

ADVENTIST REVIEW

JUNE 7, 2022

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“IT’S TIME FOR THE
PEOPLE OF GOD...
TO WORK.”

The world is the field of our work, and we must strive to give the last message of mercy to the world.”

– ELLEN G. WHITE

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– Ted N. C. Wilson, president,
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



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“For me, the greatest thrill in life is to lead people to Jesus Christ.”

Anthony Kent, p. 14

NEWS



General Conference secretary Erton Köhler reads the church's mission statement to the delegates. JOSEF KISSINGER © AR

OUR MISSION: THE HEART OF THE CHURCH

SHAWN BOONSTRA

It may be the most important item on the agenda: at 10:11 a.m., one minute after the Session officially opened for business, General Conference secretary Erton Köhler read the church's mission statement to the more than 1,800 assembled delegates. What might appear to an outsider to be a matter of housekeeping (taking place immediately after dealing with mandatory legalities), the public declaration of the statement provides an all-important frame of reference for everything that will transpire over the days ahead.

“We will start this meeting with

mission,” the chair, Artur Stele, explained to the delegates prior to the reading, “and we will end this with mission. . . . Mission is the heartbeat of this church.”

The statement, anchored in both the gospel commission of Matthew 28 and the Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14, was presented in three sections: our mission, our method, and our vision. It highlights the reason for the church's existence and provides the all-important context for the business that will transpire in the hours and days ahead.

Our mission, it declares, is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel of the Three Angels' Messages in preparation for His soon return.” The method of achieving this mission is “through Christ-like living, communicating, discipling, teaching, healing, and serving.” The vision? The anticipation that God will faithfully execute His plan to restore “all His creation to full harmony with His perfect will and righteousness.”

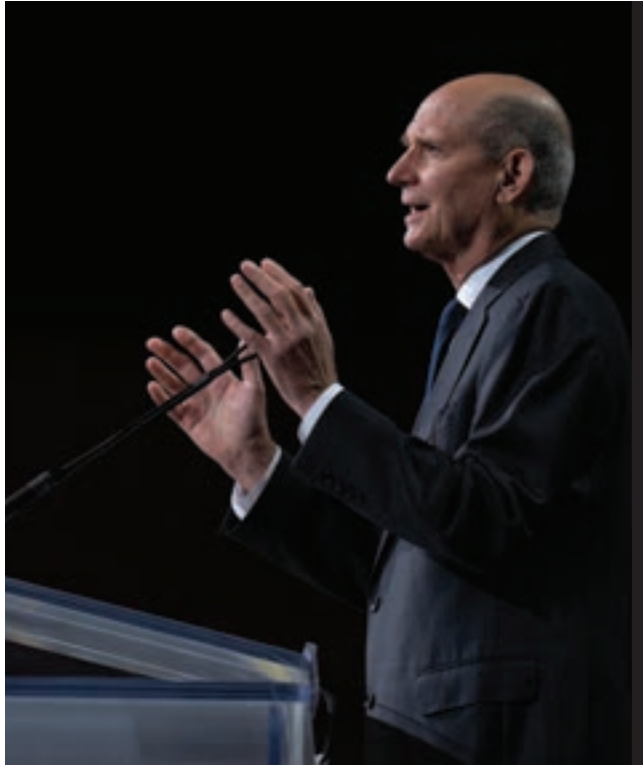
“We are opening the session with

the mission statement just to highlight to the delegates that *this* is our priority,” Köhler explained. “We need to highlight it in *all* our meetings, and the mission statement is the guide for the rest of the meetings. For this reason, our decision was to start everything by reminding our delegates that we will be guided by that, and this is our priority for everything we do. As a church, here in the Session, or in the local church, or in any part of the world: this is our call.”

