

A.W.A.R.E. – ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR.

THANKS BE TO GOD AND THE AWARE COMMITTEE.

By Olive Grunert

As I drove up the winding path to Geneva Park in Orillia to attend Aware 2001, my whole being was so ready, so filled with anticipation and excitement. Little did I know then that this was “nothing” compared to the way I would feel when I left there on Sunday.

The 2001 Aware Committee is to be highly congratulated for a very soul searching, rewarding, blessed conference.

From the moment of registration, to the first meal, the first speaker’s session, there were nearly 300 women joined in heart and mind but very individual in spirit as each one reached out, almost frantically, for his blessings. You could hear a pin drop in the Conference Center as Jennifer Larcombe spoke on TOUCHING THE HEM OF HIS GARMENT. In front of us was the most beautiful banner - an actual garment similar to the one Jesus wore on earth, in purple velvet with gold trim. This was hand made by a lady from the Parish of St. Paul’s on the Hill in Pickering. It was so beautiful and was there so we could touch it symbolically as the lady in the scriptures did so long ago. We listened and visualized the woman in that story, and how desperate she was to touch the hem of his garment, knowing by faith she would be healed. As women, we could easily relate to the way she felt. Here we were, left our homes and families in search of being closer to HIM...some of the women with walkers and wheelchairs and some just new young mothers, there were mothers and daughters together. In this world of pain and suffering, we could relate to the women in that story.. Our small group sessions found us reaching out to each other, sharing our thoughts and prayers. One of the most beautiful events of the weekend was a square piece of cloth each leader of the small groups was given with slits in it, and various pieces of different colour strips of cloth were spread out in front of the group. We were asked to select a piece of cloth which appealed to you. It might be one that was like a dress your mother used to wear, or similar to your little girl’s first dress or one that you felt resembled your thoughts etc. Each woman selectively choose a strip of cloth and then we each weaved it thru a slit in the square piece of cloth, leaving the leader with the square, completed, colourfully representing this small groups chosen pieces., symbolic of our lives in this group being woven together. Someone from the committee almost immediately knocked on the door to retrieve our little masterpiece and did this with the other 20 or so groups. On Sunday

morning this combination of colored squares had been attached together prayerfully and placed on the altar as the Communion cloth. Over 250 women had created this beautiful masterpiece and it surely represented the union that went on with our hearts and souls. All through the weekend you could see sharing as women embraced each other, prayed, laughed and cried together and the Holy Spirit was felt in the beautiful surroundings of Geneva park.

Early in the morning with the beautiful sunrise, a few of the energetic women marched past all the bedroom doors singing songs of encouragement "This is the day, this is the day" and others, as you could hear the showers being turned on and another day had begun. Through the trees of this beautiful setting the smell of bacon, sausages and toast filled the air.

The singing of praise started an hour later as we once again shared in his love and fellowship. All these women standing singing together, as we sang the words from the screen in front of us and a two woman band played prayerfully but praisingly for us. The speaker's wonderful talk, her way of expressing herself had shrills of laughter circle the conference center, but brought us to complete silence as she explained the dedicated faith in that woman's heart as she reached for the hem of his garment. It was wonderful. Late in the evening as we all headed for the comfort of our snack and nice warm beds, we were at peace with each other and ourselves.

Saturday offered several workshops we could attend – a chance to mingle and learn. These were well attended and enjoyed. The small groups met after each of the speaker's sessions which found us together then five or six times during the weekend.

Sunday morning, - The shrills of laughter had silenced, our bags packed and placed in our cars, our little momentos placed safely in our bags as we all entered the conference center for the last time on this wonderful weekend. The music played for us to stand, join hands and sing THE HOLY ONE IS HERE, as the TABLE with our beautiful cloth was prepared for communion. Reverend Linda Nichols was the Celebrant and if you looked around this huge room you could see we were ready for this ONE BREAD ONE BODY and truly it was. The women that had arrived full of enthusiasm and excitement on Friday night, were now quiet, making confident, reverent steps to the altar. We were indeed Anglican Women Alive Renewed Enriched, as we reached up our hands and hearts to HIM to receive his body and blood. Then with this large conference center jammed back with women holding a lit candle to represent HIM being the LIGHT OF THE WORLD, and with our hands joined together, we promised to let our lights shine in our homes and

parishes as we sang "Lord the light of your love is shining".... ...With all this, another beautiful A.W.A.R.E weekend drew to a close. The winding path of Geneva Park made ME feel as though I had been hungry and was filled, as I, like the other hundreds, headed for home, our families, cleansed by his grace. Thanks be to God and the A.W.A.R.E. 2001 Committee.