

Women as the daughters of God

Association of Adventist Women 2006 Conference

BY CARMEN SEIBOLD

IT WAS SABBATH and the women gathered in worship sang the morning hymn. The beauty of



Verla Kwiram, president of AAW, with the new director of the La Sierra University Women's Center, Heide Ford.

the female voices lifted in praise filled me with an ineffable longing for God. Many similar moments amazed and touched and inspired me at the annual conference of the Association of Adventist Women (AAW). We met October 11–15, in Seattle, to honor the AAW Women of the Year for their accomplishments, which highlight this year's theme, "Globalization and the Adventist Woman."

"Our women amazed us" (Luke 24:22), is the surprised admission of an apostle describ-

ing the women who met the resurrected Christ. And our women continue to be amazing. We celebrated thrilling ministries of Adventist women for their God, as we mourned the world's hurts that make them necessary. I was reminded of how crucial it is that Christianity hold up women as the daughters of God, who are equally called to worship, serve, and reflect the divine image.

Phetsile Dlamini, pediatrician of Swaziland, is the 2006 honoree in Distinguished Service. The child of an Adventist family, Dlamini has become an international leader in issues concerning HIV/AIDS, such as the pricing of medications, and she has given presentations at the United Nations on the plight of orphans. She has served two terms as minister for health and social welfare for the Parliament of Swaziland, facilitating crucial reforms that include state-subsidized health care. As the current ambassador to the New Partnership for Africa's Development in the Organization of African Union, Dlamini integrates health policies and programs among several nations.

This remarkable Adventist woman spearheaded her country's ratification of the 1995 Convention on the Rights of a Child, was a creator of a juvenile court system for Swaziland, and is involved in multinational projects to decrease deaths from malaria and combat tobacco use.

Eugenia Giordano, a physician originally from Argentina, is 2006 Woman of the Year for Professional Life. She established and directs with her husband, Oscar, the Adventist HIV/AIDS International Ministry Africa Office (AAIM). The Giordanos were missionaries in the developing world when HIV/AIDS began its tragic spiral into an epidemic. Alarmed by the stigmatization that was driving a majority of infected church members into hidden suffering and death, they appealed to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, which invited them to launch AIMM.

From their headquarters in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Giordanos minister to all three African divisions, which comprise some 16,000 church-

es and 4.5 million members. AIMM estimates that more than 10 percent of these Adventists have HIV/AIDS, which results in more than four thousands deaths yearly. The Giordanos travel their vast territory encouraging openness about HIV/AIDS, sensitizing church leaders, and mobilizing members to care for the needs of the affected.

Aune Gregg's award for Church Life honors her ministry in two widely separate countries and cultures—her native Finland and the Kingdom of Nepal. She is secretary of the Finnish Adventist Temperance Association, and a key influence in the acceptance of Finnish women as pastors. In 1997, through her affiliation with the World Health Organization, Gregg became responsible for the development of Nepal's anti-tobacco education.

Gregg established the Health Education and Tobacco Intervention Program for the kingdom by means of a new consortium among the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Finnish Adventist temperance organization, and Nepal's Scheer Memorial Hospital. With the creative use of varied teaching methods, which include street dramas, the program has succeeded far beyond expectations, reaching three hundred thousand Nepalese

teenagers to date. Nepal's tobacco use rates, once the highest in the world, now approximate European levels.

Paula Leen, an American missionary in Zimbabwe, is recognized for her Lifetime Achievement. Leen was sent home on permanent medical leave from her secretarial position in the East Africa Division, but the tremendous needs she had witnessed would not let her rest. She eventually returned to Zimbabwe and founded her own ministry, Zimbabwe Orphans Project (ZOP).

