

the Adventist Woman

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May 1996

AAW Conference October 31-November 3

"Women at the Crossroads: Wisdom, Witness, and Worship for the 21st Century"

The Association of Adventist Women will hold its annual conference at the Mission Inn, a restored hotel in Riverside, California, October 31 through November 3. This year's theme is "Women at the Crossroads: Wisdom, Witness, and Worship for the 21st Century." The opening address will take place on Thursday evening, October 31. The final event concludes at 12 noon on Sunday. Lunch will not be included.

Sabbath morning services will be held at the La Sierra University Church. The focus of Sabbath School will be "A Cloud of Young Women: Witnesses Looking at the Church." Presentors will include university women from different campuses. Worship will feature the six ordained female ministers. Their topic will be "My Life, My Witness." Lunch will be at the university dining commons across the street.

The conference will be multicultural, featuring many Hispanic and Black women. A variety of seminars will be presented.

The conference fee is \$80. The only meal included is the Friday evening agape feast. The banquet on Saturday night will be an additional \$30. Shuttle service will be provided from the airport and to the church so no one needs to rent a car.

The hotel is in the old town surrounded by historic buildings, one of which is the Art building designed by Julia Morgan, designer and builder of the Hearst Castle on the California coast. The main meetings will be held in the music room, a cavernous gothic room with a stage, the site for organ concerts in the past. The Mission Inn has been visited by many presidents and dignitaries. The lobby holds a grand piano made especially by Steinway for the 1876 Centennial. The lobby has a runner made in China to depict every mission in California. There is also a chair built to accommodate the large body of President Taft. Walking tours of the surrounding blocks and a tour of the myriad rooms of the hotel are available.



Worship speakers will be the six ordained female pastors. Left to right: Madelynn Jones Haldeman, Sheryll Prinz-McMillan, Halcyon Westphal Wilson, Norma Osborn, Kendra Halóviak, and Penny Shell.

Words of Hope

"Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by
sacrifice."
—Psalms 50:5 (RSV)

Union Constituency Sessions, 1996

The nine unions are scheduled to hold constituency meetings this year. Agenda items will include election of officers, constitution and bylaws changes, and discussion of a variety of issues. Some unions will discuss how best to deliver services to the local church. Representative delegates are chosen by conference executive committees. Watch your union paper for more details about issues regarding your union.

Atlantic — June 1, 2
Canadian — June 21-24
Columbia — Oct. 26, 27
Lake — June 16, 17
Mid-America — April 28, 29
North Pacific — May 19
Pacific — Sept. 15, 16
Southern — Sept. 8-10
Southwestern — May 20-22



The historic Mission Inn is the location for the 1996 AAW Conference.

Conference presenters and topics that have been confirmed:

Marianne Patton: Food Scarcity and Lives of Women
Yvonne Stratton M.D., Ione Brunt M.D.: Childbearing and Women's Health
Dulce Luz Pena, attorney: Sexual Harassment
Nancy Bailey: Advocacy programs for women in San Bernardino/Riverside County
Cheryl Simpson: Child Abuse
Linda Crijmes-Pennick: Prayer
Sheryll Prinz-McMillan: Family Values, & Religious Right
Lourdes Morales-Gudmunson: Christian Relationships
Beverly Beem: Old Testament Women Judges—Role Models for Today
Madelyn Jones-Haldeman: Women in the Formation of the Early Church

A special section for university women:

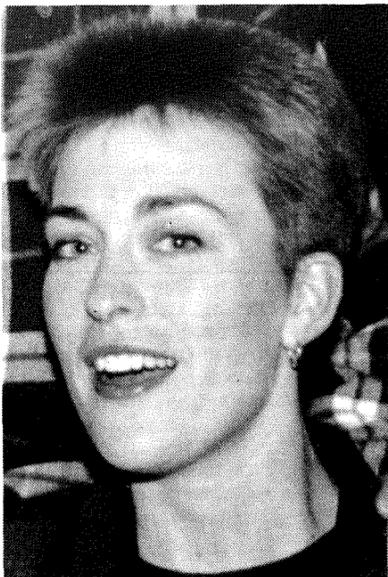
Phyllis Hanks: New Forms of Worship Witnessing to Youth Groups
Halcyon Wilson: Young Women & Their Christian Identity

