News from Women’s Ministries Inter-European Division

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EUD Women' Ministries Facebook Page

We are happy that more than 600 people have followed the fb-site Women in action. It was started as a site to promote the Women in action congress 2014. In the meantime the congress lives in our memory and the focus has moved more to the activities and initiatives of the Women's Ministries Department. That is why we are starting a new Facebook site: EUD Women's Ministries. This is also necessary because there is another fb-site called Women in action that has nothing to do with us. Little by little this site will be discontinued and our activities moved to

https://www.facebook.com/eudwomensministries

We ask you to like this new page!

First Women’s Retreat in the Czech Conference of the SDA Church

During the weekend of October 23-25, 2015 more than 80 women from all over the Czech Conference of the SDA Church met in the picturesque town of Telč to take part in the historically first Women’s Retreat of the Czech Conference of SDA. The rich program that was prepared for them started out on Friday evening with the traditional Jewish “welcoming of Queen Shabbat” ceremony. The participants had the opportunity to get familiar with the Jewish customs and experience the role a woman plays in them.

Saturday was dedicated to a series of four lectures carrying the main theme of the conference – Four seasons in the life of a woman. The lectures were held by the phantastic psychologist and family therapist Milena Mikulková. Each of the lectures was dedicated to one of the seasons, pointing out their positive sides and advantages, as well as perils and pitfalls. It was a wonderful opportunity to embrace and celebrate being a woman, but also a reminder that whatever might be going on in our lives, we are not the only ones ever to face it, and we are not alone. There was also ample time to share what we found out about ourselves and the topics in group discussions.

In the afternoon a welcome rest for the brain cells came in the form of an improvised “café” and a photo booth, which allowed the women to express their current moods and feelings by posing for the shots in one of the thematic “seasonal” hats. On Sunday there was an opportunity to share our knowledge and experiences in the form of workshops.

The whole weekend was spent in a blessed atmosphere of worship, prayer, community, sharing, gratefulness and joy. We thank God for the rest, renewed strength and inspiration, which the women were able to receive during the retreat. We believe this First Women’s Retreat will not be the last, but will grow into a tradition.
Girls4Christ Weekend in Austria

In the Austrian Church paper “Adventisten Aktuell 11|2015” Clarissa-Mae Fichtberger, a 14-year-old teenager tells about her first Girls4Christ weekend in Strobl, Austria. They enjoyed healthy food and fun as well as spiritual nourishment. Larissa Knirr spoke about melting your own icebergs of feelings of rejection, envy and disappointments. In workshops the girls were able to cook together or prepare natural cosmetics. The atmosphere was good and they had a lot of fun. The spiritual messages were certainly relevant for everybody. Clarissa-Mae ends her report with the words: “We are girls who are strong and walk with God.”

Trans-European Division’s Second Female Pastors Affirmation Meeting in Copenhagen

It may be dark and cold on a December morning in Copenhagen, Denmark, but when 36 women pastors meet, their enthusiasm and love both light up and warm the room with a beautiful atmosphere. However, behind the smiles and warm hugs there are also tears and hurting hearts.

During the Affirmation of Women in ministry meeting on December 1, the pastors shared how they had been affected by the 'no vote' on ordination in San Antonio in the summer of 2015. Some expressed disappointment, some felt deeply hurt, some even had people telling them to step down from ministry. Others have experienced harassment, bullying and condescending behaviour, including comments about their calling and ministry.

Pastor Guiséle Berkel-Larmonie from Holland opened the day reminding us of Micah 6:8, where the only thing God requires of us is "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God". Raafat Kamal, division president, again stated his own and the Division’s commitment to keep working on solving the issues of ordination and inequality. The Union presidents each took a few minutes to update the pastors on how they have been working post San Antonio. Many of the Unions have made statements of support and have taken a variety of approaches in finding solutions.

The most important part of the meeting happened in the groups that were formed, where the women had the opportunity to share their hurts, find comfort, listen to each other's stories, find support in good colleagues, seek wisdom with each other, and pray for strength, humility and a continued willingness to serve despite some opposition and difficulties. The male leaders also met and talked about how they can support and affirm their women colleagues, and how they can help the church to move on after San Antonio.

A Q&A time with the leaders showed an openness from both sides to share the hard stuff, to listen to each other, but also to keep working for the Lord who has called us to do His work. Gratitude was expressed to the TED leadership for creating an opportunity to meet. When we left the meeting, the dark December night had fallen over the city of Copenhagen, but our hearts were warmer and our desire to follow God's leading and be a light to a dark world had been strengthened. Anne-May Müller [tedNEWS

Church Regions affirm Women in Pastoral Ministry in Venezuela, South Africa and Papua New Guinea

In a landmark event, the West Venezuela Union Conference hired for the first time in its history a female pastor to take charge of a district. Anyuanett Morales become the first woman to be a pastor in this tropical country, joining the around 10 women pastors currently working in the inter-American Division (IAD).

