics of Aristotle were introduced to the West. These asserted that women were biologically and intellectually inferior to men;
- Theologians read scripture as supporting the assumptions of Roman law and Aristotle concerning the inferiority of women: in particular, Eve became the scapegoat for the Fall.

None of these points could be said to be the single cause of relegating women to an inferior status, but rather a concatenation of several mutually reinforcing factors. However, the result of these factors caused a change in the definition of ordination, particularly in relation to the power to consecrate the eucharist. So the previous process and the ceremony of ordination (which was 'ordo') became lost. Consequently, ever since then there has been this doubt in some people minds about the capability of women, and women in the church!

Later in the speech I mentioned ways in which I felt we could cope with such situations. These included having meetings to develop strategies for synod motions. Supporting each other through prayer and hospitality. Keeping a good perspective of the situation and for members to think seriously about their own health – remembering that a person's physical body, their mind (both mental and emotional health) and Spirit are interconnected. I suggested that when ever you find the work ('of the game' is too much) affecting your health you seek help from your embodied God. Listen carefully to your body and to what you are being told by others, if the game has become too rough. That is, thoughts of the situation are constantly on your mind. Then it is time to leave that particular game (or church or church organisation) for a while and join another team where you can find rest for your soul in your embodied God. [If you want a copy of the whole of the speech please email or phone me and I can send it to you.]

Thank you Sydney MOW for inviting me to be with you, and to my hosts who showed me what hospitality really means (even the art of poultry keeping)!

In August, when Val Graydon was handing over to me, she said that she felt it was time for MOWatch to examine the Constitution's objectives in order to seek new ways of meeting the needs of members. Consequently, I am enclosing a questionnaire to

identify where you would like the National committee to direct its attention in the next couple of years. If you could return this as soon as possible I would be most grateful, so then we can commence planning and implementing those things (including different programs) that will help you.

In ministry we know that certain programs can assist spiritual growth, nurture, reach out, or revive. For example, those that bring spiritual growth include bible studies, theological reflection, topical seminars, spiritual direction, and prayer groups. Programs that nurture women are mentoring, support groups, weight-loss programs, exercise groups, and specific support groups such as divorce recovery, infertility etc. Programs that reach out (that is, enable members to have contact with one another) include dinners or lunches with a speaker, or a fashion show. Or 'day off' creativity workshops (aspects of home decorating, water colour painting, learning how to do a 'good massage') – a girls' night out. Programs that can revive a person include quiet days, retreats, or specific learning on how to handle an aspect of ministry such as change management etc.

I finish this message with the Charge Prayer which I said at the Sydney MOW meeting. The word 'conspiracy' is used in the poem – in Latin it means 'to breathe together' (con-spiro). The poem is adapted from 'Conspiracy' by Margo Ritchie of Canada: it refers to the first 12 centuries when women were part of the ordained ministry of the church, and the 10 since as 'air being trapped in our lungs'. □

Come, join, and breathe together

Come and join the conspiracy ...

Together let's conspire!

*Shallow breath, caught by 21st century air.
The air of 10 centuries, trapped in our lungs.*

Tightened chest,

Labouring lungs,

Straining to enlarge.

*Narrow constrictions gripping us,
The narrow passages of half-thought thoughts,
Of half dreamed dreams, of half-loved loves
Let go of the fortress held stance of shallowly-
breathed patterns!*

Breathe deeply now.

Echoes of another call ...

Come and see!

Now ... come and breathe freely.

Yes come and join the conspiracy ...

Together, let us conspire! Amen

Shalom, Georgie

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Ritchie, M, 'Conspiracy' in Geoffrey Duncan (ed) *Seeing Christ in others*. Norwich, Norfolk: The Canterbury Press, 2002.

*MO*Watch Annual General Meeting 2008 -

In presenting this my final report as National President, my thoughts go back to the first MOW Conference held in Sydney after the ordination of women to the priesthood in 1995. Along with eight other friends from Brisbane, I recall attending the *Astonishing Women's* Conference, which had been organized by MOW National specifically for ordained women. Bishop Penny Jamieson from New Zealand was our speaker for the event. It was an exciting and inspirational few days with women from around the country celebrating a new period in the history of the Church in Australia.