Conference Planning Committee

Alyce Pudewell: Coordinator	Lourdes Morales-Gudmunson: Program
Carol Appleton: Publicity	Jeannie Murdock: Registration
Sylvia Davis: Budget	Cheryl Simpson: Publications
Ginger Harwood: Program	Marta Teel: Program
Georgia Hodgkin: Fund raising	
Audrey Johnson: Hotel/Facilities	
Penny Miller: Publicity	

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Cindy McMillan

I am delighted to welcome Cindy McMillan as our guest writer for this Presidential Communique. Cindy is a product of Adventist education from cradle roll through college. She holds a Master's degree in English from The University of Maryland, College Park. She is married to Karl Rhoads who graduated from The George Washington University School of Law in May, 1996. Cindy and Karl have accepted employment in Hawaii. Listen to her, please.

Betty Howard, President
Association of Adventist Women

Like many of you, I remember life before the microwave, ATM, calculator, personal computer, and fax. I remember what it was like before being vegetarian was hip, when restaurants did not provide smoke-free seating. Has our soci-

Presidential Communique

Meeting the Challenges of Change

ety changed for the better? I think most people would agree, at least in the context of the list I've put forth here. But sometimes change is painful. It may even be a frustrating experience like having to learn a new software program when the secretary seemed to do a fine job on the old typewriter.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, too, has changed. I remember, for example, when women were not allowed to be church elders. Now, of course, this is common practice, at least in the Potomac Conference. And this is only one of many instances.

How are Seventh-day Adventist church policies changed? Some changes depend on action taken by the delegates at the General Conference, some by decisions at the union or conference level, and others are simply made by the local church board.

This process can be very slow. So slow, in fact, that some members feel the only way to gain the attention of the church leaders and advocate for change in church policies is to make an impact on the treasury. Others simply quit attending the Seventh-day Adventist Church and hope their absence will be a reminder that change is overdue. These strategies are far too radical for those who would like to advocate for change from within the established system, especially if one is a church employee. Yet vocal opposition to church policy is discouraged in a variety of ways. The resultant ostracism and even dismissal from church employment make this, too, an unattractive option for many church members.

Where does this leave us? Realizing that all analogies break down at some point, let us consider an office where the workers must demand new equipment, even if their boss is not ready to take full advantage of the opportunities that such a change brings. The new equipment might cause some inconvenience, not only for the boss, but for those who are not as comfortable with

"Change. . . must be a coordinated, cooperative effort. . . Without change, there is no growth."

the change as others are. However, the risk is taken and soon efficiency and productivity rise. Lessons for both lay people and church leaders can be drawn from this illustration.

First, lay members must take responsibility for bringing policy problems and solutions to the attention of church leaders. We must keep leaders apprised of current practices and policies that will help the church organization operate more efficiently. This is not enough, however. We cannot accept unjust policies. We must work ceaselessly until they are remedied. Individual members must take the initiative and actively, openly, advocate for change, realizing that the vast majority of church members will recognize the necessity for change only slowly. Unfortunately, some never will.

Secondly, church leaders must listen to and follow the advice of lay members, even if they themselves are reluctant to

embrace new ways of doing things. They must be willing to trust the wisdom of others and ask for help when it is needed. They must act in courageous ways, working with lay members in helping the church to fulfill its mission, perhaps by means we have yet to imagine. Change cannot be managed by either one of these two groups; it must be a coordinated, cooperative effort.

Finally, all of us must recognize that changes in church policies are often accompanied by fear, particularly in a worldwide organization where regional and cultural differences inevitably produce varying rates of change. In order to calm these fears, collaborative efforts must be made to educate church members about the need for changes in church policies, the steps being taken to facilitate those changes, and what kind of results members can expect. Additionally, church members need concrete examples of how to handle new policies, learning from the experiences of those who have already implemented the changes.

Without change, there is no growth. In fact, we all profess the profound change Christ renders in individual souls. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, let us accept, embrace, and meet the challenges that accompany change.

—Cindy McMillan

At the time she wrote this piece, Cindy McMillan was Assistant Director of the Joint National Committee for Languages, National Council for Languages and International Studies, Washington, D.C.

