

# 1. Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa

I am very happy to be with you today. I was beginning to think we would have a repeat of 2020 with diocesan conferences cancelled or postponed.

## 2. One year ago, were nearing the end of our theme, *Women welcoming change*.

**CWLANZ is certainly experiencing change** but I am not sure how successful we have been as far as welcoming and embracing it.

At all levels of CWL, from the board to branches, we have been grappling with change which is being forced on us. Change that is difficult to welcome. At times it seems that despite our best efforts the task is overwhelming and just too hard. We must remind ourselves not to become disheartened, that although the challenges are immediate the solutions are not. The growth and survival of the League is a shared responsibility. The members need to want the league to grow and survive as a vibrant organisation for Catholic women. We must be committed to the long view.

3. Our new theme, *Kia Kaha – Courage Take Heart* was chosen to flow from and build on *Women Welcoming Change*. Little did we know in January 2020 how apt this theme would be for our daily lives, both our spiritual and secular.

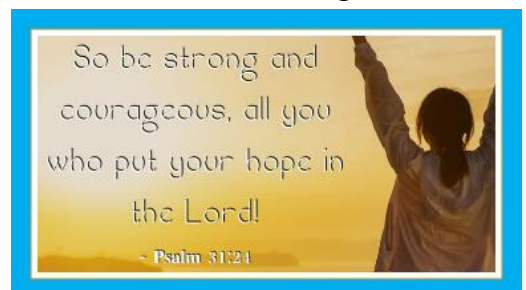
4. There are numerous related scripture references. I like this version of Joshua 1:9, **Be Bold, Be Brave, Be Courageous**. CWL members need all of these. Psalm 31: 24 is reassuring, “So be strong, and courageous all you who put your hope in the Lord.”

I am really concerned for the future of CWL. Do we want CWL to be around in the next ten or twenty years? I personally and the National Board do not have the resources to ensure this is a reality. What can we all be doing now? How can we turn this challenge into a positive?

## 5. Be strong and courageous

It is too easy to focus on the negative and lose sight of the positive changes that have been happening. In a couple of dioceses there has been an increase in membership. Publicity drives have raised the profile in others. I have instigated the regular President’s Newsletters. Branches are making real efforts to broaden their reach and diversify their activities. The National Mission secretary has conducted a comprehensive survey of branches’ support of Mission in the Pacific. The National Board has listened to our members and has a Mission Policy for going forward. We know that the Mission to the Pacific is very important to our members, but it is time to offer branches different options in 2021.

The CWL Facebook page which was started by Christchurch now has more than 130 members from across NZ. We share information, opinions, events and involve non-members. We are trying to use 2021 methods of communication. I posted a story this week of a presentation to a parliamentary enquiry into the health care of women at the time of giving birth, and before and after. Within 24 hours 5 women, including a young mum, had had a conversation on the topic and the post had been viewed by 99 members. This is how I would like to see the group being used.



Please encourage as many Catholic women as you can to join. This is a way to make a connection with CWL.

Otari Branch have a page on their parish website where they post newsletters, events, and reports. Awesome.

6. I have signed on behalf of CWLANZ, an agreement of cooperation with Talitha Kum. As many of you know Talitha Kum is an international organisation of Religious Orders and other like-minded groups who are committed to fighting against the trafficking and exploitation of humans. This agreement will mean that CWLANZ will support their work wherever possible.



7. One of my frustrations is the time constraints of our mid twentieth century decision making and communications structure. Anything up to six months or a year to make a decision. This does not work in our email, Zoom world. People expect to hear from us within a couple of days not weeks. The role of regional reps has worked very well in the past, but now it adds an often-unnecessary delay and distance among our members. If I do not reply to emails immediately, within a couple of days I have another email asking if I saw the first.



I would like to see us using tools such as Zoom to make horizontal connections, for example branch presidents talking to each other or to the regional rep and diocesan president, branch mission secretaries, or social issues convenors...

As our membership numbers fall, I believe we need to think of CWL as a national organisation rather than Diocesan based. To share resources and talents across the organisation.

8. Speaking of falling membership numbers brings me to the national levies. As you recall in recent years the National Board was in a precarious financial position. This necessitated a sharp rise in levies. At the time the Board committed to a regular review of the situation and to small incremental rises. There is a proposed rise in the Capitation Fee of \$1 bringing the capitation fee to \$13.50. There will be no rise in the travel levy which is currently \$1.50. The total levy per member will be \$15, to be paid by November 2022.



The travel levy remains the same as for the past two years our National Treasurer has secured Lotteries funding for Board Travel expenses.

9. Our National Treasurer has written a discussion document for branches relating to the use of the Jubilee Fund. Until the last couple of years this fund has generated around \$800 in interest. However, the interest available to be distributed in 2021 is under \$300. The Board decided to top this up to \$500. The Board wants branches to talk about this proposal. It will be presented at the conference agm.

**Jubilee Fund Discussion Document**

Option 1. Do Nothing. Continue Historical action. i.e., return 10% of the interest each year to the Capital for reinvestment.

Option 2. CWL Branches make another contribution to the fund, to increase the Principal and therefore increase the annual interest generated.

