

# 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*