



PAGES *Women's Ministries*

News from the Polish Union

Halina Jankowska, Women's Ministries director

The most compelling need of women in Poland is the need of supporting each other. It brings big joy in life of someone, to whom help is provided in renovation of their flat, or repairing their car. However much more satisfaction and joy are felt when we help to restore a cheerful spirit in women, who feel forsaken, lonely and very sad! Where would a person like this find understanding, support, and love, if not in God's family? King David said about God: "He heals my soul". God could fill and heal our soul through the very important friendship with other women. God has given a special calling and gift to women, who could understand the needs of other women, and with God's support they try to fulfil those needs. This is one of the main goals of Women's Ministries.

We would like to report that in many churches women are meeting on a regular basis. During these meetings they spend time together, in order to understand each other better, and share practical knowledge about spiritual life and daily challenges.

Women's Ministries Congress

One of the biggest events we organised was the First Women's Congress held in the city of Lodz-Gorna on the 13th of October. This was a Congress organised for the first time in Poland. The main speakers were Anna Radosh and Mariola from Newbold College Church, representing their "Sisterhood". This event brought to us a deep Christian spirit and a special atmosphere. Women from the whole Union met to give praises to God by songs, prayers, and to share their testimony.



The programme was prepared to be suitable for young and old. The motto of the Congress was: "My Life...My Song." Every one of us is walking through a special path, which has to lead us to God. Each path could be different, but everyone is unique and special. At the end of our pilgrimage is eternal life: a life in the presence of our Creator. In our earthly life we face many trails, and still we have hope and endurance. For this reason, during the Congress we have shared everything which have influenced or shaped our spiritual journey. We wanted to discover again our spiritual gifts and learn how could we better serve our God and people around us. We experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout our Congress. The participants went back to their churches with new ideas and a new willingness to work for the Lord more, and being more active in service.



Other good news was that we organized the new Women's Ministries Club in the South of Poland. In Cieszyn Church there is an active Health Club, which presents the health message. During their meetings, women received an invitation to participate in another meeting, too, which is organised for the women in our Church. The atmosphere of these meetings is very friendly, and they discuss very important topics for women. This helps non-Adventist women to feel comfortable in our Church, especially if they are at the start of attending our programmes. During these meetings different topics are presented, like cooking classes, health issues, beauty and spiritual topics.





Each of the women is asked to share with others, what they have learned. They put a special accent on the spiritual topics, and this is present at every Women's meeting. Some of these topics are the presentation of the Bible heroes, of God's promises, the way God is working in their lives. They also put special emphasis on Jesus. Our sisters are very happy with this ministry, which helps them to become friends with other women. In this way the visitors can learn more about our Church and some of their prejudices are gone. We hope and pray that some of them will become followers of Christ in the near future. This way our sisters try to fulfil God's mission.



„MY WORTH IN GOD'S EYES“ WM FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND IN THE SEEUC

The long awaited day has come and Raquel Arrais, GC WM Associate Director, visited SEEUC (South-East European Union Conference) to take part in the WM weekend event entitled „My Worth in God's Eyes“ as the main motivational speaker.

The weekend meetings started on Friday, March 8 at the Belgrade Theological Seminary with the WM representatives from all over South-East European Union – Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Through songs, Bible texts and Daughters of Promise monologues, female students shared our value in God's eyes. Giving voices to Jemimah, Achsah, Sheerah, Ahlai and Tirzah they showed that it is possible to live a blessed life in difficult times.

And Raquel Arrais further empathized the thought in her inspiring sermon „Don't Lose Your Song“ pointing out that neither disappointments nor pains or people should be allowed to take us away our life song – song of praise and gratitude to God, because „better days are coming“.



Sabbath Day, March 9, was celebrated in the main Belgrade church. The Sabbath School time started with conference WM directors sharing inspiring reports on WM creative initiatives and activities to reach the women from the local communities for Christ. It continued with the teenage girls reciting Bible verses on our value in God's eyes and middle age women having monologues on Bible women transformed by the power of the eternal Gospel. Once again we remembered Lydia, Canaanite woman, Woman with a Blood Issue, Samaritan woman and Women Caught in Adultery who were able to „Move the Chair“, to transform their perspectives and attitudes in the „In between“ time and make their lives meaningful and purposeful again, just as sister Raquel pointed out in her motivating mission sermon.