The Best New Books on Domestic Violence

There are a number of books coming out now on various aspects of abuse and domestic violence. Many focus specifically on Christian ministry with those who suffer from this problem. Three titles seem the most useful. (Source: *Publisher's Weekly*, 3-15-96)

Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook by Carol Adams and Marie Fortune (released by Continuum in December, 1995) is a large collection of theological and biblical background materials. It includes an analysis of Adam and Eve and "the myth of women's subordination to man," and an examination of the story of the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5) as a parallel for the sexually violated woman, for example. This is a rich resource for preaching, teaching and writing.

Family Violence and Religion: An Interfaith Resource Guide (Volcano Press, 1996) is a practical handbook for pastoral, family-life, and social-work ministry. It includes many very helpful items such as guidelines for pastors approached by women who say they have been abused, an outline of the effects of domestic violence on children in the household, how to deal with abu-



sive husbands, and sections on specific cultural contexts such as abuse of elderly parents, African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Jewish families, etc.

The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response by Pamela Cooper-White (Fortress, 1996) includes eight chapters of theological framework and background on the full range of problem, and three chapters on how to shape church ministry within this area of need. This book explores the need for the pastor to deal with his/her own woundedness in becoming a healer, how to establish effective ministry with abusive men, and how to empower women to protect themselves. The author's conclusion places the problem squarely in the context of the Christian theology of redemption and reconciliation.

Letter to the Editor

"I have just read the December, 1995, issue. The account of the ordinations in Southern California was inspiring. I was also moved by the list of women in ministry in our division. Every one of them knows the contempt of others, every one of them sticks by their courageous course, every one of them marches at the vanguard of the God Movement.

"We, who by luck and privilege live easier lives, are full of gratitude and admiration."

Sincerely,
Charles Scriven, President
Columbia Union College

Editor's note: This letter was received after the February issue of The Adventist Woman went to press.

Women at the Door

The voice of women called us to the task of justice.
We did not hear.
Some asked plainly, others submissively.
Both asked for justice.
When we heard the voice that said, "We will receive our reward in heaven,"
we listened with accent;
we even applauded, giving acclaim to she who spoke.
The voice that spoke was that of woman;
Downtrodden, resilient, practical — a peacemaker.
She smiles and nods and cries — confused;
God's call — man's empowerment.
She does battle for the lives of sinners,
in the darkness of our trust,
chilled by our insinuations of her motives.
Praise God, His love burns brightly still at the altar of her heart.
For it beckons her to serve in spite of us.
Hers is a voice for justice;
a voice resigned to justice served by God in heaven.
Hope is all she has while standing on our floor.
Acceptance at His throne — of words enunciated with pleasure,
"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."
We agree...applaud...a roar,
an anthem of our discontent.
If in heaven, why not here?
What will we do there?
Claim the crowns of women as our own?
No!
For God will not allow it.
Nor does He wish for us to do it now.
Pride and prejudice empower us to lay claim to their crowns today.
Women at our door.
It is hard to be always...ever...even at the door.

—Dan Kittle

From notes taken on the General Conference Session floor, Utrecht, 1995.

To Stretch Out the Hand



by Eileen Greenwalt

"They brought children for him to lay his hands on them with prayer. The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said to them, 'Let the children come to me; do not try to stop them; for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these.'"

—Matthew 1:13, 14 (NEB)

The Walla Walla College Seventh-day Adventist Church has engaged in a study of women's ordination to ministry. I have listened and read and pondered. One primary concept has captured my attention. It may take a wandering path to share, but bear with me.

According to Norskov Olsen, in the New Testament, the Greek words most often translated into "to ordain" could be more literally translated as "to stretch out the hand." What a powerful image! A hand reaching out in blessing is an ancient theme of both the Old and New Testaments. Out of the pages of the text flows the odor of waiting, the longing for blessing:

- Abraham and Sarah's pleas
- Jacob's wrestling with the angel, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."
- Old Anna and Simeon in the temple reaching out to take the Child into their arms.

To stretch out the hand—with blessings unto the third and fourth generations.

Mothers brought their children, their little girls and boys, and stood waiting for Jesus to stretch out His hand and bless them.

Waiting—A Child's View

Do you remember when you were little? The loneliness of waiting? Waiting while the grown-ups talked or were busy with their work, or while they shopped and you were left waiting. Most of the time you did whatever you were expected to do—as best you could. You watched where they went and followed along so you wouldn't get lost, didn't ask for things you knew you wouldn't get, didn't interrupt or whine. That's what "good little girls" did.