Option 3. Release a larger amount of the fund at each renewal of the term deposit and distribute to the "Jubilee" recipient. i.e., maybe at \$1,000.00 per year. This will ensure that the Recipient gets a decent sum instead of an ever-diminishing amount.

10. Today we will introduce you to *Te Puawaitanga, The Blossoming*. The plan had been to launch this at our national conference in last July. This contains strategies and advice to rejuvenate and grow CWLANZ. We hope that you too will take up and adopt the messages of *Te Puawaitanga*. Make it a living,



working document. If we all stand strong and commit to working together, we can welcome change and make that change work for us.

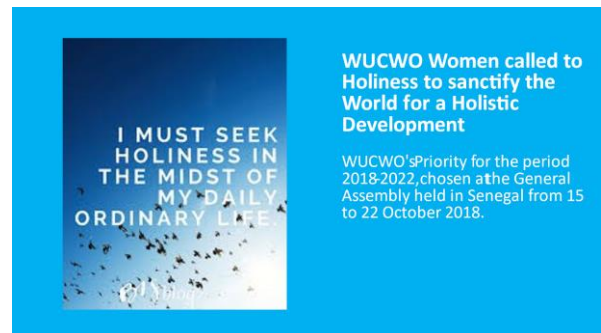
**11.** Social justice is at the heart of our organisation. Our founder Margaret Fletcher led the way to bring Catholic women together to speak out and act based on Catholic social teaching. Each branch makes its own contribution to their local community. These activities give us opportunities to involve other Catholic women and a platform to share League philosophy. We know that many women are reluctant to commit to membership but respond positively for requests for help on projects.



Use this, do not keep activities within the branch, put them out there for others to share.

The Charities Commission Return requires us to quantify our members' activities from knitting mittens to writing submissions to parliament select committees. The figures are amazing. We are making a difference.

**12.** Our CWLANZ moto is Faith and Service. The service bit seems easy to action but what of the faith aspect? The WUCWO General Assembly in Senegal choose as its priority for the period 2018 – 2022, ***WUCWO Women called to Holiness to sanctify the World for a Holistic Development.***



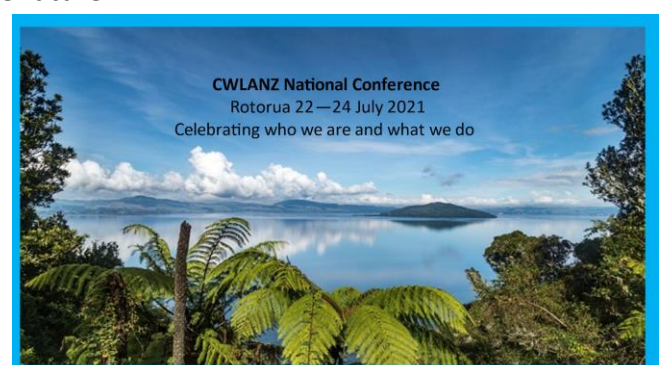
As our society has changed over the years so too has Catholics' prayer life and personal devotions. Many women are too busy to attend the once fully booked retreat days. Branches are finding that their members are looking for companionship and social activities rather than consciously searching for ways to enrich their faith.

We are all facing increased secularisation. It is a challenge for CWL to find ways to combine faith development, social action and meet the social needs of our members. Perhaps a renewed focus on faith development opportunities may attract other women to join us. We can use the internet and social media. Several members from Mid Canterbury signed up for an online scripture study of Luke's Gospel for Advent. Others joined an Australian 16 days of prayer, scripture, action and comment on Domestic and sexual violence against women. I see promoting such spiritual development activities as another way to help our members and broaden the appeal of CWL. I challenge branches to take the lead in their parishes.

**13.** I have recently joined two Wucwo webinars. The first was introducing the Pope's Laudato Si Action Platform. A Seven Year plan by Pope Francis to achieve 7 Sustainable Goals of Laudato Si. The second focused on the recent encyclical, Fratelli Tutti. "on fraternity and social friendship". The WUCO International President spoke of women's centuries long role of caring and creating a community of belonging. Women want to know how to care for a sick society. We care for our society and we care for our common home. Expect to hear a lot more on these two documents in the future.



**14.** Hamilton diocese welcomes all members to Rotorua for the National Conference 22 – 24 July. Registration and programme information will be out any day soon. The Board wants this to be a conference that celebrates our members and looks to build for the future. I am going to ask the diocese to highlight one of their outstanding members either past or



present. We are looking forward to joining with members from all over NZ. We are excited to have Annah Stretton as the keynote speaker. Annah Stretton is a well know entrepreneur and successful fashion designer. She is also deeply committed to social justice especially for disadvantaged women. Annah will tell us of her charity RAW, Reclaim Another Woman. This charity helps women make new lives for themselves after servicing time in prison. This will work very well with the WUCWO call to members to pray during 2021 for the elimination of discrimination and violence against women.

As I said in the February National Newsletter, “I feel 2021 is going to be a good, good year,” for CWL. Let’s work together to make it happen.

Susan Dickson  
National President

