

News & Views

December 2008

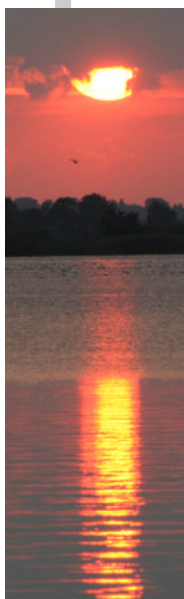


European Baptist Women's Union

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I want to encourage you to keep your lamps trimmed and ready, always spreading the Light. Jesus came and in a few weeks we'll remember His birth, but, He has promised to return – not as a helpless baby – as the King of kings and Lord of lords to take His people to be with Him forever.



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Wies Dijkstra:

Almost two hundred guests flowed on May 15 into the former conference centre, The Source, at Dalfsen, forming a river, which ended in a fountain of exhilaration at the meeting of each other, but above all in the meeting with Jesus Christ: our Source of Inspiration.



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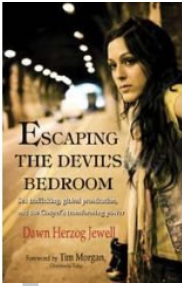
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The Samaritan woman is our example. It is only through the recognition of our own weakness that others can be brought to God. It is in our weakness that God's power of change is evident to others and becomes attractive to them.



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**Usually when
Christians see people
in prostitution, or go**

**past sex clubs and sex bars,
they prefer to look the other
way, so not to be “polluted”
by that “dirty stuff”. I’d
suggest doing the opposite.
Look right into the situation
and pray God’s grace, mercy
and love be shown into the
hearts and lives of ALL of
those involved - the women,
men, owners, workers.**

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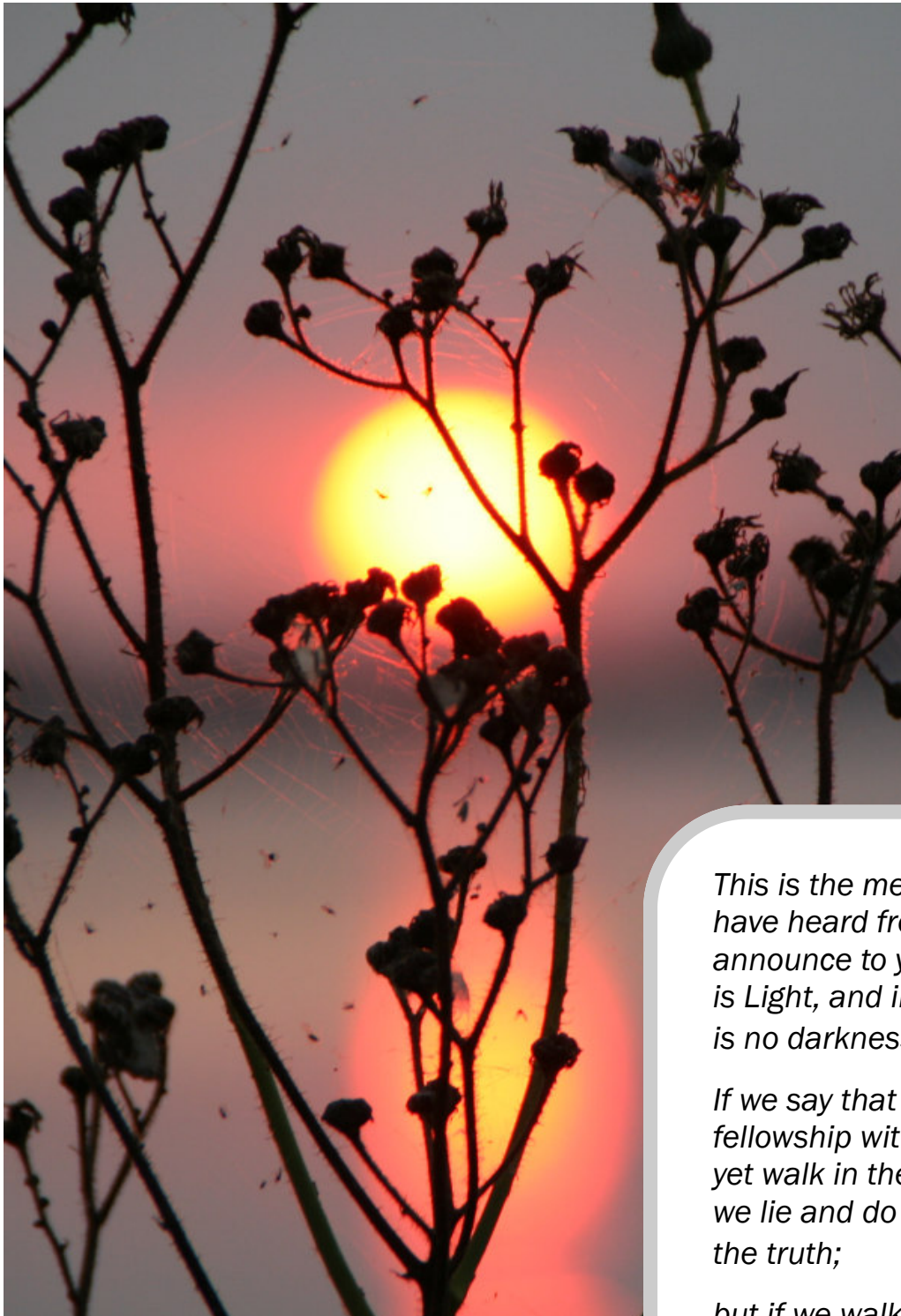
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This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1 : 5-7

