

Dauntless women, endless possibilities

Hundreds of Adventist women surrounded me, and the energy in the auditorium was almost electric. It was a long day but no one was grumbling. We were awed, energized, and incredibly blessed. It was the "Celebration of Women Around the World" meeting at the General Conference on March 31.

Every five years, Women's Ministries leaders from the 13 SDA world divisions gather for a week of advisory meetings. This year, the week was topped off with the daylong celebration on sabbath.

One by one, the division leaders got up to tell the stories of women in their divisions. These are the movers and shakers. And the results are exciting:

- Women's Ministries' baptisms in the Africa-Indian Ocean division last year: 50,115. (No, that is not a typo.)

- Ladies in the Eastern Africa Division are conducting leadership training seminars, retreats, prayer conferences, small group ministries, public evangelism, prison ministry, hospital ministry, counseling for cancer and AIDS patients, and literacy training.

- Women's Ministries in the South American Division provides Bibles to women as part of a "B=B" program. Women take the Bibles, use them to give Bible studies to their friends, and then gift the Bibles to them. There have been 25,794 baptisms as a result of Women's Ministries in this Division, 3,000 from the "B=B" program.

- The Women's Ministries leader from Euro-Asia tearfully told us how her division had just received funding for a women's health clinic as part of an outreach to women in Russia. She hoped this would lower the incredibly high incidence of abortion—the most common form of child spacing in that

continued on page 2

Two years as 'first family' of Burnt Mills

On May 1, 2001, Ron Agullera will complete two years as pastor of Burnt Mills. To mark the occasion, the Embers team of Meena and Jeff Dayak spoke to him and his wife, Lori, to capture the highlights of their shepherding experience to date.

Embers: What impressions do you recall from your first day here?

Ron: I remember thinking "Hope all potlucks are like this one!" It was packed.

Lori: I was impressed because it was so warm and friendly.

Embers: What's one thing about Burnt Mills that really stands out to you?

Ron: The cultural diversity. This is definitely the most diverse church we've ever been in and it poses special challenges. It is also one of our strengths.

Because this is how it will be in the kingdom of heaven. I'd like to highlight our diversity with an 'All Nations Sabbath,' a festival with food of course.

Lori: We love to travel and learn about other cultures. So the diversity at Burnt Mills has been great for us, especially for our daughters, Chelsea and Janelle. It helps them grow up without prejudice.

Embers: What was your vision for Burnt Mills when you started? How far has it been realized?

Ron: It was a two-fold vision that I have to this day:

1. Growing up in Christ
2. Sowing seeds for Christ

I want members to grow in their own spiritual journey—in their understanding of God's love and grace. Because this will translate into the way we act and help us bring in more souls.

We've grown—I see much positive change in attitudes. Numerically, we haven't been that successful—just 10–12 baptisms.

Specifically, I'd like to see growth in small group ministries, family focus, our worship time, and the way we view and value women in the church.

Lori: I've wanted the church to become very grace-oriented. We need to see Jesus first and that will change our lives, not vice versa.

Embers: What special challenges do you face here?

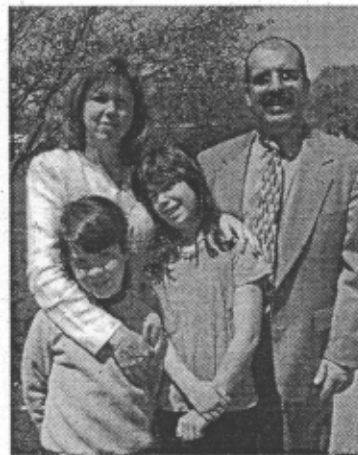
Ron: Timing is very important. A good leader is one who walks one step ahead of his people, not one who gets too far ahead. My challenge is discerning when to push and when to hold back.

Lori: I want to be more available to the church. But I focus on our kids so Ron will be more free to focus on the church. Sometimes, I'm frustrated that this keeps me from doing other things. But my involvement with the kids in church has helped me answer the needs of many parents. Burnt Mills needed more children's activities and more of a family focus, which we've been able to bring about through Adventurers, Family Life Ministries, etc.

Embers: What does a typical week in a pastor's life consist of?

Ron: About 15–20 hours of sermon preparation, some administrative work, Bible studies, visits, meetings, phone calls...

Lori: It's certainly not a 9–5. It's a life! Ron has to be on call all the time for



continued on page 4