Occasionally there was a moment when someone stretched out a hand to you! An invitation to sit with them perhaps. I remember my grandmother. Whenever a child walked into the room—without even looking at the child or interrupting a conversation—her arms just opened up and you could just step in for a moment if you wanted to.

Grandma was what might be described as "full-figured." When seated in her rocking chair, she had no lap, rather she was a pillowed version of an inclined-plane. I could lean against Grandma for a few moments and then as my feet began to slide away, Grandma would hoist me back up into place. After a short time of this, I always decided to try to find something to otherwise occupy myself.

Then one year my oldest sister came to visit. I must have been about 12. I hadn't seen her in a long time, and she was so much older that I had never known her as a friend. I had watched her as a beautiful college student visit and laugh with our mother. I had adored her handsome husband when they married when I was eight. I had never seen anyone so smart and tidy and well-dressed and educated and cheery and witty as she.

I don't remember for sure now, but I feel cold as I think about it, driving in our car, feeling cold and small, as we drove to the house where we were meeting her. I was probably wearing a scarf tied tightly over my head and under my chin to keep my ears warm and to cover up my difficult hair. I was awkward. Shy. Scared. We walked to the door and in a flash she flew out in an explosion of joy. She hugged my mom and my brother and sister. There was excited chatter and a few tears. Then she peered past the front row and saw me. She

stretched out her arms and held me out there at arm's length for one moment while looking at me. "I am so glad to see you!" she cried out while hugging me.

For the first time she became my sister. It is also the first time I remember anyone truly seeming to see me.

A Life Recognized

When the hand is stretched out the blessing is in a life recognized. It is an affirmation of being; a validation of existence; a recognition of who is there just at the fingertips. A connection. How is that done? That seemingly simple act, an act that creates and affirms an identity by mirroring a self through loving eyes and connecting individuals to life at a deeper and richer level with others and with God.

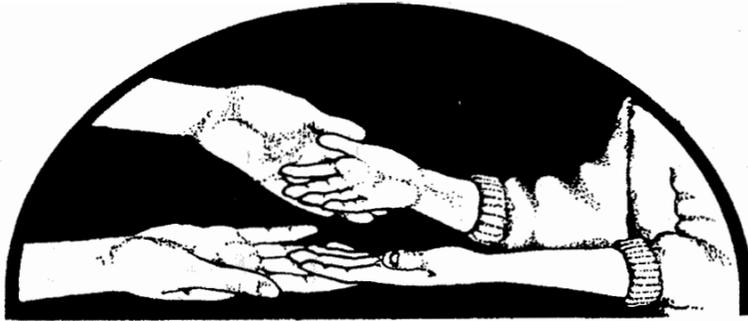
The mothers stood with their children. Perhaps the children were cross and irritable. It was hot. They were thirsty. They wanted to go to the bathroom. They were tired of waiting. They were bored. Then the disciples rebuked them and tried to send them away.

But Jesus stretched out His hand.

One by one Jesus looked them in the eyes and talked to them. Not to their mothers while the children squirmed uncomfortably nearby. He looked into the children's own, pure, profound depths—"for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these." Those children's lives were never the same again.

They had experienced the gospel.

Paul's message in 2 Corinthians 5:17-



21 seems to follow this story. I paraphrase loosely:

Once Jesus reached out to us. Our hearts were touched and forever we will feel connected to Him. For us an old way of life has ended and a new way is begun. Now we no longer see others as we once did. From the beginning to the end, this is the work of God: He has reconciled us to Him through Christ. And now we are called as ambassadors. God stretches out His hand to others through us.

Simple Acts of Affirmation

Each year a banquet is held at the college for the conference and union officers, the theology department, and graduating seniors. The students are asked to share a story about the person or persons who first recognized or affirmed their gift for the ministry. Privileged to hear these stories for many years, I am always touched by the power of simple acts of affirmation:

- someone's work noticed and appreciated;
- identifying someone's gift of service;
- an encouragement of someone's budding interest;
- the patient, tolerant mentoring of a small town congregation with ungrudging forgiveness and grace.

