

News & Views

Winter 2015-2016 Edition



European Baptist Women's Union



20th Jubilee Conference Minsk



News & Views

Winter Edition 2015-2016



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*Front Cover: Coral tree - member of the genus Erythrina and primarily found
in South Africa and South America. Photograph by Wies Dijkstra*

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Nordic Conference 2015

In 2009 we went to Denmark, in 2012 we travelled to Norway and this year we gathered in Sweden for the Nordic Women's Conference 2015. 75 women from Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway travelled by car, ferries, trains and / or by plane to Sjøvik Folkhøgskola in Sweden.

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Joy and Praise in Sofia

Through years having many difficulties with the bureaucracy and finances, yet on the other hand they experienced the support of the Baptist brothers and sisters from the European Baptist Federation, and many other supporters.

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Belarus Jubilee Conference Minsk

By Vera Tihon

November, 6-7th 2015 with God's mercy the Baptist sisters of Belarus celebrated the 20th anniversary of women's ministry (service) with the President of EBWU, Aniko Ujvari from Hungary, and Vice President Wies Dijkstra from the Netherlands taking part.

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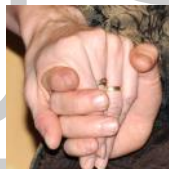


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By Margaret Brown

Welcome to our Winter Edition 2015-2016 of News and Views!

Although it is some time since we have produced our magazine, we do hope that you will enjoy its contents. We take this opportunity of wishing you well in the coming year, praying that you will continue to know the goodness and graciousness of God in your lives as you strive to follow His leading.

We have all witnessed on television or maybe even first hand seen some of the thousands and thousands of people travelling across Europe in search of freedom. How desperate many of them really

are to be free of war, of imprisonment and of persecution! How they long to be free and to experience an improved life! Many have lost their lives in this search for freedom and our hearts go out to them as our prayers go up to God for all such people. I don't think we have a story from any of these refugees at present, but in this issue you will read of people who have found freedom.

A few days ago I was sitting looking out of the window, having my quiet time alone with God. Outside on the upper part of the window frame was a spider's web, and in the web was a fly. I watched as it struggled to get free. It was a very windy morning outside and the wind didn't help the fly as it struggled



as the web was also moving in the wind. Next time I looked the web was still there but the fly appeared to have gone. FreeI thought! Then, on a closer look I realised the fly was still, unmoving, tangled up in a corner in the web against the window frame. The fly never got its freedom.

Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching you are really my disciples. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31/32). This truth of Jesus, Who is Himself Truth (John 14:6), is the truth of salvation – freedom from sin. Mankind's greatest need is to be free from sin and have the assurance of salvation for eternity. This we find in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

To-day many are seeking freedom and yet sadly fail to find it. People are desiring freedom from the world, freedom from consumerism, from materialism, from addiction, from all sorts of things which trap and hinder potential. People are looking for

freedom to be themselves, to achieve their ambitions, and sometimes this also is entrapment. Sadly many end up like the fly in their search for freedom.

God made each one of us with a purpose in mind for us (Ephesians 2:10). We can never be truly free until we are free from our sin and are living in God's divine will for us. Then we will experience and know the freedom of God in our lives, free to be the persons God created us to be, free to be all we can be in Christ.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 5:1). Thank God for the freedom we have in Jesus; freedom from sin, freedom to stand in the face of opposition, freedom to serve and love as Jesus did, free to live for Him without fear, free to be bold, yet gracious, free to follow Him wherever He may take us.

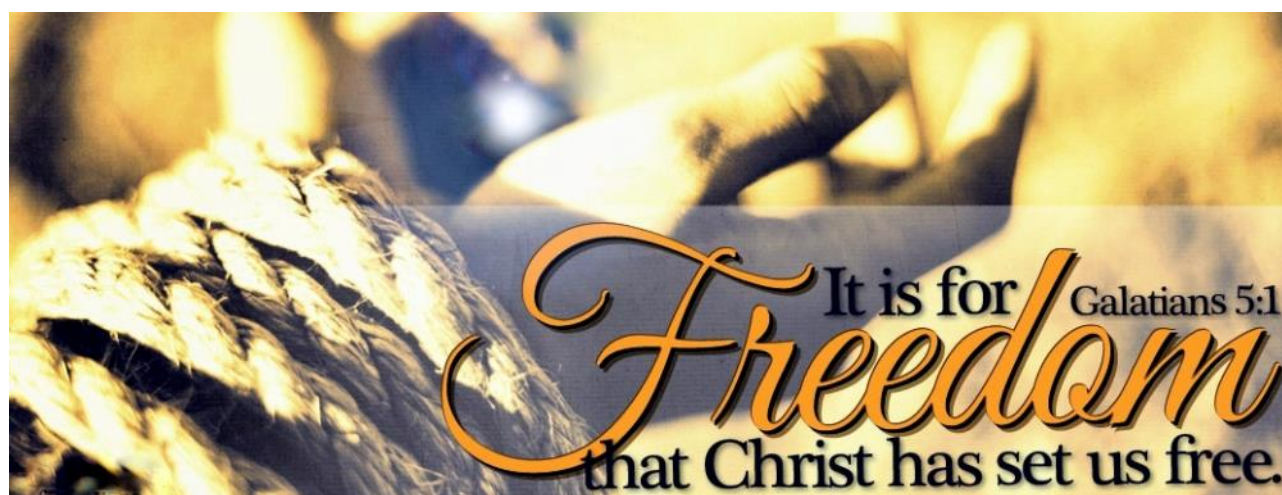
***Now the Lord is the Spirit,
and where the Spirit of the
Lord is, there is freedom.***

2 Corinthians 3:17

As you read the pages of this magazine may your hearts be touched afresh by the Spirit of Jesus, and may you be encouraged to persevere in your walk with Him.

We who know this freedom are to tell others so that they also may experience it. Our responsibility remains the same as that given to the first apostles to go and make disciples. I like what the angel of the Lord said to them when he released them from prison, "Go, stand, and tell the people the full message of this new life." (Acts 5:20).

Once we are free in Jesus we can truly be witnesses for Him in the community He has placed us in whether that be at home, school, workplace, business or church. I want to recommend to you this year's Baptist Women's Day of Prayer which has as its theme 'community'. I know that November is some way off but the programme is now ready and it is never too early to begin preparations on how to celebrate this wonderful time of prayer. Start planning now and may the Lord guide you and empower you in all things He is calling you to do. Remember you are free in Jesus!



