



March 2022

Dear AMUA members

As I write this newsletter, I can hardly believe that it's March already. Another busy year is well underway. Here in southern Queensland and northern NSW, we are in the aftermath of an amazing 4 days of at times very heavy rain, while our members in the west and southern areas of the country are experiencing bush fires and high temperatures. These more extreme weather events have been linked to climate change and are a reminder of the way humans have used God's environment.

Overseas Target Fund

Just to remind or inform you, the purpose to which Target Funds are used is negotiated between AMUA and Mary Sumner House in response to the needs of our members overseas. The focus of the Target Fund changes every two to three years. Over the last couple of years you have done a wonderful job of raising funds for the Parenting Program in Papua New Guinea. Well done.

Our Target Fund project for the next two years is Disaster and Climate Change Management in the Pacific. This project is particularly topical given the recent underwater volcano which spilled ash over Tonga. The provincial president for Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia reports that clean-up is well underway, but there is still a lot to be achieved to enable life to return to normal. If any of you have been through a dust storm you may have some idea of the absolute clogging of the air and the significance problems these fine particles can create especially in homes where water supplies have been disrupted and polluted by debris. Recovery includes such activities as re-establishing food gardens and savings groups as well as ensuring child protection and re-establishing water supplies.

Additionally, MU is involved in discussion and teaching among the churches in the Pacific around the theology of disaster resilience. This approach aims to change attitudes to preparing for events such as cyclones and storms. I will write in more detail about the theology of disaster resilience in a later newsletter.

Raising funds to support MU work among these communities will build on local strengths to assist communities to be resilient and disaster ready. Further discussion and learning concerning this target project will also enable us more aware of the effects of climate change especially among island communities who are losing land and facing inundation from sea water, reducing available land for growing food and flooding infrastructure such as sewage systems. Watch this space.

Human Trafficking

Each Friday afternoon during February I attended a course in Human Trafficking via zoom. Participants who are all church workers came from most countries in Asia and the Pacific. It was a real privilege to hear their stories and learn more about this global problem. While some may think that human trafficking/modern day slavery only exists in low resource countries, ashamedly some Australians are also perpetrators. According to a 2020 report trafficking does occur in Australia mostly among domestic and migrant workers.

In 2019, law enforcement referred 213 suspected cases of trafficking for investigation, an increase from 179 and 166 in the previous two years. Court reports indicate that recent victims of forced



labour have been trafficked to Australia from countries like Fiji; young women from Thailand are trafficked for sexual exploitation, as well as Australians engaging sexual activity with children overseas. These are only the cases that have been prosecuted. It is estimated that the numbers of victims and survivors may be bigger than those reported.

Sadly, we also may be vicariously complicit in modern day slavery when we buy goods and clothing without any knowledge of the chain of supply that brings these products to our shops.

Please continue to pray for the work of MU overseas, praying purposefully about both these issues.

Wave of prayer

When you are planning your wave of prayer day program in your branch, please consider using a purposeful prayer approach (as outlined in a previous newsletter – also on the MU UK site). Last August at their conference, members in North Queensland prepared purposive prayers for each of their link dioceses. Use the internet, diocesan sites and news sites to explore the major current issues for the area or the country. List dot points and then write prayers that specifically address one or two points for that country. This resource can be used on the “spare day” in the MU diary so that you continue to pray for your link dioceses throughout the year. Don’t forget to check the internet every few months to make sure you are praying for current needs.

Northern Outreach

By way of a Northern Outreach update, bishops in the three northern dioceses have been asked to submit applications for grants for 2022. We await applications and will let you know how the money you raised last year for northern outreach is being spent this year.

May God continue to bless you in all that you do to further the kingdom of God.

Kind regards

Robin