During the church service, a solo song and songs of children's and youth choirs uplifted the hearts into the atmosphere of praise and gratitude and prepare them for the message of Raquel's sermon „Access Factor“ dealing with the assurance of salvation through our Saviour Jesus Christ and His interceding role in our favour in Heavenly Sanctuary, illustrated by many unforgettable examples like the one with the ruined dress and a new dress gotten as a gift.

After the rich and delicious food feast, during potluck, intended for all – women, men and children, a new spiritual feat was awaiting those who stayed for the afternoon service. Talking about flourishing lives of those who are rooted in Christ and power we receive by enabling work of the Holy Spirit, Raquel Arrais encouraged us to recognize our purpose and to take our place in God's mission.

The Sunday meeting, on March 10, was organized in Novi Sad, in the North Conference. Again it was time to nurture, empower and motivate women to reach in and out toward women in need around them. Through songs, poems and a monologue on deaconess Phoebe they were reminded to keep serving faithfully and diligently to the Lord. In her two inspiring seminars „Women Can“ and „One Thing“, Raquel reminded women on Ellen White's words that “women can take their place at this crisis and He will work through them”. Women can learn, serve, teach, proclaim and lead if they are willing to trust God and allow Him to guide and use them. That will be possible if they stick to one thing – meditating on God's Word day and night. But also growing passion for Jesus, people and His soon return. That will give their lives calling, purpose and destiny.

The potluck time was the time for fellowship, discussion and precious experience exchange for all the women attending this empowering meeting in Novi Sad.

In her book Christian Education, Ellen White said that we are changed in accordance with what we contemplate on. According to the words of Marija Trajkovska, WM director in the SEEUC, what women were contemplating on this weekend changed their perspective and attitude for service. Knowing that victorious life is a series of new beginnings, many of them decide to turn a new page in their Christian life and service and live more committedly and gratefully.

-Marija Trajkovska, SEEUC WM Director



News from the Netherlands

COLOUR YOUR WORLD

Six years ago, a unique concept was born in the Netherlands: an identical programme for the International Women's Day of Prayer held at different locations throughout the country. It has varied from 4 to 7 different locations through the years.

Over the past years we have had different themes for the day: Me time? Yes, you can! Women got talent Live, laugh, love Dream, dare, do Let your light shine

COLOURFUL

This year the theme was: Colour your World and on Sabbath the 2nd of March the programme was held.

All locations gave a lot of thought to the colourful decorations. It really was inviting.

There were over 300 participants throughout the country. The first thing that happened was a meal. We all know that when you eat together conversations start. We had a set of cards on the table which could be used as conversation starters. Each location also had a music team which lead out in praise and worship.



SUITCASE STORY

In their own way different speakers presented the message by taking out different items from the suitcase. 'The message was fantastic, done in a fun up-to-date way so that friends from outside the church can take home a message as well', says Clair Sanches, head of Women's Ministries at the Trans-European Division. Bringing friends from outside the church is being done more and more. Up to 10% of those attending are from outside the church. The programme is low-threshold but also has a message. 'I always go away feeling uplifted. It is amazing,' says Wendy Dekker, one of the attendees.

There were also workshops; a talk café, a creative workshop and a quiz about the world. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the quiz.

GOOSE BUMP MOMENT

The closing of the Sabbath was a real goose bump moment. Standing in a large circle we sang 'Side by Side we Stand'. After prayer everyone received a key chain of a world globe with a name of someone who was in attendance that day. The name you got would be the name you pray for every day.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

'It is wonderful to think up a programme from scratch with such a fantastic group of women volunteers. To see women go home excited and filled by what they experienced', says Madelon Comvalius, Women's Ministries leader for the Netherlands Union. 'Without these volunteers this would not be possible'.

DID YOU KNOW

That this way of doing International Women's Day of Prayer is unique. Clair Sanches and Raquel Arrais, two Women's Ministries leaders from the world church, came especially to have a look and experience this day for themselves. Together with Madelon Comvalius they were in Cappelle aan den IJssel.

And they were very enthusiastic! 'What appealed to me the most was that women found a safe place to come together and share their thoughts and heart, their happiness and sorrow. This is how you get a real feeling of closeness...and you go home feeling encouraged', said Raquel. She emphasises that we can reach women through God's love and that it can be fun as well.

The two visitors from abroad take many ideas with them to share with their counterparts in their field.