I remember Bishop Penny congratulating the organizers of the Conference, and giving a clear *direction* that future Conferences must be for lay and ordained women together. She remarked that we had traveled the long and difficult road to ordination together, and there was no reason to go separate ways now that this had been achieved. It was important that the *shared* journey continue.

On the last day of the meeting, it was agreed that the next Conference venue be set before participants departed and Brisbane, my home diocese, offered to host the 1997 event. *I believe that Bishop Penny's insight and direction at that time, together with the decision by the National Executive to continue to hold regular Conferences, have been at the heart of the Movement ever since.*

I had the privilege of coordinating the 1997 *Visionary Women's* Conference with Gwen Roberts in Brisbane. Getting together a balanced program for lay and ordained women, as well as shaping a new direction, did not come easily, but at the gathering it was apparent that people were positive about the future. Having enjoyed the experience, but assuming that I had 'done my bit' for the Movement, it was an unexpected turn of events to find myself in the role of President by the end of the Conference.

The road ahead was uncertain, but during the following difficult couple of years, the Executive explored the changes we needed to make. Surveys and meetings with long-standing members of MOW as well as new members slowly shaped the way forward. In 1998, when I visited the Lambeth Conference venue, I met with women from around the world who were struggling with the same issues we were seeking to address. In particular, the leaders of *WATCH* in the UK encouraged us not to close and reform as they had done, but rather *transform* in a way that would allow us to respond to particular needs. It was from this point that we took up the challenge to remain vigilant of the way issues for women in ministry were being addressed within church structures.

Our goal was to encourage, support and engage at whatever level we could, not only with our members, but other individuals and groups who were working towards the full and equal acceptance of women and men in the church. The decision to change our name to *MO*Watch and the introduction of a new Newsletter *MO*Watching reflected this direction.

Amidst the many activities of our small Executive during the past decade, which are documented elsewhere, it was the Conferences that seemed to supply the energy and enthusiasm for whatever challenges we faced along the way. Conferences have always been an integral part of the Movement since its foundation. We should not forget the effort and the heartache of members and branches pre-ordination, in particular their Conferences. It was our aim to hold post-1995 gatherings across the country, and to encourage and support the local Planning Group to shape their own program. This proved a winning format. An energetic and enthusiastic group of women in Adelaide hosted the 1999 Conference *Reconciling Women*. They then handed on the baton to the very heart of Australia where a truly amazing and restful week in Alice Springs embraced the theme of *Women Who Forgive* in 2001.

A longer than expected break between this and the next Conference, due mainly to our involvement with a number of other matters, was unfortunate. However, this period was to bear fruit in unexpected ways, most importantly the growth and renewal of MOW Sydney. Suddenly, so it seemed, there was a new wave of initiatives occurring within the Diocese of Sydney in which MOW was able to participate. In turn, *MO*Watch has sought to encourage and support the only remaining branch of MOW in their endeavours. They have been quietly courageous, trusting, patient, and gracious in their ongoing push for the ordination of women to the priesthood. They deserve our heartfelt thanks for their determination and perseverance to work on behalf of a great number of people who have been denied the sacramental ministry of women. They have always acted within the boundaries and I have no doubt that their integrity and generosity of spirit will be remembered with love and admiration.

In 2006 the National Executive decided to plan the Conference in Melbourne, *Women in the Wings, Waiting for Purple*. We were extremely conscious of the high standard that previous events had attained. Once again opportunities arose and a program that touched the edges of the impending appointment of our first female bishops was achieved. The Conference also proved timely for revisiting previous milestones, but we did so with all eyes on the certainty of Episcopal leadership not far off.

National President Val Graydon's final address

Our presence at each of the General Synods during this period, Brisbane, Perth and Canberra, gave us an opportunity to talk with many people. Our information stands and displays were always well received. There are many memorable moments for us. In Perth for instance, when the vote for women bishops was lost, a great number of people came over to encourage and support us through our disappointment. I recall Bishop Phillip Huggins joining us for a chat, bringing with him a couple of cups of water and apologizing that it was not something stronger!



