Heather-Dawn Kamille Ernie Barker was born on September 29, 1957, in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. She was baptized at age 11.


She held a BA in English from Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA; an MA in leadership with a minor in pastoral care to women from Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon; and was a candidate for a doctorate in inter-cultural studies at Western Seminary. She died before completing her dissertation.

Heather-Dawn worked for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in different capacities: as the administrative assistant to the president of Caribbean Union College (now University of the Southern Caribbean) from September 1995 to 1996; as Children’s Ministries director for the Caribbean Union Conference in Trinidad and Tobago from October 1996 and Women’s Ministries director for this Union from 1998 to 2001; as the associate director for the Women’s Ministries department at the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2001-2005, and as its director since 2005. She served the church in this position for more than 18 years.

Heather-Dawn enjoyed ministry to women. The Women’s Ministries mission statement emphasizes three areas—to nurture women, empower them, and involve them in outreach. She kept this focus in mind in everything she did, particularly with her presentations and resource development.

“Don’t let anyone steal your joy.”
She often talked about the need for good mental health and helped develop a women’s mental health training manual. Leading the worldwide church’s initiative for the abuse awareness program, enditnow® Adventists Say No to Violence, Heather-Dawn spoke out against domestic and physical abuse and advocated for those who have no voice.

Heather-Dawn strongly supported education for women and fostered leadership development through the Women’s Ministries Leadership Certification curriculum. She was always delighted to present certificates of completion during graduation ceremonies held for women who completed the four levels of training. She sponsored the production of the annual women’s devotional books. Royalties from sales help fund scholarships for Adventist women committed to serving the mission of the church.

As she traveled the world speaking at different events and conferences, she dreamed of seeing more women, especially young women, educated and trained for evangelism and ministry to others. Her desire to equip Adventist women for ministering to women of other cultures and religions is evidenced by the training manual she developed for building bridges woman to woman.

Despite life’s many challenges, Heather-Dawn kept sharing the joy that God had given her everywhere she went. Her favorite word was “JOY,” and her favorite saying was “Don’t let anyone steal your joy.” She loved air travel—disembarking from the airplane in a new country, eagerly waiting to meet new friends, and ministering to their needs. Her hobbies included reading, embroidery, scrapbooking, and stamp collecting. Her personal devotional life was filled with Bible art journaling which became an often-requested seminar worldwide.

After a short illness, Heather-Dawn learned she had terminal cancer. In response to her prayer, God gave her peace “which transcends all understanding” (Phil. 4:7). This peace of mind during the last couple of weeks helped her continue ministering to her family, colleagues, and friends. She looked forward to seeing Jesus coming back for her on the great resurrection morning and being given a new body free of pain.

A celebration of life service will be held, Sunday, February 18, 2024, 10:00 AM EST, at the General Conference world headquarters. Watch here: Livestream link

In lieu of flowers, you may give now to the GC WM Scholarship Fund.
WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT Heather-Dawn:

- She practiced the motto, “I choose joy.”
- She was a strong advocate against any form of violence.
- Her joy and openness captivated those who met her.
- Her warm heart embraced Women’s Ministries directors worldwide.
- Her legacy and footprint I will carry in my heart.
- She was a visionary leader.
- She leaves a legacy of service.
- Her legacy of love and faith lives on.
- Her leadership extended beyond mere guidance; her leadership was also motherly.
- Creative! Her Bible art journaling seminars are legendary.
- She was an unwavering beacon of faith and love for God.
- She taught me never to give up even when circumstances are not favorable.
- She was held in deep admiration and respect.
- Her sermons and devotions were practical, always with an experience or story to make her approachable.
- Her boundless compassion touched everyone.
- Her legacy of advocacy for women’s empowerment will forever inspire us.
- Every hug, word, message was an inspiration.
- She was a good friend.
- She was my teacher, partner, supporter.
- She was a strong advocate against any form of violence.
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2009: Raquel Arrais and Heather-Dawn at WAD WM congress