PRESIDENTIAL LETTER



By Aniko Ujvari

Dear Sisters,

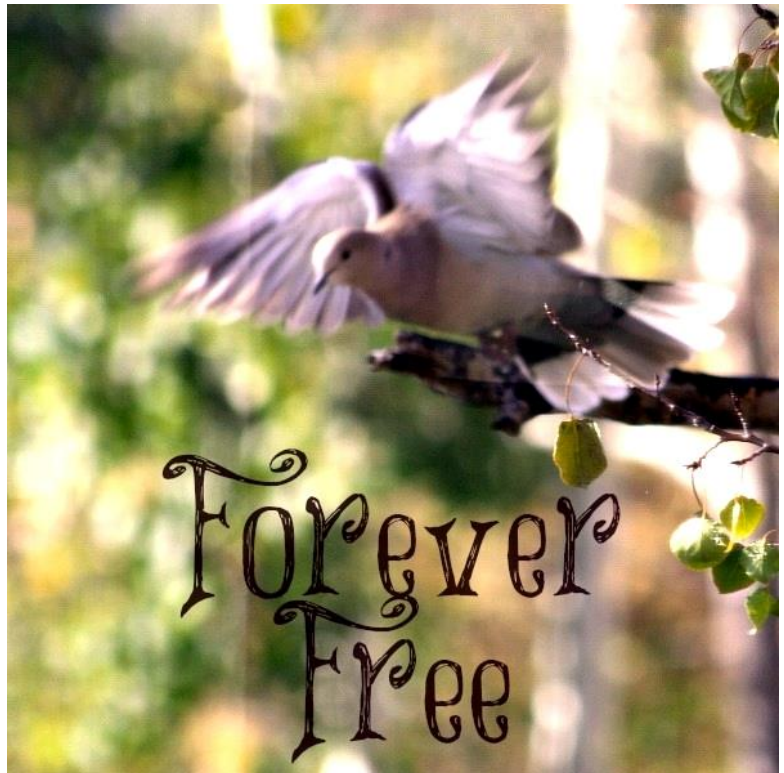
We may say one of our greatest gifts following our Lord, Jesus Christ, is to get the opportunity for the new beginning. Every single new dawn, every single new week, new month and new year has the special gift of a new beginning in it's storage.

That is a special gift, that I don't need to continue my wrong habits, I may leave behind my fears, my doubts, my anger, my suspicious feelings, and all that long list, which I even cannot count here. I may - and we may - open a new page, a really empty one.

How and why? "Just" because we have a calling to meet the Savior of our spirit, our life, the Savior of the world.

The Almighty God sent us the invitation to his world through his only son, Jesus Christ. We celebrated his birth not so long ago, and a few days after there was the celebration of the New Year, the opportunity for the new beginning. We may face that our Lord, the Immanuel promised to be with us. He promised to save our life from the power of the devil, from the enemy of our souls, who holds us in a capture. But Jesus Christ came to the Earth to open these gates and set us free from our sinful nature. We need not to be slaves of the evil any longer. God gifted us through his Son with liberty.

And in this Liberty we gain so many spiritual and physical gifts. Provision for the daily needs, provision for the spiritual needs, we receive fellow sisters and brothers, congregation and fellowship. I wish you my dear Sisters, the experience of how rich is our life in Him!



Let me share with you how deeply I am touched with the sisterhood throughout Europe, meeting the women in the churches as they gather together sharing their life experiences, encouraging each other and praying for each other. You know, I see in the eyes of our sisters the love of God. When for example a tiny elderly woman came to me, (she lives somewhere in a poor area in a little village), she put some donation in my hand and tells from her clear heart how much she wishes to help the women in need with her "little money". This trust moves my heart. We didn't ever meet before, and I see she has little of this world's goods too. But she has an open heart and love for her sisters wherever they are. And she trusts in the Lord; her offering gives help to the others. She has freedom to give, to share.

And there are others, who share their time, their strength, their open homes, use their knowledge to serve and give away what they have. They are free to give, they have liberty in their hearts and minds! They received this gift from our Savior. They experienced what it means: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 7:12

I count the blessings from my last year's trips in Estonia with the Russian speaking sisters; in Ukraine where the women in spite of the deep and painful situation are in hope, serve and trust in the Lord; then in Czech and Slovak women's conference where we experienced the unique gathering of the separated two unions.



Jubilee Conference Minsk, Belarus



The summer gifted us with the special celebration of the sisterhood in Johannesburg at the BWD WD's Leadership Conference. Later, in Bulgaria at the EBF General Council meeting in the newly opened Sophia Baptist Church Centre. I remember the women's conference in France, where they listened to a very deep teaching, where I experienced again, the one is important as Mary from the Bible made her best choice, to sit down and

listen to Jesus Christ. "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed - or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41-42.

And I may continue as I count the blessings of the sisterhood in Belarus, and in the conference in Turkey. Let us praise the Lord for His presence through today's disciples on the Earth!

Let us pray for the liberty in Him, for the freedom in Europe, for the peace in our hearts and in our continent!

Please, join us in prayer as we rethink and plan the BWAUD's ministry for the future. We have some changing. The executive committee comes together in February for this planning meeting. Let me share with you, that the very well known and honored dear executive director Miss Patsy Davis has retired, she finished her office job at the end of 2015. We are thankful to the Lord for her ministry in the past 17 years. We wish her peaceful days and joy, good health in her retired years, in her personal life. We know for the Christians the ministry never ends, just we go through some changes, we trust the Lord has new opportunities for her in the future.

And we pray for blessings upon the new BWAUD's president's leadership, as Dr Ksenija Magda began her ministry and already we experience her commitment and readiness to work hard in her ministry for the women all around the Globe.

Remember her in your prayers as the EBWU Committee does the same for her, for you, for all the contact unions, for the women in Europe!

God be with you and yours in the year of 2016.
Count the blessings each day,
Yours in Christ,

Aniko Ujvari
EBWU president



EBWU RESOLUTION

EBWU RESOLUTION

Crikvenica, Croatia 30th October – 2nd November 2014

We Reflect on the first statement the women made in 1948 in London: *“Facing the world...today, with its desperate need of faith, of hope and of love, we turn to our Heavenly Father for purification, for guidance and for strength. He has great blessings in store for us, which he is longing to give to us, but which can only given to us in answer to our prayers.....Let us, as European Baptist women, dedicate the first week in November as a week of prayer when we unitedly pray for each other and for all the world. Never is the fellowship deeper, richer and stronger than when we as one heart and soul are praying together.”*

We Affirm the value of women, encouraging us to discover who we are in Christ, and dedicating ourselves to His purposes, according to the Scriptures:

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be My people, and I will be your God.” Ezekiel 36:26-28.

We Accept the challenges of a suffering world and how we deal with that as daughters of the living God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We Commit ourselves to pray for the determination and fulfilment of our calling as women individually and corporately in Europe and in the Middle East.



Attendees Consultation Conference Croatia

SA CONFERENCE



Report of the BWA Women's Leadership Conference, South Africa, July 2015

By Margaret Brown

This event took place 18-21 July in the Indaba Hotel, Johannesburg, South Africa. The theme for the Conference was '**Arise, Shine**' taken from Isaiah 60:1 '*Arise, shine; for your light has come!*' Many times throughout the Conference one of the speakers would say, 'Baptist women' and the congregation would respond. 'Arise and shine!'