Val Graydon with newly-consecrated Bishop Kay Goldsworthy

In Canberra, at a time when we knew the appointment of women bishops was getting closer, there was a great buzz of excitement around our display as people expressed their relief that the Appellate Tribunal had reached a favourable decision. The occasion became something of an early celebration for the announcements that were to come; and it was not long before we were able to give thanks and party at the consecrations of Kay Goldsworthy and Barbara Darling. I was disappointed not to be present at either of these events, as planned, but pleased that Vice President Alison Gent was able to attend in Perth and Vice President Bronislava Lee in Melbourne. Of course I was there in spirit, and certainly didn't miss an opportunity to celebrate with friends closer to home.

I step aside from the role as President with mixed emotions, but it is comforting to be able to do so during this Conference. It is interesting to recognize that as breakthroughs are made along the way, energy to continue has been renewed rather than diminished. This Conference has an amazing program for us to enjoy and the high standard of speakers continues a great tradition since the beginning of MOW over twenty years ago. If this is to continue, a change in leadership, a fresh approach and new directions are vital to maintain and empower us in the years ahead. Stages of growth yet to come will be different but, I believe, equally important as those in the past.

My eleven years in office have been a very exciting time in my journey. I am sincerely grateful to have been given the opportunity to contribute to so many changes in the Church of God. I look forward to being involved in other ways and to offer whatever support I

can to the Executive as they continue to lead us into the future.

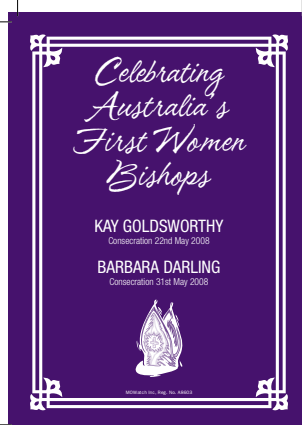
In closing, I want to thank all those from the National Executive, as well as the Sydney MOW Office Bearers for their encouragement, advice and support during my role as President. In particular I want to express my love and gratitude to Kathy Toal and Judy Little. I can honestly say that without their assistance I would not have been able to continue over such a long period of time. **They are astonishing, visionary, reconciling and forgiving women of faith**

who just get on with it! They have worked quietly, breathlessly and joyfully for over twenty years for our Movement and have expressed their desire to continue to do so. I assure the new President, whoever she may be, that with their help you will be supported and enabled to complete whatever tasks are ahead.

May we never give up on striving to contribute to the Church we love. □

Val Graydon,
retiring President

MOWatching is produced by MOWatch Inc. Editorial responsibility is taken by Charles Sherlock, 3 Lelant St Trentham 3458. Written contributions should be emailed to chsherlock@netspace.net.au.

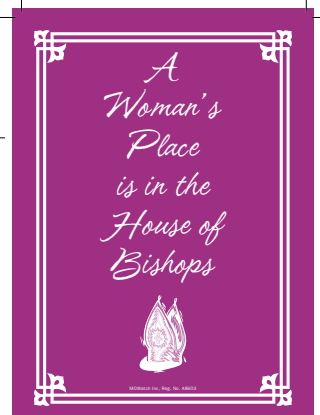


To celebrate the consecration of Australia's first two women bishops, MOW has issued two postcards. Enjoy!

Postcards from
the centre

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CofE update: Women bishops face ‘flying bigots’

BY GEORGE PITCHER, *Daily Telegraph*, October 6, 2008

Last Friday, I was locked in St Paul’s Cathedral with a couple of hundred of my fellow clergy from the Diocese of London for what was styled a ‘Sacred Synod’. We sat under Sir Christopher Wren’s giddy dome to hear the Rt Revd Dr Richard Chartres, Bishop of London, invite carefully selected colleagues to reflect on something called ‘The London Plan’ and how it could be re-invigorated to take account of the prospect of women bishops.

This much we know: there will be women bishops in the Church of England as soon as legislatively possible. But the fight is not yet over from those within the Church who oppose them. There is clearly an Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical rearguard action, against the will of the Church’s executive, to enshrine men-only Episcopal oversight in law for dissenters – and a good deal of positioning, some posturing and not a little psychological denial among those who wish to secure such provision.

Why do we know this? Partly because the *Sunday Telegraph* yesterday [October 5, 2008] reported that Church authorities are planning ‘flying bishops’ – or ‘flying bigots’ as one liberal voice called them privately on Friday – to serve those who in conscience cannot accept women bishops. And partly because the atmosphere in St Paul’s on Friday suggested that supporters of women’s episcopacy had won a battle at General Synod in July, but had not yet won the war.