Four years ago another country belonging to the IAD took the same decision. In 2011 the Guyana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists commissioned its first female pastor. Margaret Rasmusson, who was an ordained elder for a number of years, became the senior pastor of the Olivet Seventh-Day Adventist Church in D'Urban, Backlands. Dr. Hilton Garnett, Conference’s president said “…we have been ordaining female Elders for years. Our ladies have been making a significant contribution to leadership”.

Anne-May Müller [tedNEWS

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Anyuanett Morales was put in charge of a district with 12 churches in the province of Delta Amacuro. Although there are unavoidable challenges that a woman pastor must face in a culture dominated by male-chauvinistic paradigms, she is hopeful and confident: “Venezuela is a male-chauvinistic country, but the Lord Jesus Christ is leading our steps. The best thing to do is not expect anything, just develop your ministry. Nobody is going to stop you because you have the presence of Christ in your life”, she said. “Do you think that is easy? Not at all, but we must not focus on the negative [things] because the positive [things] are bigger”.

Candy Swartz Becomes First Adventist Woman Pastor to Receive Commissioning in Africa

On Saturday, November 28, Xolisa “Candy” Swartz became the first Seventh-day Adventist woman pastor in Africa to receive a commissioned minister credential. The historic service took place on the campus of Bethel College, Eastern Cape, Cape Conference, during the Cape Conference Constituency 3rd Business Session. Along with Swartz, six male pastors were ordained during the service. While there are several women serving as pastors in the Southern African Union Conference (SAU), Swartz became the sole woman pastor in all three of the divisions on the African continent to be commissioned. SAU Ministerial Association Secretary Gerald T. Du Preez, who presided over Saturday’s proceedings, noted that at the last SAU Executive Committee Meeting, the name of a second woman ministerial candidate was approved for commissioning—that of Nandi Fleming.

First female minister commissioned in Papua-New-Guinea Union Mission

The Adventist Church in Papua New Guinea (PNG) commissioned its first woman minister during its 15th Business Session held last month in Lae. A once male-dominated clergy in the Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM) has seen rapid changes in the past 10 years as women ministers continue to join in force. Dr. Agnes Kola, who returned to the country earlier this year after obtaining her Doctorate in Ministry at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS) in the Philippines, has become the first Adventist female minister to be commissioned in PNG.

In what was an exciting and emotional moment, delegates from all over the country attending the business session witnessed and applauded the Church for recognizing the work of female ministers in the country. Outgoing PNGUM president Dr Leigh Rice read out the policy statement on the responsibilities of ministers and highlighted what Dr. Kola would and would not do as a commissioned minister. He applauded the work of female ministers in PNGUM and said the Church appreciated the great contributions they make. It was an emotional moment for Dr Kola, who praised God and thanked PNGUM and the South Pacific Division leadership for the recognition and honor. She also thanked her husband and family for their support in her ministry and recent studies. During the business session, Dr Kola was also appointed the Women’s Ministry and Family Life director for the next five years.—Nancy Lagdom (Adventist Record, December 2015)

Italian women organize EnditNow program

The Castelvolturno SDA church in southern Italy conducted an EnditNow program on November 14, 2015. They celebrated the day according to the pattern of instruction and explanations they gleaned from the Leadership Course they attended. The petition to end the violence against women that is to be submitted to the UN was signed by most of the church members.

Meresiana Dauniseka, WM director of the church says, “We are just so thankful that they became conscious already of such a program after they had been educated and thus became cooperative.”

At the same time they celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the Women’s Ministry with a cake. They are looking forward to the next year’s activities and have already made plans, starting in the month of January 2016. Meresiana asks for your prayers so that all Women’s Ministry Programs will bring glory to the Name of the Lord.

According to a repost by Meresiana Dauniseka
What would it be like if I decorated a tree in my heart; not with baubles but with all the names of people who are dear to me. People far and near. Whom I see every day and only very seldom. Whom I love to think of and whom I sometimes forget. The painful hours and the happy ones. The ones I unintentionally hurt and the ones who hurt me. The ones whom I know well and the ones I know only superficially. The ones who owe me something and the ones whom I owe much. The names of all the people whose path has crossed mine. A tree with deep roots, so that their names will never be erased from my heart. With strong roots, so that names from past times will blend with the names of today. With a prayer, so that you, Lord can work in our lives.

By your love,
faithfulness,
grace and
justification.

Wishing you God’s blessings in this season

Denise Hochstrasser, EUD WM Director
and her team

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