



newsletter

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LIBERAL RELIGIOUS WOMEN

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE IARLW

Be The Change You Wish To See In The World

President Kathy Matsui

THANK YOU, Jopie, I truly thank you for the good work you have done for the past four years. I would also like to thank Ms. Kayoko Yokota, for guiding me this far. If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't have been here today. I would also like to thank the present board members, honored guests and members of IALRW. I am much honored to accept the role of president of International Association for Liberal Religious Women. IALRW has a history of 96 years. In four years, we will be celebrating our centennial anniversary. Ninety six years ago in



1910, women created an organization to voice their plea for world peace. If we look back to that time, these devoted women were brave to stand up and take action to work for peace.

Ninety six years ago we were voiceless and vulnerable, and now it is critical to sensitize ourselves to the many other voiceless and vulnerable women and children in our community, our country and the world. We need to build solidarity, mutuality and justice together.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)



2006 Conference of the IARLW

FO GUANG SHAN MONASTERY, TAIWAN

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(Issue No. 58)

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Topics In Future Newsletters:
Woman's Conference in 2009 in New Orleans
2010 Conference in Kerala, India
One Hundred Years History Anniversary

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Photo Credits:
First Page: Christine Johnston
Inside Pages: Kayoko Tokota, Sylvia Krogh
and Christine Johnston

A Message From Our Editor

This edition is primarily a report of all of the enriching events happening at the last international conference in Taiwan, and of our exciting plans for the future. Some details are given about the Vision Task Force and you are encouraged to get in touch with the leaders in your area (see report enclosed).

There is also some background information for new members such as the themes of past international conferences and details about our ongoing Ladakh project. Recently donations have also been made to other worthy causes.

This is your newsletter and so we encourage you to send in news from your chapter or area which might interest the international community.

We are inviting you to be creative and design a new possible symbol for our organization as the past one contains historic symbols as the cross which we now feel to be no longer appropriate. Send in your ideas by August 2008, either to Kathy Matsui or myself, and the whole Council assess them.

Enjoy the magnificent photos most of which were taken by Kayoko Yokota, though I provided the cover picture.

Yours in Partnership, *Christine Johnston*

IMAGES OF TAIWAN 2006



Two IARLW Dutch stalwarts of the past two decades, Jansje Sick-Verhout, secretary for a second time (left), and Dr. Nelly de Rooy-Janse, President in 1987-1990 and past Newsletter Editor (right)

Be The Change You Wish To See In The World

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Tolerance and appreciation of diversity are essential qualities required in the building of a culture of peace. We can create a society that respects everyone's human dignity by developing awareness, showing responsible attitudes and active commitment.

We are women. It's part of our identity. Too many times in history, we have sent our sons and husbands to war. Too many times our daughters have been victims to unnecessary violence, and loss of loved ones. Too many times our children have lost their beautiful and innocent smile from fear of war, fear of losing a good friend, fear of losing their family. Do we want to experience this many more times? As an act of solidarity, we, like-minded women with the same vision, with the same dream, gather together and walk the same path to world peace through inter-faith dialogue and cooperation. We may not see it happen in this lifetime, but we need to walk on the path to realize justice and peace. If it has to be done, then let it start from us. The path must be walked by all of us, hand in hand, step by step, as Gandhi may put it, until we see the change we wish to see in the world.

PRESENTATION OF GIFT TO JOPIE: Jopie, here's a gift we give to you as a token of our sincere appreciation for leading us these past four years. This gift was chosen especially for you because you are valuable to us. The gift is a gem that when the rays of the sun filter through it, it beams the colors of the rainbow, just as when the rays of God's light filter

through you, you shine with the colors of wisdom and love. We have gathered here at Fo Guang Shan for four days and have gained valuable experience



The new IARLW Council (from right to left): Mikiko Watanabe, Vice President; Kathy Matsui, President; Susan Caravello, Treasurer; Jansje Sick-Vernhout, Secretary and Christine Johnston, Vice President.

from each other. Now we will return to where we came from and apply what we have learned in our respective roles in our community. I would like to end with the words of the Venerable Master Hsing Yun that reflects the hospitality we received from the Honorable Chueh-

men and the honorable sisters of Fo Guang Shan.

*May palms be joined in every world
In kindness, compassion, joy and giving*

*May all being find security
In friendship, peace and loving care*

*May calm and mindful practice seed
Patience and equanimity deep*

*May we give rise to spacious hearts
And humble thoughts of gratitude*

May you all return to our next conference four years from now to celebrate our centennial celebration. We have shared this wonderful moment together, now we shall share it with our family and friends back home.