2012: Judith Mwansa, Rebecca Turner, Raquel, Heather-Dawn

2016: Desirée Calixte, Rebecca, Raquel, Heather-Dawn

2016: Heather-Dawn and Raquel

2016: Rebecca, Heather-Dawn, Nilde Itin, Premila Pedapudi

2022: Raquel visits Rebecca, Nilde, Heather-Dawn
Heather-Dawn Small

MEMORIES BY GC STAFF

**Heather-Dawn Small**

Heather-Dawn diligently served the world church as Women’s Ministries director for many years. She was supportive of helping women become involved in evangelism and assisting the church in outreach and community activities. Heather-Dawn was very focused, through the Lord’s guidance, in making a difference in the life of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church using the talents and dedication of women of the church.

Heather-Dawn helped shape Women’s Ministries over the past 18 plus years. She was committed to mission and sharing her wonderful Savior. She was a sister, mentor, and friend and leaves a legacy of service which will continue to be a positive influence on women around the world. We continue to pray for her family that they will be comforted in this time of loss. Heather-Dawn’s joy was infectious. She impacted everyone she met, and she left a hole in our hearts. We look forward to seeing her on the resurrection morning, when the pain, sickness, and separation caused by sin will be no more.

Heather-Dawn Small was not only a colleague of mine, but a friend. Her death was a shock to me as it was to each of you around the world. Heather-Dawn touched my life in many ways. We didn’t work together for very long time, but her knowledge and experience were very important in my life, as I learned and worked. She was always very generous, always thinking of what she could share with others. She often surprised us with gifts, such as new books, sticker packs, access to Bible journaling events (that she tried to attend while tending to the many other...
We will remember Heather-Dawn Small as a visionary leader dedicated to the Adventist Church and Jesus Christ as her personal Savior. Traveling around the world, she became a well-known and beloved church leader, passionate about making a difference in women’s lives, especially in the lives of young women. She was a faithful proponent of women’s education and a strong advocate against any form of violence against women, children, or other people. Heather-Dawn was very kind, loving, and creative. She purposefully chose JOY as a vector of her life and mentored others to be joyful workers in God’s vineyard. It is hard to believe that we won’t receive her letters always beginning with “Dear Sisters, joyful day!” and ending with “I thank my God every time I remember you…with joy” (Phil. 1:3). We look forward to that day when Jesus comes and wipes all tears from our eyes, and we will see her radiant smile again!”

Dr. Galina Stele
GC WM associate director

As I consider the life-changing, positive impact Heather-Dawn made on my life during the past six years, it is easy to recognize why she was my favorite boss. Working for Heather-Dawn was fun. I looked forward to coming to work and although we worked hard, we also laughed and enjoyed the day. And she encouraged our staff to work together as a team.

She coached me and explained her expectations. She patiently answered my questions and was always available if I needed help. She gave me praise when I succeeded and was quick to say thank you. Her words were encouraging and built my confidence. She gave me opportunities to grow and develop by giving me caring, honest feedback and introducing me to other talented people. She helped me discover what I wanted to do in the future and to make goals to achieve that end. As a role model, she mentored me in the skills and values of a great leader. The more I observed her, the more I aspired to be like her.

She cared about my life outside the office. She asked about my family, prayed for them, and remembered what was important to me. She was patient and understanding when I went through personally difficult times.

I’ve had many other bosses in my life, but it turns out that Heather-Dawn was a special, one-of-a-kind boss. I am grateful for these good years. Thank you kindly, Heather-Dawn. Love you.

Premila Pedapudi
GC WM administrative assistant

Heather-Dawn was thoughtful, creative, far too generous, and only a text message away. Although she loved traveling and being with her “sisters” around the world, she came home excited to be with us and to share her experiences. Her favorite part of returning to the office was our weekly worship and staff meeting.

We functioned as a small group, recording our praises and requests in journals, along with that week’s names of division WM staff for whom we prayed.