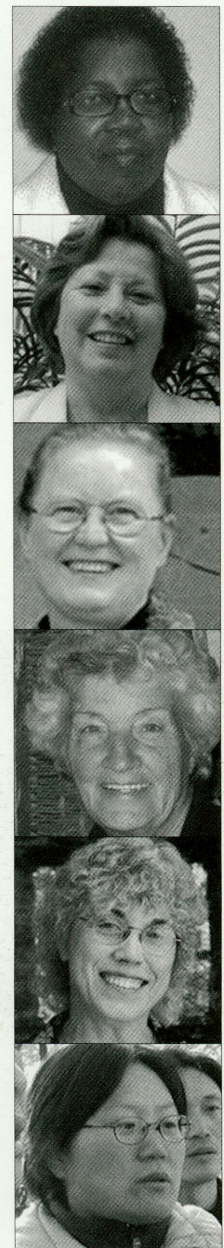
Seventy-two-year-old Leen donates her services as director, her Social Security checks, and gifts from supporters for the benefit of "her" people. The region's profound poverty spurs her extraordinary feats. She acquired land to grow food for the orphanage and provide employment. Needing a reliable source of water, she taught herself to construct dams, wells, and storage tanks. Now her orphanage has twenty acres of gardens, and her orchards offer the area's only employment.

Leen's food program regularly sustains more than two thousand people, and she has given away more than one million articles of clothing. Several times a week, she transports the ill to the nearest hospital eighty miles away, using the same truck that at other times carries

food, schoolchildren, and medicines, and increasingly doubles as the local hearse. She rises at three o'clock in the morning, and by flashlight embarks on the endless demands of the day.

Merikay McLeod was presented with the Award for Outstanding Achievement for her landmark lawsuit that brought equal pay for equal work to women employees of church-related businesses. In the early 1970s, McLeod was a young assistant book editor at Pacific Press when she discovered not only that she was paid significantly less than male peers, but also that women employees were ineligible for head-of-household benefits. The women's lower pay scale reduced their Social Security income in retirement as well.

Her efforts failed to correct the discrepancies through conventional channels with the press administration. For McLeod, it was a matter of justice to persevere with a complaint to the Equal Employment Opportunity Administration and a subsequent class action lawsuit on behalf of the press's women employees. Hers was the first lawsuit in the United States to apply Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to church-connected entities, and was the precedent-setting case for women in many denominations to secure



Top to bottom:
Dlamini, Giordano,
Greggas, Leen,
McLeod, Zhu.

stories of service and devotion

equal pay for their work.

McLeod's pursuit of fairness exacted a price—the press fired her, her friends rejected her, and she is still a controversial figure for many Adventists. But she reports no regrets following her conscience and believes that God continues to bless her life. She lives in Northern California and is a national award-winning journalist.

Linda Zhu (Zhu Qing Yan) is a Chinese third-generation Adventist, and the AAW's award recipient in Community Life. After completing graduate studies in business, she became the first employee of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in her country and established the headquarters for ADRA China.

Until recently, Zhu was ADRA's director for its straw-bale buildings program, which has resulted in the culturally appropriate construction in northern China of more than six hundred houses as well as three schools. Straw-bale walls have far better insulating qualities than those built with traditional materials and are safer in earthquakes. They are ecologically superior, utilizing what was once waste rice straw, and reducing the pollution of coal fumes released while firing bricks.

The project won the Building Social Housing Foundation's World Habitat Award in 2005 at the UN Habitat Conference. Consequently, the Chinese government is adopting the building model. With this success



firmly underway, Zhu is turning her talents to HIV/AIDS prevention for ADRA.

Zhu Zhen, a lay elder of the Beijing Adventist Church, is recognized for contributions in Spiritual Leadership. Zhen was a daughter in an Adventist pastor's family and studied nursing. In 1960, shortly after her marriage, she was charged as a counter-revolutionary and sentenced as a criminal for three years, with another term to be served as a nurse in a re-education camp. She wasn't released until 1971.

Retirement from nursing meant more time for church work, and Zhen devoted herself full time as a volunteer. In 1995, she was called to preaching and to date has planted ten house churches, some of them with two hundred members. As an ordained elder, she preaches, provides pastoral care, and solemnizes communion and funeral services for her

house church members.

In addition to the women's awards, **Rudy Torres** was named Champion of Justice, in appreciation for his courageous support of Adventist women in pastoral ministry.

Throughout the conference, other notable women from around the globe brought their stories of service and devotion to God. Professor **Phyllis Tribble** delivered a knock-your-socks-off textual analysis of the story of Miriam and the Sabbath sermon on Naomi.

