
Directory of Groups Addressing Concerns of Women in the Adventist Church

by Rebecca F. Brillhart

The 1980s may well be remembered as the decade that had the most impact on the Adventist woman. An assortment of women's groups have sprung up in almost every region of North America, with interests ranging from spiritual development to family life and careers. One thing all the associations and organizations have in common is their desire to see women's concerns and needs more adequately addressed by the church.

On March 19, 1989, a historic meeting took place in Silver Spring, Maryland, which brought many of these group leaders together for the first time. Hosted by the North American Division Office of Human Relations (OHR) Women's Commission, the event gave these representatives an opportunity to share information, promote networking and understanding, and improve communication and follow-through with the official church.

This directory introduces the groups that attended the summit and the issues/concerns they represent. A few others have been added because information was readily available, but a more complete list of groups can be obtained by writing to the OHR Women's Commission in care of Thesba Johnston, Chair, Bell Hall, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI 49104.

Rebecca F. Brillhart, a project consultant, is on the board of directors for the Association of Adventist Women (AAW) and coordinates programs for Time for Equality in Adventist Ministry (TEAM). She formerly served as director of development for Washington Adventist Hospital.

Adventist Women in Ministry (publication only)

Established: 1985

Purpose: to help create a sense of belonging among women in Adventist ministry.

Objectives: provides information to students and others interested in pursuing ministry and chaplaincy roles; reduces feelings of isolation for those involved in non-traditional ministries.

Scope: geared primarily to North America, supported by charitable gifts.

Contact: Penny Shell, Editor
211 Hillsboro Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20902
(301) 279-6112

Adventist Women's Institute (AWI)

Established: 1988

Purpose: to "pursue actively the attainment of the full and equal participation, education and development of all persons within the Seventh-day Adventist Church community—particularly women of all ages—without regard to ethnic origin, economic or social status."

Objectives: promotes the ideal that Adventist home and church community be a place for full personal development of everyone within; that women's work, achievements, and contributions can and should be recognized, valued, and affirmed; that women should work with full equality in ministry and be included in decision-making administrative roles; that Adventist theology must grow within both the female and male exper-

rience of self, world and God; and that the programs of the church should more faithfully reflect women's interests, needs, and hopes.

Activities: sponsors a variety of projects that expose the needs of women in Adventism and promote positive change toward that end; provides support for women in ministry by offering retreats, scholarships, and grant funding; organizes a speakers' bureau and resource coalition for women's issues; and helps victims of harassment, abuse, and discrimination within the church structure.

Scope: international, network organization, operates on volunteer basis, dependent on charitable gifts.

Publication: *Ponderings* (bimonthly)

Vickie Danielsen, Editor

Circulation: 10,000

Contact: Fay Blix, Chair

P. O. Box 25794

Santa Ana, CA 92799

(714) 545-4888

Adventist Women's Speakers' Guild (AWSG)

Established: 1988

Purpose: "to glorify God by Christian witness, build His kingdom by affirmation and unify the church body by God's word."

Objectives: improve the communication skills of women with public speaking and musical talents; publishes a listing that provides a resource for persons seeking women equipped to minister in speech and music.

Activities: communication training workshops available to members and nonmembers; annual day of worship (Sabbath Symposium) designed to celebrate the unique gifts God gives women and focus on using these talents creatively to benefit all people; and operation of a scheduling service for women speakers to help ensure an appropriate match for each audience.

Scope: national, membership organization with four levels of participation—

Intern (mentoring, training, opportunities),

Speaker (support systems, listing in brochure, appointment scheduling),

Musician (same as above),

Sponsor (financial supporter, receives benefits of an intern). Dependent on membership fees and charitable support; serves groups planning seminars, retreats, campmeetings, special worship services, and important events.

Publication: *AWSG Speakers' Brochure* (annual) includes a current listing of available speakers and musicians, their biographies, and a return checklist of the needs of the inviting party.