May God bless you all.

Taiwan 2006: Women Waging Peace

Vice President Christine Johnston

The glorious setting and the warmth of the greetings set the tone for a very harmonious and fruitful conference. The photo on the cover gives

only a taste of the classical Chinese architecture, which was surrounded by colourful gardens and magnificent dog statues (to remind us of the Year of the Dog). The

food was the best Chinese food most of us had ever tasted, and the hosts and hostesses of Fo Guang Shan went out of their way to see that our every need was met. Seven of the nuns joined our programme but many others chatted with us or taught us how to do calligraphy or make dumplings. We received lessons on how to handle a monastic breakfast and many of us later participated in this unique experience. Several of us rose early to join in the early morning Chanting and Meditation.

The Opening Ceremony set the tone for a harmonious conference. In the planning of this the Rev. Jopie Boeke, the out-going president, was ably assisted by the Rev. Olivia Holmes because Jopie had unfortunately had some recent health problems. Prayers and readings were offered from several of the religious groups. This event ended with a ceremony in which water offerings from all over the world were blended and then shared out to take home.

We had stimulation for our minds provided by our two excellent key-note speakers who focused on the theme of the conference "Women Waging Peace": the Rev. Izumida, a religious leader of the

Rissho Kosei Kai of Japan; and Dr. Kamar Oniah, a Muslim professor from Malaysia. We were challenged to act on our beliefs and values in our daily lives.

The Business meetings were unusually harmonious and the Chair was careful to include all the voices including the minority.

About 87

members were present. Jopie thanked the past Board members, the past Editors of the Newsletter, and Akiko Sekine and Olivia Holmes for their outstanding work in planning this conference. Akiko deserved special mention as she has done the work of two vice-presidents, visiting the UK, the US, and Taiwan as well as Ladakh. Jopie herself has been busy visiting Holland, the UUA's General Assembly, the ICUU in Barcelona, the Japanese Chapter, and of-course Oxford where Jopie has represented us on the International IARF Council. Jopie had drafted a Mission statement which was approved as amended (see elsewhere in this newsletter.) Members were enthusiastic about our future and a Vision Task Force was set up (see section on this.) Several presentations and small gifts were given to Jopie for her ever-gracious presence and steady leadership despite ill-health, to Olivia for her wise guidance and leadership throughout this conference; to Bhiksuni Chuehmen, our hard-working hostess and IARF Board member; and to Dr. Hida and the team of translators who handled any problems so effortlessly.

For our entertainment we had some outstanding talent, both local and from members, especially the



Nuns in training entertain us in the evening.



Our two keynote speakers, the Rev. Izumida and Dr. Kamar Oniah, surrounded by IALRW admirers.

talented members of the Japanese Chapter. Not only did the latter provide exhibitions by professional dance teachers but a group of them taught many of us their colourful hat dance. The local monastery provided us with classical music performances and their novices stunned us with their costumes and skill in dancing. The youngest of the Orphan Princes and Princesses even did cartwheels to entertain us.

We look forward to seeing these old and new friends again in 2010 in Kerala, India, and hope more of our South Asian friends will be able to attend at that time. And in the meantime some of us plan to attend the Woman's conference in Orleans in 2009, a follow-up to that held in Beijing. Susan Caravello offered to co-ordinate our representation. In addition, many of us are involved in local and national events.



Past President, the Rev. Jopie Boeke, chats with the Rev. Izumida (a keynote speaker) and the Rev. Olivia Holmes, our parliamentarian and a key facilitator at the conference.



The Rev. Jopie Boeke thanks our hostess and IARF Board member, Bhiksuni Cheuh-men. A multi-faceted crystal was presented to her as a memento.

Steady Progress In Ladakh Literacy

Edited version of report by Kayoko Yokota, Chair of the Japanese Chapter, 21 March, 2006.



A Ladakh women's literacy class

The United Nations specified the 10 years from 2003 on to be focused on world literacy. The population of the world is deemed to be beyond 10 billion, with 60% non-literate, and 2/3 of those women. Knowledge of childcare is scarce except as taught by the previous generation. And the lack of sex education makes the protection against AIDS difficult.