On registering each participant received a specially made bag made by the women of Christian Women's Job Corp from material associated with the area.

Each bag contained the programme, prayer guide, pen, a spoon decorated in traditional South African beadwork, also a small beadwork flag of SA, notebook, guidebook of SA and a ball.

The grounds of the hotel were laid out with paths, flowers and trees, a small lake and even a little waterfall. Because it was the winter season in SA in the evening there were fires burning in braziers giving off the aroma of wood smoke. The opening dinner was held in Chief Boma's Restaurant and this was truly a banquet, with a wide range of choices available for our meal. We were welcomed to the large 'hut' to the accompaniment of African music. Food was laid out in buffet style with plenty for everyone.

We were warmly welcomed to the 'rainbow nation' with music and song in various languages of South Africa, led by SA Baptist Choir. Everything was very colourful



and bright, not least the dresses of the African women, also many of the participants wore their national dress. At the beginning of our evening meeting the continental flags with the continental presidents following behind their flag were paraded into the hall – quite a spectacle. The flags were placed along the back of the stage providing the backdrop for our time together. Greetings were brought by John Upton, BWA President; Joina Dhlula, President BWUA; Durosinsesu Ayanrinola, Gen. Secy. All Africa Baptist Fellowship; Paul Msi-za, BWA President Elect; Dorothy Selebano WD President 2005-2010.



Raquel Contreras present President addressed the meeting. She spoke from Psalm 90:1, *'Lord, You have been our Refuge through all generations.'* From our past to





our present and into our future the Lord is our Refuge. As we walk in step with the Spirit we are able to arise and shine. We remember those before us who knew God as their Refuge and we learn from them. On our journey we also can know the Lord as our Refuge. Now we are going to arise and shine. Light during the day doesn't do much but light in the darkness gives light. We are not called to shine in the light, but to shine in the darkness around us. None of us are exempt from problems, yet God has put us where we are to arise and shine so the Light of the World will be seen, and the only way we can do this is because the glory of the Lord has shone on us.

Each morning began with praise and worship. The Africans led the way in exuberance; they put their whole selves into the worship, dancing as they sang, faces shining. It was a joy to watch and greater joy to participate with them. Raquel led Bible studies on Abigail and Priscilla on Sunday and Monday mornings respectively followed by a short time of prayer and action in response. Each evening in closing an inspirational meditation was given. The days were filled with themed presentations, continental presentations and





times of prayer presentations, some of which were very poignant and moving.

The eight Millennium Goals provided the focus for the eight workshops on Sunday afternoon. On Monday afternoon events included Africa Market where goods from Africa were on sale; a Safari where each of the continental unions and the BWA Women's Dept. had information about them-

selves and some items for sale, plus prayer requests; I am Beautiful where we could be encouraged to live in beauty, freedom and joy; Prayer Stations where we could walk from one African country to another praying as we went; Pillowcase Dresses where we could learn to make dresses and shorts from pillowcases.





As the Baptist Women's Day of Prayer was celebrating its sixty-fifth anniversary this year, the occasion was marked by a special presentation by the EBWU and the BWA WD. Again this proved to be a rather moving time for some, and also a timely reminder of the importance of prayer in the lives of Baptist women throughout

the world. The first Monday of November is allocated yearly for this special Day of Prayer when Baptist women unite in prayer for one another and for the needs of the various countries in which we serve. We have the opportunity to study the Word of God and give financially as well as pray together. Those unable to attend a Day of Prayer meeting can share now in the programme via Facebook.

Included throughout the programme were times when several women gave testimony of how God has been and is at work in their lives. It is always good to hear these testimonies and to praise God for His goodness and mercy in the lives of others as well as in our own lives.

The business part of the Conference took place on Monday afternoon. The reports of the unions and the WD were all printed in the programme booklet as well as the financial statement. Two new officers were elected – Mrs Kathy James, USA to the position of Secretary/Treasurer and Dr Ksenija Magda, Croatia to the position of President. It was a great honour for Europe to be the continent providing the President for the next five years and we showed our appreciation to Ksenija.

The prayer partners for Europe for the next five years is Asia, when we will be praying for the needs in that continent and Asia will be praying likewise for Europe. The new officers were installed on the final morning of the Conference with Ksenija responding as our gathering came to a close. She will be relying on the Lord to uphold her and direct her, and she will be relying on the prayers of His people.

Our time together was all too short, but what a wonderful, inspirational and challenging time we had in Johannesburg. The meeting with 'old' friends, making of new friends, learning from each other, praying for one another, the vibrant worship, the laughter and the tears have enriched our lives and hopefully none have returned home unchanged by what we experienced in South Africa. All praise and glory to

the Lord Who enables us all to Arise and Shine.

The 21st BWA Congress, 22-26 July, followed the Leadership Conference. It was held in the International Conference Centre in Durban, the theme being Jesus Christ the Door. This was also a very colourful mix of culture, language and costume from over 100 countries. Various



Ksenija Magda and Raquel Contreras

presentations were given each day, as well as music and song from different groups and choirs. There were Bible studies in different language groups, also various focus groups. Different preachers, including Dimitrina Oprenova of Europe, each day enabled us to see Jesus Christ as the Door to Light, the Door to Liberty, the Door to Leadership, the Door to Love, the Door to Listening & Learning, and the Door to Life. Other doors were mentioned along the way.

Paul Msiza of South Africa was installed as the new President of BWA. The Vice-Presidents were presented, Jan Saethre as first Vice President, and Dimitrina Oprenova amongst them, coming from Europe, Norway and Bulgaria respectively.

The next BWA Congress is planned for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in August 2020.



This proved to be another enriching and challenging experience. All of us were encouraged to determine the door that the Lord has opened for us and to seize the opportunity, being mindful that opposition also accompanies opportunity, but God will enable us to get through our particular door, if we are truly seeking to be obedient to Him and honour His name.

THE HIGH PRICE OF FREEDOM



The High Price of Freedom

A year of bitter and sweet anniversaries has passed

By Regina Claas

Almost two years ago I returned to a country which has made international headlines for decades: The Republic of South Africa. When I first visited the country in December 1987, the bitter system of racial segregation called apartheid was still in full swing. I will never forget the look in the eyes of Christian brothers and sisters who had just come out of violent interrogation and torture, just because they had joined the Struggle and opposed the injustice of racial discrimination.