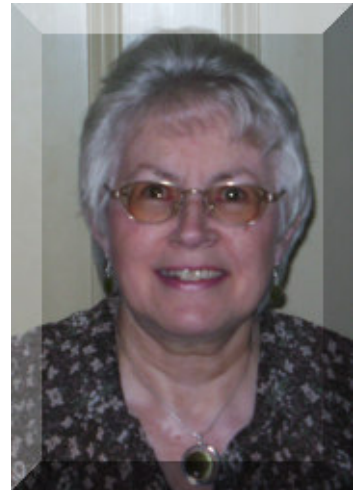


EDITORIAL

By Margaret Brown

Welcome to this edition of News & Views, the first produced by Wies Dijkstra and myself.

This month (December) we shall be celebrating the birth of our dear Lord Jesus Who came to bring Light. There are many, many references to ‘*light*’ in Scripture and its good, when the days of winter can sometimes be rather dull, to think of light.



Praise God! His Light continues to shine in the darkness of this sinful world. Everyday almost, we hear of tragedies, of people losing their lives prematurely, including teenagers and children, even infants. We hear of natural disasters causing havoc to all of creation, including mankind. We hear of accidents on the roads, on the seas and in the air. We hear of wars and rumours of war. We hear of Christians suffering violence, terrible persecution and death. Yes, the world is a dark place, full of the evil of hatred, selfishness and greed. Often these things are blatantly obvious, more often they are done more subtly and carried out away from the public eye. Even in places of authority evil lurks in the corridors of power among those in whom a measure of trust has been placed.

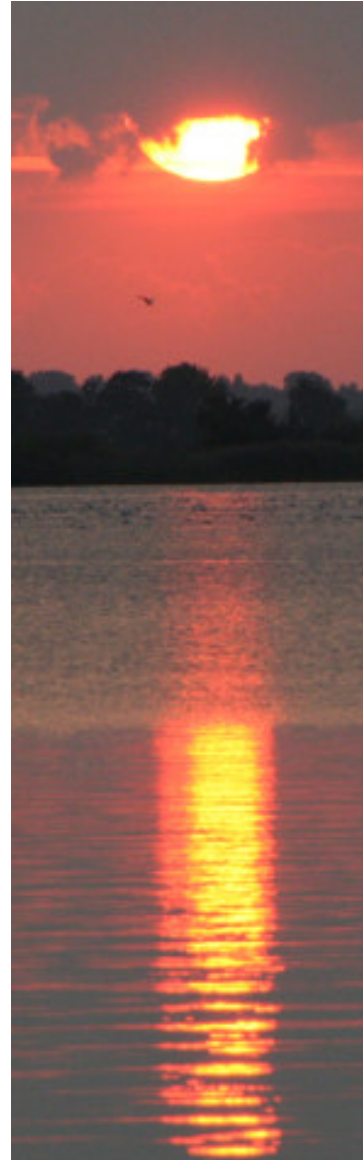
But, praise the Lord, His Light IS shining in the darkness and we must not despair nor give up our Hope.

As the Lord looks upon His world, which He created and was perfect when He finished it, He sees the darkness. I suppose, for us it would be like looking at the night sky on a moonless night, away from the bright lights of the towns and cities. The sky is very dark.

One by one the stars begin to appear in the blackness of the sky – some are just visible, a glint of light, others shine more brightly and still others appear to twinkle and reflect light. Some are very small, while others are larger and more clearly seen. God sees the areas of brightness in His world as well as the darkness. He sees where the Light is shining and He gives strength and encouragement so they can shine even brighter to be more clearly seen. God dealt with the darkness when He sent His Son Jesus into the world, where He died for us and now offers forgiveness for all who would trust Him. All of us who know and love the Lord Jesus and seek to live for him are areas of Light where we live, work, play and worship. Are we reflecting the Light of Jesus Who is the Light of the world?

Let me give another example of us, as Christians, being Light. If you have ever been to the theatre or watched it on television you will know that the star of the show is held in the spotlight which shines down on the actor. Whenever and wherever he/she moves on the stage, the spotlight follows so that they are kept in its light. For us we are in God's spotlight, but unlike the actor, we only move when the Light moves. On the stage the actor's movements direct the spotlight but in our lives it is the Light which directs us. When the Light moves, we move with it so that we are always in the Light.

We are to, '*walk in the light as He is in the light,*' so says 1John 1:7.



We obey and follow the Lord's instructions so that we can be good reflectors of His Light.