I became involved in the activity of IALRW in 1984 when the conference was hosted in Tokyo. At first we assisted a project in Calcutta, India, where the women became independent economically, by sewing bags with donated machines. The literacy project in Ladakh, India, began in 1997, proposed by Nelly de Rooy-Janse, a former president. In 1999, after I was chosen as the president of IALRW, mainly Japanese members funded the project, although Nelly remained very involved and has visited several times in recent years. A small group of Japanese members visited Ladakh in 2001, 2003 and 2005.

Ladakh is located in far NW of India near the Chinese border and close to Kashmir. Yet it is stable and a kind of buffer zone. Since there are flights to Delhi, tourism is increasing. Thus developing literacy and an awareness of the need for peace

are truly important steps as a strategy for world peace.

The highly esteemed Buddhist Mahabodhi society (MIMC: Mahabodhi International Meditation Center) with which we work was established in Ladakh in 1956. They educate women and children, support orphans and the aged, have established a hospital, etc.

In 2003, four Japanese members reported on the gradual progress. In 3 villages (Stakmo, Gompa and Szabo) there were 102 students (from a mother of 24 years old to an 84 years old woman). By 2005 this was 7 centers with 272 students. They also had procured more sewing machines, and were heading for economic independence. Our money was used for the stationery, the rent, the firewood and the teacher. At this time, owing to the support of Rotary Club members, we brought notebooks, on which were printed "Peace begins from the heart of each persons" and pencils marked "Peace". Our aim is to plant daily feelings of peace in the people's minds.

In 2003 Ms. Kunzes Dolma in Ladakh stated: "I cannot express their joys being brought by this project to this area... In the past, they could not have any responsibility and were treated as only burden of its society and they had to endure of it... Now they feel that they are the most responsible persons within their families and also feel satisfactions on it. In order to call their intimate persons, they can understand the numbers to dial. In each center, almost all students became to be possible to write their own names and able to write sentences... Also, they can read the price tags of fruits, vegetables, the numbers of the bulletin board at the office and the destination board of bus. They can also vote."

Ms. Dolma disclosed their plan for the foundation of additional three centers in near future.

In 2005 Rev. Sanghasena was the well-loved head of the MIMC project and gave us a lot of his time. He is a member of the Yellow Hat Party (the same as the Dalai Lama) and an important member of IARE. He recognizes education as the most important of MIMC services, and greatly appreciates our support. Comments from the women included: "I can read the sutra." "I will be able to educate my children more than before." "Please continue this literacy project forever." A woman of 72 years old who seems to be a leader in that center said vividly "My new life started." They have begun to sing together.

We took a jeep to the Nurla center which was established a year before. It was a hard journey to drive on the road barely made on the crest on the Himalayan mountains. The Indus river flows along the side and it is only cliffs of rock and sand... It was an unforgettable memory, being jolted in a Toyota four-wheel drive for about 3 hours, on such a road. The highlight was the scene of the car tire hanging over the brink of the cliff when it met the army trucks coming and passing each other. Indeed, it was a journey of life and death.

For the people of Ladakh, it may be common but it is a terrible thing to Japanese. Moreover, the area is a dangerous one confronting Pakistan on the left and China to the right. The border is still not clear.

I felt a strong desire to offer more support to this land where crops do not grow well in the severe environment, but where the people are assiduously



The Rev. Sanghasena welcomes the IALRW team from Japan.



living and studying. Here in the past, the status of woman was low compared with to that of the man. Women were not supposed to go outside without the permission of the man except to do farm-work, carry water, and pick up firewood.

The scenes I saw on this visit changed my attitude completely. We even found time for dancing and singing delightfully together. The families, too, admit it and cooperate. Even the men and the village mayor cooperate with the events at the school. Indeed, a new community has been born, showing a new relationship between men and women of all ages. The conversation in the home is also mainly about what is happening in the school. Imagine these friendly happy family circles, which had been lost until recently.

In May 2005, at the Nagoya Expo, we displayed our literacy project in the Earth Citizen Village pavilion. On the stage we sang the chorus: "Peace begins from the heart of each person."

We only wish we could enlarge the area, to include such places as Afghanistan where there is much conflict."

Note: Dr. Nelly de Rooy-janse of Holland visited again in 2004 for 3 weeks. She not only visited the Literacy Centres but journeyed to several monasteries. At one she watched the monks make one of the biggest Thangkas which they did every 12 years and at another a sand Mandala which was then placed in the flowing Indus to become ONE with the river. She was amused that four of the leading women are named Dolma. One of them attended the Budapest Conference in 2002.

