



The Adventist Woman

The Journal of the Association of Adventist Women

Three Women Elected to Top Positions in Adventist Church

By Nicole Batten



Ella Simmons



Rosa T. Banks



Daisy Orion

At the 58th Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, three women were voted into senior positions in the world church. Dr. Ella Simmons, former provost and vice president at La Sierra University, was elected as a general vice president for the world church. Dr. Rosa T. Banks, director of human relations for the church in North America, was elected associate secretary. Daisy Orion, veteran global mission coordinator, was elected an associate treasurer.

Simmons is the first woman to be elected as a general vice president for the world church. Dr. Peter Landless, associate director for the General Conference Health Ministries department, said, "This should have happened a long time ago. I know including women in leadership is easier said than done. Cultural issues around the world often prevent it."

Jim Cress, secretary of the world church's Ministerial Association, says, "We are more open to women in leadership and we need to be. By including more women in leadership we are affirming that 70 percent of the church is one gender and we have not been representative. This is the first major step we've taken in the past 12 years."

Simmons, 57, is a mother and grandmother who spent the past year traveling after leaving her post at La Sierra University. "I love spending time with my family; however, God has called me out of my comfort zone and I had no choice but to accept," said Simmons.

Simmons's main responsibility in her new leadership role will be in the area of education. She has an extensive background in this area, including her term at La Sierra University, as well as serving as vice president for academic affairs at Oakwood College in Alabama, associate dean at the University of

"The church as an organization cannot be efficient until it allows all people to contribute in ways God called them to contribute."

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Message from the President

Highlights from the AAW Conference and GC Session



Verla Michel Kwiram

The 2005 AAW Conference in St. Louis was a time of intimate solidarity. My experiences began when Alvin and I met the Woman-of-the-Year Award (WOYA) recipients at the airport—already old friends after months of correspondence.

Our first appointment was at the West County Church in St. Louis on Sabbath, where Mary Schwantes had arranged for four of the WOYA recipients

and me to speak for the mission spotlight. Little did we know that we would be presenting to an array of General Conference, Division, and Union officials who were in the congregation. After church we shared potluck lunch together and engaged in conversations about the needs of women in the church.

Some of the highlights from the conference itself include the vitality and enthusiasm exhibited by the six honorees that infected the entire conference. Each of the honorees gave moving accounts of their work. Also due to the distinguished presenters, many attendees became aware for the first time of the recognized work of women in Adventism and of new possibilities in reading the biblical text.

Another highlight from the conference was the presentation of the Champion of Justice Award to Charles Bradford Jr.—a tribute for his tireless commitment to breaking down barriers dividing the body of Christ and his unwavering support for women and their leadership.

Following the conference several attendees went directly to participate in the work of the General Conference Nominating Committee. Reports indicate that they spoke effectively about the need to place women in executive roles in the church. The General Conference president, Jan Paulsen, showed powerful leadership by telling the Nominating Committee, “I want a woman vice president *now*.” After this request, Dr. Ella Simmons was elected vice president of the General Conference. This will prove to be a defining act in Dr. Paulsen’s ministry.

During the General Conference Session, AAW shared a booth with TEAM in the exhibition area. The impact of the Woman-of-the-Year awardees became obvious as various television programmers sought them out for interviews. The awardees also used the time to network with those who can offer assistance for their various projects.

I also want to mention the special bond formed between Karen Kotoske, executive director and founder of Amistad International, and several of the awardees (see the article on page 5).

Thank you to all those who helped make this year’s conference a success.

Best wishes in the new year!

Verla Michel Kwiram
AAW President

Comments from Readers

Thank you for the lovely informative Web site. I found the AAW Web site after receiving an e-mail from Verla Kwiram, whom I’d spoken to at the WWC Alumni weekend. I have enjoyed very much three AAW/Women and the Word Conferences in the past and wish I could have been there this year.

Challis Casebolt Fry, Salem, Oregon

I am persuaded that God’s work is going fast and Jesus is coming very soon. That is what AAW is all about—serving the Lord, helping “the least of these,” and giving people the gift of freedom from guilt and shame through Jesus. God keep and bless you all!

Hazel Clarneau, College Place, Washington

How to Use the Adventist Archives for Research

By Bert Haloviak

The Web site for the Adventist Archives, www.adventistarchives.org, is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in doing research on Adventist history.

Once you enter their Web page you will notice a free download called DJVU on the right side of the page. This facilitates the downloading of the huge volume of documents listed on the left side of the page. For instance, assume you want to call up issues of the *Adventist Review* from 1850 to 1982. Just click on the *Adventist Review* and they will all be visible. Or you want to find out when a particular name first appeared in the *Adventist Review*; just place the name in the window at the top and hit the return button. (Note that if you are using more than one name in the window you should place quotation marks around the phrase). You will immediately be taken to the *Adventist Review* issues where the name appears. Once you click onto the page where the name appears, you will notice a binocular device at the top. By typing in the chosen name again, it will take you to the particular place on that page where the name appears.

Jeremy Mays Leaves AAW

Jeremy Mays, the graphic designer for *The Adventist Woman*, is leaving AAW to go back to school to complete a master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. "We appreciate all of Jeremy's creativity and dedicated work on the newsletter and the Web site" says Verla Michel Kwiram, AAW president. His contributions have been enormous.



