

Going Places

with Adventist Women in the South Pacific

September 2015

Greetings & News

DATES TO REMEMBER:

November 25
White Ribbon Day

IN THIS GOING PLACES

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I can't believe it's already the end of September which means that the end of the year is nigh! What happened to time? It's just flown by and can't come back.

So much has happened this year – the GC Session in July is probably one of those most important events for our church and I have to admit that when the decision on women's ordination came out negative, I cried! It felt as if the church rejected its women's right to go out and use the gifts God had given them and that the calling the women had received was not recognized by the majority of the delegates.

I wasn't the only one who shed tears on that famous Wednesday, there were both men and women who had stood up and spoken on behalf of us, the women, and we all cried together. Wonderful, supportive, understanding men who for a long time had fought for equality within the church, but the 'church' spoke and the rest is history. We have to adapt, wait until the rest of the church catches up with the fact that God created us all in His image, "man and woman He created them." "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slaves nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

I've always stood up for those who nobody stood up for and the ordination was one topic I

felt strongly about and wasn't shy about sharing that fact. If we believe what Galatians 3:28 says then we are all viewed the same way by God, right?

The book of Ephesians, has in my mind been misinterpreted, making women feel they are second class citizens and that men are to rule over women. I don't understand that book in that way at all! Ephesians is my favourite book of the Bible and I love what Paul teaches us through his letter to the members in Ephesus. We are to be submissive to one other and men are to love their wives as Christ loves the church etc. That to me is the message of Ephesians.

I have preached for years that if we had only the book of Ephesians, we would have learned how to live as Christians in our communities without needing anything else! There are so many wonderful lessons in this book. I read it at least once each month and have done so for years and each time I learn something new.

During the year there have also been other important things happening like leadership training and spiritual retreats, along with all sorts of meetings across the Division that I've attended, and loved every minute spent with God's women, not just this year, but throughout my ministry here at the South Pacific Division.

New ways to minister

Changes are "acoming" my friends! The departments as they've been known for decades won't exist any longer, but teams have been formed to address the needs of each group of God's people in the local churches. Although it's not yet determined how this new structure will work, I'd really like for all of you to pray that it all works out as God wants it to. There will no longer be any 'directors' but team members in this new system. Therefore, my role as director will end at the end of this year. In the new-year I have been asked to become a consultant to this new group and that role is only part time or 2 days a week for up to 2 years. The job description will also be worked out before the year-end. What I've been told so far is that I will help the team 'disciplining' the women of the church, amongst other responsibilities.

This may very well be my last newsletter to you all, so in case it is, I'd like to say how much I've been blessed ministering to you and that my love and prayers as well as my blessings will be with you. May the Lord richly bless each and every one of you is my prayer.

Yours in His service,
Erna

News From Around the Division...

Tonga Celebrates

On Friday afternoon, August 28, Tongatapu (main island of Tonga) Seventh Day Adventist Women gathered at the Nuku'alofa Church for a combined Prayer Service to mark the 20th Anniversary of Adventist Women's Ministries (WM).

A member of the Royal Family, Honorable Lupepau'u Taione was the Guest of Honour and the Mission President Pastor Saia Vaea Vea was the preacher of the day. Elderly WM members of 69 years and over were special guests and were gifted with scarves in the WM Color (lilac) with the WM logo as a souvenir of the day.

A special afternoon tea party at the church hall followed the Prayer Service. A 20th Anniversary Cake was cut by three of the oldest WM members who attended. It was a joyful and memorable day enjoyed especially by the elderly WM members who rarely attend social gatherings or similar functions. It was a time of meeting and sharing with old friends who hadn't met for a long time. Speeches and fond memories from the work of WM and Dorcas were shared by the women.