Jesus came to be a Light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6) and He is that through us, His people in the nations. We women of Europe represent many nations, let us shine the Light that we have in Jesus to our nations in the various ways that He moves and directs us. Good things are happening. Christians are reaching out with the love of Jesus and the good news of the Gospel. You will read of some of them in this magazine. In many different ways we are all endeavouring to be the Light of God where we are. Whatever He asks us to do, great or small, up front or behind the scenes, we must be obedient to Him. When our Light is shining brightly people will acknowledge God, the Father and give glory to Him, hopefully by coming to know Him through Jesus, His Son. *'You are the light of the world.....let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.'* Matthew 5:14,16.

I want to encourage you to keep your lamps trimmed and ready, always spreading the Light. Jesus came and in a few weeks we'll remember His birth, but, He has promised to return – not as a helpless baby – as the King of kings and Lord of lords to take His people to be with Him forever. So as we celebrate His first coming may we also with joy and anticipation look for His second coming and rejoice. May the thought of His return spur us on to shine ever more brightly with the indwelling Light of the world with us. This surely will encourage us to persevere as we face the trials of our earthly lives. Remember the darkness cannot put out the Light. The Light shows up the darkness but it cannot be extinguished. May you know much blessing in your lives this Christmas time and may you go forward into 2009 with confidence and joy as you become ever more determined to shine for Jesus across Europe.

PRESIDENTIAL LETTER



By Livija Lame

Dear Sisters,
I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ! May His grace and peace be with you!

This is the first time we meet in this magazine after Dalfsen, The Netherlands. I hope those who were there still have great memories from this meaningful time. We were refreshed by our Source of Inspiration - Jesus Christ - and continue to live with Him and for Him.

I am grateful to God for all of you and for your ministry among women in your own countries. With awe, I received an invitation to serve you as President of EBWU Executive Committee. When I think about the future, that has already started, and how I see my place or my mission in this ministry, I would like to encourage women in committees and countries to use their gifts and talents for the glory of God, for His kingdom, to create a safe place where each could be accepted and loved. I am grateful to the Lord for every sister from the Committee they are so gifted and godly women. Together as a team, we can serve the Lord and be a blessing for each of you, dear sisters, in your countries.

As we continue to pray each Monday for all countries we kindly invite you to join us to pray together, on that day each week. When we receive information from you, your countries, or see information on TV, we will try to pray for more of you.

My prayer is that we would be more mission orientated women whose hearts cry for unsaved people and whose minds work hard to think about new ways to reach women for Christ – to use old and new strategies. Lord, give us such hearts!

As a representative from Europe, I have to take a part in WD Executive Committee. In July we met in Prague and during the meeting spent a lot of time completing our Strategic Plan for the next five years (if you want to know more details, please let me know, I will send by email: livija.lame@lbds.lv . We were also planning for our Conference in Hawaii on July 24-27th 2010, immediately before the World Congress 28th July-1st August. Lorraine Walker, President of SWP, is the Programme Committee Director.



Planning is in process and we are excited about women who will attend. Perhaps it is time to start planning and to put money aside and to pray for this big event. Please keep in prayers WD Director, Patsy Davis, she had a serious back surgery at the end of October and is now in the difficult recovery period. After Executive Committee meeting in Prague was BWA Annual gathering.

Soon after again Prague – at the end of August 28-29 we had our first EBWU Committee meeting. First of all, we had time to get to know each other. The sisters from the committee are wonderful, gifted, godly, busy women:



Wies Dijkstra from The Netherlands, Member,
Susanna Mefford from Spain, Member,
Margaret Brown from Scotland, Member,
Aniko Ujvari from Hungary, Secretary,
Elisabeth Vekas from Romania, Treasurer,
Livija Lame from Latvia, President,
Margun Warem from Norway, Vice - president.

EBF General Secretary, Tony Peck welcomed us to the EBF family and invited us as EBWU to join in the big Baptist event, Amsterdam 400 in July 2009. He introduced us to the work of EBAid, as we are involved in some aid projects. Their wish is to coordinate the groups who are in charity work, being sensitive toward people in need. We spent some time praying and talked about our vision of our ministry for Europe and worked some plans out.

PRESIDENTIAL LETTER

We want to continue our project against trafficking of women. Susana and Margun have some experiences in their countries of this and they are going to continue with this work. We decided to work through various areas. We divided all countries among 5 sisters of the committee. Aniko and myself will be in touch with all of you. We want to keep closer relations with you, to know more and to pray more for you. Don't be surprised when you receive the letter from sisters of our Committee, some of them have written already.

Margaret and Wies are very enthusiastic to work with N&V. Please, send any materials, articles, testimonies to Margaret and Wies.

In spite of economical problems in Europe we want to make closer ties and relations with you, to encourage and support.

Our next committee meeting will be in spring in Yerevan, Armenia, where we will also share in a women's conference. Please pray for us.

At the beginning of October I had the privilege to visit Poland and take part in women's conference with the topic ***Let's start rebuilding! And they got ready to start work. Neh.2:18.*** A new Committee was elected during the conference; it gives hope to see how the younger generation continues women's ministry. It was encouraging to see how much Ewa is loved among her people in her own country, too, not only in Europe. Pray for this new Committee!