Jeremy Mays

Mays redesigned *The Adventist Woman* and worked with William Nordgren to bring the AAW Web site into being in 2004. He also designed the new AAW logo and was responsible for the design of AAW's stationary and annual conference publications, such as the Woman-of-the-Year booklet.

Mays says, "The most important thing I'm taking with me from my time on AAW projects is an in-depth appreciation for AAW and its goals for women around the world. The organization pursues these goals in a dedicated manner, demonstrating both hope for change and serious intentions of promoting it. I appreciate the opportunity of being a part of that."

Mays graduated from Walla Walla College with a degree in graphic design. Previously he was working in the Seattle area as a freelance graphic artist and Web designer. He and his wife, Stephanie, have two children. Together, they share a passion for God, church, outdoor sports and travel.

When asked why he was changing careers, Mays said he found graphic design to be fairly solitary work. Mays says he enjoys being around people and decided to move towards a career that would incorporate that.

Bruce Fenner, a graphic designer for Pacific Press in Nampa, Idaho, will be taking over as the new designer of *The Adventist Woman*. Fenner is married to Letty and they have two children. AW



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Louisville, Kentucky School of Education, and chair of the department of education in the College of Applied Sciences at Kentucky State University. Simmons received her doctorate in education from the University of Louisville and a master's degree from Andrews University in Michigan.

With her background in both Christian and public education, Simmons has a unique view of Adventist education. "I see education as a mission—a call from God. While I firmly believe in Adventist education the reality is that there are large numbers of Adventist students outside that arena." Simmons hopes to focus on the "broader goal of salvation for all our children."

Simmons also realizes that she is paving the way for other women and serving as a role model in her new capacity. Simmons said, "The church as an organization cannot be efficient until it allows all people to contribute in ways God called them to contribute. I think the church is taking a step in the right direction."

When the world church president said he wanted session delegates to vote on Simmons becoming a vice president, there was surprise. According to *Spectrum* magazine, Paulsen's idea wasn't immediately embraced. Nonetheless, Simmons says she takes comfort in the fact that men and women from a variety of cultures and nations elected her.

Banks, a woman with a long track record of firsts, including first female vice president at Oakwood College, first female officer in the church in North America, and first female field secretary for the world church, says, "As a pioneer, it is good to see this pass. I'm filled with joy not only about my election, but Ella's and Daisy's as well."

Banks, who has a master's and doctorate degree from the University of Pennsylvania in Pittsburgh, is one of the founding members who helped organize the department of Women's Ministry for the world church. She is known for working to get more women involved in church leadership. "This is a new day for the church and for the many women who have fought, formed committees, and prayed," says Banks. In a challenge to women to become more involved in church leadership, Banks said, "How will we learn if we don't take that step?" AW

Adventist Church Represented at United Nations Status of Women Meetings

Heather-Dawn Small, the new director of Women's Ministries for the world church, attended the 49th Conference of the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) held at the United Nations headquarters in Manhattan, New York, this past March. It is the first time in 10 years that the Adventist church has been represented at these meetings.

In attendance at this conference were 10,000 women from around the world. Six thousand of these women represented 1,000 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), many of which submitted statements on behalf of their organizations. Small presented a statement on behalf of the Adventist church, stating "as a faith community...the Adventist Church wholeheartedly supports all efforts to improve the quality of life of women...and will continue to actively work through its congregations, institutions, and organizations to collaboratively achieve these objectives."



Heather-Dawn Small

“There are times when it seems the church is so insulated and isolated from the outside world that we forget that the problems of the world are the problems of the church.”

As part of the statement, Small presented a challenge to the United Nations and the represented NGOs to “develop concrete action plans for empowering today’s women and girls, and to work in partnerships with local governments and institutions.”

Small said, “I was thrilled to have the opportunity to meet with some of these women, to network with them on issues we have in common, and to share with them what the Adventist church is doing to help women. We share many of the same concerns, including the challenges of HIV/AIDS, poverty, abuse, lack of education and training, the need for mentoring young women, women’s workloads, and women’s health needs, as well as gender equality.”

Small hopes to maintain the church’s connection with the Committee on the Status of Women in order to stay informed about the needs of women in communities around the world.

Small says, “This in turn will help us to plan and implement more effective outreach programs.”

For a full transcript of the statement that Small presented at the Committee on the Status of Women, visit the Women’s Ministries Web site at <http://wm.gc.adventist.org>.

Small was formerly the assistant director for women’s ministries at the General Conference. Prior to coming the General Conference in 2001, she was the Children’s and Women’s Ministries director for the Caribbean Union Conference. She is married to Pastor Joseph Small and has two children. **AW**

Women and the Word Conference Held in South Pacific

Women in the South Pacific were encouraged to think beyond stereotypes and reach their potential despite living in a gender-biased culture during the first “Women and the Word” conference, held in Sydney, Australia, the weekend of August 13.

“Throughout history, women have been made to feel inferior and were not always allowed or able to reach their full God-given potential,” says Joy Butler, director for Women’s Ministries in the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. “We wanted to draw attention to what Christianity and the Bible really say about women and their potential. We want women to know they

are chosen by God to be proclaimers of truth.”