The Sacred Synod had originally been booked for All Souls’, Langham Place, but that has recently been used as a base for hard-line conservatives who resist homosexual bishops, so the event was quietly transferred to St Paul’s.

The changed venue still carried dangerously potent associations. St Paul’s exudes the patriarchy of empire; we looked up into a dome painted with muscular and male apostles. And we sang hymns that started with lines like ‘Father, hear the prayer we offer’ and said prayers that opened ‘God our Father’.

Some priestly women activists had urged a boycott of the event, fearing a mugging from the Anglo-Catholics. In the event, they had nothing to fear. The oppressive St Paul’s felt like that foreign land where women

did things differently, but it was unmistakably of the past.

Dr Chartres, too, was playing an open hand. He acknowledged that, for some, the gender issue is one of justice, over which there can be no compromise.

The London Plan, first devised by Dr David Hope as Bishop of London, offers an Episcopal oversight, in the shape of the Bishop of Fulham, for those who cannot accept women as bishops. The question is whether it can be a paradigm for the wider Church.

My guess is that the women’s faction will accept such provision for male traditionalists if it’s from an area bishop, like Fulham, within the diocese (whose diocesan bishop may well be a woman) and within a simple code of practice, but not flying bishops effectively from a ‘third province’ founded in law. As Dr Chartres affirms, there can be no ‘episcopacy-lite’ for women.

But that takes no account of the real-politick in evidence in St Paul’s on Friday. Some of the men-only camp are set on legal protection by the back door, after Synod voted clearly for a code of practice. One or two of them were indulging on Friday in what Canon Winkett called ‘competitive vulnerability’, invoking a term coined by novelist Sara Maitland for those who believe their pain must be bigger than that of others.

The women, meanwhile, don’t look set to give ground. They feel they will have conceded enough if they accept the Fulham model of the London Plan.

At the first sight of a legal flying bishop, expect them to withdraw from the process and point to the will of Synod. □



MOWatch office bearers 2009: Cassandra Nixon, Kathleen Toal, Georgina Hawley, Val Graydon, Judy Little, Bronislava Lee.

Women of faith in action – and how!

A reflection on the 2008 MOWatch Conference from Pamela Turner

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the conference. On the last afternoon we talked for some time in the sun and I thanked her for her mentorship. She looked pleased and puzzled. So often those who have impact on us do so by their very being. Just in the manner of their being human do they teach us and mentor us, tacitly without fanfare or deliberateness. How blessed I feel to have been mentored in this way by Australian women and those who arrived from distant places to become mentors and sisters.

This too must be said of Bishop Kay, whose own incredible journey of faith, as she said, is well known to us. But no less momentous for its being on our doorstep! Kay delighted us by sharing her story and her possible shape of being, as she ‘slowly turns purple’. Kay made up the fourth instrument in this quartet of women, and we heard the counterpoint of her experience, courage and gentle wisdom. Kay’s self-effacing humility does not belie her inner strength as she prepares for the unknown. I felt that Kay was including us all in intimate disclosure of the newness and uncertainty of being a woman in purple, but also of the stamina, humour, humanness and resilience she possesses through her faith.

What a quartet we experienced! I was impressed throughout the conference by the confluence of understanding between all four keynote speakers. Each picked up the other’s melody and sang with her own experience of a unified message.

The *MOWatch* Committee also provided an inspiring speaker in Ann Skamp (who doubles as a great dinner companion!), and in the many workshop facilitators whose experience and joy in sharing their expertise was evident. I make special mention of *MOWatch* committee member **Broni Lee** from Sydney Diocese. Broni lead a workshop on ‘Sexuality in the Church’ – clearly a fascinating topic which needed days to discuss! Her youthful vibrancy and commitment augurs well for *MOWatch*’s future, together with the young women **Shaha Bin Suliaman**, **Elise Grey** and **Pauline Dixon**, who shared their inspiring stories in ‘*Young Women Speak*’.

Many of us really appreciated the care and detail given in the Daily Offices which provided prayerful and powerful beginnings and ends to each day, and the contributions of Nyoongar elders **Lorna Little** and **Vivienne Sahana**.

The off-campus activities at St George’s Cathedral were treats indeed - a public lecture by Esther; a beautiful eucharist presided over by Bishop Kay with a sermon from Jane; and the Conference dinner finale

– complete with superb food and wine, stylish settings and a moving address from **Wendy Page**, producer of *Australian Story*.