All the stories embody what it means to see and to stretch out the hand—what it means to receive blessing and healing. The stories are heartening to hear for they are the stories of our sons and brothers and husbands and fathers. But they are also painful to hear because they are seldom the stories of our daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers.

Mentoring Women's Spirituality

Do we know how to mentor the spiritual life and to encourage the potential ministry of a woman? Do we know how to look into the eyes and touch the souls

of young girls? How do we affirm and validate and support the commitment of youthful women's spirits? Does anyone stretch out a hand as an ambassador for God and invite them into His service?

I look around my own church at women I have come to know and love. There are many. They are all successful in various "tent-makings." But did anyone ever suggest to them as a young girl that their gifts were needed in ministry? Some of them I knew nearly 20 years ago when they were students in my classes. I apologize to them that I never asked them to consider the ministry. It was not a concept in my own mind.

To my former students: You bless me over and over. I now need your ministry. Please forgive me for failing to mentor you as a good mother of Israel should have done. Thank you for stretching out your hand to me anyway. With your beautiful and sensitive spirit, your depth of thought and creative life, your commitment to God, you are an ambassador for Him.

Many of us stand together now with our children at our sides as the mothers did of old. We stand with our little girls and boys. It is a whole hillside full of us mothers—with children so sweet it makes us weep for joy to think of them, "for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these."

We know that Jesus sees us and reaches out to bless. We see His hand upon the heads of our sons and upon the heads of

nailed to a cross remind us of the cost of living a grace that flows out of loving hearts and minds.

This is the call.

It is clear. We are called to stretch out our hand and become a priesthood of believers. Paul describes it well: "Now we are all children of God. There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female." (Galatians 3:28) We no longer see others as we did. Now we are called as ambassadors to stretch out our hands to others.

The ordination issue in the Adventist Church began as a pragmatic one. "Ordination" is a policy, not a biblical doctrine. It began (in spite of considerable trepidation on Mrs. White's account) only to fulfill an organizational need. Mrs. White herself said women should also be set aside for service by "prayer and laying on of hands." (R & H, 7/9/1895, "The Duty of the Minister and The People")

Excluding women is a bad policy because it suggests that the gospel doesn't really work in real lives. The policy honors a disrespect for a particular group of loyal and committed peoples that the gospel includes. Women are excluded out of respect for the cultural biases of the unconverted.

But church policy should flow out of a new spiritual reality. We must not seek to create a theology to justify practical convenience. To withhold ordination from anyone dedicated to service for God is to supersede the dictates of "disciples" over Jesus' word and the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a contradiction of the gospel. This is a policy that comes from a blindness to the new way of the gospel. How can we preach "redemption" but make exclusion our policy?

I am awed at how simple and ordinary the question of ordination could be. Yet, according to one account, only 60 women are employed as pastors at the present time in the North American Division. Only about 100 have the training for ministry. Apparently, this is a very difficult question for some.

Why do women not just give up? Because we are mothers. We cherish a vision for the church to become a sanctuary of the new reality for ALL our children. This is only going to happen as we learn how to connect with others in redemptive relationships. Relationships should stretch out a hand to all our children and all of God's children with the firm, clear-eyed affirmation of a sister—not the obliging indifference of a tired, old grandma—certainly not the heedless rejection of a busy disciple. Grace is the result of a deeply personal spiritual life, one that involves being touched. It expresses itself in the ways we relate to one another at a personal level, one that demands we ALWAYS relate to persons at a personal level.

To give up our witness to this elemental call of the gospel is to reject the Caller and the world that prophesies of a latter rain upon sons and daughters and a history that includes Miriam and Deborah, Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene, Pricilla and Phoebe. To give up our witness to this elemental call of the gospel is to exchange the joy of being a child of God to model the cultural traditions of oppression that prevail in this world.

This church is our community. We are a family. Some of us are already crippled by the wounds of wrestling with this issue, but we "will not let thee go except thou bless us." (Genesis 32:26) We continue to wrestle for blessings in the name of thousands whose hearts have been broken and have quietly slipped away. These are souls we know and miss.