More than twenty years ago, on 27 April 1994 I then had the privilege to represent the Baptist World Alliance as an observer to the first free democratic elections in South Africa. Millions of black Africans who previously had been denied a vote flocked to the polls to elect President Nelson Mandela, whom they affectionately called by his tribal name “Madiba”. I was deeply moved to see these people, many of

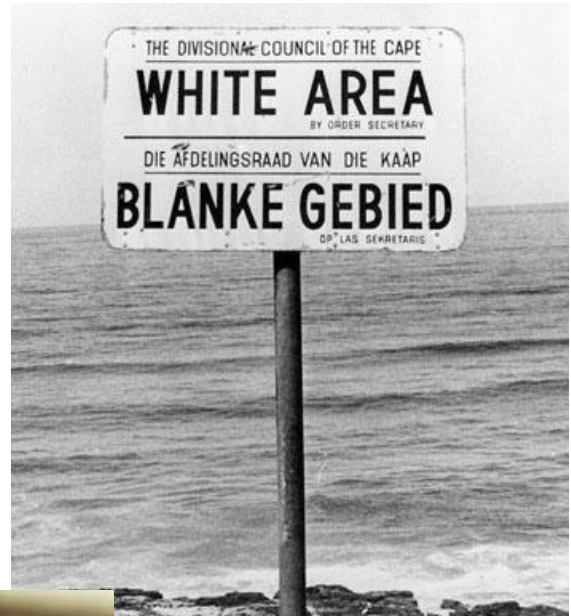


them pensioners, waiting patiently in the queues under the scorching sun for endless hours until it was their turn to cast their vote. Their long-suffering was coming to an end. Hopes were high: this was indeed Freedom Day!

This day has become one of the significant historical anniversaries that were celebrated 2014.

Between 1994 and 2003 I saw the New South Africa, as it was called in the first few years after apartheid had been abolished, struggling but greatly hopeful for a bright new future. When I now returned after eleven years in Germany, I was prepared to find a different country from what I had left. And yet I was surprised and sometimes shocked at what I saw.

Madiba, the hero of freedom, was dead (he



had died at age 90, December 2013).

Many of the highly educated people had left the country, disillusioned and lacking perspective.

Blacks who had put highly unrealistic expectations in Madiba and the New South Africa woke up to the facts of increasingly high unemployment, surging cost of living, and the strangling trap of debt

through bank loans, credit cards etc.

The growing poverty rather than relief of it, enhanced by an accelerating urbanization, led to an increase of criminal acts which easily turned violent. Lack of respect for life and moral decay further contributed to an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. Moreover, many of those with political power who might have been able to turn the tide seem to be caught in corruption and foul play to maintain their personal status of advantage.



One of the most destructive attitudes I find nowadays especially in young and middle aged black people is the attitude of entitlement. They say: "Because we Blacks have suffered during apartheid, it is now our turn to enjoy life!", and they take what they want without ask-

ing. They forget that those who came before them had worked very hard to enjoy the fruit of their labour.

Does this mean all hope is lost? Was the excitement at gaining freedom from oppression a false joy?

Definitely not! The nation has changed from gross racial injustice to legally ensured equality. In many instances the racial relationships within the population have normalized, and for many racism is not an issue any more. There is a growing Black middle class, and modest luxury is much more accessible to Blacks than before.

No one wants to give up their precious freedom again, neither Blacks, nor Whites, nor any other race.



But it has also become clear that freedom is much more than a law which prevents racial discrimination and more than access to material goods. Freedom creates space for a vision and purpose for one's life, and offers opportunity to make this vision come true. Freedom gives space for love and trust, which casts out all fear. Freedom is found not in selfish acts of individualism, but in responsible relationships of interdependence, one serving the other in mutual respect and affection.



That is the reason why I am here, and here to stay at least for some years. I truly believe that real freedom is only found in the presence and under the leadership of Jesus Christ. He modelled freedom as servant leadership, sacrificial love, humble availability to God and fellow men, and as an existence in fulfilment, joy and divine peace that passes human understanding. This is what the world around me here in South Africa desperately needs. And I suspect that the situation is not much different in other places in the world, places that commemorated great historical

anniversaries in the outgoing year, anniversaries like the fall of the Berlin Wall (25 years), the Gaza-Jericho Agreement (20 years) which gave Palestinians control over the Gaza Strip and West Bank, or the Tiananmen Square Massacre in China (25 years ago). I am here to encourage Christian leaders to follow the model of Jesus Christ and to bring the light of hope and freedom to a dark world without hope.

Here in South Africa we have had the privilege to host many visitors from around the world who have been attending the BWA Women's Department Leadership conference in Johannesburg (18 - 21 July 2015) and the BWA Congress in Durban (22 – 26 July 2015). This was a tremendous opportunity to share the light of Christ with a nation that is longing for true freedom. We are expecting great things from God!

LETTER FROM LAURAN

Dear Sisters in the EBWU,

I wish you all could have been with us in November at the EBF Anti-Trafficking Network Conference in Kungsor, Sweden! From north, south, west and east of Europe, we heard tragic stories of slavery in prostitution and labor exploitation. But we ALSO heard about Healing and HOPE! The purpose of the EBF Anti-Trafficking network is to make churches aware of human trafficking in their own countries - to prevent the tragedy - but also to help victims return home and find restoration. Even if you weren't there, there are two things YOU can do!



- 1) IF you or your church is involved in an anti-trafficking project PLEASE send a message to me so that the Network knows about it!
- 2) STAY INFORMED! Request to join the "EBF Anti-Trafficking Network" Facebook page for updates and information.

Here's some of the exciting projects we learned about at the conference:

- A Swedish pastor told us that God had involved him in helping others to recover their sexual addictions. When we address the "demand" side of the prostitution and pornography industry, we reduce the incidence of human trafficking.
- A Moldovan pastor shared about great work being done in his country to prevent vulnerable young people from being lured into situations of exploitation, and also how those who were victims are being restored and have new lives!
- Women from Denmark explained that there are many African women working



in prostitution in Denmark. They have started a ministry with them, offering them food for their bodies - and their souls. They are working in cooperation with a project in Nigeria to help the women return home and to find jobs.

- Representatives from Romania informed us about how their organization is trying to reduce the number of children who are being exploited in the labor and sex industry. Romania has the largest number of victims of human trafficking in all of the European Union, and the church needs to become

LETTER FROM LAURAN

aware of what they can do to prevent the suffering of slavery - and do it!

- Our friends from Kyrgyzstan described the many challenges with poverty and unemployment in their country - and how they are addressing them through local church initiatives, including safe houses, victim advocacy and a “hotline” where people can call when they have questions about their safety - or criminal activity.
- In Stuttgart, Germany, there are more than 400 brothels - “employing” thousands of women in prostitution. One of our participants began a project which educates church members about how to do ministry in the brothels, and also works with the police. Many women have come out of prostitution and found new life!
- A coalition of Christians in Bulgaria does outreach with women in prostitution, and is opening a shelter for victims.
- A Russian brother described his life as a criminal and drug addict - and then how Jesus turned his life completely around. God has used him in establishing many communities of those coming out of addiction and prostitution who are finding healing in Jesus’ name. Hallelujah!