Pat Wick and Katie Tonn-Oliver,
Editors

Contact: Karen Nicola, Chair
10470 Crow's Nest Lane
Penn Valley, CA 95946
(916) 432-3636

The Association of Adventist Women (AAW)

Established: 1982

Purpose: "to encourage Adventist women to recognize their worth and value within the family of God, and the responsibility to use their God-given gifts as effectively as possible."

Objectives: provides an organizational framework whereby the needs and concerns that women sense within the church can be focused and presented to church leadership for consideration, dialogue, and progressive change; affirms efforts to bring women into the forefront in such areas as employment at all levels and committee participation/decision-making roles; advocates support systems for special-interest groups such as ministers' wives and single mothers; urges the General Conference and unions to establish active women's commissions; shares current news concerning women and women's interests via its newsletter, *The Adventist Woman*.

Activities: regional representatives and chapters provide monthly programs that address local needs, interests, and projects; national annual conference features workshops, seminars, and discussion groups dealing with the concerns of Adventist women while fostering growth and providing encouragement for involvement in the life of the church; sponsors the Woman of the Year Award given annually to honor outstanding achievement among Adventist women.

Scope: international, sponsors local chapters, membership organization; operates on a volun-

teer basis, depends on membership fees (\$15/year) and charitable gifts.

Publication: The Adventist Woman (bi-monthly)

Beverly Habada, Editor
Circulation: 2,000

Contact: Nancy Marter, President
P. O. Box 3884
Langley Park, MD 20787
(301) 270-5776

Chaplains for Women in Ministry

Established: 1986

Purpose: "to support and affirm the calling and gifts of women who wish to exercise their talents in a direct ministry for God."

Objectives: provides a means of support/fellowship/networking with women in ministry and those who support their interest; educates people about the role of women in ministry (especially those groups who communicate their concerns directly to the official Adventist Chaplaincy Services body); promotes the full recognition of women in ministry and equal access to pastoral positions based on qualifications, not gender.

Activities: workshops, seminars, and sermons that help educate the church about the role of women in ministry; promotion of gender-inclusive language; communication of needs and concerns of women in ministry to Adventist Chaplains' Ministry-SDA Health Care Chaplains' Association in the form of specific recommendations; and an annual retreat for women in ministry (the first will take place in 1990).

Scope: national network organization, committee of the SDA Health Care Chaplains' Association (SDAHCA)—a branch of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (ACM)—sponsored by the General Conference; originally established as the Committee for Women in Ministry

Publications: *Spiritual Partners* (updated three times annually), directory of women in ministry and their male colleagues who are in full support of their efforts; *View on Women in Chaplaincy Ministry*, results of a survey completed by men and women in Adventist chaplaincy, compiled in 1988.

Contact: Juanita Mayer, Chair
c/o Pastoral Care Department
Shawnee Mission Medical Center
9100 West 74th Street, Box 2923
Shawnee Mission, KS 66201
(913) 676-2305

Christian Women's Retreats (CWR)

Established: 1982

Purpose: to promote "spiritual growth for women by women."

Objectives: help develop close, personal relationships with Jesus Christ by providing opportunities for prayer and fellowship with other women; learn from the witness and experiences of dedicated Christian women who illustrate God's power to work through women; and provide an example for others who may be interested in developing similar programs in their own churches and conferences.

Activities: annual retreats; marriage seminars; adoption of "mission" family, providing support during crisis; help other conferences/churches interested in developing a women's retreat programs or fellowship groups with on-site workshops and a "how-to" manual; now developing Bible-study fellowship groups; supported the organization of a Christian Men's Retreats program, which held its first meeting May 5-7, 1989.

Scope: national, with emphasis on Northern California, begun with the cooperation of the Northern California Conference board; directs all activity; self-supporting, uses funds generated by retreats.

Publication: *Wings* (quarterly)
Sue Nakanishi, Editor

Contact: Pam Whitted, Chair
4070 Five Mile Drive
Stockton, CA 95209
(209) 473-3736

Office of Human Relations Women's Commission

Established: 1983

Purpose: to listen to women's concerns and promote the said needs to the church.

