“Standing with Our Sisters”

Southern Province Kicks-off Campaign for the Unity Women’s Desk

 As soon as the Christmas holidays were over, the Special Events Sub-committee of the Unity Women’s Desk (UWD) “Standing with Our Sisters” campaign met to begin working in earnest on a special kick-off event to announce the capital fund drive for the UWD. We wanted it to coincide with the International Women’s Day Celebration being planned for Winston-Salem on March 8; however, we did not want to interfere with the Day of Prayer services which are held each Wednesday in Lent. The date, March 12, was finally decided upon to be the best day, and Fairview Moravian Church graciously agreed to host the event then.

 Under the direction of Sr. Cynthia Tesh, chair of the Special Events Sub-committee, small groups of women began making twelve tri-fold posters to tell the story of what the UWD does and where we do it. Sr. Ann Radford, co-chair of the Home Moravian Albania Task Force, was asked to bring a wheel barrow full of the foods that are provided each month for residents of Bathore, Albania. Somehow she was recruited to help with the posters as well. Sr. Elizabeth Geis Johnson of Salem Kitchen, a local gourmet catering and take-out business, using Br. Daniel Crews’ *Around the World: Unity Cookbook,* began experimenting with recipes found therein. Brochures and invitations were designed to publicize the event in the Southern Province churches. A worship service was planned. Sisters Carol and Sandra Gray were asked to provide special music for the day, along with Sr. Norma Nifong, accompaniest. Sr. June Edwards was asked to compose a special song for the event. Sr. Laura Watson, of the Moravian Ministries Foundation of America, began assembling all relevant information that could be given to everyone who attended.

 All seemed to be going very well until the week before March 12. A major snowstorm was forecast for our area with four-to-six inches predicted—a major snowstorm for our area! We waited and watched the news, hoping for the best but prepared to call off the event the day before it was to happen. What to do in the midst of Lent? No other Sundays were available to the area where the largest Moravian Easter Sunrise service takes place—band practices, days of prayer, special study groups, etc. were filling all the available Sundays for weeks to come.

 The Saturday before the event came with mild temperatures and unspecific forecasts. We decided not to cancel as the snow was supposed to be over by daybreak and Fairview had a good snow-clearing crew. Were we ever glad for that decision! It turned out to be a lovely day with warm temperatures and plenty of sunshine and not a flake of snow.

 We had a good turn-out of very interested people who wanted to know more about the work the UWD is doing. The posters were very informative and the food was excellent and plentiful—the best rice and beans ever, smoked salmon canapes (made with salmon brought from Alaska by Sr.Helen Gulledge), samozas, watermelon and pineapple, Sisters’ Kisses, and coconut balls (which proved so popular that Sr. Johnson is considering adding them to her catering menu!). There was also plenty of Salem Kitchen Tea, Salem Kitchen Cheese Straws, and Mrs. Hanes’ Cookies—all Southern Province favorites! To help people better understand how difficult it is not to have running water, there was even an opportunity to see what it is like to have to carry five gallons of water in plastic milk jugs on a broomstick across one’s shoulders or in a plastic 5-gallon pail balanced on one’s head.

 The response to the program was overwhelming. For some people it was the first time they had known exactly what the UWD does. For others, it was an opportunity to see how far we’ve come in the six years since the UWD was started. Many were inspired to learn how many girls and women were being helped by the UWD. Sr. Patty Garner gave a brief history of the UWD and a recounting of the women and girls we have helped. Perhaps the highlight of the day was Sr. Sallie Greenfield’s story of her mother going to Nicaragua as a young woman and how that had created a life-long desire to be a part of Moravian missions in her. When Sallie thought that perhaps she was past the stage of life when it was important to continue to be involved, the mission of the UWD spoke to her and told her that this was important and that she needed to be a part of it (in fact she is a member of the Advisory Board of the UWD and is also the co-chair of the capital campaign). Dr. Phil McKinley, the other co-chair, was in-between medical mission trips to Haiti and Cuba so we had to video his appeal to the assembly.

 All in all the day was a great success. People in the Southern Province are excited about the ways in which they can help and gifts both large and small are coming in already, even though the Province-wide appeal will not be made until September. We hope to raise $250,000.00 that will be used to continue to offer scholarships, micro-loans, and project support to women around the world, to continue to hold Consultations every seven years for gathering women from around the world to evaluate what we are doing and set direction for the years to come, and to employ a coordinator after Sr. Garner retires (again).

 The Unity Board has encouraged every Province and Mission Province to find ways to support the work of the UWD, which helps women in every Province, Mission Province, and Mission Area. A capital fund drive, investing in the greatest “capital” the church has, our women, was the way chosen by the Southern Province. We hope that other Provinces will follow suite or incorporate the UWD into their annual budgets or whatever ways work best in their areas. We pray for the Lord to continue to bless the work of the UWD as we seek to improve the lives of Moravian women everywhere.