• Again: Let me know about YOUR involvement in anti-human trafficking AND join the Network on Facebook!! We want to learn from you - and help in whatever way we can!!! I look forward to hearing from you!

With Love and Blessings to All,
Lauran Bethell - e-mail: lauran@pobox.com





20th Jubilee Conference Minsk



EBWU Conference, Izmir-Özdere, Turkey



EBWU Conference Izmir-Özdere, Turkey



EBWU Conference Izmir-Özdere, Turkey

ÖZDERE CONFERENCE

Report of EBWU Conference in Izmir - Özdere Turkey - 12-15 Nov. 2015

By Margaret Brown

On the warm, sunny shore of Özdere twenty-eight women from various parts of Europe had the privilege of coming together from 12-15th November 2015.

Although small in number, we were large in love, fellowship and blessing.

The conference was arranged primarily to bring a flavour of what was experienced by the Committee in Johannesburg at the BAWD Leadership Conference in July, and took the same theme of 'Arise, Shine'.



Ertan Cevik, pastor of the Baptist Church in Izmir, attended on the first evening with some young people from the church who led us in our opening worship and gave testimony. Ertan also brought greetings and shared about the situation in Turkey. This was followed by the Roll Call of the countries present, each representative placed their lit candle on a ray of the sun laid out on the floor, so that when all the candles were lit and the

rays shining there was light in the darkness, finishing with the song 'Shine, Jesus, shine'.

The main speaker was the newly appointed President of the Women's Department, Dr Ksenija Magda, from Croatia. It was an honour to have her with us and to listen and learn from what she shared with us from the Word of God. Her topics were





‘Arise! Because YOU CAN!’ and ‘Shine! The World eagerly awaits your light.’ She had us digging into God’s Word and we had much food for thought. May the Lord enable us to put into practice in our lives the important lessons He taught us.

Reports of the work of EBWU and of the conference in Johannesburg were given. Also in-

cluded was a Fair/Mission where small items from the countries were on display and/or for sale.

A very important part of the conference was an acted out history of the Baptist Women’s Day of Prayer. Time was also given for testimonies to be shared which was quite a moving experience as we heard of the hardships some of our sisters are going through. There were times of praise and worship and prayer.

On the last evening we had a meditation focussing on ‘pearls’ and how precious we



are, like pearls, valued, treasured by God, prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper following which was a prayer blessing when each woman received a small bottle containing a few drops of water from the Jordan River.

During our time at the conference we were able to visit the ruins of the ancient city of Ephesus. This was well worth the visit, and gave an insight to what life must have been like for the people who lived there and of their customs.

All too soon it was over and goodbyes were said with the promise to keep in touch, and to pray for one another. We learned so much from the Lord. We were inspired, challenged and encouraged to persevere in our Christian walk, to 'Arise and Shine'.



EBWU Committee in Ephesus

NORDIC CONFERENCE



Nordic Women's Conference - August 2015

by Synnøve G. Angen, Norway

In 2009 we went to Denmark, in 2012 we travelled to Norway and this year we gathered in Sweden for the Nordic Women's Conference 2015. 75 women from Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway travelled by car, ferries, trains and / or by plane to Sjøvik Folkhögskola in Sweden.

Some of the women had participated in Nordic conferences before, but for some, it was their first time. It is always wonderful meeting old friends, but it is refreshing and a big blessing making new friends, all with the same faith, but with different life-experience.

Sharing your life stories can make a big difference for someone!

With the topic: **EQUAL BEFORE GOD - A CHALLENGE TO PROTECT OUR SISTER** the organizers had hopes for the conference, that it would be a valuable experience and a source of inspiration for the participants to move forward in equality with care for each other and for the other sisters. Committed women, from different countries, with different backgrounds and experience, shared their views on the subject in an engaging way with the audience.



Karin Wiborn, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Sweden shared thoughts from her long experience of female leadership and of working with the issues of the role of women in the churches.

Olga Tshiwewe Kangas from the Democratic Republic of Congo, working for World Council of Churches with questions on women's rights. She shared information and stories on the campaign "**Thursdays in black**", to stop rape and other violence against women. This campaign is an ongoing drive to raise awareness and encourage people to work towards a world without rape and violence against women and children.

Lina Mattebo, journalist, author and editor of the current **Anthology feminism and CHURCH**, shared exciting views on equality in Christians' environments.

Eva-Maria Munck is passionate about global justice issues. She shared her experience working on an exciting project with young women in Thailand.

Walla Carlsson told about her own childhood and about the situation for women in Lithuania. She has for many years invested time and effort in supporting mothers sitting in prison in Lithuania. It is hard for these vulnerable women to protect their children while they are imprisoned.

Synnøve G Angen from Norway representing the European Baptist Women's Union (EBWU) gave information about EBWUs work for the last five years and also shared her long-standing work to support women in Sierra Leone and ex-prostitutes in India by selling Freeset bags (through the Baptist women of Norway). Her stories from the visit to Lebanon meeting Syrian refugees touched the women and they gave a **love gift** to EBWU's Relief fund for Syrian women.



Lena Lonnquist and invited guests talked about We are all sisters - however with different belief and different traditions.

Görel Bystrom Janarv is a journalist and filmmaker specializing in religion and philosophy of life, she shared her "Multi-religious travel bag" with us by making us reflect in groups, over different religious symbols / effects.

Music, singing, prayer and worship, workshops, relieving/ liberating movements and breathing was fun and good for body and soul.

Pilgrimages in surrounding area (one short and one long) with reflection-breaks and communion created contemplation and peace for mind and soul.

Conversation during meals and just enjoying nature and beautiful summer weather made a wonderful atmosphere for the participants! Someone was even taking a bath in the lake!!

We give big thanks to "Kristen & Kvinna" / **Aina Rasmussen** and **Lena Lonnquist** for arranging and making this conference possible.

Thanks to old and new friends for listening, sharing and making this "a good place for Sisters to be"! Next time we meet in Denmark in 2019!!



Reflection on the Nordic Conference by May Åkerström, President Kristen & Kvinna from Sweden

What touched me most among the messages at the Nordic Women's Conference at Sjøvik was Olga Tshiwewe Kangaj's story about how difficult it is for many women in Africa. She told us the story of many of her friends. The young girls get to study and be reasonably free until marriage. In marriage they are completely dependent on their husbands, they can not decide anything themselves but have to obey their husbands in everything.

The campaign, Thursdays in Black, feels like a hopeful initiative with the motto "A world without violence and rape". Sweden joins this campaign to help put focus on the situation for women in the world. The Christian Council of Sweden, Ekumeni kyrkan, of the Church of Sweden run this campaign in Sweden.

