

## **SOCIAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT**

**Anna-Mari Laine - World Director**

I would like to introduce myself. Also, I tell you something about certain “social service visions” that have been a great, great joy to me.

I live in the southern part of Finland. The nearest town is Hämeenlinna. This is a small village, where peace prevails in the countryside, forests, and lakes. I retired in 2015 after working as a teacher who taught different languages. When my husband and I lived in another town, Seinäjoki, from 1976 – 1991, I taught in a health care college and in a vocational school. Here in Hämeenlinna since 1993, I had mostly adult students with special needs like asthma, diabetes, vision deterioration, problems with hearing, difficulties in moving etc. I had language courses for the prisoners in the closed prison and the staff in department stores as well. During my last three years I worked with younger students: mentally retarded, FASD, ADHD, AUTISM, Asperger’s Syndrome, Down Syndrome, Epilepsy, or a mixture of these. I suffer from epilepsy so I felt I belonged to this group.

I have enjoyed and been thankful for many kinds of work God has allowed me to have. But my heart and my husband’s heart beat for the parable of the GOOD SAMARITAN ( Luke 10 ). Our hearts beat for roads, highways, people who travel there and how you can use different vehicles. Why? When Jesus found us, he changed our hearts. We cannot pass those people who need help on highways.

My husband can repair cars. We equipped our vehicle with some tools and spare parts. If somebody’s car is broken or the person for some other reason has had to stop, we stop to help. My husband starts to repair the car and I serve coffee and something to eat to refresh the desperate passengers. When people ask us why we are doing this, we tell them about God’s great love to us and all the people on earth and what Jesus has done for us. Sometimes we give spiritual material. It has resulted in many interesting, wonderful stories! Now days people have mobile phones and there are effective road services so our help is not needed so often.

In 1991 we were invited to Austria and we worked for the international Christian missionary organization OM over a year. My husband still was repairing and maintaining cars, trucks, and different machines the Centre has. They took outreach teams, aid, and books to different Eastern European countries. I still was making coffee and tea and helping in the kitchen and serving the staff and passers-by. The passers-by were mostly Christians from different countries who stopped in Vienna when taking aid to some eastern European countries.

After that time, 1992 – 1993, we returned to Finland. We went on working for OM here in Finland. Together with some friends of ours we collected aid and financial support to be a helping hand in Romania, Moldova and Slovakia. We sent three trucks full of furniture, lamps, curtains, building material, lumber, agricultural machines, children’s clothes, etc.

The great vision we had for years became true during the last ten years. My husband and I have remodeled, and partly rebuilt two library buses which are used to serve in certain eastern European countries all the time. They belong to Finland OM and are moving in Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Ukraine. In the bus the local churches and groups sell and give good literature. Sometimes they have a hairdresser, a dentist or a nurse in the bus taking care of people in small villages. Many people can’t afford the basic health services. There are youngsters singing and playing with kids. Inside the bus they show films, have puppet shows, serve tea and cookies. Of course this is a big project. To be able to buy the second bus, OM received a donation from the USA. We need many other people to share the vision with us.

To remodel, partly rebuild and design the interior part of this kind of bus takes about 1000 hours. My husband works and I help when needed. On the Net you can read more. (bus4life.org)

Let's be faithful servants! WITH GOD'S HELP we are changing the world.

God bless your work and social service vision and your work and social service visions you share with the other sisters!

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### SOCIAL SERVICE PROJECTS

I would like to thank my predecessor, Hyun Sook Lee, for her wonderful ideas, suggestions, and work to provide us with good tools and new visions to serve better and more effectively those who are neglected and are suffering for different reasons. When I read her beautiful text, I could summarize it: PRAY, LOVE, BE INVENTIVE AND CREATIVE AND BE WILLING AND READY TO SERVE.

There is a huge problem touching nearly all the countries in the world. We have **refugees** all over the world. More and more people must leave their own countries. Last year over 30,000 refugees from different countries came to Finland. First of all we must pray for them. We can also ask God if He wants to use me, our Chapter, us nationally to serve them. In Helsinki, Finland White Ribbon sisters taught Finnish to immigrants and refugees for a couple of years. When our Chapter had a meeting, we had a Spanish evangelist as a visitor. We invited refugees, most of them from Iraq. All the young men were genuinely interested in Jesus and Christianity. They were so fun, open, lively and eager to discuss things with that Spanish evangelist. We sisters were serving them with coffee and cakes, but maybe they were serving us even more by showing their gratitude and opening our Christian eyes to see, how miraculous our humble Jesus Christ really is. When I was at church, I was asked to translate from Finnish into English for six refugees. I learned to know them. Later I gave two blankets to one of them. We have free education and free lunches for pupils at school, a good health care system, and language courses organized by the State.