The conference, held at Sydney Adventist Hospital, was jointly organized by the Women’s Ministries department and Avondale College. It attracted 100 people—both women and men—from as far away as Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Speakers and workshops explored topics ranging from connecting with God, understanding Old Testament representations of women, to condescending attitudes toward women throughout history that have shaped today’s values. Attendee Beatrice Kemo says, “This conference helped me learn about the relationships women had with Jesus and draw close to God. I hope to use my experiences here to empower other women.” **AW**

Source: South Pacific Record

Help Alice Ouma and the NYALWODEP project

Listed below are needs that Alice sent us for her NYALWODEP project. Your assistance will make a difference in the lives of these women and children.

1. Two more classrooms for pupils. Currently, there are 82 orphan children in one classroom and a small office. The two classrooms will cost about US \$16,000.

2. The widows of Nyalgunga have tailoring and weaving classes. There is no workshop for them. They need a workshop which could also serve as a seminar hall. This will cost approximately US \$10,000.

3. The orphans who have finished primary school are unable to go on to secondary school due to a lack of money for school fees. One year of secondary school costs US \$600 per student. Currently, there are four girls and three boys needing to attend secondary school next year.

4. NYALWODEP needs a dispensary or a pharmacy where we can stock necessary medicines.

5. NYALWODEP also needs a generator. Quite often educational films on AIDS are used as teaching aids, as well as films and pictures about Christ. The generator costs US \$3,000.

Donations to NYALWODEP can be made through AAW.

AAW Sponsors Booth at GC Session 2005



The Association of Adventist Women shared a booth at the General Conference Session this summer with TEAM. Demetra Andreasen, Gillian Geraty, Madeline Johnston, Patricia Habada, Beverly Habada, Paul Habada, Penny Miller, Laura Milleson, Verla Kwiram, and Alvin Kwiram helped staff the booth.

Copies of *The Adventist Woman* and a one-page introduction to AAW were distributed to those who visited the booth. In addition, thanks to Madeline Johnston, bound reprints of *Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: James White, Uriah Smith, and the "Triumphant Vindication of the Right of the Sisters" to Preach*, by Beverly Beem and Ginger Harwood, were made available at the booth. Visitors were also able to obtain a DVD of the 2005 WOYA recipients for a donation.

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Karen Kotoske

AAW Member Inspired to Help WOYA Nominees

By Nicole Batten and Heidi Brenner Hayatgheyb

Karen Kotoske, executive director and founder of Amistad International, was so moved by the presentations of the 2005 Woman-of-the-Year Award (WOYA) recipients that she decided to help support some of their projects. "I was deeply moved by the excellent international choices made for this year's candidates. As founder and director of Amistad, I always have my antennae out looking for indigenous women (or volunteering women from other countries) who are successfully implementing sustainable projects among areas of the planet which are often ignored or forgotten about by 'the haves,'" says Kotoske.

One major project Kotoske and her organization, Amistad International, got involved with was Alice Ouma's Nyalgunga Widows and Orphans Development and Education Project (NYALWODEP). Located in the village of Nyalgunga in western Kenya, an area primarily inhabited by the Luo tribe, Ouma is making a difference in the lives of the local widows and orphans, who lead very difficult lives due to the tribe's deeply rooted customs and cultural practices, such as their "wife-inheritance" tradition.

Kotoske has joined Ouma in her struggle to save the lives and dignity of Luo AIDS widows and orphans by helping to complete a widow's duplex. The widow's duplex is a place of refuge for widows in crisis, such as those who are very ill and need care, or those who have been newly "chased from homes." In addition, Amistad International provided funds to Ouma's NYALWODEP project to purchase a large water tank and a Toyota AE100 for transporting sick widows to the hospital for treatment. (The Green Lake Church in Seattle also raised an additional \$2,500 to supplement Amistad's grant so they could buy

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AAW Honors Achievement, Looks to Future

By Kit Watts

Seeking to open gates that will allow women to fully participate in the life of the church, a band of 75 intrepid women and men gathered at the foot of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Mo., for the 23rd annual conference of the Association of Adventist Women (AAW).



The conference, June 26-29, 2005, preceded the General Conference Session.

Aware of the daunting challenges that women often face, AAW honored six Woman-of-the-Year Award recipients. "Together they have transcended barriers of culture, religion, war, disease, and misunderstanding to make an astounding difference for others," said Verla Michel Kwiram, AAW president.

Esther Díaz de Guerrero orchestrates the education of pastors as dean of the Cuban Adventist Seminary. Jeanette "Ginn" Fourie courageously forgave men who murdered her daughter and forged an audacious alliance with them for peace and understanding in South Africa. From Australia, Helen Hall has for 23 years been a self-supporting missionary educating Karen refugee children caught in the crossfire of border disputes between Burma and Thailand.

With little money but great faith, Alice Owuocha Ouma of Kenya provides a city of refuge for about 72 orphans and 50 women widowed by AIDs. Ardis Stenbakken, who joined GC Women's Ministries in 1994, has empowered Adventist women around the world in evangelism and literacy and has consistently advocated for women at the highest levels of church leadership. Born into a Chinese Buddhist family, Siriporn Tantipoonwinai became a nurse and an Adventist, and today serves as



president of Mission College, the senior higher education institution for the Southeast Asian Union, and an international educational consultant.

Eager that the church and women prepare for the future, AAW assembled a group of scholars to re-examine Scripture and Adventist history. "The Bible has often been used to limit and discredit women's contributions, but is that a faithful reading of Scripture?" Kwiram asked.