Synnøve Gåsvær Angen (EBWU) told about Freetown's work among ex-prostitutes in India and about NBWU's project helping women in Sierra Leone and how they are influencing the men by speaking to them about how to treat women. It touched me, how important this work is! It is not easy for women to change their situation given their circumstances. One picture stayed particularly in my heart, it was the picture of the "Water Carrier". The broken bucket became a blessing as it, in its brokenness, spilled water on the flowers that it passed, so that they blossomed. In summary

it was a pleasure to hear how much good work is being carried out in different countries by sisters in the faith.

The feeling was strong “we belong together and can do a lot together”

Gunilla Sundqvist, Purmo, Finland Reflection on the Nordic Conference 2015

I am assured that God loves me just as I am and regardless of how I feel. He always remembers me!

Sunday service meant so much to me. I experienced a new meeting with God. Life has for some time felt so heavy and dark. I can still hear the song: "Jesus, Son of God. You are the light within me. Do not let the darkness get a grip of my soul. Jesus, Son of God. You are the light within me. Open me for Your love and peace."



Freedom: The conference gave me another meeting with the God that I have believed in since I was a little girl ... It also gave me the courage to see that I can go away without my husband. I have not done that since I began to sit in a wheelchair about 5 years ago. Now I experienced that there are sisters who are willing to help me. This was also a form of freedom for me personally.

Otherwise, I think that freedom is when people can be themselves wherever they are meant to be.

Lise Øhrstrøm Willer. President of the Danish Baptist Womens Union



The Nordic Conference was arranged in Sweden at Sjøvik, and we had some overwhelmingly beautiful days!

Sweden showed its best side with sunshine, a glassy lake, wild and green forests. Morning swimming was a refreshing start to the day!!

We were gathered from Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. The fellowship was great, and we had many good conversations across nationalities, although language sometimes could cause problems.

The title of the conference was: "EQUAL BEFORE GOD - A CHALLENGE TO PROTECT OUR SISTER". There were very good lessons on this subject in addition to several seminars and a pilgrimage.

Here are some of my reflections after the conference:

We are together in Christ, we are one body in Christ, and we are therefore responsible for our sisters. Gandhi challenged us by saying: "Be the change you want to see." We must see what each individual needs, and use "whatever we have in the house". Together as sisters we can go far, as the following quote says:

**If you want to walk fast ...
walk alone!
If you want to walk far ...
walk together!**



Freedom

For me freedom is a very central concept. The freedom we have has come after many years of historical fighting, where many have strived to achieve it. This year we have celebrated the women's right to vote at the elections in Denmark.

When talking about freedom the central part for me is the freedom to talk, act and think.

This freedom should not be connected with fear, but be a basic right for all. I find it is a gift that we can get around freely without fear, even when we go outside during the night.

Paul writes in Galatians 5: 1 "Freedom is what we have – Christ has set us free!"

This is the most important, that Christ has set us free, free from the sin in Christ, because of his victory on the cross!



JOY AND PRAISE IN SOFIA

Joy and Praise in Sofia, Bulgaria.

By Aniko Ujvari, EBWU president.

September 20. 2015 an historical day in the life of the Bulgarian Baptist Union, especially in the life of the Sofia Baptist Church. This congregation went through many hardships in the past decades. But they went on in faith and experienced the blessings from our Heavenly Father.

And they came to the point of beginning to put down the foundation of a new church building twelve years ago, which was to fulfill their desire, not just to celebrate and worship the Lord, but to give space for social and educational projects answering the needs coming from their society.



Through years having many difficulties with the bureaucracy and finances, yet on the other hand they experienced the support of the Baptist brothers and sisters from the European Baptist Federation, and many other supporters.

So their dream became reality, and now they are celebrating what the Lord has done.

The celebration began in the old church building counting the blessings, and giving thanks for all the experiences, baptisms, weddings, child dedications, sorrows and joys, prayers and grace.

Then all the participants walked to the other end of the street where the new building is located. The national flag ribbon crossed the gate and lovely young ladies in national dress formed the frame of the celebration. Moving speeches were given by Teodor Oprenov and the architect of the building who solemnly gave the key of the church building to the church leadership.



Inside a piece of bread welcomed the participants. And then began the joyful celebration.



Greetings, speeches, worship, remembrance and prayers, all part of a colourful evening which touched the heart of all in attendance. I may tell you, our brothers and sisters in Sofia Baptist Church came to the end of a hard time, but now they are facing new challenges – to continue their church life – organ-

izing it, and all the activities, medical care, spiritual support, feeding the hungry and fulfilling various kinds of aims.

The celebration continued in the following days as the EBF organized its annual General Council meeting in Sofia.

At the opening of this event we greeted a very unique guest in this new church building, the president of Bulgaria,





Rosen Plevneliev, who addressed a meaningful message to the participants from nearly forty countries.

It was a really special event which never before happened in Bulgaria, and gave real honour to our brothers and sisters there.

Let me pick up two names, the Oprenovs, Teodor and Dimitrina, who were the basic motivators behind this huge project and worked hard organizing, supporting, and encouraging their church coming to the end of this tremendous project.

We share their joys, and we join to them in praise of our Lord for all His blessings. We wish them and all our brothers and sisters in the Sofia Baptist Church blessings to go on in the way of ministering and serving our Saviour, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Aniko Ujvari, EBWU president



FREEDOM AND BE FREE

Freedom and be Free

A story of a Jewish girl from the Netherlands

Freedom

Jetty went skipping through life as a happy girl. A dear father and mother and brothers and sisters who surrounded her with lots of love, led to a regular carefree youth just as her friends in Friesland had at the time. But it was not that usual ... what she experienced when she was 12 years old. It appeared to her that she had been smuggled as a baby from Amsterdam to Friesland. In Amsterdam she was born in 1942, in the middle of the 2nd World War, as the daughter of a Jewish father and mother: Roosje and Mozes Stouwer.



Roosje and Mozes Stouwer

The young couple looked forward to the birth of their first child. But Mozes would never see his daughter, Jetty in real life. And also Roosje, her mother, would only take care of Jetty for a short while. Even before Jetty was born Mozes was sent to a camp in The Netherlands because he was a Jew. Roosje stayed at home alone, heavily pregnant. Following delivery,

with the help of neighbours and a compassionate nurse in the hospital Roosje and Jetty remained out of the hands of the German occupiers of the Netherlands. But they were not safe at all.

One evening there came a resistance man, Sjoerd Wiersma at Roosje's door to take her and the baby from Amsterdam to the province of Friesland, where it was much safer. Roosje herself dared not go with him because it was after curfew time, but she already gave baby Jetty to him. The following day he came again to retrieve Roosje. In vain he knocked on the door; Roosje had been arrested in a razzia (German raid on Jewish people during WW II) that night and brought to a large square in Amsterdam where she and many others waited for transport.