Heather-Dawn was already Bible journaling before I introduced her to Bible art journaling. It became the passion of her personal devotional life. She began teaching others how to worship God using this intimate and imaginative process.

I treasure our deep friendship and love, a relationship that far surpassed the typical supervisor and employee interaction. Now I look forward to being in heaven with her and worshiping Jesus in many artistic ways.

Rebecca Turner
GC WM editorial assistant

Meetings and responsibilities) or thinking of how to celebrate our birthdays. Her enthusiasm especially when traveling, and her focus on the word JOY, were inspiring.

She always encouraged her leaders to share their stories, experiences and even struggles and challenges, and how through it all they had known and felt God’s presence. She loved to preach about the names of God and what they meant to her. Her leadership style impacted the development of Women’s Ministries around the world as she encouraged women to become involved in the mission of the church.
MEMORIES BY WM DIVISION DIRECTORS

Akseniya Liberanskaya  
*Euro-Asia Division*  
*WM director*

I did not have a privilege to know Heather-Dawn for a long time, but I would like to say that her joy, cheerfulness, dedication, and openness captivated me from the first time I met her.

Dr. Debbie Maloba  
*East-Central Africa Division*  
*WM director*

In the hearts of Adventist women, young ladies, and leaders throughout ECD, the indelible mark of Heather-Dawn Small persists as an unwavering beacon of faith and love for God. Heather-Dawn, a dynamic and prayerful leader, has woven an extraordinary tapestry of legacy for our women, one that whispers of empowerment, spiritual guidance, and hope that knows no bounds.

Her positive impact echoes through numerous seminars held across various unions of our division. Heather-Dawn’s strong support for ECD’s evangelistic pursuits has been consistent. Heather-Dawn’s commitment extends beyond mere words, manifesting in tangible support for diverse women’s projects such as women’s literacy centers, women’s agriculture projects, women’s centers of influence, young ladies rescue centers, women’s kitchen centers, and many more.

Her warm heart embraced division leaders worldwide, showcasing a genuine connection that transcended borders. Despite her busy itinerary, Heather-Dawn always made time to share the gospel and instill joy (her favorite word). Our God, who knows our days, knows why it must be now that she rests. We acknowledge His divine plan and thank Him for Heather-Dawn’s ministry. In honoring Heather-Dawn, we uplift her courage, dedication, and profound concern for the divine work she undertook, a legacy engraved in our collective memory.

While waiting for the blessed hope, we will meet in the clouds when Jesus Christ comes for the second time. “We thank God for Heather-Dawn and her wholehearted service to Him and to His church,” attested Dr. Blasious Ruguri, president of ECD.

Edith Ruiz  
*Inter-American Division*  
*WM director*

We will always remember our beloved Heather-Dawn because of her smile, kindness, and leadership on behalf of women around the world. She left an imprint in my heart and in women across the world. Every one of her messages, words, hugs, smiles, and her energy were an inspiration. Those of us who were with her felt blessed by her ministry.

“We are losing a strong voice in the world church and IAD. She was a good preacher. Her words, her messages, her testimony, and her passion for the Lord will remain with us,” said Elie Henry, president of IAD.

Melba Dinorah Rivera  
*Former Inter-American Division*  
*WM director*

I had the privilege of working with Heather-Dawn from the beginning of her ministry as GC WM leader. I remember when she passed through our division headquarters on her way to the GC office. At the same time, I was beginning my tenure as WM leader for IAD. Together, we grew in our new positions of leadership.

She fought to empower women around the world to become spiritually, mentally, and physically strong, to bring forth an even better generation of women for the glory of God. Her passion and commitment were evident, and her love and zeal drove her to fight for their wellbeing.

Heather-Dawn was more than my leader. She was my friend. We enjoyed sharing ideas, and traveling together, and we could trust one another. What a great mentor! I can’t wait until we can hug, laugh, and tease each other again. Until then, I am trusting in God’s promises for her family and the rest of us who are still waiting for Jesus’ return.
Heather-Dawn Small

Heather-Dawn was a woman of God, devoted in service to God and the women of the church. She was kind and loving, with a strong personality, a great sense of humor, outgoing, outspoken, and an advocate for justice, especially in the matter of violence against the vulnerable. Heather-Dawn's sermons and devotions were very practical, always with a personal experience or story. That's what made her so approachable.