Committee, from the left:



Ula Nowak - President

Lija Otrych - Treasurer

Anna Wisniewska -
Secretary

Klaudia Wiazowska -
Vice-President

Danuta Martynicka -
Member

A month later in November just after the Day of Prayer I had the opportunity to visit Bulgaria. In Sofia their women's conference was held, their theme being, *The power of God's Word*. Psalm 119:105.

It is a great encouragement to see how people are committed to God's work. Here also a new Committee was elected. Didi Oprenova as a women's leader leads Bible study for young girls, for young women with children, and seniors, too. Didi and her husband Teo are pastoring a church in Sofia; they - as a couple - are a good team for church ministry. They have constructed an Educational Centre, where they will have enough space for the different church activities. Now they are in a church building that is too small for their congregation, for different activities. Let's pray for them and for financial means to finish this big project! Pray for their new Committee!

I want to give you some words for the coming season:

Are you severely troubled right now? Are you afraid and confused by waves God allows to enter your life? Then look up and receive the quiet contentment of the Lord Jesus.

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you... John 6:63

On behalf of the European Committee it is that peace I wish you and your beloved ones at Christmastime and during the year 2009.

Livija Lame



Dalfsen

May 15-18, 2008

The Netherlands

DALFSEN 2008



Report EBWU-Conference Dalfsen 15 - 18 May 2008, the Netherlands.

By Wies Dijkstra.

Theme: Jesus, our Source of Inspiration.

(inspired on Isaiah 58:11 b)

Almost two hundred guests flowed on May 15 into the former conference centre, The Source, at Dalfsen, forming a river, which ended in a fountain of exhilaration at the meeting of each other, but above all in the meeting with Jesus Christ: our Source of Inspiration. A Source which - once struck - will change and renew our lives daily. The splendid EBWU poster clarified the theme exactly - wherever the Lord leads us, He will satisfy us, even in arid regions; then we will be like a garden with sufficient water, an always bubbling up source.



EBWU President Ewa Gutkowska opened the conference. José Mik, the President of the Dutch Baptist Women's Movement welcomed everybody, standing on a beautifully decorated stage – a flowing water source among superb flower displays arranged by the Dutch President herself!

She also organised the roll call, with for each country attending, using other flowers to represent each country and fitting in with the theme of the conference.

The President of the Dutch Baptist Union, Jannes Hofman, was called upon and cordially welcomed everyone, bringing greetings on behalf of the Dutch Baptists. Also some other invited persons, eg EBF representatives, addressed the gathering.



Great Bible studies were given by Dorothy Selebano, President of the BWA –



Women's Department since 2005, and Yona Pusey, former EBWU President. Some used texts: By drinking of the living water Jesus offers us, we'll never get thirsty anymore, because that water will grow into a fountain in us, from which eternal life originates. John 4: 7-15.

In John 2:3-5 the changing of water into wine by Jesus. Jesus has the ability and is willing to change things dramatically in our lives if only we ask Him. We are not to be surprised when life brings us situations which were totally unexpected: Jesus is teaching us like He did the disciples in John 13: 2-5.

Isaiah 58:11 Jesus is the Source of our Inspiration, our example. In John 14 the Holy Spirit reveals to us the love and knowledge that is between the Father and Jesus, this same relationship is what God wants to share with His people. Jesus can transform us and change our hearts.

"And the LORD will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail."

Not only the Bible studies were great, the workshops were fantastic too. From responses it became clear that tears welled up in the eyes of the women who were attending the workshop of Judith Parker and Joan Evans in which Yona Pusey played a role to show how there can be assistance in situations of crisis.

The workshop of Luran Bethel concerning women in prostitution was very honest and to the point, confronting the issues those involved in prostitution face. She herself was encouraged enormously by the fact that there was such a large

interest for her workshop compared to 5 years ago. 'It is clear', thus she said, 'the Holy Spirit is working in our churches'. For many years this subject was not mentioned, but now, more and more churches are discovering their responsibility.

The workshop Bible Drama was given by Linda Schipper. A Biblical story was enacted by the women as they put themselves in the place of the characters used. It turned out to be a very personal experience, which will remain as precious moments in the hearts of the women.



Other workshops were: Migrations lead by Lidi Maggi, and Women with a Mission by Ksenija Magda.

A creative workshop, conducted by Anneke Tessers and Wies Dijkstra, in between all those serious

subjects, was a welcome supplement. Just using our hands and making a beautiful keepsake, and of course what women like to do: chatting – don't think too little about that, as women learn a lot from chatting with each other. Much was learned of the tales from other countries, which were told during several components of the programme.



However, more is learned by chatting with each other in the lobby and at meal breaks at such a conference.

What is also very interesting and touched everybody very deeply is that, in fact, we don't need words to understand each other when it comes to being aware of each other and sensing each others needs; then it turns out at that moment the different language isn't a barrier! Blanka Vekas, being deaf and not able to speak, proved that entirely by singing to honour God without words. She has a talent to sing with body language and all the people who "heard" her singing were deeply moved. After that all were called to use their talents and gifts to serve the Lord. He needs us everywhere in the world to help others. We must dedicate ourselves to Him and He will lead us. The women of the EBWU are working and praying for God's kingdom.