The girl next door was sent to the square to try to tell mother Roosje that "the packet had arrived safely". The mother now knew that her baby was safe and free. Roosje herself was brought to the same camp where her husband was and both of them were killed later elsewhere in Europe in a concentration camp.

The struggle

So Jetty had never seen her biological parents after the war and she was raised in the family of her saviour: the resistance hero Sjoerd Wiersma and his wife Trijntje who during the war brought into freedom more than 1000 Jews.

The family were Christians and Jetty learned about Jesus Christ. But her adoptive parents wanted that she herself would make a choice later on when she was older, because of her Jewish ancestry. But in the beginning Jetty did not want to know anything of her Jewish past. At first she was even mad at her mother: "Who is giving her own child away?" Years later she understood that it had been an heroic act of her mother to protect her. As a result, her family lives on in her and in her kids! She supplanted her past, until after the birth of her youngest child when she suffered from postnatal depression. That was the moment the war started for Jetty. She struggled with her history. She never wanted to go to Germany, the country that had occupied Europe in World War II. But Jetty was invited to go to a Christian monastery in Darmstadt where an older German sister in tears asked her for forgiveness for what Hitler – Germany – had done to the Jews.



Winks from Heaven

Jetty now wanted to know everything about her family. But no one of the family had survived the war and there was nothing left from them.

Until in 2007 a message came from Amsterdam from the neighbour-girl Rie, the girl who had been able to transfer the message after the razzia to Jetty's mother on the square that Jetty was safe. From "auntie" Rie she got a few objects of her mother's, which had been smuggled from the Dutch camp. Roosje had sent a suitcase with dirty laundry to the parents of Rie. Hidden between the laundry was a picture and a little purse containing the wedding ring of Jetty's mother. That ring Jetty gave to her daughter Rosa-Nienke on her wedding day in memory of the grandmother she never knew, but for whom she is named.

Rosa-Nienke in turn gave her mother a statuette, she modelled herself, on the model of the one and only picture showing Jetty as a baby with her mother. It is together with the ring and a few more objects one of Jetty's most precious possessions. Jetty also received copies of pages from the personal poetry album of "auntie" Rie, in which at the time Jetty's grandmother, her mother and Jetty's aunt had written a personal poem for the girl next door, Rie.



From her father there was no memory left, it was thought. But in 2008 Jetty's youngest daughter Corlinda saw on the site of the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam a prayer booklet with the name of Mozes Stouwer. It turned out to be a gift that had been given by the Talmud Tora School to Jetty's father when he had done his Bar Mitzvah on 29 October 1932 at the age of 13. The Director of the Museum recognized Jetty as sole heir and donated the booklet to her. The family did not dare to receive it by post, so Jetty's son Max went personally to Amsterdam to get it. This booklet of her father and the objects of her mother – precious memories – so many turning up later, miraculously again in Jetty's possession; these, Jetty regards as winks from Heaven.

Be Free

Jetty realizes that she is very privileged by the Christian education given by her foster parents: "They have given me the freedom to choose for Jesus. In my heart I am Jewish and I am proud of it. But very consciously I have been baptized as an adult together with my husband Jille; with Jesus I was allowed to go into the grave and rise again. There I left my sins. Jesus died for me on the cross and that is why I am allowed to restart every day again and now I am **truly free**."

Story told by Jetty Leffring-Stouwer, written by Wies Dijkstra



***"You shall know the
truth and the truth shall
make you free"
John 8:32***



PATSY DAVIS TO RETIRE

BWA Women's director Patsy Davis to retire



Patsy Davis, executive director of the Baptist World Alliance Women's Department (BWA WD), is set to retire effective December 31, 2015, after working in that position for 17 years.

"She has initiated many projects and the global Baptist Women's Day of Prayer grew into a recognized ministry that connected Baptist women to each other both in prayer and practical support," said Ksenija Magda, president of the BWA Women's Department.

"She has been appreciated by many women on all continents and under her leadership, the Women's Department became an example of an effective global ministry within the Baptist World Alliance."

"God called me many years ago to work with women, and he has blessed me these 17 years to be a part of the BWA WD", Patsy Davis stated.

"The Women's Department of the BWA, and in particular the Executive Board of the WD, appreciate Patsy's many years of faithful service to women globally", Ksenija Magda declared. The BWA Women's President wishes "that God, our Lord and Father, may continue to bless her and her work in the future."

Prior to taking up her position at the BWA in 1998. Patsy Davis was a Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionary for 21 years, serving as General Secretary of the National Woman's Missionary Union of Venezuela.

She succeeded the late Willene Pierce, who died in March 2014, and who resigned the BWA post in July 1997.



MINSK BELARUS CONFERENCE

Report of the 20th Jubilee Conference in Minsk, Belarus

by Vera Tihon.

Theme: Spiritual Renewal.

... For us to serve God in renewal of our spirit. Romans 7:6

November, 6-7th 2015 with God's mercy the Baptist sisters of Belarus celebrated the 20th anniversary of women's ministry (service) with the President of EBWU, Aniko Ujvari from Hungary, and Vice President Wies Dijkstra from the Netherlands taking part. 180 sisters gathered together at the "Light of the Gospel" church to praise God, take encouragement and be renewed spiritually for work on the cornfield of God.



The President of the Baptist Union in Belarus, Bishop V. Krutsko greeted the sisters with the words of the apostle Paul from the message to Romans, chapter 16. The Belarussian woman's ministry co-ordinator Vera Tihon called the sisters to give a sacrifice of praise to God, the best sacrifice of the confession of one's faith in Jesus in deeds and love. (John 13:15-16).



130-Years of Baptist witness in Belarus is unseparately linked with the ministries of sisters who had received Jesus into their hearts and invited the first believers into their houses, and in that way the churches were organized.

Officially Baptist women of Belarus were organized in 1995 at the first conference together with 70 women from Missouri, USA. The reason for this was the visit of sisters from Moldova, Olga Mocan and



Tavifa Baklach in 1994. For the last two decades 15 republican conferences have passed with two visits of presidents of EBWU Yona Pusey, Eva Gutkowska and Aniko Ujvari.

On this conference of celebration of anniversary the Belarussian sisters watched with great interest the presentation of women's ministry of the European sisters shown by sister Aniko. Aniko called sisters to rise and shine in our dark world, like the sun, to reflect Jesus.

Sister Wies called sisters to renew spiritually, rise up and follow Jesus who is the Light of the World, just as sunflowers turn during the day to the sun. In the second sermon the sis-

ters were encouraged to be aware that God uses people – people you would never think of – to serve Him (Luke.4:39). In conclusion of the two-day conference sisters Aniko and Wies were in charge of conducting the Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer. By using rays of the sun, written on the names of the 7 Continental Unions of the Baptist World Alliance Women's Department, all were praying for the continental requests. The prayer session was closed by making a huge circle with all the sisters standing hand in hand praying the Lords Prayer in their own language.