We long for the indifference of an old and nearly blind church to rekindle into seeing eyes—eyes that shine with joy and reach out to receive the gifts that God sends—like the old prophet Anna. We long for the busy disciples to recognize that no task is more important than to stretch out the hand in blessing. Action is the gospel ministry—not just talk about it. Gospel reaches into the soul

(See HANDS, p.4)

AAW Ministers to Women in Ministry

"How many women ministers are there? Six or eight?" The president of one of the Seventh-day Adventist world divisions who asked the question in the late 1980s in a public meeting was truly puzzled. And, as it turned out, no one had the answer.

In 1985, 1988, and 1989, the General Conference (GC) brought together scores of delegates from all over the world for three commissions on the role of women in the church. Was it worth it? Were there enough women entering ministry that the debate on their role, and possible ordination, was merited?

Learning of the division president's questions, the Association of Adventist Women decided to go after the answers. That quest led to three major AAW surveys conducted in 1990, 1994, and 1995. At first there were 60, then 90, and now more than 150 women identified. In fact, the number of women in ministry keeps growing.

Today, the project has grown and taken on new dimensions. It has now become an ongoing ministry to women in ministry. Every quarter a page of "Quick News Notes" is mailed to more than 115 women in North America and about 45 who live in other parts of the world. The news sheet includes information about issues of ongoing interest to Adventist women.

Women in ministry are asked to respond by sending back updates on their education, work, special projects, and other concerns. Many ask AAW to pray for specific needs they are facing.

In the beginning

The idea of compiling a list of women in ministry and corresponding with them began with Penny Shell. In 1984 she became director of pastoral care for Thorek Hospital in Chicago, (then managed by the Adventist Health System). Feeling isolated

from other women chaplains and pastors, but having attended seminary and CPE (clinical pastoral education) classes with several who were eager to enter these professions, she launched a newsletter to them at her own expense. For more two years she kept in touch with about 40 women in the U.S.

Building on Shell's experience, Kit Watts approached AAW in late 1989 with the idea of securing photos and brief write-ups about women in ministry to publish in a special edition of *The Adventist Woman*. The issue, containing information on 65 women, was distributed at the 1990 GC session in Indianapolis.

The survey was repeated in 1994 and 1995, bringing the total number of women contacted—and responses generated—to more than 150. AAW believes there are dozens more who have not yet been identified. Others who have been identified have not yet responded to a survey form.

Who's on the list?

"The list is inclusive," Watts says. "Among the 160, we have women who are employed full-time as pastors and chaplains. But that's less than half of the women in ministry."

Several work part-time or on a stipend basis, paid by their local church. "For others," Watts adds, "there is no pay. They may have training and the ability, but they have to work as volunteers."

Other women are in transition—between jobs, or on a leave of absence to rear young children. Many are in training programs. Some have retired. And others work in ministries where (if they were men) they would probably be ordained—as religion teachers, conference administrators, and departmental leaders.

Quite a number of women have been

unable to gain employment within the church. Some have begun their own private ministries or do lay evangelism. Others work for non-Adventist hospitals, hospices, etc.

Are all women in ministry alike? "Certainly not," Watts says. "For example, not all women in ministry feel the same about ordination."

"Some find it very difficult to function without it. Particularly in the United States, ordination is seen by the government, the armed forces, hospitals, and professional organizations as a routine but essential recognition of their authorization to represent their denomination."

"But other women in ministry are dismayed by the conflict over ordination and don't find it necessary. Some have been fortunate to get jobs in places where they can work without it."

What are AAW's goals?

The goals of AAW's ministry to women in ministry include:

(1) *Maintaining a mailing list.* Keeping a list up to date requires contact every three to four months.

(2) *Encouragement.* AAW seeks to encourage all women, including women in ministry, to know that it is God who calls them to ministry. AAW joins them in seeking ways to use their talents and skills.

(3) *Network.* Many women in ministry live and work in isolated settings. Through regular mailings AAW seeks to support women in ministry and demonstrate its conviction that God cares for them. At its annual conference, AAW often hosts seminars for women in ministry.

(4) *News and information.* By sending out a simple news sheet, AAW tries to keep women in ministry abreast of issues that may interest or affect them.

(5) *Advocacy.* Through surveys and periodic updates, AAW compiles statistics and information about women in ministry to share with Seventh-day Adventist church leaders, and encourages positive policies to be adopted.

How can you help?

First, if you are a woman in ministry, or if you know of such a woman who has not received mailings from AAW, please send us her name, address, and phone number. (See address below).