Phyllis Tribble, world-renowned Old Testament scholar, presented a study of Genesis 1-3, "In the Garden with Eve and Adam—Again for the First Time." Sociologist Laura Vance traced 150 years of Adventist views of gender issues in her doctoral research.

Beverly Beem, professor of English at Walla Walla College, and Ginger Hanks Harwood, associate professor of religious and theological studies at La Sierra, presented their newly minted research on early

Adventists' very favorable attitudes toward women, an article just published in *Andrews University Seminary Studies*.

And Olive Hemmings, on the faculty of religion at Columbia Union College, disclosed her findings on why church leaders have resisted ordaining women pastors.

Recognizing that some Adventist men have valiantly sought to open doors that previously were closed to women, AAW presented a Champion-of-Justice Award to Charles Bradford Jr., former president of the North American Division. As a guest speaker Bradford presented a sermon: "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? The God of the Inclusion." **AW**



(Photo Credits: Penny Shell/LSU Women's Resource Center)

A Tribute to Charles Bradford: A Champion of Justice



Charles Bradford

The AAW conferred the 2005 Champion of Justice Award on Charles Bradford Jr. in recognition of a lifetime of distinguished leadership. Born in 1925 to the son of a former slave, Bradford's life has been shaped by personal knowledge of the disadvantages of inequality. Yet,

he had the good fortune of having self-respecting parents who encouraged him and that led him to become what Neal Wilson calls an "overcomer."

Bradford demonstrated leadership potential from boyhood on and received encouragement from people of stature, who gave him opportunities usually reserved for his seniors. Gifted with prodigious energy, wit, an engaging manner, and a performer's stage presence, it would have been easy for this precocious lad to become brash and cocky. Yet Bradford's confidence was grounded in the gospel and the insistent belief that *all* of God's children are important, that in Christ all believers are servants, from whom faithfulness is required.

A diligent, disciplined Bible student and a voracious reader, Bradford's theology is coherent and clear-headed, grounded in the Protestant concept of the priesthood of all believers. This concept places Bradford firmly against authoritarian behaviors and hierarchical structures. His idea of administration was to facilitate and enable the creative activity of others, not to dominate, dictate, and coerce. "One pilgrim cannot dictate to another" says Bradford. He has led by his example of deep spirituality, extraordinary self-discipline, faithfulness, prophetic vision, and respect for the gifts of the spirit demonstrated by other believers.

His concept of servant-leadership has caused him to put the needs of others above his own, with the goal of creating a collaborative, interdependent community of believers.

Focused on the moral-ethical dimensions of issues, he was ever mindful of the claims of justice. His belief

that "all have equal status before God," and that "anything that smacks of hierarchy is unchristlike," fueled his determination to empower others, giving encouragement, energy, affirmation, and hope to many.

For Bradford the gospel commission has two dimensions—proclaiming the gospel *and* serving the felt needs of the people in each community in order to restore their wholeness. To proclaim without responding to needs is incomplete in his scheme. Ever mindful of the cry of the Old Testament prophets, Bradford calls for justice and equity in the communities of believers and gives unfailing attention to the needs of the widows and orphans. "What is the church all about if not the care of people in need?" For him, compassion is the ultimate manifestation of Christianity.

Because of his belief that all members are called to be ministers, that all believers are blessed with gifts of the spirit, that all people created in God's image have intrinsic worth and must be accorded dignity, that "any issue concerned with human rights is a moral issue," and that the church must be a "just society of equals," where "dignity and status is conferred upon every believer," it should come as no surprise that Bradford gave his full affirmation to women who seek equal status in the church, including ordination, speaking eloquently on their behalf at the 1988 Annual Council and at the 1990 General Conference Session in Indianapolis.

The theme of Bradford's life can be summed up in a statement he made in a piece published in *Message*, in September, 1982: "If we are to be Christian, truly Christian, we shall have to take Jesus seriously. That means everything about Him. If He is really the answer, then we must accept Him totally, unconditionally—His lifestyle, His teaching, His attitude toward people."

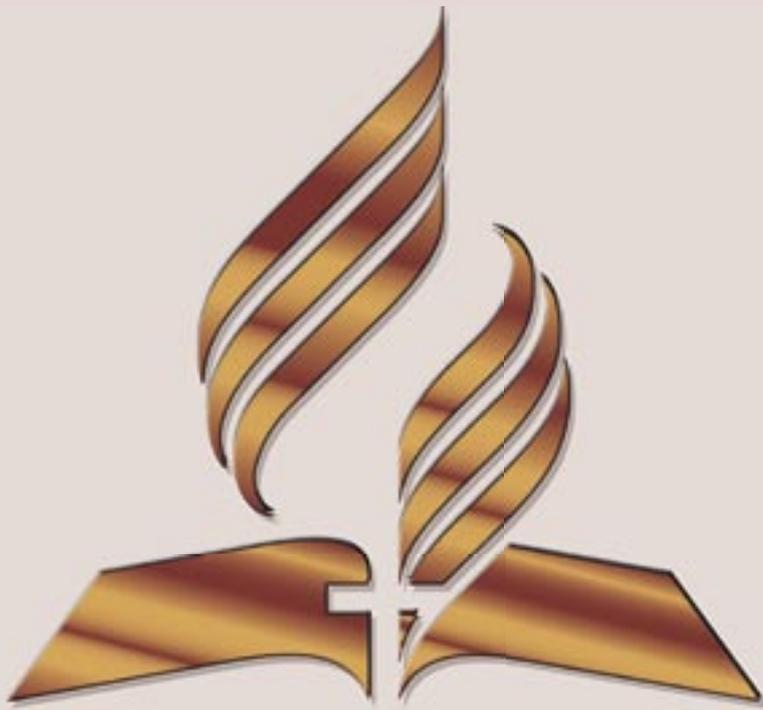
In recognition of a principled life lived faithfully in the manner of Christ's life, the Association of Adventist Women awarded Bradford its highest honor with the following citation: "Holding fast to a dream of a just world in an unwavering pursuit of equality. He has shown you what is good: To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."