In all countries, richer and poorer refugees need friends and Christian love. But let's not forget those Christians who live in very difficult circumstances in countries where Christianity is forbidden. I personally want to support a Christian Organization that supports and helps persecuted Christians and all the refugee groups some very poor countries have taken. As Hyun Sook says, we are willing to help, to serve, to love all - having respect for all religions, all races, all people God wants to give to us near and far away. I would be especially interested in knowing what kind of visions, smaller and bigger jobs and serving you or your sisters are doing among refugees in your country. Do you have refugees?

One increasing problem in the world is **human trafficking**. We cannot close our eyes to it. We must pray for the victims. Surely God is very, very sad and angry with this kind of destructive activity. A friend of ours, who works with these victims in Austria, wrote: "On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September in 2016 the authorities in Kärnten, southern Austria, did a raid on 7 brothels and 25 apartments. In the process they discovered 17 underage girls from China and Romania working there. These 17 girls have been set free from their captors. It was the answer to many prayers that the authorities are doing something. Let's not give up praying." A Swedish lady uses her talents to give sewing classes to the girls rescued from the snares of human trafficking. The work is very demanding. The sewing class girls were so happy when they received an order for 300 bags that need to be made before Christmas. While it is a Praise the Lord, it is also a great challenge! These sewing classes are being used to demonstrate so many valuable things to these precious

girls. Those near them see the impact already in their lives. If you have good news like this concerning human trafficking, I would like to know.

Our members in WWCTU have so **many talents**. Taru, our music therapist in Finland White Ribbon, is using her therapeutic music and gentle touch in order to bring joy and show caring to many people, including elderly and mentally retarded people. I would be interested in what kind of talents you and your sisters have for serving.

**Visitations** are one of those traditional and important ministries in the Social Service Department. The visitation may last for a short moment, but it may be of great importance to a prisoner, a person in a hospital or a nursing home. Being inventive means that you may delight that person with something EXTRA like flowers, small gifts, cards, bananas, apples, Christian books, a beautiful song . . . to show you are praying and you do care. Do it with your whole heart. God can touch him or her with His Heavenly hug. Our Chapter donates Christmas cards with stamps on them to prisoners so that they can send the cards to their dear ones. Two sisters are good at drawing and painting and they make very beautiful postcards themselves. In addition to that we donated two guitars. They liked that present because music is a comfort to many in their lonely cells. We have also donated music DVDs and books in different languages to prisons so that the prisoners can borrow them. One Chapter in Finland gives scholarships to hardworking, successful prisoners. This kind of appreciation and love has meant a lot to them. Very often we visit nursing homes and prisons as a group of sisters and we can create a warm highlight moment to those in prisons or nursing homes. It is important we have enough time for chatting. Bringing a good cake, singing together, and possibly pray to create an atmosphere of respect and love. What kind of small visitation ideas do you have in your country? It would be nice to get some more!

Depression, emptiness, drugs, and family problems are increasingly present now days. You can be an important **listener**. All of us can do it, if we do care. In two of our Chapters they have had weekly "cafeterias" making it possible for different people to pop in and the sisters serve, help, and listen. If we cannot help someone, let`s not reject that person! We can help him or her to find some professional help. That`s why it is important to have good teaching and lecturers to visit our chapters so that we ourselves have more and more knowledge, information, and contacts in order to become better and better helpers.

Hyun Sook wrote about the importance of **WATER**, the right, moderate, and thankful way of using it daily. We here in Finland, in the country of thousands of lakes and pure water everywhere, must remember that, too. I would like to add that we can always correct or change our habits of living a bit.

As Christians we want to be good examples. I interviewed a retired couple, who **pick up garbage** in streets every day. They are a Christian couple and they have picked up thousands and thousands of cigarette butts, and other garbage. I never before had picked up garbage other people had thrown down. Now my husband and I follow their example and when jogging or walking, we take a plastic bag with us and make roads and ditches beautiful. In addition, I am going to send that White Ribbon magazine with the interview to our county manager and suggest that he encourage all people in this county to use wastepaper baskets, garbage cans and special cigarette dishes. The county authorities should provide all the necessary places for them. Clean, tidy surroundings are a joy to us and to tourists! But above all we can see and feel the value of the beautiful nature God has created for us. Among cigarette butts and dirty papers it is difficult to praise God and be Heavenly touched. Even very small changes matter. Have you changed any habit or attitude of yours lately?