Verla Kwiram, AAW president, is the remarkable woman who planned, organized, and saw to every detail of the conference with tireless personal warmth. (Verla, all of us who attended rise up and call you blessed.)

The Association of Adventist Women will celebrate its twenty-fifty anniversary at the 2007 conference in Silver Spring, Maryland.



Above: Torres, Tribble. Center: from the AAW Web site.



Carmen Seibold, a hospice chaplain and clergy spouse, writes from Worthington,

Ohio. This article first appeared in *Spectrum* online <www.spectrum-magazine.org>

Opportunity Lost: Why Adams Should Have Been Review Editor

BY ANDY NASH

ONE OF THE PROBLEMS with the official church press is that, when a major meeting doesn't get reported objectively (and it often doesn't),

people are left with rumors and mistaken impressions.

One of the mistaken impressions that people might be getting from the recent Annual Council gathering of Adventist Church leadership is this: Many delegates thought Roy Adams should have been nominated editor-in-chief of the *Adventist Review* because he's black. That's simply incorrect. The delegates who made speeches weren't arguing that Adams be nominated because he's black. They were questioning why someone so well qualified *wasn't* nominated.

It's a valid question and one that I share. Having worked at this magazine, with this staff, I can provide a number of reasons why Adams should have been the clear-cut choice.

For starters, he's been the senior associate editor, and a highly effective one, since 1988. He's served the Adventist Church not only in the United States but also in Canada and the Philippines—and as an immensely gifted speaker, he travels widely. He's had his doctorate since the early eighties and has written a number of books and hundreds of articles. He's a centrist—doesn't try to cater to any party of the Church, doesn't try to block voices (or letters) that don't agree with his own. He has tremendous leadership skills, and he lives by a code. He runs an efficient meeting, his work is always excellent, and he submits it on time.

But perhaps the most important thing about Adams is the gracious way he treats people. This isn't the corporate world; this is the church—the body of Christ; it ought to matter how our leaders treat people. I can't think of anyone who treats people with more dignity than Adams does. He isn't political—isn't constantly trying to position himself, doesn't “kiss up and kick down.” He treats everyone with respect, whether above him or below him. There were times when I saw an issue differently than Adams did. But I never felt demeaned by Adams, and I never saw him demean other staff members or production staff at the publishing house.

Although I personally respect President Jan Paulsen and other church leaders, it's difficult for many of us to understand the dynamics of what happened here. Even after the world church's Spring Meeting in April, when the delegation voted to send back Bill Knott's name and specifically requested that Adams be considered, Paulsen returned six months later with only one name, Knott's, and the choice of a yes-or-no vote.

The fact that Adams would have been the first black editor in the *Review's* 157-year history would have been a bonus—an important first for a church that's never been on the leading edge of racial unity.

I was proud to work in the company of Roy Adams, and

I always pictured him succeeding the equally graceful William Johnsson as editor-in-chief. I know many others did as well. It's no doubt a very hard and painful experience to be passed over like this, but at least Adams can know that many others care for him, as he did for others.

Andy Nash worked as an assistant editor at the *Adventist Review* from 1996 to 1999 and is now an associate professor of journalism and communication at Southern Adventist University. The article first appeared in *Spectrum* online <www.spectrummagazine.org>.

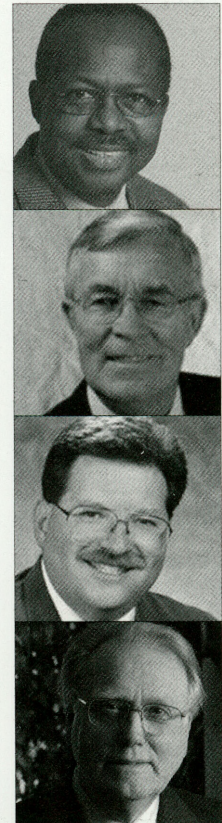
What about the Adventists?

BY ZANE YI

“WHAT ABOUT Adventists? Aren't they like the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses?” an earnest red-headed woman in the back of class inquires.