This tribute is based on the book, *Brad: Visionary Spiritual Leadership*, by Harold L. Lee with Monte Sahlin, published by Bradford-Cleveland Institute and Center for Creative Ministry. All quotations are from this book. AWW



AAAW booth from page 5

Madeline Johnston went to every exhibit booth and personally delivered the reprint of *Your Daughters Shall Prophecy* to the representatives of the various denominational organizations exhibiting. Many people were made aware of the work of the AAW as a result of the contributions of the individuals who worked in the booth. Thank you to those who donated time, energy, and enthusiasm to help promote AAW at General Conference Session. AWW



Pioneering the Church

An interview
with

by

Verla Michel Kwiram

Ella Simmons

Shortly after Ella Simmons was elected as the first woman vice president at the 2005 GC Session, Verla Michel Kwiram interviewed her.

Did Dr. Jan Paulsen's request to the nominating committee "for a woman vice president now" come as a surprise to you?

Dr. Paulsen did suggest this possibility to me before GC Session; however, I didn't take it too seriously since I knew it required the vote of both the nominating committee and the worldwide constituency. I knew there could be obstacles there, so when I was told that I had been elected, I was simply stunned.

What led you to accept this new role?

I felt God's clear call to provide leadership to my assigned areas and the responsibility of pioneering our church into a new era. An important part of my role in the world church is to build bridges and bring individuals of both sexes together. My

"People are curious about a female world leader with worldwide visibility in the church. Many are waiting to see how a woman acts in this role; how a woman conducts herself as a General Conference vice president."

responsibility includes transcending women's ways of knowing and being, yet at the same time always be cognizant of women's needs and perspectives.

I know that I will come under greater scrutiny than a man will. People are curious about a female world leader with worldwide visibility in the church. Many are waiting to see how a woman acts in this role—how a woman conducts herself as a General Conference vice president. If I fail, it's not just me, but all women and men who are not ordained who will lose. However, I'm not feeling any unusual pressure. I'm accustomed to being the only woman and/or black person, and with that distinction often comes scrutiny and observation.

A long time ago I decided that the best way to handle it is to just do what is right because it is right—following God's direction for my life and my work.

What will it take for our church to be enlightened?

It will take people who are dedicated, committed, and humble to reach out in all venues and contexts of the church, and even beyond the church, and those who can construct new realities, new ways of knowing, new ways of viewing the church's mission and purpose, as well as new ways of viewing and acting on our own personal missions.

Into a New Era

Have you experienced a good reception to your election?

From all parts of the world most people have been incredibly positive and supportive. Several people from African nations and South American nations told me that people back home were celebrating my—a woman's—appointment. I am told that my election signaled hope for many members of the church. And when congratulating me, they also commented with enthusiastic appreciation that Dr. Paulsen had exhibited real courage.

Speaking of black women, I understand that some black people have said, “Well, she doesn’t represent us or our community.” Why would they say that?

As a black woman in the United States, this is not new to me. If you are working with people who don't know you that well, if they didn't go



Ella Simmons

to school with you, it takes a little more time for them to trust your positions and motives. And if you can get along with people of all races from diverse ethnic and national groups, some might not understand your perspective or perceive your frame of reference as grounded in the African-American experience. They may not take as legitimate your

ethnic or racial pride if you don't conduct yourself in a certain way or limit your causes to strictly those that are most closely associated with their experience. Mind you, my experience, both within and outside the church, has been that this kind of criticism usually is not from the majority of African-Americans or other black persons.

How are people chosen for the General Conference Executive Committee on which you have served for the past five years?

The General Conference tries to identify members from a wide range of backgrounds who have demonstrated spirituality and deep commitment to the church, who have expertise in diversely specific areas, who will bring a variety of perspectives to the decision-making process, and who are willing to become actively involved in the

various tasks and committees when assigned.

You must have distinguished yourself in that regard.

I have served on several committees. I do not know to what extent being on the Executive Committee leads to being nominated to the vice presidency.

How do you prepare now for a vice presidency?

Whatever preparation there is

To give advisory oversight or to chair the Accrediting Association of SDA Schools, Colleges, and Universities Committee.

To chair the International Board of Education.

To chair the Institute for the Prevention of Addictions Board at Andrews.

To chair the Adventist Ministry to College and University Students Committee, which serves Adventist young people on non-Adventist college and university campuses.

To provide oversight, referred to as advisory, for two worldwide departments of the GC: the Department of Education and the Department of Women's Ministries.