Objectives: to be in touch with women at the

grass roots level; share information they provide about their needs and concerns to church leaders; promote networking and understanding between women's groups with similar concerns to avoid duplication and promote cooperation; open the channels of access to the church.

Activities: three two-day meetings per year in different union settings to host open house events addressing women's concerns; hosted first women's groups summit (March 1989) to promote understanding, pool talents, and coordinate efforts on behalf of women in the church.

Scope: North American Division; the women's commission recommends proposals to OHR (not a policy-making group); OHR recommends to North American Division officers, who must seek support from the union presidents before implementing proposals and programs.

Publication: none

Contact: Thesba Johnston, Chair
c/o Bell Hall
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, MI 49104
(616) 471-3475

Shepherdess International

Established: 1982

Purpose: to offer support to minister's wives throughout the world church.

Activities: distribution of a resource materials bulletin; publication of one article devoted to issues involving ministers' family lives to appear in each issue of *Ministry* magazine; coordination of meetings especially designed for ministers' wives at each General Conference session.

Scope: international membership organization, support provided by the General Conference.

Publication: *Shepherdess International Resource Bulletin* (quarterly)

Sally Streib, Editor

Contact: Ellen Bresee, Coordinator
General Conference of SDA
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904
(301) 680-6517

Time for Equality in Adventist Ministry (TEAM)

Established: 1988

Purpose: "supports the ordination of candidates to the pastoral ministry regardless of race, social class, or gender" and calls for the church's official approval of ordination for women at the 1990 General Conference Session.

Objectives: promotes the belief that the Bible supports the ordination of women through the principles of unity, equality, and spiritual gifts; that Ellen White approved of women and men serving the church with equal authority, recognition, and pay; the fullness of the gospel commission by the Seventh-day Adventist church requires the spiritual gifts of women in the ordained ministry; and that by ordaining women, the church ensures true unity among believers, demonstrating that all are equal before God and one in Christ.

Activities: promotion of equality in ministry seminars for churches/groups; awareness campaign (ads and articles in church papers); distribution/publication of relevant literature, cassettes and video presentations on the subject of women and the church; and coordination of a network for constituency feedback to denominational leaders concerning the equality issue.

Scope: international, network organization, operates on volunteer basis with part-time paid project coordinator (salary provided by the board); projects supported by charitable gifts/grants.

Publication: *TEAM Update* (monthly)
Rebecca Brillhart,
Project Coordinator

Contact: Patricia Habada, Chair
P. O. Box 3702
Langley Park, MD 20787
(301) 445-3340

Women's Ministries Advisory (WMA)

Established: 1985

Purpose: "to uphold, encourage and challenge Adventist women in their pilgrimage as disciples of Jesus Christ and members of His world church."

Objectives: elevate women as persons of inestimable worth because they have been created and redeemed; enable women to deepen their faith and experience spiritual growth/renewal; build networks among women in the world church to encourage bonds of friendship and mutual support; facilitate the creative exchange of ideas and information; address the concerns of women in a global context; seek expanding avenues of dynamic Christian service for women; and challenge each Adventist woman to be a part of the "team" in furthering the global strategy of the SDA church by using her unique talents to complement those of others working toward the same goal.

Activities: survey of women employed in leadership positions by the church and subsequent study of observations and opinions regarding their experience in denominational employment

(results not yet published); recommended appointment of coordinator for women's ministries for each world division (now in progress); distribution of a "starter packet" to division coordinators which includes a variety of information and ideas to help implement programs for women; encourage boards to include women; urge editors of church publications to address frequently and sensitively topics relating to women.

Scope: international, representation desired in all world divisions; supported by the General Conference (voted at Annual Council, October 15, 1985).

Publication: in development.

Contact: Karen Flowers, Chair
General Conference of SDA
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904
(301) 680-6172