A sister, a mother, a friend, one of us.

“Joy” was the motto of her life, although she did not only experience joyful times, or perhaps precisely because of this. Many women saw themselves in her and were enriched and blessed. She shared how to maintain a personal relationship with God, especially in the busy lives of women. Her workshops in Bible art journaling were legendary and always well attended. In her prayers, she often addressed God lovingly as “Abba,” which made the prayers so intimate and personal.

Heather-Dawn was a great encourager and supporter who saw the potential in others and fostered it. She has empowered so many women and helped them to gain a deeper understanding of God’s love for them, me included. I am very grateful for having known her and worked with her. She will be terribly missed, but we will carry on her legacy.

With great sorrow I heard about the passing away of Heather-Dawn, our loved and much appreciated friend, mentor, motivator, and encourager.

I had the joy of traveling with her in most countries of Europe, in several states of the USA, in South Africa, and even in Australia. We managed many events together, and we spent much professional time and also private time together. I worked with her for 13 years: 5 years as leader of WM in Switzerland and 8 years as a WM director at EUD. Heather-Dawn was for me a great role model, she was my teacher, my partner, my supporter. It was a great privilege for me to share this part of life with her. She was very important for my formation and my professional life in the church until my retirement in 2018. I learnt so much from her, she also greatly influenced my spiritual life.

I will miss her in this world, and I am very much looking forward to meeting her again in heaven in good health, cancer-free, healthy knees, and without pain. What will remain is her joy and gift of friendship.

Goodbye, dear friend, Heather-Dawn.

May the Lord give comfort to her husband and children. Life will not be the same for any of us.

Dagmar Dorn
Inter-European Division
WM director

Heather-Dawn’s death has left a hole in our hearts. We were encouraged by her fearless spirit. We were supported by her voice in favor of the voiceless women. We were strengthened by her faith and blessed by her unique talents in leadership. We now feel so much poorer because of this tremendous loss, but her legacy will continue.

For me, Heather-Dawn was a friend in all times. I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve our sisters globally under her leadership for 21 years. She was a woman of faith and courage. A woman of wisdom always with a clear mind and a word of encouragement. A woman who taught me to never give up even when the circumstances were not favorable. A woman with a strong voice in favor of the voiceless women in the world. A woman who knew God personally and lived completely for Him.

I will miss her hugs, smiles, sermons, advice, journaling the Bible together, and her special presence and touch in my life.

Her legacy and footprint I will carry in my heart until I see her again when Jesus comes and takes us home.

Thank You, my dear friend, Heather-Dawn.

Jesus is coming soon.

Raquel Arrais
Northern Asia-Pacific Division
WM director and former GC WM associate director

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Denise Hochstrasser
Former Inter-European Division
WM director
Heather-Dawn Small

Erna Johnson
Former South Pacific Division
WM director

When I received the news about Heather-Dawn’s passing, I felt blessed that I had been in touch with her just a few days before she died. She was a good friend, and I treasure the trips we made together. Heather-Dawn’s devotion to our “sisters” was an inspiration to me throughout my ten years as WM director at SPD. We traveled to all the islands of the division together over those years, and I know the women of SPD will not forget her love for them. I feel so privileged for having worked with her. I look forward to the resurrection morning when Jesus comes back.

Dr. Danijela Schubert
Former South Pacific Division
leader for WM

I met Heather-Dawn in Brisbane during the women’s ministry conference that Erna Johnson, director of SPD WM, organized in 2012. Then I heard Erna speak highly of her as they traveled through SPD territory, especially in the South Pacific countries. I did not know then that I, too, would be working with Heather-Dawn as leader of women’s ministry in SPD.

