INTRODUCTION

This year Women’s Ministries celebrates 20 years as a department of the world church of Seventh-day Adventists. Yet there is a history to this department that goes beyond the 20 years, a history that tells of struggle, determination, joys and some sorrows, as well as praise for God’s guiding hand in the life of this department.

As we celebrate the historic vote at the General Conference Session in Utrecht, Netherlands in 1995 to establish the Department of Women’s Ministries, we do not want to forget the women and men who made that vote possible.

Long before the official vote in 1995, the work of women’s ministries began in the North American Division. This brochure documents the history leading up to the vote at Utrecht and those whose vision laid the groundwork for the work of women’s ministries that is now flourishing around the globe.

CONCLUSION

And so women’s ministries continues a journey begun in 1898. Ellen G. White encourages us with these words from Evangelism, p. 464:

“The Lord has a work for women as well as for men. They may take their places in his work at this crisis, and he will work through them. If they are imbued with a sense of their duty, and labor under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. The Saviour will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of his countenance, and will give them a power that exceeds that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed.”

God’s call to Adventist women is clear and sure. Since 1995 we continue to work in varied ministries to touch the hearts and lives of those who need to know the Gospel message. God is our strength, our guide, and our joy, and we look forward to the day when this work will be ended and we see Him face to face. Until then, Adventist women globally will work with our brothers in every field of service where we are needed.
Ellen G. White encouraged Mrs. S.M.I. Henry (Sarepta Miranda Irish Henry) to begin a “Woman Ministry,” though living in Australia at the time, Ellen White’s letters to Sarepta Henry reveal her support for the work of women in the Church:

“I have thought, with your experience, under the supervision of God, you could exert your influence to set in operation lines of work where women could unite together to work for the Lord. There certainly should be a greater number of women engaged in the work of ministering to suffering humanity, uplifting, educating them how to believe—simply believe—in Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Evangelion, p. 462).

Sarepta Henry resigned her position as national evangelist for the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) as national evangelist for the WCTU, and, with her resignation, the work of ministering to suffering and oppressed women came to an end.

March 18 – The General Conference Commission on the Role of Women (GCCRW) met, including delegates from the world field. This international commission recommended that an affirmative action plan be developed to improve women’s involvement in the Church.

March 19 – Summit for leaders of nine Adventist women’s groups met at the invitation of the NADWCA and voted to call for a full-time women’s ministries director at the North American Division.

July 23 – Under the leadership of Dr. Rosa Banks, OHR Director, NADWCA met at Camp Hope, British Columbia. Each union in NAD was represented and voted to affirm the above recommendations, especially emphasizing that their division elect a director for women’s ministries.

Whereas, Women represent a vast storehouse of spiritual gifts which await full development and utilization in the accomplishment of the Church’s global mission; and

WHEREAS, Open dialogue bringing women’s perspectives to leadership will bring greater balance and wholeness to decision-making; and

WHEREAS, Women need to be nurtured spiritually, their unique needs addressed, and guided toward Christian service, it was RECOMMENDED:

1. To authorize the establishment of an Office of Women’s Ministries at the General Conference to foster ministry to women in the world church.
2. To ask each division to identify its degree of need for women’s ministries and find the best way to meet this need.

October 5 – Rose Otis was elected Director of the GC Office of Women’s Ministries.

November – Ramona Perez Guzik was appointed Assistant Director of the NAD Office of Women’s Ministries.

Kevin L. Kite, OHR Director, NADWCA meeting. Each union in NAD was represented and voted to affirm the above recommendations, especially emphasizing that their division elect a director for women’s ministries.