IALRW DONATIONS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS

Money collected for Ladakh in 2005:

The North American Chapter holds two Endowment Funds, one for our Service Project/Charities and one for General Funds (around US \$21,000 and \$29,000 in two Life Insurance Annuities). The interest from the Service Annuity provides the money (\$500) which we give every year to a different project, but we are considering giving some of the interest from the General Fund to a good cause as well, such as the micro-credit project.

* * *

The Japanese Chapter collected and gave to Ladakh 602,500 yen or around US \$6,000.

* * *

The British Chapter have 1,031 pounds (US \$2,000) saved but the European (mostly Dutch) have already donated their money.

* * *

*Recent donations to Other Special projects:
(US\$500 annually)*

2002 Child Haven International (India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Tibet);

2003 Afghani Women's organization;

2004 Filipino Abused Women;

2005 Maha Bhodi tsunami victims (India);

2006 (along with \$500 from the Japanese chapter) was donated to Fo Guang Shan who returned it to be used for our charitable work. So we decided to give this to a new micro-credit project connected to the Maha Bhodi Literacy project of Ladakh. Later we decided that half should go for the recent flooding in Ladakh.

2007 Some project chosen by Dr Kamar of Malaysia

2008 Some project chosen by the Japanese Chapter

We Are Woven Together

By Kathleen McTigue

We gather today as a diverse body of people from many faiths and traditions.

We do not speak the same language of worship.

We follow different teachings, made known to us by sacred voices and scriptures through the ages.

We do not utter the same prayers, nor do we even use the same words if any word at all, to speak the name of God.

Nevertheless, we gather in worship.

In our gathering we honour and celebrate our diversity.

We do not seek a unity that would deny our differences.

We seek rather a deeper union, a union woven through choice and intent,

Through time and attention,

Through respect and compassion,

Until we recognize that we have become a whole cloth,

A cloth made rich and textured and vibrant through our differences.

Each of us can hear, in the beating of our own hearts,

The ancient rhythm of the loom at work,

We are woven together.

We are bound to one another.

We belong and with each other.

Let us worship together.

IMAGES OF TAIWAN 2006



The Giant Buddha at Fo Guang Shan

IARLW Vision Task Force Identifies Goals



The Vision Statement is to be implemented in two year increments. The overall charge from the Executive Board was "Increased Communication and Membership." An interim report is expected in 2008.

Specific tasks:

1. Create a web site of our own and keep updated. Include Mission Statement, history, local contacts, information about up-coming 100th year anniversary at next conference in Kerala, India. One suggested theme was: "Women in Action or Women on the Move".
2. Investigate IALRW status, that is, institutional status in US and Europe (in Japan IALRW is already recognized by the Japanese Government); and check Non Governmental Organization status.
3. Establish clear line of officer move-up.
4. By-laws - check to see if need more up-dating.
5. Formulate organizational structure.
6. Ideas for programme: have cross-cultural workshops between members.
7. Write history of IALRW for 100-year anniversary in 2010 (Susan Caravello will check with long-time members as Anne Vendig & Gladys McNatt).
8. Press release to increased publicity (idea: put ad in UU WORLD and in Canadian and British publications.) Newsletter to all members following conferences. Have press releases that can be given to local members to insert in church bulletins, local community papers, etc.
9. Revise banner to reflect current logo, or recommend and create a new one which does not include a cross.
10. Suggestion to purchase inexpensive walk-e-talkies for next conference to facilitate communication between officers.

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Keep Moving, Keep Cheerful

By Dr. Kamar Oniah

I had to undergo a sinus operation; now healing well. My thoughts, like yours, no doubt are with our brothers and sisters in the Middle East, especially those in Lebanon and Palestine. How much worse can humanity go.

I was away in Sydney this summer. The first one was a sort of emergency request by the Australian authorities and the other meeting was set a year ago. The best bit of all these is that all of us are reaching out to each other to work for world peace.

I have Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and Philippines in mind for the 30 participants we decided for 2010, and I do hope to have them from various faiths too. Maybe we can have the two other Muslim panelists, Kamar Ainiah, a lawyer, can talk on social justice and law, Dr Hariyati Shariman, a lecturer and psychologist, on humanitarian aids where she can present very graphic slides on disaster victims, looking at how we can do our bit as an inter-religious body.

Keep moving and keep cheerful -- we are expanding good tracks for the next generation.

IMAGES OF TAIWAN 2006



"Princes and Princesses" entertain the delegates.