Immediately, I am at rapt attention. What would my professor say? I am sitting in a systematic theology class at Fuller Theological Seminary. The class is comprised of about forty students from various Christian backgrounds—Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, and so forth. My professor, Marguerite Shuster, is a Presbyterian minister. As far as I can tell, and unknown to anyone else in the class, I am the only Adventist student in the room.

The reactions I've gotten from being an Adventist in a non-Adventist seminary are



Top to bottom:
Adams, Johnsson,
Knott, Paulsen.

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mixed. For most of my peers, I’m the first Adventist they’ve ever met. Some of them are curious about what I believe; mine is one of many denominations represented at the school. Others can’t hide their surprise; they wonder what I am doing at an evangelical seminary.

In the class, we have been working our way through one of the great creeds of the church, the Nicene Creed, trying to understand what it says and why it is important. The Nicene Creed is unfamiliar to most Adventists—we do not traditionally subscribe to any creed—but many Christians recite it corporately on a regular basis, sometimes weekly.

“We believe in one God the Father Almighty,” the creed begins, “Maker of heaven and earth.” It continues and affirms that Jesus is, “the substance of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of the same substance with the Father...” Forged during the time of the Arian controversy, the crafters of the creed robustly affirm Jesus’ divinity, explicitly pointing out that Jesus was “not made,” that is, Jesus is an uncreated being, in essence sharing the “substance” of God.

In the third century, Arius, a well-intentioned church leader, wanting to protect belief in one God, taught and convinced many people that the Son was a special and exalted, but ulti-

mately, created being. Arius’s teaching survives today. Professor Shuster has just explained that this idea separates sectarian groups from orthodox Christianity. For example, Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses believe in Jesus, but believe he is a created being.

This brings us back to my classmate’s question: “What about the Adventists, are they Christians?” Shuster pauses and considers the question while I hold my breath.

“Adventists have always affirmed the divinity of Jesus and are Trinitarian in their theology. Therefore they should not be categorized as a sect,” Shuster explains. She continues, “I’m not so sure what to make of some of their other beliefs and of their eschatology, but when it comes to their Christology they are right on and therefore are considered Christians.”

“Whew!” I breathe a sigh of relief—but before I fully exhale a hand shoots up from the front of the class. It belongs to a former missionary who lives in Redlands, a small city near Loma Linda, California. She objects. She has encountered and ministered to many ex-Adventists. She explains that Adventists have a false prophet (Ellen White) and hold numerous other non-Christian views. She insists that Adventists are not Christians.

“Uh oh,” I think. “What now?” I anticipate the worst. I’m terrified at the prospect of

having to raise my hand and offer some weak and complicated apologetic; however, remaining silent in the face of misunderstanding seems craven and disingenuous.

Shuster smiles warmly as she responds seriously. “If we were to look in all our denominational histories, we would discover people who in the end are all too human. Things are claimed and said that later we may find embarrassing. We need to remember this and be as charitable as possible in dealing with the histories of others.”

My classmate, who later becomes a friend (although I’m not sure if she ever found out I was an Adventist), isn’t really satisfied with that answer, but the classroom discussion winds down and the lecture continues.

At the end of the class, I walk up to the front of the class to thank Shuster. She’s talking to my suspicious classmate, who honestly thinks the professor has made some sort of mistake about Adventism. Shuster is patient, gracious, and kind. She repeats and expands on her comments from class.

When it’s my turn, I tell Professor Shuster that I am an Adventist. I thank her for her charitable and respectful comments about my church. I feel she has described Adventism in the fairest terms. In fact, as a long-time member of the Church, I can’t imagine doing a better job myself. She smiles

and states that some of her best students and colleagues have been Adventists.

"I never had a negative experience with Adventists and the denomination," she recounts. Occasionally, it turns out, she writes for *Ministry* magazine, a journal for pastors published by the Adventist Church. "And theologically," she adds, "when it comes to the central issues [Jesus], Adventists have got it right." Then she adds with a twinkle in her eye, "If that's the case with any church, all the peripheral issues work out in the end."

I wasn't too sure what Shuster meant with her last comment. I learned from her as the quarter progressed that one's beliefs about Christ are closely linked to one's views of salvation. When people affirm the divinity of Christ, they end up affirming that God himself took the initiative in order to save us, that he came into a fallen and helpless world proclaiming the kingdom of God, teaching its principles, and manifesting its power, and that ultimately he died on a cross.