Concerning gifts and talents – the Russian women formed a splendid choir and let us enjoy some of their songs.

Patsy Davis, Director of the head office of the BWA -Women's Department told about the Day of Prayer, which is the most important expression of the tie that binds us together each year as Baptist women on the first Monday in November.

During the prayer meetings the enormous importance of praying for one another came across and also the desire to continue to pray after the conference was over. Praying is the strength which the river of mercy continues to give us as it flows to become eventually a fountain of blessing in our lives. This truth was

brought forward by the Workgroup Holland by teaching the guests, in Dutch, the well-known song, “I’ve got peace like a river, I’ve got joy like a fountain.” They were accompanied by the fantastic music group from Heemskerck, who voluntarily postponed their own schedule to look after the music during these days of conference.



Because the conference was in the Netherlands, the Workgroup Holland had a considerable share in the programme, in front and certainly behind the scenes. Thanks to the aid of a lot of volunteers from Dutch Baptist people all over the country and the commitment of two young men who took care of the technical items, everything did work out very well.

The outing for the participants was also organized by the Netherlands. The foreign people were taken from source to source. On Saturday afternoon the guests visited Orvelte, a historical part of the Netherlands. After that they were planted again near another source. This time the Baptist Church, “The Source”, in Emmen, where all were satisfied in an excellent manner, by a lot of volunteers, with food and drinks and enjoyed a full entertaining programme afterwards. The Workgroup Holland - in farmer’s clothing - entertained



everybody with a wooden shoe dance singing the song, ‘Tulips from Amsterdam’. The guests did get their own little wooden shoes: made from Delfts Blue porcelain. Fancy packed in silver, and a tulip sticker on the package - a real

Souvenir from Holland from the Dutch Baptist sisters.



In a professional manner, real folk dance culture was taken over by the dancing group “The Sheepdancers “ in splendid historical attire. Not only a little bit of the Dutch culture was shown, but also the history of the Dutch Baptist Women’s Movement in a PowerPoint presentation.

Unfortunately not all Dutch women could come to the conference. Yet they have welcomed their sisters! After a request a tidal wave of typical Dutch postcards overflowed the mailbox of the organisation. Now a card and a Dutch goody could be laid as welcome on every bed. It was appreciated enormously, as well as the special Conference bag piled up with small presents that every guest got at the start.

Pleasure, deepening of faith and friendship, and business matters are part of such a conference. Every 5 years we have to make decisions and a new EBWU Committee must be chosen. President, Ewa Gutkowska from Poland, Secretary, Janny Kingma from the Netherlands - both after 16 (!!!) years of faithful service, and member Olga Mocan from Moldovia left the committee. The board functions were filled in by the sitting committee members, so three new committee members had to be elected. The results follow. Those serving for the next 5 years on the EBWU committee are: President, Livija Lame from Latvia; Vice-president, Margun Warem from Norway; Secretary, Aniko Ujvari from Hungary; Treasurer, Elisabeth Vekas from Romania; three new members, Margaret Brown from Scotland, Wies Dijkstra from the Netherlands and Susana Mefford from Spain.

President Livija Lame was consecrated in a special service, in which also the other members of the committee were confirmed. This impressive service, was



conducted jointly by e.g. the Secretary of the EBF, Anthony Peck, the world President of the Baptist Women, Dorothy Selebano, the President of the EBF Toma Magda, and EBWU Ex-president, Ewa Gutkowska.

With a depth of gratitude for the fountain of blessing on this particular conference most of the guests drew homeward. Behind the scenes some little streams were led into their beds again and then the end of the conference was a fact. At that very moment “The Source” in Dalfsen could be called by its new changed name from now on: “Mooi rivier” which means, “Beautiful river” .

More pictures and stories www.ebwu.org



THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

Why a sinner is a better evangelist than a saint

By Ksenija Magda

Do we want to be effective witnesses for Jesus? In the fourth chapter of the gospel of John, the apostle presents to us his first true believer: a woman who is by nationality a despised Samaritan and by morality a prostitute. It is difficult for us to identify with her, but



I believe our witness for Jesus will stay ineffective until we can do so with all of our hearts. When we sinful humans meet Jesus on his terms instead of our own, the meeting is always successful, and it always heals. In this chapter John describes just such an encounter:

Jesus meets this woman at noon on a hot day. In spite of cultural norms that forbid their interaction, he starts a conversation with her and asks for water. She counters with a question, showing that her defenses have been set high against people like him. She just wants to be left alone! After all, she has rearranged her whole life to avoid meeting saints of his type. She goes alone to fetch water. She goes at noon when she is sure she will not have to answer to all the judgments of the other women. She has things to hide: a whole life of misery and defeat, judgment and rejection. She has had five men who could not be called husbands, and the one she has at this time is no different. Anyone could find laws and regulations to judge and exclude her. She cannot hope for acceptance and compassion. So it is easiest to re-arrange her life in order to avoid people and awkward situations altogether or, if that is impossible, to at least reduce them to a minimum.

And yet, according to the Evangelist, Jesus had to pass through Samaria. It was the will of God that Jesus would sit down at that well at that time—her well, her time. It was the will of God that life would be offered to her who had already given up on it many times.