In addition, I will be asked to serve on several boards and committees, as well as to chair various *ad hoc* committees as needed.

This suggests that you will need knowledge in depth in a

wide range of areas.

Fortunately, expert department heads will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the departments I will advise. They will in most cases provide the background information for the committee and boards that I will chair. The Directors of the Education Department and Women's Ministries Department are highly capable professionals. They will be actively involved in most of the work I will do.

An estimated 70 to 75 percent of the church members are women, and now you are their

sole representative at this level of the church. What is your highest priority in representing women?

I will hasten to say that I am not women's sole representative at the General Conference—recognizing Dr. Rosa Banks, Mrs. Daisy Orion, and others—although you are correct in that I am the only woman at the vice presidency level. My priority in that regard will be on expanding that spirit of hope permeating our church now. One lesson I have learned is to never feel that God is finished with us in using us for His work. As women, we need to listen for God's call with a "new ear;" perhaps God will call us to a responsibility that we hadn't envisioned before. We must find better and broader ways to support women as we mature into new gifts from God and seek to follow where God leads us in serving the church and the world. It's truly a new era for our church.

I have heard that when women are present on decision-making councils, priorities change. It is said that men emphasize quantitative things like number of baptisms, while women are more concerned about human need—protecting the vulnerable and providing relief from things like poverty, abuse, or illiteracy. How do you think priorities will change when Adventist women have more influence?

I have not yet had an opportunity to interact with my new colleagues in private meetings and councils, although I have had the privilege of observing them from a close distance while serving on the Executive Committee. These observations and limited interactions have provided me cause for optimism. For example, I was very pleased and proud when the Executive Committee approved a strategic planning document developed by General Conference leadership that contains three core strategic values for the church: quality of life, unity, and growth.

“When confronting cultural issues, the church sometimes hesitates and says, ‘It’s a cultural practice. We don’t get involved in that.’ For example, when men continue to beat their wives after becoming Adventist Christians, I think we have failed to make them understand what Christianity is.”

has already been done. God always prepares us for that to which we are called. Now I will just dive in—learning along the way whatever is needed beyond my current knowledge and skills.

What will your duties be?

My primary responsibilities will be education and women's ministries. However, my main focus will be on education. My assignments are divided between the following major categories:

To chair the Home Study International/Griggs University Board of Directors.

Quality of life in this context has to do with nurturing all members of all ages according to their diverse needs and leading them to discover their spiritual gifts. We are asking members of the church to be model citizens in the secular world and to develop their capacities for compassionate service.

The church men, as well as women, who spoke for this priority direction were very serious. At the very beginning of this statement is an emphasis on quality of life for individuals and congregations. Certainly there is a quantitative measure there also, since one of the three core values has to do with growth in church membership. Yet, I sense that this priority does not overshadow the other two.

I have been hearing that the church loses about one-third of its converts. Being a convert yourself, how do you think that the church can address this problem? Could retention of members be a woman's issue?

Yes, of course, this should be everyone's issue, but perhaps you are alluding to studies that have shown the leadership style exemplified by women is characterized by relational, nurturing, and transformational qualities. This being so, it would lead us to the conclusion that retention of church members is a woman's issue. On the other hand, one might likewise view this as a man's issue; if we consider this issue from a quantitative perspective following your friendly generalization. Perhaps the methodologies for approaching this issue will emerge from a feminine vision. The quality of life and unity priorities will surely lead the entire church in addressing this crucial issue.

To this end, I believe that it is important for each member to discover his or her own spiritual gifts and to feel that he or she is important to the body of Christ and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. If we first serve the quality-of-life needs of our new members and neighbors, we

will then move more naturally and lastingly into theological and spiritual realms with them. The relationships built will provide a living and lasting link to the church for the new convert.

When we focus here, there will be no indoctrinations, but rather only real relationships between real people. When we build relationships, we come to recognize that we don't have everything to offer others, although we have much. Rather we engage with others as equal human beings. We realize that the people with whom we come in contact have much to offer us as well.

I just gave a talk at the GC Session in which I cited research projecting that poverty, drought, famine, and terrorism will increase for the next 10 years as it has for the past five years. Nothing we have done in the past is sufficient for today's world with all the calamities we are experiencing. If we are who we say we are, we have to do much more for the world today, and much more than that in the future.

The quality-of-life core value extends to cultural practices. When confronting cultural issues, the church sometimes hesitates and says, "It's a cultural practice. We don't get involved in that." For example, when men continue to beat their wives after becoming Adventist Christians, I think we have failed to make them understand what Christianity is. Are you comfortable with the concept that the gospel speaks directly to cultural issues?

We need to follow the example of Jesus. Jesus approached people where He found them and understood their condition within a given context, but He did not leave them there when He found sin in their lives, regardless of the cultural context. We must seek to achieve this same balance that is Christ's example. It was once culturally acceptable to oppress human beings in this country—to buy and sell them like cattle—but Christ's standards do not allow for such. *Human perversions must never*

be viewed as cultural uniqueness or defended as acceptable because it has a cultural base.

Do you have a personal mission statement?

I have not crafted a formal personal mission statement. However, my life's mission comes down to knowing God's will for my life and being and doing the divine will of God for a specific time and specific place, in order to do the work God has given me to do.