So these are some of the elements of *MOWatch* Conference 2008. Readers might understand that it was a huge success, and it was. But so much of its success was in the grace, faith and capacity to love of both delegates and leaders. We shared, listened, and cared deeply. And it made me think that perhaps the three-legged stool of Scripture, Tradition and Reason would function rather better in adaptation and justice if it added another leg. That of Experience. The experience of being woman.

MOWatch and the speakers, leaders and delegates who have shared their stories, fill me with hope, courage, stamina and patient persistence. Thank you for your part in my own discernment and journey. You are now part of *my* story. □

Pamela Turner

Bp Kay’s Pectoral Cross presented

A pectoral cross was presented to Kay Goldsworthy, the first Australian woman to be consecrated bishop, at a picnic in the Pioneer Women’s Memorial Garden, Kings Park WA on Monday October 27th, 2008 .

The cross had been commissioned by *MOWatch* in May from renowned South Australian sculptor, Silvio Apponyi, who with his wife Natalija, also an artist, collaborated in the design. They are both Anglicans, and were delighted to have the opportunity to make such a special piece.

The design is based on gum leaves, layered over each other to form the cross. Three small gumnuts are carved into the front of the cross to represent the Holy Trinity. The detail of the carving is exquisite, with the shapes of the leaves and their stems evident on both sides of the piece. One leaf has a hole in the side as if it has been eaten by an insect, to show that only God is perfect. The cross was first carved in wood, a mould was made, and it was then cast in silver. The wooden carving was completed in time for Kay’s consecration and we were able to show it to her on the night.



The Church has traditionally told its stories and celebrated its important and historic occasions through the commissioning of beautiful artworks celebrating the glory of God and the beauty of God’s creation. This unique piece of Australian art uses the beauty of our own landscape to tell of God’s glory, and to celebrate this historic occasion in the life of the Australian Anglican Church. □

Bishop Barbara Darling reflects on Lambeth

Many thanks to those who have written, sent congratulations, supported the *Hope, Cope and Mitre Fund* and in so many ways helped to rejoice in the consecration of both Kay and myself in May. I have been overwhelmed with the delight and joy shown by so many, and would like to thank you all for all your ongoing support.

What a journey the last 6 weeks have been! Highlights include the three conferences I attended in England – the first with the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Swanwick, Derbyshire, and then with 95 women clergy at the Transfiguring Episcopate conference at Ripon College at Cuddesdon, near Oxford. There were 13 women bishops attending, mostly from the Episcopal Church in the States and from Canada, and it was great to catch up with Kay from Perth both there and at Lambeth. I was greatly impressed with the calibre of the English women clergy and their experience in many cases already as dean, archdeacon, parish priest or full time residential canon.

The day before this conference the English General Synod had spent six hours debating the issue of women bishops, and so many of them arrived exhausted but happy with the decisions reached. They were not so happy that the legislative pathway means it may be 2015 before the first women can be consecrated, but they were buoyant that it is set to go ahead without the ‘flying bishops’ – they will be looking carefully at the protocols developed by the Australian church to see if these can be adapted for the UK.

Between conferences, I spent one weekend at Bicester near Oxford, with a woman vicar and a 902-year-old church needing repairs; the next was spent in a medieval university church at Cambridge, celebrating and preaching.

Then we spent nearly three weeks at the Lambeth Conference at the University of Kent, joining with 650 other bishops (18 were women) and some 510 spouses (10 of them men). We held two separate conferences but met together for meals and some wonderful worship in the Big Top tent

– with worship led each time by a different country. We said the Lord’s Prayer in our own ‘heart language’ every time - a wonderful outpouring of over 50 languages.

After an initial 3 day retreat for the bishops led by Archbishop Rowan Williams in the magnificent Canterbury Cathedral, our daily timetable included Holy Communion, a small group Bible study in groups of 7 or 8, ‘Indaba’ discussion groups with 5 Bible study groups meeting together, and various plenary or self select groups.

It was a busy conference with lots of talking and walking – a great opportunity to meet and talk with bishops and their spouses from all over the world. My Indaba group included several bishops each from the Sudan, Korea, Melanesia, USA, Canada, Australia, the UK, India and South Africa. Unfortunately some of the more conservative bishops stayed away, but we were able to try and hear people who felt strongly about issues of Biblical interpretation and sexuality and who came from different cultures and backgrounds.