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

For Jesus draws her into this unexpected conversation. She does not follow his logic at first. After all, she is not used to this abstract religious talk. She realizes only slowly that Jesus offers a solution to her problems that is better than avoidance: he confronts the issues that make her life so miserable instead of judging, concealing and ignoring them. According to this strange man, not only will she no longer need to go through the humiliation of fetching water alone at high noon. She herself can become a well of living water. She does not need to be dry and thirsty inside any longer. And yes, that is exactly what the Samaritan woman longs for. She wants that.



But it is a hard way. Jesus points directly to her problem, to the wound that hurts so much. Her messed-up life is exposed: five husbands and a sixth one in the law. She tries to evade this conversation by pseudo-theological manoeuvres. It is easier to admit to ignorance than to a messed-up life. She says she is confused with all the religion that is out there. “You religious leaders should make up

your mind and offer a unanimous conclusion that everyone could believe!” No, Jesus says, it is not religion and religious rites that are important here (although there is the right and the wrong way in that too, to tell the truth). It is the personal relationship to God that counts. And yes - she has heard something about this before - there is this Messiah or some Christ who will explain everything. But he is not here yet and who knows when he will come.

Then Jesus reveals himself to her: “I am he - who talks with you.” It is not the conversation but the revelation that makes everything fall into place for her. The

Messiah will not - as she had once thought - bring some sensational religious revelation but will tell her everything concerning her life and her needs. He will show her everything she needs for her life.

And now, she is ready to take on what he was telling her. She is ready to believe in him. It is good to notice that nothing has really changed outwardly, but she is free to run into the city. God has encountered her. He has exposed her life, but at the same time, he has accepted her. He has not despised her. So she is free to let go of the shame and fear and go to encounter people she has tried to avoid.

Out of this encounter, then, the miracle of evangelism happens. The outcast becomes the factor of change for a whole city. Her healed weakness becomes a testimony for the world. If it was possible for God to change her, it is possible for him to change everything else. Moved by her change, many of her fellow citizens are eager to meet Jesus and experience the same, and finally they can say: "We don't believe because of your testimony any longer. We now see for ourselves that Jesus is the Saviour of the world."

Two basic things can be learned here about women in ministry. One is that people are not attracted to holy judges of their behaviour. Unfortunately, many of us have grown up in churches with false notions that Christians are miles apart from the common sinners of this world. We are so much better than the rest of the world because we know the truth: we go to church, pray (in the right way) and read the Bible. Christian women in particular have the urge to patronize and speak down to the «sinful» people they meet. And then we wonder why it is that these people avoid us? People don't need to be reminded of their shortcomings. They are very well aware of them. They don't need lectures; they need a divine way out. As Christian women, we should stop offending people by judging their way of life. Like Jesus, we should offer God's love by sitting down with them and offering them what they long for.

Second, to be effective women in ministry, we must recognize our own sin and

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

shortcomings and God's gracious way of healing. I am surprised about the number of Christian women who have never experienced God's healing touch. Christianity is all about rules and regulations that - thankfully - we have embraced and others must accept to get saved. So we go on proclaiming them.

This is not only unattractive, it is unbiblical. The Samaritan woman is our example. It is only through the recognition of our own weakness that others can be brought to God. It is in our weakness that God's power of change is evident to others and becomes attractive to them. So instead of arranging our lives around our shortcomings and presenting ourselves as perfect, we should admit to Jesus the truth of our life and let him deal with it. We may be surprised in the end how many people saw and knew about our weaknesses, even though we pretended they did not! And also we may be surprised to find that there is no stronger testimony than when people watch God change what had been our notorious sin.

Let's become a well of living water by responding to Jesus' request when he sits on our well and addresses our painful shortcomings. God uses our weakness to bring about life not just to us, but also to everyone around us.

This article was written for the workshop conducted by Ksenija Magda at the Conference in Daltsen, Holland.

Dr. Ksenija Magda is Lecturer in New Testament Theological Faculty "Matthias Flacius Illyrikus" Zagreb

Whoever believes in me
streams of living water
will flow
from within him.
- John 7:38 -



LETTER FROM LAURAN

By Lauran Bethell



Dear Sisters in the EBWU,

I'm honoured to be asked to share my heart with you, and look forward to our time together in this new column in these coming months and years. Many of you know that I work with the issues of prostitution and trafficking in persons, and through these letters in the coming months, I'm planning to introduce you to others who have felt called to reach into the dark corners of our world, to shine the light of God's love and compassion.

Prostitution is such an ugly word. We don't want to think about people who are working in this way. Until I moved to Thailand 22 years ago, I thought that people working in prostitution had made a bad "choice" for their lives. And then I started talking to many young women working in bars and nightclubs, prostituting themselves, and I learned that the money they made was going to support their mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters. It was paying for food and housing and education for their siblings. They told me that they knew that they were "sacrificing" themselves for their families. Their low level of education meant that they couldn't find jobs which could bring their families out of poverty. As daughters, they felt they owed their lives to their family, to help them to survive and thrive - no matter what.