Let's Consider Microcredit

By Susan Caravello

We received an e-mail from Bkikkhu Sanghasena, President of the Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre, whom we work with in our literacy project in Ladakh. He sent information and pictures showing extensive flood damage in the Phyang, Saboo, Igo and Shara villages of Leh District and Sankoo block and Gongma Kargil District caused by sudden torrential rains and cloud bursts, washing away houses, roads, crops, killing animals and some people, and asking for donations for relief. The Board is thus considering sending a \$500 donation to the Meditation Centre to help with rebuilding.

I am working with an intern from the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office to gather as much information as possible about existing micro-credit projects, which is one of the areas we discussed at our Annual Meeting. I will report back to our Board on this.

Also, I understand there is to be a follow-up to the Beijing conference on women to be held in New Orleans in 2009 and will forward information when received.

IMAGES OF TAIWAN 2006



Hounds abound in the "Year of the Dog."

Kyoto Congress Inspiring

By Kathy Matsui

I attended World Conference of Religions for Peace in Kyoto. I was given an opportunity as master of ceremony for the Women's Pre-conference. There were about 200 women religious leaders of various faith disciplines from various countries. I value the experiences I have gained from this conference and hope to apply them to our 2010 conference in Kerala, India. I just visited Costa Rica. They decided not to have a state army or any form of military in 1948 and since then used budget for education and healthcare. Thus literacy rate in Costa Rica is 98% and both the rich and the poor are blessed with education and healthcare. Any disputes are settled by International Court of Justice. Their government is one good model our governments should learn from.

IARLW MISSION STATEMENT

(Initiated by Past President Rev. Jopi Boeke)

The IALRW (International Association of Religious Liberal Women) is a global membership organization of women of faith committed to promoting equality for all and economic and social justice. We strive to embody and nurture a spirit of generosity and trust which encourages care, education, networking and financial support for women, especially those in impoverished and difficult circumstances. The organization is dedicated to building a culture of peace and justice for all. We are inspired to achieve our full potential as we partner across all boundaries to work for women and children's well-being, education and self-actualization."

IALRW COUNCIL AND INTERNATIONAL POSITIONS

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1910-1913 Helen Brooke, UK
1913-1947 Martha Everett, USA
1947-1957 Nicolette A. Bruining, The Netherlands
1957-1968 Cornelia Boer, The Netherlands
1968-1978 Carolyn C. Howlett, USA
1978-1981 Jutta Reich, Germany
1981-1987 Jane Lauriat, USA
1987-1990 Nelly de Rooy-Janse, The Netherlands
1990-1993 Gladys McNatt, USA
1993-1999 Christine Hayhurst, UK
1999-2002 Kayoko Yokota, Japan
2003-2006 Johanna Boeke, UK

IARLW and IARF

As a member group of the International Association for Religious Freedom, the IALRW participates fully in its activities while promoting consideration of women's issues in its agenda.

THE IALRW NEWSLETTER

is published once or twice a year and mailed free to all members for whom the local Treasurer has a current address. This issue was created by Christine Johnston in Canada but the next issues will be created by Judy Highfill in the USA (Their addresses appear on page 11) Submissions are welcome.

IALRW CONFERENCE THEMES:

- 2002: *Woman's Role in the 21st Century*
Budapest, Hungary
- 1999: *Women with Roots, Wisdom and Wings*
Vancouver, Canada
- 1996: *Culture, Religion, Influence on Women*
Iksan, Korea
- 1993: *Nurturing Earth*
Bangalore, India
- 1990: *Building Bridges through Sharing*
Goslar, Germany
- 1987: *Time and Space Together*
Palo Alto, USA
- 1984: *The Culture and Spiritual Roots of our Lives*
Oiso, Japan
- 1981: *The Changing Role of Women in Society*
Noordwijkerhout, Netherlands
- 1978: *Communication*
Oxford, UK
- 1975: *What it means to be a Liberal Religious Woman Today*
Montreal, Canada
- 1972: *Our Differing Lifestyles*
Berg Stettenfels, W. Germany

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP (PLEASE PRINT)

Name _____

Address _____

Religious affiliation _____ Local group _____

I apply for membership in the following category:

Individual Group

I/we wish to further IALRW's work by enclosing a contribution to:

Literacy Service Projects Sponsorship Fund General fund

Annual Membership fees (Individuals / Groups):

Sterling £5.00 / £10.00 US dollars \$15.00 / \$25.60 Dutch guilders dfl 25 / dfl 30

Rupees Rs 20 / Rs 30 Yen Y2000 Y3500

Please make cheques payable to IALRW and send to the appropriate country contact at the address list.