Heather-Dawn welcomed me wholeheartedly and helped immensely to make sure I succeeded in the new role. She was very knowledgeable and very prompt in answering all my questions. Even after my work in that area was completed, we remained in contact, and she was still prompt in answering my questions and giving sound advice.

Heather-Dawn’s legacy has left a lasting impression on many, many women and men with whom she came in contact, either with her many speaking appointments throughout the world or leading through the administrative processes of the church. I look forward to meeting her again somewhere in eternity.

DeeAnn Bragaw
North American Division
WM director

Along with her family and the women of the entire world, the women of NAD mourn the loss of our friend, Heather-Dawn Small. Because of Heather-Dawn’s leadership, example, and dedication, we love Jesus more deeply. We are more committed to prayer. We have seen Jesus more clearly through Heather-Dawn’s example of time in the Word of God. She inspired us to become more joy-filled, faithful disciples, to stand up and speak up and show up for the marginalized. Heather-Dawn left a legacy of committed excellence to the work God placed before her. Though dealing with personal pain, she sought to relieve the pain of others. Time and time again she led by example. “Be joyful, my sisters...” was always on her lips. We are better women for having had Heather-Dawn in our lives, and we commit ourselves to carrying forward her legacy of faith and joyful service until Jesus comes.

Jeanete Lima
South American Division
WM director

Seventh-day Adventist women of SAD appreciate the legacy of faith, the life of service, and the passion for the salvation of souls that Heather-Dawn left us. Many hearts were impacted with her strong, inspiring, and spiritual leadership. We are committed to the mission and will work diligently, following Heather-Dawn’s example, to reach our world. Thus, we can hug her soon.

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Heather-Dawn’s desire to visit IOUC was evident from the start although it did not materialize in 2013 or 2018. Despite challenges, including her unfortunate illness during one of her African trips, our paths continued to cross at various GC annual meetings.

After I was elected as WM director at SID, Sister Heather-Dawn expressed her longstanding wish to visit the IOUC. Praise the Lord, this dream became a reality in July and August 2022 when Heather-Dawn graced Mauritius and Seychelles with her presence. During our three weeks together, I had the privilege of truly getting to know her.

When Heather-Dawn and her husband, Pastor Joseph Small, visited Mauritius and Seychelles in 2022, I witnessed first-hand her passion for mission and her fervent desire to empower women. In Seychelles, she even took the opportunity to meet with the President of the Republic, expressing her hopes for positive change in the lives of women regarding domestic violence and drug-related issues. In Mauritius, Heather-Dawn and Joe met my siblings, and we shared some cherished moments.

Sister Heather-Dawn was dearly loved within our division. Her many visits to SID during the 22 years at the GC created a profound impact on the lives of many women in our division who were immensely proud to call her a leader and a friend. Her dedication to mission and women’s empowerment touched the hearts of countless individuals. The outpouring of condolences from numerous individuals within our division is a testament to the deep admiration and respect they held for her.

She had a positive influence in our SID community.

Heather-Dawn was a hero and a mother to us all. Her legacy of love, mission, and advocacy for women’s empowerment will forever inspire us. We are grateful for the moments shared, and we will dearly miss her.
Heather-Dawn Small

Dr. Omobonike Adeola Sessou
West-Central Africa Division
WM director

Heather-Dawn was a mother in Israel, a woman of value, a great mentor, loving and accommodating, prayerful, and always seeking for the good of all women. In this acrostic of her name, her unique qualities are highlighted:

H: Happy
E: Elegant
A: Always in service for God
T: Teacher of righteousness
H: Hopeful
E: Enemy of injustice and the abuse of women
R: Respectful
D: Daring for the Lord
A: Affectionate
W: Willing to sacrifice for others
N: Never discouraged

Women of WAD greatly miss Heather-Dawn, but we are hopeful to meet her when Christ comes. Our deep and sincere condolences to the family she left behind, especially her husband, Pastor Joe, her children, and all Adventist women worldwide who mourn for her.