The day we had our group photograph we also had an informal one taken with all the women bishops, and we journeyed together to Canterbury Cathedral one evening to Archdeacon Sheila Watson’s home and met many of the supporters of women’s ordination. We women bishops also ate a meal together on campus one night, but mostly mingled with the male bishops and enjoyed greeting each other when we met travelling from venue to venue. The whole conference was a great introduction to life as a bishop!

Now I am back I have started working in at the diocesan offices and have been busy preparing to move to a new diocesan house in East Brighton. I begin work in earnest when Archdeacon Graeme Sells leaves at the end of August – and then maybe I will get time to write some individual thank you’s! □

Shalom and thanks *again from*
+ Barbara

A memorable October!

Report from Sydney MOW

Sydney MOW began the month with a great celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the event that launched the public face of the Movement in Sydney on 4th October, 1983. This was when the Twelve MOW Theses were attached to a door of St Andrew's Cathedral, where they would be seen by people going to and from that year's synod. The text was composed by Dr **Susanne Glover**, then a former student of Moore College, who designed it to address the synod in the terms of the Protestant Reformation.

This 2008 celebration was planned and co-ordinated by Sydney MOW's newly elected Convenor, and first National President, Dr **Patricia Brennan**, who had much to do with the original occasion. The function had two parts – a public celebration on the Town Hall steps across the square from the cathedral, followed by a meeting in the Chapter House for MOW members and supporters.

At 7.30pm, the Town Hall steps were crowded with MOW members and banners, TV lights lit the scene as Patricia spoke announcing that MOW was relaunching public debate, and that the tacit moratorium on discussion of women's ordination within Sydney Diocese was over. She was supported by the Revd **Keith Mascord**, a former Head of the Ministry Department at Moore College, who admitted that he once believed "that only men should lead congregations" but now stood in solidarity, admiration and support for "those who have fought and struggled for what they believe and I believe is right." MOWatch President, the Revd Dr Georgina Hawley, pronounced the blessing and our MOW congregation went on to the Chapter House. ABC radio reported the event next morning.

The Chapter House was dressed with MOW banners, with the original Theses in pride of place. The cathedral authorities had at first refused to let us use the hall on the grounds of not wishing to encourage MOW. Thankfully, this decision was reversed. As the Chapter House meeting went on, photographic slides from the Lambeth Conference were projected onto the walls of the Town Hall and the Cathedral.

A great reunion of MOW supporters followed. The speakers were:

- **John Pomeroy**, a 1996-97 Sydney co- Convenor who read one of his 1970 letters
- **Susanne Glover**, who succinctly restated the theological thinking behind the whole debate
- **Alison Cotes**, who read a memoir from **Janet Scarfe**, MOW's second National President

- **Patricia Hayward**, MOW's third National President, who read a message from the Revd Dr **Colleen O'Reilly**
- **Elaine Peterson**, who reflected on her time as Sydney MOW Convenor and introduced the 'Perth Banner'
- **Bronislava Lee**, who challenged us to consider the plight of marginalised women, and
- **Chris Albany**, who spoke on his determination to continue to challenge the synod of Sydney.

The speeches concluded with a thoughtful analysis of the kind of conflict we are in by *MOWatch* President, **Georgina Hawley**. There were jokes, laughter, music, a photo slide show, supper and much conversation.

Sydney synod

Nine days later, the 2008 Sydney Synod began, and on the second afternoon the MOW motion, moved and promoted by the Revd Chris Albany, and carried over from last year, was on the agenda. The debate was properly conducted, the amendment which had caused the important dissent of last year was withdrawn, and Synod really did have the opportunity to decide whether or not to ask Archbishop Jensen to "explore ways in which these different views [about the ordination of women as priests] can be creatively lived out in the life and practice of the diocese."

We were asking for some hospitality for visiting women priests, and even mentioned the possibility of a Sydney parish being able to call such a person. The motion was lost on the voices, so it is difficult to assess the support – I have heard estimates from 25%-40%. Instead, Synod chose to pass a motion giving thanks for the "creative and God-honouring ministry of women in the Diocese of Sydney at this time and over many years".