Practically speaking, Arian views usually result in the view that humans must do something to add to what Jesus has done; the chasm between a perfect Creator and fallen creatures has yet to be bridged. In other words, it results in a legalistic mindset and makes salvation something humans earn rather than something

that a gracious God gives to powerless sinners.

I learned a lot about Christian theology from Shuster that quarter. The class raised a series of interesting questions with which I am still wrestling. What is Adventism's relationship to the great Christian creeds? What is the central doctrine of Adventist theology? Should we place emphasis on the distinctive doctrines we hold or the commonalities we share with other believers? How should we relate to other Christians?

Aside from these questions and sophisticated nuances of systematic theology, I think I learned more about Christianity from Shuster's demeanor and actions than from anything she said. That morning it would have been easy for her to portray a faith tradition not her own in a less sympathetic light. Instead, her response epitomized Christian love and grace. She not only represented my beliefs accurately, she also gave them the most charitable interpretation possible.

In the end, what impressed me most was not her orthodox Christian theology, but her genuine Christian practice of gentleness and love. This approach is one that I, as an Adventist, hope to model in my dealings with others. ■

Zane Yi recently moved to New York City after finishing a master's degree at Fuller Seminary, in Pasadena, California.

First Congress of Latin American Adventists in Europe

BY R. K. NOLTZE

THE FIRST CONGRESS of Latin American Adventists was held July 26–30, 2006, in Pomezia, a city eleven miles from Rome. The Hispanic Adventist Church in Rome took the initiative for this event, which

The Euro-African Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church



the Italian Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church supported and funded. All congregations of Latin Americans in Europe were invited, regardless of whether they belonged to the Euro-African or the Trans-European Divisions.

The organizers hoped to attract two hundred delegates to the congress, but their expectations were surpassed. The delegates numbered 350, and on Sabbath about 550 visitors also attended. These numbers tested the capacity of the facilities but made the event an unforgettable spiritual feast that inspired everyone.

The delegates represented Latin American congregations in nine European countries:

All in attendance felt one common passion, expressed best in the theme of the congress: "Being like Him."

This congress was born in the minds and hearts of sisters and brothers dedicated to the cause of the gospel, and by fervent prayer and God's blessing it took shape and culminated in a spiritual event of major significance.

Germany, Belgium, Spain, France, Denmark, Italy, Holland, Sweden, and Switzerland. They reflected the multicultural diversity of twenty-two Latin American nations united by a common language, though also sprinkled with national idiosyncrasies. More importantly, all in attendance felt one common passion, expressed best in the theme of the congress: "Being like Him."

Everyone in the Hispanic Church in Rome became involved in planning the event. Pastor David Verastegui, Pastor Ignazio Barbuscia, Eduardo Nuñez, José Antonio Castillo, and Pastor José Luis Nuñez oversaw arrangements. Each of these was responsible for a different aspect. A group of sisters from the church, dressed in distinctive light blue, made sure that each delegate found her or his seat. The planning and realization of the event could not have been better. The local church that conceived and planned it had the full support of Pastor Daniele Benini, union president, and the union treasurer, Gaetano Pispisa.

The program consisted of spiritual presentations and seminars. Pastor Alejandro Bullón, the South American Division evangelist, emphasized the need for constant spiritual growth by those who follow Christ. This can only be achieved, he said, by means of three practices of equal value: diligent study of the Word of God, constancy in prayer, and efforts to lead peo-

ple to Christ. The other major presenter, Pastor Juan J. Suárez, director of literature evangelists in the Greater New York Conference in the United States, reminded his audience that Jesus is still the Good Shepherd of all who are his sheep and know his voice.

The seminars were diverse. Sister Dora Bognandi led one on "Women Ministry," Pastor Lucio Altín gave another on "Parent-Children Relationships," and Pastor Ignazio Barbuscia offered one on "The Integration and the Future of the Latin American Adventist Church in Europe." The seminars made a deep impression because of their intellectual depth. Participants enjoyed them very much, as was plainly reflected in animated discussions that followed.