Prior to the 58th GC session, there were no women on the General Conference Division Officers (GCDO) committee. Nor were there any women on the President's Advisory Committee known as PREXAD. Will your appointment integrate PREXAD and GCDO?

I will be a member of PREXAD. I am not a Division officer, but as a General Conference officer I will interact with division leaders in committees and various decision-making entities.

What vision for the church's future do you cherish?

One of my dreams for the church is for education to be joined more intimately to evangelism, although I have no specific plan or strategy for doing this at this time. The education of girls and women is neglected in many places.

We know that you will make every effort to be constructive in your new role. How can we offer tangible support and encouragement to you? Have you thought of forming your own advisory committee?

I feel I can draw on Women's Ministries, Women's Resource Center, and AAW. I solicit your prayers, public and private. *AW*



Elizabeth Talbot

Women in Action

Interview with Elizabeth Talbot By Nicole Batten

AAW seeks to encourage open dialogue with one another—to share ideas, to encourage one another, and to learn from each other. In this edition of *The Adventist Woman* we are featuring an interview with Elizabeth Talbot, the first female senior pastor in the Southern California Conference.

Talbot, born in Argentina, is the senior pastor of the Alhambra Adventist Church—otherwise known as the “Grace Place”—in California. She has a bachelor’s degree in music education, master’s degrees in both organizational behavior and biblical studies, and she is currently working on a doctoral degree in biblical studies.

How did you get started in ministry? Did you have encouragement growing up?

Before I came full-time into ministry in 2000, I had a career as a business consultant—although I have always been involved in ministry in one way or another, including serving as minister of music and youth director.

I was born and raised in Argentina, the daughter of a pastor. Obviously there weren’t, and still aren’t, any female pastors in Argentina. My father was my role model. He inspired me. I loved to go door to door for evangelism meetings. In fact, when I was a little girl I would set up my dolls and preach to them. Then in my early twenties I moved to the United States and have been here ever since.

I got my start in full-time ministry when the conference approached me. I had been recommended to them in the past and my boss said the Holy Spirit wouldn’t leave him alone until he hired me. And it was like finally, my passion meets my job. Since then I have become known as the ‘gospel preacher.’

How have you been received by your church?

My church has been wonderful, so supportive. Ironically, before I came there were very vocal members

who didn’t like the idea of female pastors, but they have since apologized. However, my number-one supporter is my husband, who was actually a pastor himself for 13 years. He is a family therapist now.

Do you think attitudes toward female pastors are changing in the Adventist Church? Do you feel supported by your peers?

I think the Adventist Church is showing great progress. There is the same pattern in other denominations when years ago women were accepted as part of the ministry, and then they weren’t, but now they are being welcomed again.

Personally, I feel very supported and loved by my peers. I have been fortunate in that I haven’t had to deal with any negative attitudes toward female pastors in my ministry. The only time I have really felt I was being treated unfairly was after my four years when I should have been ordained, but I couldn’t be because I wasn’t a man. I was told I would have to wait the full five years to be commissioned instead. I told my conference it was unfair and that the recognition of calling by God was being delayed because of my gender.

Do you think women bring something unique to ministry?

We all bring different perspectives to the ministry. I think women bring something unique to the theology side as well. And I hope when I preach that people forget about my gender and listen to the message.

Do you think your background in business helps you in ministry?

You know, this is the first time as I look back over my life that everything makes sense. In this job, I can use all my training—music, accounting, biblical studies, and especially organizational behavior (i.e. leadership, conflict resolution, team building, etc...) All of this is beneficial to me now as a pastor. And I hope I never stop learning.

What would you tell young women preparing to go into ministry?

Whenever you have a passion, you must follow it, no matter the challenges or if doors seem to be closing. God will make a way. When I would say I want to be a pastor, my friends would ask me “why are you doing this, you can’t ever become a pastor.” But I did.

How do you prepare yourself spiritually to minister in your church?

For me, I have to constantly remind myself to separate my personal devotional time with God from my study time. I could spend all day studying the Bible, Greek, Hebrew, etc.,

but I have to include time to meditate on God. I have to be the receiver too, not just the giver. Pastors spend so much time giving, they forget to receive. I also have accountability partners and prayer partners to help me. In addition, I find that exercise, getting enough sleep, and eating healthfully is also a part of preparing myself to minister.

You have started a cutting edge ministry in your church? Tell us about that.

Well, our church reaches out to young adult parents and singles. Everything we do is geared towards this group. This is a very visual generation so we use lots of media. And it was only natural when we decided to use podcasting to expand our outreach.

I used to have a contemporary service on Friday nights at my old church, and when I was there a company



Alhambra Adventist Church—"Grace Place"

approached me about broadcasting live on the Internet. The programs would stay on the Internet for up to a year afterwards. When I came to this church, I was approached again about reaching people with iPods, which is primarily a young adult market.

In September I began recording 10-minute 'Jesus

101' sermons on my computer and uploading them to PraiseCast. Through their podcasting service, subscribers can download the files, and if the subscriber is linked, the downloading is automatic. We plan to make the sermons also available as video files soon. The company sent out a press release about my new series and listed it on several global directories, and already hundreds of people are downloading it.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

I don't know what the Lord has in mind, but eventually I would like to move into teaching and more scholarly pursuits. I also would love to do evangelism full-time. My driving force is to share Jesus. But who knows where I will be in five years. God has a way of surprising us. *AW*

For more information about PraiseCast, call 805-688-3441.