Sydney MOW members greatly appreciate the support of friends outside the diocese, especially those who have been praying for us over these past days. Frankly, at the moment we need all the prayers we can get. We thank those at the *MOWatch* Conference in Perth who 'put their foot down' for our cause, and especially Lyn Harwood who organised Archbishop Roger Herft and others to complete the Perth Banner. We and It will appear again. □

Elaine A. Peterson,
Editor, *The MOW Report*

Sermon for Bishop Barbara Darling's first Eucharist as a Bishop

St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne,

Third Sunday after Pentecost – 1 June 2008

Matthew 7: 15-29

I first met our new bishop when we were schoolgirls in Sydney – yes, Sydney. In our final year in different schools, we met in a school debating semi-final on a topic now lost in the mists of time. We were on opposite sides of that debate, and neither of us recalls whose team won. But since meeting each other again some years later here in Melbourne – a city we have both come to call home - we have been on the same debating side ever since. So it is a special delight to have been invited to preach at this wonderful celebration today.

My heart is almost too full to speak. What a month May has been! First, another Melburnian, Kay Goldsworthy, was consecrated in Perth, and then yesterday, many of us were here for Barbara's consecration. How appropriate they both happened in May – Mary's month. And yesterday was a wonderful feast of Mary, commemorating the visit the young girl from Nazareth made to her elderly cousin, Elizabeth - a visit that culminated in the proclamation of the great good news of God's reversal of all the world's injustices. Through Mary's child, the mighty would be cast from their thrones and little ones raised to prominence; the rich would be sent away empty, and the hungry filled with good things. Mary, the lowly peasant girl, pregnant before her marriage and so in grave danger of public shaming or worse, is instead named as 'blessed' for all generations. God's revolution had already begun, even before the Saviour was born.

This past month we have seen, in these two historic consecrations, the symbols of another of God's revolutions. Women, for so long relegated to secondary status in church and society, have been lifted up. They too can now be named as 'holy'. In time – a very short time – what happened here yesterday and in Perth ten days ago will become quite unnewsworthy. Just as we now take for granted that every ordination of priests and deacons here will include significant numbers of women, we will now expect to see women bishops as a matter of course. In fact, the protocol drawn up by the Australian bishops has taken care to make provision for the day when there will be a woman archbishop and even a woman Primate! For us that is still revolutionary – please God for my as yet unborn grandchildren, it will be unremarkable.

So today I do not want to dwell on the 2,000 years of neglect of women's spiritual gifts by the church, or even the three decades of debate and struggle that have brought us to this momentous weekend. I want to look

to the future, and speak about the role of women as bishops in the light of today's Gospel. It is a very appropriate Gospel, as Jesus warns us today to beware of false prophets who come in sheep's clothing. We often use the imagery of sheep and shepherds when we speak of our clergy and particularly our bishops. The word 'pastor' means 'shepherd' in Latin, indicating that the caring, guarding role lies at the heart of our understanding of ordained ministry. Clergy and bishops who ignore or disdain that primary, key role as pastors of the flock, are truly wolves in sheep's clothing.

The model for those who shepherd the Church of God is of course Jesus the Good Shepherd. But this image is so familiar that we often fail to see all its connotations. It is actually a strongly maternal image. Conventional pictorial representations of the Good Shepherd depict Jesus carrying a frail little lamb over his shoulders as he gently leads his flock to a safe place and good pasture. What Jesus is doing as the Good Shepherd is conforming to the conventional role of mothers – carrying babies, leading toddlers and older children, nurturing them, and protecting them from danger, even to the point of laying down their own lives for them if necessary.

The 23rd psalm - the Good Shepherd psalm - echoes with consistently feminine images, portraying the Lord as the one who provides nourishment, rest, and comfort, the one who spreads a table before us no less. Certainly in the ancient world, and largely still in our own society, women are the ones who usually offer these essentials and who prepare the festive table of celebration. Here, today, Barbara, now a 'Mother-in-God', will spread not just 'a' table before us but 'the' table – the Lord's Table, where we will be invited to eat and drink to eternal life.