Belarussian Baptist Union ministers prayed a prayer of blessings for the women's ministry, and they also prayed for Israel, Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Caucasian countries and Middle East countries.

At the end of the conference brother Sinkovets called sisters to pray for God's will in their children's lives, to bring them with a Christian spirit, bless them and let them go and serve God, be near them in the hard times of their lives.



In Memoriam

**Chieny Buitenhuis – Boiten, the Netherlands,
7 May 1927 - 13 January 2014**

By Wies Dijkstra



Celebrate Life was the motto of Chieny

For that you need inner freedom. Freedom was a very important issue for Chieny, being born in between two World Wars. Seeing how freedom was curtailed in World War II it made Chieny to be a consciously living human being. Her inner desire for freedom, irrespective of borders, made Chieny turn freedom into action.

First in the Dutch Women's Union – she was already a member before she married in 1953 with Jan Buitenhuis, with whom she had 2 daughters – where she was chosen to serve on the National Board and developed many new initiatives which made the Dutch Baptist Women's Union a flourishing organization.

Also she made several contributions to society by being for a long time a board member of a Baptist home for the elderly and being a teacher for children with special needs well into her eighties, not to mention the activities in her local church.

In 1972 she was elected onto the EBWU board as an additional member and afterwards till 1982 as Secretary and till 1992 she served the EBWU as member of the Nominating Committee.

In those years she served together with Hilde Sayers, Kerstin Rudén, Klára Weist, Else Ohrn, Marianne Wupper, Julia Gerö, Clarice Morgan, and others. We owe these sisters a great deal; they were good examples for us to follow.



Sunflowers painted by Chieny

It was then that her inner feeling of freedom came to greater heights. During the time of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain she was building bridges between East and West. The European Baptist Federation mentioned that too, when they commemorated her during the Warsaw meeting in January 2014. She transmitted her inner desire for freedom onto others and believed that Sisterhood between women from all countries and prayer could make a difference.

Therefore the Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer (DOP) founded in 1949 in London after the devastating situation in Europe had always been a very important day for Chieny to be involved with.

In that chain of prayer we will miss Chieny as a strong golden link, praying inside with folded hands to heaven, but with extended hands to the people here on earth.

Galatians 5 : 13, 14

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."



REFUGEES SYRIA

EBWU launched in 2013 the ongoing project: Relief Fund for Syrian Women. In February 2014 EBWU President Aniko Ujvari and Synnøve Angen visited Lebanon to hand out Love-Gifts (hygiene packets for women and children), paid by YOU (thank you so much for your donations!) and coordinated by the Lebanese Baptist Women's Union and others.

Saada Malky, president of LBWU, gives us an update, January 2016, about the situation: It is written in the gospel of Mark (6: 36), when Jesus "came ashore He saw the large crowd and He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd." Millions of people are in need of humanitarian aid and there is not enough international aid to help refugees in the region. In Lebanon, wherever you go you see crowds of refugees, whether Syrians or Iraqis – displaced people. They exceed two million in number, which is approximately half of the Lebanese population. Their situation moves the compassion of many.

The question is how can we provide food and other needs for such a great number of families? Jesus taught us to help those in need, so Christians are sharing the little they have and God is blessing their offering. The great blessings that we are experiencing in these critical situations, is that many are receiving the gospel and proclaiming their faith to others. Some are becoming leaders in the "house group ministry," where most of the leaders are women. Many Baptist women are ministering, through their local churches, providing cloth, food, medical care, and other women are discipling them. Some ladies are teaching Syrian and Iraqi women new skills to help them support their families, and encouraging them to find work. The church is spreading the gospel by words and deeds; we are praying that the Lord will always pour His Holy Spirit upon us till Jesus returns.

May God grant us wisdom and grace as we seek to respond to the needs of an increasing number of vulnerable families seeking refuge. We need YOUR help too to help THEM! Please give your donation to:

EBWU "Relief fund for Syrian Women",
Account number: 272728.

Spar- und Kreditbank Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden eG.
Postfach 1262, 61282 Bad Homburg , Germany, Europe.

BIC: GENODE51BH2
IBAN: DE45 5009 2100 0000
2727 28



PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayer Requests:

- For the thousands of refugees travelling in Europe.
- For wisdom and guidance for governments to know how to best help the refugees.
- For the Middle East countries where persecution is rife; pray for our Christian brothers and sisters to have courage and perseverance as they seek to remain true to Jesus Christ.
- For Aniko as she travels in Europe and further afield; for protection, good health, a clear mind and enthusiasm for the work she is doing.
- For Ksenija as she leads the Women's department, that she may carry out her responsibilities in ways which are beneficial to those she serves and honouring to the Lord.
- Pray for the Meeting in London as the continental presidents meet with WD Executive to determine the way forward for the WD now that Patsy Davis has retired. Pray for wisdom and clear guidance.
- Pray for Patsy as she mourns the loss of her brother recently.
- Pray for the family of Chieny Buitenhuis, the Netherlands, former EBWU secretary and give thanks for all she has done.



Events:

- February 2016, 18-22, London – Aniko and Ksenija, Meeting of Women's Department.
- March 2016, Belgium – Aniko and Fabienne, Conference.
- April 2016, England – Aniko attending EBF Meeting.
- April 2016, 22-24, Berlin - IBC Women's Conference
- May 2016, Czech Republic/Slovakia – Aniko, Women's Conference.
- June 2016, Vancouver, Canada – Aniko and Ksenija, BWA and WD Meeting.
- September 2016, Trondheim, Norway – EBWU Committee, Norwegian Women's Union Centenary Celebrations and Annual EBWU Committee Meeting.
- September 2016, Estonia – Aniko, EBF Council Meeting.
- October 2016, Smolensk, Russia – EBWU Committee, Conference.

THE BAPTIST WOMEN OF NORWAY

Celebrating 100 years

2-4 SEPTEMBER 2016 IN TRONDHEIM



Russian Women's Conference

Smolensk

October 22-24 2016

More info

soon on

www.ebwu.org





European Baptist Women's Union

Executive Committee Members
and positions



Aniko Ujvari, President
Budapest, Hungary
president.ebwu@gmail.com



Wies Dijkstra, Vice President
Buitenpost, The Netherlands
wiesdijkstra@gmail.com



Margaret Brown, Secretary
Ardrossan, Scotland
mib4m5@btinternet.com



Fabienne Seguin, Treasurer
Sotteville-les-Rouen, France
treasurer.ebwu@gmail.com



Dimitrina Oprenova, Member
Sofia, Bulgaria
d.oprenova@sebc.bg



Synnøve Angen, Member
Trondheim, Norway
synangen@gmail.com



Leadership Conference, Johannesburg SA



Leadership Conference Johannesburg, SA