



Dear Friends,

I have just come back from a Mental Wellness Conference in Suriname, South America. 650 ladies got together to meet God and to be blessed by song, worships and presentations. It always amazes me how God leads when we give Him the glory. The experience was one of being timely. Many of our sisters came from the islands which were devastated by the hurricanes. The experiences we heard were heart breaking. Yet during all their experiences they came to glorify God and give Him thanks for what He does for them every day. It was very moving.

May we all continue to glorify God in good and bad times.

Blessings,

Clair

Here are some photos of the event. We had a prayer wall of chicken wire on which after every presentation prayers were hung up. See how it grows.





News from Finland

Anne Vrcelj, Women's Ministries director and Executive Secretary at the Finland Union of Churches Conference

GIRLS FOR CHRIST AND CREATIVE BIBLE STUDY WEEKEND IN TOIVONLINNA

Over the last weekend of the summer from 25th to 27th of August 2017, we gathered together in Toivonlinna Villa Ljunghäll. There was already a shade of the beginning of autumn in the air. Around 30 women met to dig deeper into the Bible under the title "Creativity and my Bible" led by Clair Sanches-Schutte, director of the Women's Ministry department at the Trans-European Division.

At its best, the weekend was a profound spiritual journey into one's inmost heart and closeness to God. The core text for Friday was Colossians 3:1-17, and we especially concentrated on Col. 3:12: "Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering." In the evening we crafted dresses, and on them every one of us could write qualities, which she personally finds most challenging. Next year we are going to create a summary to see, how we have managed to work on those things with God. Clair talked about how love is like glue that binds everything together and makes everything beautiful. She also spoke of the fact that the Bible is a surprisingly many-sided book that day by day speaks to us on a new level.



On Sabbath, we had the possibility to begin the morning with an active hour of devotion, during which we thought over the condition of the human heart using a story called "Gravel path and Chamomile". When people trample us, do we become hardened or do we give off the sweet aroma of Christ?



Women's Ministries News



For the Bible study and the Church service we assembled together with Adventist Local Church in Toivonlinna and visitors in the school gym. The afternoon continued with a Bible orienteering worked out by local ladies. Unfortunately, rain started to fall that moment, and our orienteering group took shelter under a roof. We spent the time praying for Toivonlinna and other issues.

In the afternoon, we also found out our own way to learn. It should direct our Bible study towards a practice that helps us internalize our learning as well as make effective use of it and concretize it in our lives.

We also studied Bible texts by means of fabric pieces, we made drawings, coloured, moulded our self-portraits and received lots of material to continue our study at home. The Gratitude Journal proved to be my personal favourite.



On Sabbath evening, we had the possibility to take a journey to a prayer garden using the inspiring Lord's Prayer. Jesus himself has taught that prayer to us and now it concretized in a huge way in our minds and hearts. At the end of the evening we formed a circle and held each other's hands. Then we prayed together a "popcorn prayer". The air was filled with the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit and with feminine energy in a tangible way, when women from many generations approached God in prayer.

Our topic on Sunday was the mentoring programme "Girls for Christ". It is a programme for girls and young women and it includes meetings once a month to spend the entire day together. Each meeting consists of Bible study in creative ways, participation in a service project, health and lifestyle guidance and spending the evening socializing. Breaks and eating are naturally a part of the day.

It would be ideal if at least three women could guide each group. When one of them gets ill, the whole programme won't fall on one person's shoulders. The person who wants to mentor girls and young women should above all be able to listen without interrupting and condemning. She must not have favourites but she accepts everyone, is reliable and logical and shares her experiences and pieces of wise advice.





It is especially important for the growing youth, whose identity is about to take shape, that the activity has continuity instead of a quick run. It is the call of every Christian to live a holy life. To spend one day with a well-balanced mentor like this is better than a thousand days of hard-working study (cf. Jesus' example).

Material for the "Girls for Christ" -programme is currently available in English, but the children and youth activities department is going to translate it into Finnish to get appropriate material for local congregations within the Adventist Church in Finland. Clair Sanche also presented two colouring books for Bible study. One of those books is already being drafted and is a guide to courage and empowerment based upon the lives of women in the Bible. The other one, Steps to Christ, is only available in English.

We went home with inspiration, some of us directly from the lunch table, others after a Charity concert performed by Toivonlinnan tuki ry. Next year, we are going to assemble again, and we want to encourage younger women to come along and get to know each other and God in new profound ways. – Heidi Meriläinen

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