Karen Holford
Trans-European Division
WM director

I was deeply saddened when I heard that Heather-Dawn Small was very ill with cancer, and shocked by the swiftness of her death. Her passing is a huge loss for Women’s Ministries. She was loved by so many people around the world who were touched by many years of her creative and joyful ministry.

Heather-Dawn came to England in June 2023, and we had three wonderful weeks as she ministered to women in North East London, Brixton, and Dudley. She had a strong faith, a loving heart for each woman she met, a powerful testimony, and a focus on gratitude and joy. As we explored London for a day with our husbands, and then ministered together in various places, she shared her wisdom and creativity with me. It was clear that she wanted to encourage and inspire each person she met, male or female, and to scatter love and joy along the pathway, wherever the Lord took her.

Heather-Dawn has left many memories in the hearts of all those she met. I know that although the world is a little emptier because she is no longer with us, her positive influence will be remembered, and it will continue to bless all those who were touched and inspired by her faith and influence. We look forward to the day when we will meet Heather-Dawn again, knowing that she will continue to share her infectious joy and gratitude with others throughout eternity.

Amal Fawzy
Middle East and North Africa Union
Mission WM director

With heavy hearts we reflect on the profound influence Heather-Dawn had on the lives of those she led. Her leadership extended beyond mere guidance; it was akin to a mother’s nurturing love, gently guiding each member like a caring hand teaching her children. Heather-Dawn was a loving and compassionate leader. When I was new in the ministry, she was teaching me like a mother who holds her baby’s hand to teach her how to stand, how to take her first steps, and how to walk.

Her boundless compassion touched everyone as she treated each one with a special kindness. She always spoke from her heart, and that is why her messages reached the hearts of women. Heather-Dawn was a joy-giver and she worked very hard not to allow anyone or anything to steal her joy by always seeking God in prayer. Even when the trial was great and difficult to bear, she accepted God’s will with joy and peace. She was a loving mother, dear sister, sincere friend, inspiring leader, and a faithful daughter of God. She was assured that God knew her name as well as she knew His name, and she faithfully shared this with her “sisters.”

Though she has departed this earthly journey, the legacy of her love and faith lives on. Grateful and full of love, we remember her, privileged to have been part of her remarkable journey. We have a great hope in the soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and look forward to seeing and hugging her on that glorious day.
GC Session 2022 with WM division directors

Heather-Dawn Small with WM division directors

Debbie Maloba and Heather-Dawn at ECD WM Leadership Certification graduation

WM Departmental Advisory, 2016

WM Advisory prayer circle, 2016

Heather-Dawn with women attending ECD women’s congress
Heather-Dawn with ECD WM directors

Heather-Dawn and Dagmar Dorn, EUD

Akseniya Liberanskaya, ESD, and Heather-Dawn

Edith Ruiz, IAD, and Heather-Dawn

IAD Congress in Southeast Mexico with almost 2,000 women
Heather-Dawn, Erna Johnson, and the mission plane in Papua New Guinea

Omobonike Sessou (left) and Heather-Dawn at WAD WM Leadership Certification graduation

Erna (left) in SPD with Kiribati’s Cabinet Minister for Women and Heather-Dawn

Nilde Itin (former GC WM associate), Pastor Joseph Small, Heather-Dawn, and Amal Fawzy, MENAUM

Erna (left) with SPD scholarship recipient in Fiji and Heather-Dawn

Amal translating for Heather-Dawn in Lebanon

Omobonike (left) with the first lady of the Republic of Central Africa and Heather-Dawn.

Amal with Heather-Dawn and a camel at the Pyramids
FOR YOUR INFORMATION
The link for our website page is:

WOMEN’S MINISTRIES MEMORIES
Inter-European Division

Southern Asia-Pacific Division
https://adventistreview.org/commentary/southern-asia-pacific-division-remembers-late-womens-ministries-leader/

British Union Conference

OBITUARIES AND NEWS:
Adventist News Network

Adventist Review News with recent Inter-American Division memories