News from the BUC

BUC Celebrates International Women's Day 2019

The International Women's Day Celebration, which was hosted by the Development Education Department of ADRA-UK in partnership with ADRA-UK, Adventist Community Services and Women's Ministries Departments both under the directorship of Sharon Platt-McDonald, was, according to ADRA's Cathy Boldeau, intended "to highlight the contribution of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the wider community. Based on Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) as prescribed by the United Nations for humanitarian organisations, the afternoon programme was a development education initiative to inform, inspire and hopefully change attitudes and opinions regarding gender issues."

The afternoon of Wednesday 13 March saw a large number of women and a few brave men assemble in the British Union Conference (BUC) loft at the beginning of an afternoon's programme to encourage, value and appreciate the role of women in society as well as thanking women who had made a significant contribution to their church or local communities.

Following lunch, the tables nicely decorated for the occasion by Renatella Lunac, the Women's Department secretary, the programme began with a brief presentation showing how male and female gender roles were established in children's minds at an early age. A class was asked to draw a picture of a fighter pilot, a firefighter and a surgeon. Almost all drew pictures of men in those roles and were surprised when their real counterparts who turned up to meet them were women.

The day is usually celebrated on 8th March but was altered to fit the diary of the principle speaker, Chief Inspector Alicia Shaw, Hertfordshire Constabulary's first woman from the BAME community to hold that role. She gave an inspiring account of how she joined the police service and her rise through the ranks in what was traditionally seen as a man's world to her present role becoming a hostage negotiator in the process and finding herself being called out at all times of the day and night dealing with potential suicides. She pointed out that the Metropolitan Police Commissioner is a woman as is a Hertfordshire Constabulary Assistant Chief Constable an organisation which has five male and five female Chief Inspectors. Other inspiring talks by women were given by two fire-fighters, Christi Burling who is currently a retained (part-time) fire-fighter hoping to be appointed to the service before too long and Carley-Jo Rackley who is the District Community Safety Co-ordinator for the Watford & Three Rivers districts, both talking about their roles and their experience in the local fire service - which was also traditionally seen as a man's world. They pointed out the a woman is currently in charge of London's Fire Service!

ADRA-UK's Chief Financial Officer, Stha Nyamusara, spoke at length about the role of ADRA in making a contribution to the sustainable development of girls throughout the world telling us of the hardships that many encountered as a result of their gender. Also of her own inspiring rise through education from a childhood in an African country to becoming a Chartered Accountant and working for ADRA-UK.



The Chairman of Watford Borough Council, Councillor Rabi Martin, was the second main speaker of the day speaking of how equality had progressed during his lifetime although the women assembled wouldn't necessarily have agreed with all his views as seen from a male perspective! He cited three women prime ministers as being amongst those who had achieved the most during his lifetime: Mrs. Indira Ghandi in his native India, Mrs. Sirimayo Bandaranaike who became the world's first female prime minister in her native Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1960 and Britain's Margaret Thatcher.

The celebration ended with a presentation of certificates to women across the age range who have quietly undertaken work for their local churches, communities or ADRA giving their time freely for no financial reward and to those who have achieved a lot in areas traditionally seen as belonging to men. It was felt that they should be recognised and appreciated for their contribution during their lifetime rather than as so often happens just have it recorded at their funeral or in their obituary! The work they were recognised for was inspiring in each case and it was clear that without them working quietly in the background many Adventist churches in the country would have a difficult job functioning as well as they do in their local communities.

Those recognised for their work were: Pat Walton, Audrey Balderstone, June Coombs, Pastor Lorraine Fontaine, Lynette Allcock, Margaret Anthony, Melvina Kirwan, Elsie Staple, Barbara Lawrence, June Thompson, Sonia Lee, Ruth Stewart, Hopieann Platt (in absentia) Pam Robertson (in absentia), Kristi Burling, Noreen Kydd-Sinclair, Elritha Sunderland, Janice Davis, Milimo Mumbo, Jill Bartley. Annalisa Buraglio Molteni and last but not least, Andrea Hayes Community Liaison Officer, Watford Labour party for her work with Watford's 'One Vision Project'.



In the words of Sharon Platt-McDonald, written nearly 30 years ago:
 So let's value our women
 Let them know that we care
 And appreciate and celebrate them
 Whether they be far or near
 Then confirm us valuable as women
 And you'll be sensible
 Because in one word ...
 We're just INDISPENSIBLE!!!

- June Coombs