I met many girls who were victims of human trafficking: they had been told that they could have "good jobs" to support their impoverished families, working as waitresses or house-maids if they would go to Thailand from Burma or Laos or China. When they arrived in Thailand with traffickers, no such jobs waited for them. Rather, they were raped and forced to sexually serve many men. Their traffickers kept them working in prostitution by threatening to kill them or their family members.

LETTER FROM LAURAN

All over the world - including Europe - poverty drives many women and girls into prostitution. But what about women and girls who are from wealthy countries who prostitute themselves? What we know is that most women in prostitution from Western Europe and North America were sexually abused as children. The emotional trauma of that experience does damage to the heart and soul that is beyond measure. Often, they run away from home to escape the abuse. And far too often, those who offer to “help” them on the streets will entrap them in a down-ward spiral of drug dependency and prostitution. Of course, not all sexually abused girls and women enter into prostitution. But abuse creates a vulnerability that can be exploited by those with evil intent.

And so, my BIG question those 22 years ago in Thailand - and my BIG question now is: what can Christians DO? What can Christians DO to shine the light of God’s love into the dark places of prostitution and human trafficking? What can Christians DO to make any difference about subjects that are so overwhelming - and evil?

I hope that all of you are asking that question. I have answers for you!

Pray! Usually when Christians see people in prostitution, or go past sex clubs and sex bars, they prefer to look the other way, so not to be “polluted” by that “dirty stuff”. I’d suggest doing the opposite. Look right into the situation and pray God’s grace, mercy and love be shown into the hearts and lives of ALL of those involved - the women, men, owners, workers. Pray that God would do God’s work there. Pray over newspaper articles and TV programs that address the issues - that God’s love would pierce the darkness. I’m convinced that God is working through the prayers his people! And if you feel led, ask God to direct you to a place of doing more....

Research! Find out who is doing what in your community, state or country to directly touch the lives of people in prostitution and victims of trafficking. Look for Christian individuals and groups as well as NGO’s and governmental

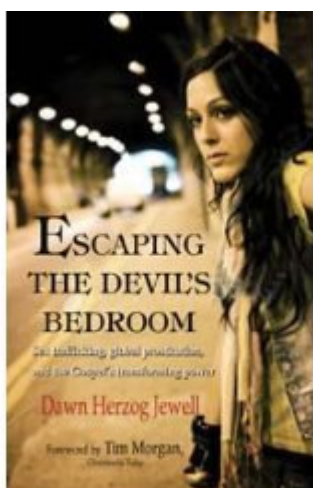


organizations. Ask about how you or your church can help. How can we be servants in the name of Christ to those who are “on the front lines” - whether they be Christian or not?

Prepare to be surprised!!! Twenty-two years ago when I began praying and researching about prostitution in Thailand, I never imagined what would happen. I had no idea that God would clearly call me to spend my life helping Christians all over the world to share Christ’s love with people being abused and exploited in prostitution, offering economic and spiritual alternatives. God’s spirit is moving around this world, calling people to do things they never thought possible. In God’s kingdom, even what we think of as a “small thing”, God will multiply way beyond what we can dream.

I’ll leave you with some resources!

Make sure that you have the 2 books that your EBF Anti-Trafficking Working Group has produced! These two books provide Bible studies, theological reflection and practical ideas. If you don’t have them, you can request them from the EBF office in Prague: office@ebf.org



My “book of the month” that I highly recommend is: *Escaping the Devil's Bedroom: Sex Trafficking, Global Prostitution and the Gospel's Transforming Power*, by Dawn Herzog Jewell. It powerfully tells the stories of people who are transforming and being transformed by God’s redeeming love. It’s inspiring! You can order it from www.amazon.co.uk

LETTER FROM LAURAN

Requests:

If you know of ways that Christians in your community or country are ministering in Christ's name to people in prostitution or victims of trafficking please tell me about them!

Do you have questions? Don't hesitate to write and ask me!

God's Love and Blessings to All of You!

Lauran Bethell
lauran@pobox.com

EBF ANTI- TRAFFICKING RESOURCE BOOK

Rev. Lauran Bethell serves as Global Consultant, helping Christians to minister in Christ's name to victims of human trafficking and prostitution.

She is a missionary with International Ministries ABC/USA, and is based in The Netherlands.

Lauran is writing for News & Views on a regular base to keep us informed.





NEWS FROM LEBANON

By Afaf Bassous

Marathon Fundraising

Warm greetings! For the past few years, Lebanon has been experiencing political and security tension; but in the past few months, a temporary regional agreement has provided our country with relative peace. We want to take advantage of this peaceful period to promote and advocate the book that points to the *Prince of Peace* - the **Bible**. We also want to raise funds to support the cost of distributing free Bibles to underprivileged sectors of our society as part of our holistic relief, community, and humanitarian programs. Many of those people have never encountered the Scriptures in their lives, so we want to take this opportunity to provide them with the life-changing Word.

