

MY DEAR FRIENDS...

A message from World President Magdie de Kock



Transition from one year to the next always fills me with a degree of sadness on the one hand and a feeling of excitement on the other. Sadness and disappointment about untapped opportunities, and excitement at the prospect of new opportunities offered.

On my desk in front of me are two diaries. The 2020 Year Planner with dates and pages that have been scratched through as events and appointments have been cancelled and postponed as unpredictable yet inevitable consequences of the Pandemic. As I glance through the pages, I notice numerous online events where I represented ACWW – certainly not as rewarding as a face-to-face attendance, but equally relevant.

Pages in my new 2021 diary are already filled with entries of many invitations to attend interesting events and appointments to fulfil – provided it is allowed by the prescribed Restriction Regulations. However, I am nevertheless prepared and available to seize every opportunity, to keep every appointment in this New Year and to be resilient and eagerly ready to respond when opportunities arise.

“Resilience is one of the most important skills in life. We all face difficulties, challenges and setbacks, but resilience is what determines whether we fight through it and grow, or whether we cave in and let those challenges defeat us”. Lachlan Brown

In my first message in the 2020 issue of *The Countrywoman*, I focussed on hope without realising how relevant this would be in a year when it seems as if all concepts of the meaning of the word were challenged. As the year unfolded, it seemed as if hope was replaced with a feeling of hopelessness as the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic raised fear and uncertainty for millions of people all over the world.

It is therefore appropriate to focus on practising resilience and adapting to the stressful events, as we were tested in uncountable ways the previous year.

“Resilience is accepting your new reality, even if it’s less good than the one you had before. You can fight it, you can do nothing but scream about what you’ve lost, or you can accept that and try to put together something that’s good.”

Elisabeth Edwards

According to other experts on human behaviour, resilience can be learned and I am in the process of managing this ability very well as I have had many opportunities to practise resilience during the previous year!

Research of human development stresses the value of understanding the concept of resilience as these unprecedented changes have had a significant and adverse impact on the general wellbeing of so many people. If ever a time called for understanding the concept of resilience, this is it!

Therefore it is now a good time to learn and practice resilience as the end of the Pandemic has not yet been announced. On the contrary, it now presents additional challenges- there is more social isolation, loss, uncertainty and worry beyond control.

We should focus on what is within our control. Research shows that when resilient people face adversity, they look for the good amid the stress. They engage with the controllable aspects of their lives – like family, personal health and giving back to the community and keeping connected

Board members and Staff remain supportive, connected and involved with the membership. Hopefully members will be motivated by these efforts and will continue to support our beloved organisation – not only financially but also in other ways.

Continued virtual meetings of the Board and staff enable us to mitigate and manage the impact of the Pandemic. The onslaught affected the survival of many organisations similar to ours, but we are grateful to be able to avoid many of the negative impacts – unfortunately, not all...

As transparency and information is critical at this point, I want to mention that Covid-19 has inevitably impacted the finances of ACWW. In an effort to address this reality, we reviewed strategies, made well informed decisions and implemented plans following thorough research. A fundraising appeal – Securing ACWW for Future Generations, will soon be introduced. I hope this initiative will be very well received and supported!

My 2021 diary is already bursting with dates to accommodate Area Conferences and other ACWW related events – those

which were postponed as well as those which were originally planned for 2021. Two conferences are taking place in the first quarter of this year. I am looking forward to attending the very first Area Conference of this Triennium! The Southern African Area Conference is taking place in February in the scenic surroundings of the Midlands of Kwa Zulu-Natal, a province of South Africa. Not being affected by domestic travel restrictions, I will be able to attend the event.

The South Pacific Area Conference is taking place in March. As this will be the very first Area Conference to be conducted virtually, I will join the Conference on-line.

In my message in January 2020 I wrote: “While hopelessness often paralyzes us, makes us complacent, causes us to give up, hopefulness does the opposite- it’s the wind beneath our wings to lift us up to reach our goals”.

As I continue to navigate uncharted waters, I stare at the pages of my 2021 Year Planner and I will regard every opportunity to cultivate my resilience. Whilst hopefulness is indeed the wind beneath our wings – it is resilience that will enable us to focus on our goals and to remain true to our pledge to support and connect women worldwide and to be Rural Women in Action in every sense of the word!

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us”. Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Dear Members, thank you for your ongoing support and encouragement – you are certainly helping me to discover “the importance of what lies within us”.

Warmest regards,

Magdie

Magdie de Kock
ACWW World President