There is good biblical warrant for us to go one step further, and speak of the *motherhood* of God that Barbara models for us. God the *Father* is also our *Mother*, because God created us, and because Christ is the true mother of all who, through his flesh, nourishes and redeems humanity. For that remarkable English medieval mystic, Mother Julian of Norwich, Jesus' passion is like the labour of childbirth; his keeping of the human soul an image of pregnancy. The Holy Spirit is also a 'mother' for Julian, working in and on the human soul, leading it towards its full joy. In these reflections, Julian was not worried about mixing up the genders! Christ is our mother, but is still for her, firmly masculine. Only in our generation have we become more precisely pedantic about wanting to assign these maternal, feminine roles purely to the female.

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Part of the joy of our full acceptance of the feminine in ministry is that we can now happily accept that our male leaders can and should also offer us true mothering in the name of Christ.

Will the introduction of women bishops really make much difference to the life and ministry of the Anglican Church, beyond the obvious leadership they will offer women clergy, both as role models and pastors? Or will the effect of this momentous change be purely symbolic?

Symbolic value should not be discounted. Earlier this year, sociologist and feminist Eva Cox pointed out that the presence of women in organisational leadership is vital for the creation of what she termed "more civil societies and organisations".¹ Management studies have shown that diversity in leadership brings openness to new ideas, she pointed out. It is not necessarily the contribution that the individual women bring that effects healthy change; rather, their presence "is a sign that the culture of the group is open to new faces and ideas and therefore likely to make decisions that recognise change and risks that others may miss". In the 21st century, organisations that continue to exclude women from their leadership, risk identifying themselves at the very least as change resistant and reactionary.

The introduction of significant numbers of women priests and deacons to our Church has already made a marked difference to the way so many of our institutional structures work. Both national and diocesan bodies have benefited from the fresh insights, patterns of ministry and ways of relating that women have brought. I am confident that, in the same way, women bishops will introduce healthy change to the episcopate as well. Their female common sense and their sobering experience of the long, patient wait for acceptance will stand them in good stead.

As has happened at other levels of church leadership, women will gradually bring a more realistic, balanced approach to episcopal office. They will model more creative ways of approaching the task, new ways of engaging with the church and the wider world, and more holistic ways of preserving balance in the way they live and work and pray. Within a generation, the change for the better will be apparent, and not just among the bishops. It will flow deeply into the ongoing life of the church, refreshing and revitalising tired old forms and patterns and bringing renewal and regeneration.

So we will see, by these fruits, that *this* change is truly of God, just as we have seen over these past decades as women were ordained. As Jesus said, we will know

them by their fruits. When women first became deacons in the Australian Church – here, in this very Cathedral – in February 1986, the air was thick with threats of division and disaster. Woe betide us if we opened the door to priesthood for women as well, we were told! And yet, within so short a time, as women such as Barbara ministered in parishes and chaplaincies, fear and apprehension melted away. Anxious parishioners quickly came to respect and love their female pastors; uncertain clergy colleagues soon relaxed in their presence.

The church adjusted so quickly to the admission of women to the ordained ministry because the ministry of the first women clergy bore such abundant fruit. In the face of often bitter opposition and unkindly lampooning, they simply went about their God-given task – faithfully, patiently, prayerfully, creatively. They held fast to that which is good; they rendered to no one evil for evil; they strengthened the faint hearted, supported the weak, helped the afflicted, gave honour to all, and loved and served the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. They built their house on the rock, and withstood the storm. More, they bore the heat and burden of the day – day after day – as the national Church slowly came to recognise that this was of God.

It is so appropriate that Kay Goldsworthy and Barbara Darling are our first women bishops, because they were among those first women ordained here in 1986. Both had faithfully responded to God's call to ministry even before ordination was possible; both have continued faithfully to respond to God's call down the 22 years since they entered Holy Orders.

Now they stand among us as Bishops in the Church of God – 'Mothers-in-God', and there can be no doubt that they stand among us as ones having authority, astounding the Church and the world by the teaching that they embody – that all women are created in the image of God, all women are called to be Daughters of God – dearly beloved Daughters of God. By their elevation, all women stand taller, as do all men. While women were diminished, while their status as Daughters of God was compromised, so were men diminished and compromised. Where women are given full honour, men too are fully honoured.

So we come to the Lord's Table, daughters and sons of God, called by our brother Jesus through the newest bishop in the Church of God who stands ready to set the table for us on his behalf. Rejoice, for God has called us from darkness into light! □

Muriel Porter