WOLA Nominees from page 5

a more rugged vehicle for the difficult, non-paved roads of Nyalgunga.)

"Alice's project, NYALWODEP, is visionary, community-based, and is helping some of the poorest and most forgotten folks on our planet. She deserves First World support. We hope the project will be self sustaining. Our preference is to work with women (and occasionally men) who have incubated a community project, are willing to work toward self-sustainability, and only need short-term grants," says Kotoske.

Kotoske also sponsored Esther Díaz de Guerrero, dean of the Cuban Adventist Seminary, so she could attend AAW's Conference in June in St. Louis. Guerrero told Kotoske she is desperately in need of a vehicle for their school—a multi-passenger vehicle costs about \$25,000.

In addition, Kotoske has offered to assist Helen Hall, who is the founder and principal of Eden Valley Academy in northwest Thailand. Hall's students sit for British "O-level" exams to qualify to pursue college degrees or become government workers, providing a better life for these former Burmese refugees. Kotoske will be providing assistance for students taking these exams.

Amistad, a word meaning friendship in Spanish, is a not-for-profit organization assisting humanitarian, self-help, and educational programs for impoverished communities in Mexico, Zimbabwe, Kenya, South Africa, India, Dominican Republic, Thailand, and Mongolia, by empowering people and helping them to develop the skills and knowledge needed for sustenance of life, as well as the promotion of health and preservation of cultural identity. Their website is www.amistadinternational.org. To contact them, write to Amistad International, 1657 Edgewood Drive, Palo Alto, CA, 94303 or email them at tomamistad@aol.com. *AW*



courtesy Robert Aichinger

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Renewing your membership helps keep AAW alive. The preferred method is to go to the Web site at www.aaw.cc, and register for another year. Because you will be entering your information personally, this will result in more accurate data.

If you do not have access to the Internet*, send your name, address, and phone number along with the membership dues (\$30/yr) to the following address:

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**Correspondence by e-mail saves the AAW money. Send the e-mail addresses for ten friends to help us reach our goal of 2000 in 2005.*



Association of Adventist Women

Mission Statement

The Association of Adventist Women seeks to develop and promote women as leaders in Seventh-day Adventist organizations, congregations, and communities.

Goals

The image of God, as embodied in the skills and insights of women, will be more fully reflected in our churches and communities as we achieve our goals:

To create significant opportunities for women to be full partners at all levels of church life.

To promote leadership skills among Adventist women of all ages and backgrounds.

To highlight Adventist women's opportunities, contributions, and achievements using print, electronic, and personal communications.

To establish a network of Adventist women leaders who can inspire and mentor other women.

To demonstrate open and collaborative models by working in complementary ways with other church organizations.

Revised 10/17/04

E-mail news, article and photo* submissions to Nicole Batten, Editor, at nicbat@pacificpress.com.

*Photos must have a resolution of at least 350 dpi. If you are unsure of the resolution or dpi of your image, you can view its dpi setting in the image's properties. When scanning your images, set your image size to 350 dpi. When taking a photo with a digital camera, be sure to set the image quality indicator to the highest quality setting. If you are mailing a photo print or CD-ROM, send it with a return address to Nicole Batten, *The Adventist Woman*, 17965 Monarch Way, Nampa, ID 83687.

The Adventist Woman

The Adventist Woman is the official newsletter of the Association of Adventist Women and is published four times a year. Members of the association receive the newsletter as a benefit of membership. To join the association, go to the web site at www.aaw.cc. Or write to the AAW at P.O. Box 25025, Seattle, WA 98165-1925. If questions remain, email Verla Michel Kwiram at vkwiram@aaw.cc.

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23rd Annual AAW Conference DVDs



Phyllis Tribble's Seminar is available for \$12.00 (includes shipping)

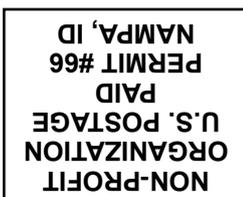
Phyllis Tribble, Ph.D., an internationally known biblical scholar, rhetorical critic and “dean” of women Old Testament scholars, presented an engaging talk on Genesis 1-3 at the AAW Conference this summer. She unveiled “fresh hints, new intuitions,” from the text “which reached beyond the old conclusions, set categories, and conventional methods” that are often based in sexist presuppositions. Tribble is also the author of three well-known books, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (1978), *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (1984) and *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (1994).



Laura Vance's Seminar is available for \$12.00 (includes shipping)

Laura L. Vance, Ph.D., an associate professor of psychology and sociology at Georgia Southwestern State University, presented a talk entitled, “‘A Great Work Is to Be Done, Every Talent Is to Be Used’: The Evolution of Women’s Roles in Adventism” at the AAW Conference this summer. She is also the author of the book *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis: Gender and Sectarian Change in an Emerging Religion* that shows how Seventh-day Adventism’s early years were distinguished by the leadership of women, most prominently the visionary prophet, Ellen White. Then after 1915 the number of Adventist women in leadership began a dramatic and uninterrupted decline that was not challenged until the 1980s. Vance’s objective scholarly account of the forces at play in this decline is fascinating.

Both DVDs together are \$20.00.



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