Second, you can help maintain this ongoing ministry by making a special donation to AAW. Currently, the costs for the AAW ministry are about \$3,000 per year. "This is above and beyond the normal AAW budget," Watts explains, "so some dedicated donors are needed!" Donations large or small are welcome.

Please send information and/or donations to: Women in Ministry Project, AAW, P. O. Box 7414, Langley Park, MD 20787.

Does AAW's ministry make a difference?

A young woman in Europe wrote to AAW saying: "You care more about my ministry than anyone in my conference or union. Thank you for writing to me!"

A woman, formerly a pastor in North America, told AAW: "I do enjoy the tidbits of news [you send]. I am not working as a pastor since our move. Basically, I work elsewhere for a full-time salary, and then work full-time for free in our local church. I'm exhausted to say the least. Keep encouraging me...I need it!"

A young woman in theological training writes: "This summer I'll be in school, but I'm excited about Revelation Seminars I'll be participating in. [As for my future in ministry], I'm in the valley of decision. Please lift me up in prayer."

AAW MISSION STATEMENT

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Genesis 1:27 (RSV)

In God's sight each individual has the potential to make a valuable contribution to our world. It is the purpose of this group of Adventists to help individuals in our church reflect more fully the image of God in their relationships to others in the home, the church, the workplace, and the community.

This association, which focuses on the development, discoveries, interests, and potentials of Adventist women, has these goals:

1. To encourage communication,

support, and wider understanding among Adventist women in diverse situations.

2. To acquaint the church community at large with Adventist women's potential and achievements.

3. To assist Adventist women in achieving fulfillment in their personal development, interpersonal relationships with others, and their relationship with God.

4. To help Adventist women maximize their options, whatever their age and situation, so they may reflect more fully the image of God.

To Stretch Out The Hand

(Continued from page 3)

and creates a new world. It challenges our policies, our traditions, and our cultural and religious biases. Women wait and expect change as faithful and loving children, not to condone the ongoing rejection of the disciples. We do not deny the disciples their continuing place as disciples, but we hear with relief as Jesus overrules their insensitivity and lack of vision.

We have been waiting a long time. The longing courses heavy and thick within us. We no longer feel as small, awkward innocents. Now we are seers, haunted by ghosts of unfulfilled visions, as mourners groaning from irretrievable losses. What do we want? Stretch out your hand.

Some people might think or say this is too simple. Simple perhaps, but not necessarily easy. I find most of us really don't know how to do this very well at all. Postmodern society is far more comfortable with science and technology. The church organization functions from the models of corporate conference rooms and management by objectives. For those who have never learned to respect the Word spoken through the experiences and voices of women it will not be easy.

Learning a New Way

Stretching out the hand is not easy for me. It is now my children who help me remember how to do this deeply personal action. "Come on!" they say. "It isn't fun unless you're there!" And they stretch out their hands.

I learned how to ice skate (in a "sort of" ice skating way) a couple of years ago. At the time I remembered that so many things we do for the first time are very frightening to us only because we don't know how to do them. But the children showed me how to skate and were encouraging and accepting of my attempts. "I'll hold your hand, if you want me to" was the offer.

So we began—standing together on the ice. Just standing there and holding hands.

At first we couldn't actually move anywhere. It was quite challenging enough to keep a pair of narrow blades balanced on that glassy surface. I thought about how much courage we need to try to live in new ways. I realized that the most important task is to live in new ways—"grace-full" ways.

In a few minutes, the children were skating around me, calling out in sweet voices, thrilled and exuberant in the crisp, cold air, "Come on! Let's go!"

Gradually, my feet began to shuffle and slide and . . . fall down. . . and then even to "sort of" skate. I too could learn to be grace-full. I was free.

This is a church that needs to learn to skate.

Jesus called a child, set him in front of them and said, 'I tell you this: unless you turn round and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. Let a man humble himself till he is like this child, and he will be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.' (Matthew 18:2-5, NEB)

The new life we live in Christ is a new freedom—a freedom from the boxes that have separated us. This is a freedom into a new personal connection with one another that is seen in the honesty of a child, in the curiosity and openness of a child, in the loving, open-armed responsiveness of a child. "Come on! Let's go!"

The hand of Jesus extends to us. Will we accept it?

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Clip 'n Do

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