Alisi Fonokalafi, WM Director, Tonga Mission, TPUM



Cutting of the Cake



Guest of Honour - Honorable Lupepau'u Taione



Older ladies wearing their special scarves

The Bride Wore White

The girl's conference 2015 was attended by 42 girls and was such a wonderful experience. Just to see the faces of those lovely girls learning and understanding the beauty of God's love and the gifts He has in store for them. I thank God for the opportunities we have to serve Him.

I would like to share a few comments we received from the girls who attended, it makes it all worth it:

"It was amazing, inspirational, and made me feel like it's ok to wait even though everything, everywhere you turn it's saying the opposite. I am glad I came along to this wonderful experience and you should continue on with such programs. May our Loving Father in Heaven bless each and everyone of you who put this together and made it amazing".

"I was very impressed with the program today. I came with quite negative attitude as in what could I possibly learn that I didn't know already. But I did learn, a lot!! and loved the sharing of first hand experiences. I would encourage anyone to save and invest in this as it is a beautiful experience. A very happy and pleased late teen"

"It was such a privilege to be here today. May God richly bless you for all your wonderful effort and dedication to making this day a very memorable one for us at a personal level. I cannot thank you enough! Thanks again. xoxo"

Jasmin Stankovic, WM Director, Western Australia





Breathe WM Conference

471 Attendees filled the Auditorium and God spoke powerfully through our beautiful speaker, Dilys Brooks. A truly spiritually revitalising weekend, filled with powerful preaching, inspiring testimonies, meaningful worship sessions, devotional times, special prayer gatherings, drama, generous giving, exercise options, friends, food and fellowship. The weekend ended with a beautiful coming to the Table for a Communion Service. Our cups were filled!!! To say it was an incredibly blessed weekend - is an understatement. We thank God for that space in time at BREATHE to connect with HIM again.

A group of 12 Women's Ministries Directors from the Solomon Islands, our sister Mission, came to Sydney just to attend Breathe, and we were blest to share with them.

Women lined the foyer with stacks of baby items, filling the cot to overflowing with new baby clothes, nappies, baby soap, powder, etc. for the Solomon Island Baby project - it was awesome!! Such generosity will transform many, many lives.

In addition to that, our women gave \$10,450!!!! for our HOPE Stayz project. A special Retreat for disenfranchised women - April 11 - 13, 2016. Adventist Women Greater Sydney Conference is planning to bless women in our community who would never have an opportunity to a 2 night/3 days getaway. We're going to love them, treat them, teach them, offer services they may never otherwise access. SO VERY EXCITING. If you want more information, contact Beryl at beryllanders@adventist.org.au

Beryl Landers, Women's Ministries Director, Greater Sydney



Welcome to Country by Aboriginal Sisters



Solomon Island Baby Project



Some of the Attendees



Dilys Brooks - Speaker for the Conference

Refresh - WM Conference

What a blessed time we had as 144 women gathered together for an amazing weekend. Most of the women who attended this year were in their 40s and 50s. There were 9 women from a non-SDA background and 2 non-Christians. We were privileged to have 12 young women under the age of 21 and 16 other girls in their mid 20s. Their comments and experiences were uplifting to hear. They realised that women's retreat is not just for older women!

We experienced inspiring messages from Cheri Peters who challenged us to be real and be all of what God created us to be. The music was great, the food was in abundance, the fellowship and friendships were amazing. There were relevant workshops led by enthusiastic presenters. There was plenty of free time to socialise and rejuvenate. What a blessed time we had!

Jasmin Stankovic, WM Director, Western Australia



Group photo



Cheri Peters - presenter

She's an Aussie!

On the 20th of August, Erna and her husband Eddie stepped into the Blacktown Town Hall and after a short ceremony were declared to be Australians! This was something Erna had been looking forward to for many months and it was a very special moment and one that will always remain a highlight in her life. While her childhood memories and much of her heart will always reside in Iceland she has now made her much-loved Australia her new and permanent home. Welcome Erna – you have chosen well! We are delighted you can now legitimately say, "Giddy Mate!"



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We are here to help
women reach their
potential!