We will be ***Running for Bibles*** as a Bible Society team. We are running to continue to proclaim the Word of God in this country. Sixty-three people comprising of staff and volunteers have joined our team; three Norwegian friends, who have professional running experience, have come specifically from Norway to join us during



this event. I want to invite you to support me and our team through your contributions. On average, each Bible costs about \$5.00; you can choose to support the cost of one, two ... or as many Bibles as you wish, for every kilometer I, or we as a team, run. For those living in Lebanon or close enough, please call or email your pledge. For our friends around the globe, please use our secure online credit card gift facility (Marathon 2008: Running for Bibles) at:

<http://www.biblesociety.org.lb/2008/support/support.html>

We count on your support and prayers as we continue to live and serve in this region. Thank you for helping us help others.

DAY OF PRAYER REPORT FROM SCOTLAND



We had a small group meeting in our church in the south west of Scotland this afternoon and had a lovely time together. We specially remembered in prayer the requests made by the seven continental unions (seven women represented the continents and prayed their requests) but we also remembered our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world. Many are being martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ and we prayed for their families that they would know that their Lord stands with them in their trials.

Come, Lord Jesus!

Praise God that He is with all His people always and that includes those who are



suffering – may they be given strength and courage in the face of such danger and even death. We also prayed for Patsy Davis and Dorothy Selebano and all the continental Presidents, including our own Livija Lame. Oh yes, we do have a God Who cares very much for us and loves us unreservedly and we take joy and comfort in that. He is just so wonderful and so good!

One of our Scottish past president's and a member of our church led us in a time of reflection on God's care, while another read the testimonies. We had a great time of fellowship and prayer together. Each woman received a flower which she wore in her hair during the service. We used flowers (as was done in Dalfsen) to represent the prayer requests. We covered a table with an Australian tablecloth and had various items on it which represented the South West Pacific (shells, flowers, stones and pebbles etc) and also tea-light candles burning. I made cardboard shells and each woman placed her offering into a shell and these were collected in a basket. I also made the lemonade scones from the web page and we had them with tea and coffee after the service along with pineapple, kiwi fruit, and melon. It was good to sit and chat for a wee while afterwards before we went home.

Margaret Brown



DON'T FORGET ... WE HAVE A WEBSITE!

WWW.EBWU.ORG

***VISIT IT PLEASE AND SHARE WITH US
YOUR EXPERIENCES***

PRAYER REQUESTS



Lebanon

- Please pray for Lebanon:
- Pray for the Christian Baptist members. Many of them suffer from cancer disease. Some are very young : 17 and 19 years old.
- Pray for “Women Centres” in all parts of Lebanon. (page 33)
- Pray for the economic situation - as it is covered the whole world.
- Pray for the families not to be split, because the men cannot find jobs, and they are all leave the country to work outside.

Georgia

- Pray for those displaced people who have lost loved ones and are homeless
- Pray for the Christians as they reach out to the refugees with the love of Jesus
- Pray for all that is necessary to be supplied
- Pray that those who are attending church will come to know Jesus

Bulgaria

- Pray for Didi Oprenova and the new elected Women’s Committee.
- Pray for Teo (Didi’s husband and General Secretary) for enough finances to finish the project of an educational centre.

Personal Prayer Requests

- Pray for Patsy Davis as she recovers from back surgery, that she will experience healing and pain free movement. Card? Send to: 405 North Washington Street, Falls Church , Virginia 22046, USA.

South West Pacific *Prayer Partner of Europe*

<http://swo.baptistchurch-online.com>

- Pray for developing stronger ties with women in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.
- Pray for the sisters in Papua Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Fiji, as they work through the arduous “red tape” of applying for a visa for the Cairns Conference. (May 1 – May 4, 2009).
- Pray for God’s choice of women to be elected at the Conference to be the new BWUSWP Executive.



AND EVENTS

- Pray for those church members who are turning back to the old ways of sorcery and spirit worship.
- Pray for mothers and babies as there is still a high maternal and infant mortality rate in Papua.
Please pray for the economic situation. Many people have difficulty buying even basic household necessities.

EBWU

- Pray for EBWU President Livija Lame, that she will know God's protection and presence in all her travels, and be given His strength.
- Pray that she will be an encouragement to all she ministers to.
- Pray for the Executive Committee as they prepare to meet in Yerevan, Armenia at end of March.
- Pray for the women of Europe to be true disciples of Jesus Christ, to serve Him with all of their being.

Worldwide

- If you have access to a computer : Link to www.saynotoviolence.org sign up to the campaign and pray for those women who suffer from violence.

Please, send your prayer requests to News & Views

Events

- Kiev: Women's Conference December 5-6, 2008
- Armenia: EBWU committee meeting March 31 – April 5, 2009
- South West Pacific Cairns: quinquennial Conference of the Baptist Women's Union May 1- 4, 2009
- Amsterdam 400: Celebrating 400 years of Baptist witness July 23-26 2009
- Scotland: Day of Discovery at Bellshill Hilton Hotel Saturday March 7, 2009
- Scotland: Thanksgiving Day at Galashiels, Saturday May 16, 2009

Please, send the dates of your national events to News & Views



THE LATEST NEWS



Christmas 2008

Bethlehem

And while Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them. That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said.

"I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior - yes, the Messiah, the Lord - has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others - he armies of heaven - praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."





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and positions



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