A special group, which consisted of assistant pastors and leaders from all congregations represented at the congress, met to consider planning for similar meetings in the future. From these deliberations came a proposal to request that the Italian Union and the Euro-African and the Trans-European Divisions foster the establishment of a Network of Latin American Adventist Churches in Europe, to facilitate communication, mutual support, interchange of procedural information, sharing of speakers, distribution of Spanish literature, and planning of biennial congresses.

To begin the new network,

the group proposed and the general assembly approved formation of a coordinating committee: president, David Verastegui (Italy); vice-president, Ronald K. Noltze (Germany); secretary, Jorge Hermida-Stoll (Switzerland); and members, Ricardo Abos-Padilla (Switzerland) and Juan J. Suárez (U.S.A.). The committee suggested that the next congress be held in Switzerland.

This congress was born in the minds and hearts of sisters and brothers dedicated to the cause of the gospel, and by fervent prayer and God's blessing it took shape and culminated in a spiritual event of major significance. On the Sabbath afternoon of the congress, those gathered together witnessed the baptism of twelve new followers of Christ, thus recharging their own spiritual lives. The delegates took a new spiritual vision from Rome to their churches. We thank all who helped make the dream of a few become a reality for many.

R. K. Noltze is a physician at Krankenhaus Waldfriede, a Seventh-day Adventist hospital in Berlin, Germany. Translated from Spanish by **Herold Weiss**.

South America: Church Elects Youngest Regional President

ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK STAFF

AT 38 YEARS OLD, Pastor Erton Carlos Köhler is the youngest president ever to head the South American region of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Members of the South American Division Executive Committee present when Pastor Köhler was nominated on Oct. 29 to replace Pastor Ruy Nagel, who retired, say that he reflects the youth and energy of one of the Adventist world church's largest administrative regions. The South American Division is one of 13 administrative regions of the world Adventist Church.

Köhler's nomination will be recommended to the Executive Committee of the world church, which is the body that elects division presidents.

When asked about his new role leading nearly 2.6 million Adventist church members in South America, Pastor Köhler said: "I feel extremely honored to serve the church in this function at this moment. I believe that maybe I was called to fulfill Ellen G. White's prophecy that the young people will finish God's work on earth."

Ellen G. White was one of the young founders of the Adventist church. She, along with her husband James, John Nevins Andrews, Uriah Smith and other young pioneers of the church, nurtured the small group of Adventist believers in

the church's infancy. In 1844 at the start of the Adventist church, Ellen was 17, James was 23, and Andrews and Smith were in their 20s. As the youngest regional president for the world church, Pastor Köhler follows in the founding

The South American Region of the Seventh-day Adventist Church



members' footsteps.

"In South America 58.8 percent of the church's membership is under 35 years old," Köhler continued. "I am 38 years old and this is a reason for me to make a final call for all the young people to come to know Christ."

"Pastor Köhler was chosen because he is young, because he is enthusiastic," said Williams Costa Jr., communication director for the church in that region.

Pastor Köhler held the position of youth ministries director for the region for three years starting in 2003. "We want him to put the same kind of enthusiasm and energy that he put into our young people

into the whole [region]," Costa continued, adding that Köhler is "also very well-organized and he is very good with planning."

Köhler's election follows the retirement of Pastor Ruy Nagel, who headed that church region for 11 years and served a total of 44 years in church ministry. In his new role, Köhler is not only a leader for the church in that region, he also becomes a vice president of the 15-million member Adventist world church, which is headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. Pastor Jan Paulsen, president of the Adventist world church, participated in the proceedings.

Before becoming youth ministries director for the entire South American region, Pastor Köhler was youth leader and then secretary for the Rio Grande do Sul Conference in Brazil. He has served as a local pastor and a youth leader for the church's local conference and in the Northeast Brazil Union. Köhler graduated in 1989 with a degree in theology from the Brazil Adventist College.

A new communication director was also elected for the church in South America. Pastor Edson Rosa, former secretary for the church in Brazil, will be filling the spot vacated by Costa, who earlier this month was elected associate communication director for the Adventist world church.

Source: Adventist News Network

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—Pastor Köhler