The mission statement grounds the church firmly in its apostolic past on the Mount of Ascension (Acts 1) and anchors the hearts of delegates in our ultimate hope: the resolution of the great controversy. It reminds us that although the agenda is replete with seemingly mundane tasks, the delegates are about to touch holy things. It serves as a standard by which the ideas to be presented on the floor can be assessed: *Would this move us closer to or away from our mission?*

The Adventist Church has assembled. We labor in diverse cultures and languages, but *this* is what we all agree on and will continue to agree on when we return home, declaring ourselves to be in harmony with Christ: “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10, NKJV).

It was only right that the *next* order of business at the session was a baptism. ✎



JOSEF MISSINGER © AP

“WE ARE BLESSED TO HAVE SUCH AN ACTIVE CHURCH,” GC PRESIDENT SAYS

TED N. C. WILSON'S REPORT HIGHLIGHTS GOD'S WORK THROUGH MEMBERS' COMMITMENT.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

How good it is to be together!” General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson said in the opening remarks of his President’s Report on June 6. He made his comments during the first day of official business at the 61st General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, United States. It is really a unique session, a hybrid session, he emphasized, with most delegates on site and others joining by Zoom videoconference.

But no matter the format, Wilson reminded delegates, guests, and other visitors, GC Sessions are “a very important event” in the life of the church. “It is here that decisions are made that affect the entire church,” he said. Wilson added, “Delegates, your voices, your votes, matter. I urge you to participate with voice and vote. It truly matters, and it is a sacred responsibility.”

MOVING AMID CHALLENGING CONDITIONS

Wilson reminded the audience that since the last GC Session in 2015, the world has experienced unprecedented changes. “As Seventh-day Adventists, this should not surprise us,” he added, explaining that God has revealed that such challenges as the ones experienced during the past few years will become more common as we approach the end of time on this earth.

From the crisis in Eastern Europe to natural disasters to a global pandemic, the church has been forced to adapt in order to go on. Every crisis has allowed the church to respond in a compassionate way, showing other people Christ's love despite the circumstances.

And certainly, the church has managed to keep focused on mission, Wilson emphasized. "We praise God that despite challenges, His work goes on," he said. "We give God all the glory for what He has done."

Missionary endeavors of the Adventist Church are multiple and take place in various spheres, Wilson shared. From a comprehensive health ministry that "helps people to be healthier, happier, and holier," to Life Hope Centers that connect with local communities, to new and groundbreaking resources for Bible study and research, Adventist members are managing to keep drawing people to the truth as it is in Jesus.

GC DEPARTMENTS' RESOURCES AND INITIATIVES

At the General Conference level, Wilson said, every department is focused on adapting to reach out, using the latest technology to connect with new generations.

Wilson highlighted some of the resources and initiatives that various departments of the church are producing to support members and nonmembers alike. Among them, he referenced the Biblical Research Institute's work on hermeneutics in a book and videos that address important aspects of biblical interpretation.

He also referred to Youth Alive, a mental health initiative developed especially for youth by the Health, Youth, Education, and Family Ministries departments and Global Mission.

Wilson also mentioned regional church initiatives, including those that resulted from the global

COVID-19 pandemic. New opportunities for small groups opened through the Zoom platform, Wilson said, as well as increasing essential interventions by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and others. "[ADRA's] worldwide impact more than doubled since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic," Wilson said. "Their ongoing work continues to have life-saving impact."

THE CHURCH'S STRATEGIC FOCUS

In the last part of his report, Wilson reminded delegates of the 2020-2025 strategic focus of the church, named "I Will Go." This initiative seeks to encourage every

POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Wilson also shared stories about the power of the gospel to facilitate experiences of forgiveness and reconciliation. They included the stories of Ruth DePaiva and Melissa DePaiva Gibson, who offered forgiveness to the man who killed their missionary family in Palau before he himself came to accept Jesus while in prison.

It also included the reconciliation story of converts from the Philippine Communist Party's New People's Army (NPA) and the Philippines Army, which called them rebels.

The President's Report concluded with a baptismal ceremony. A colonel from the Philippines Army and his wife were baptized into the Ad-



Duane McKey, president of Adventist World Radio, and two recently baptized members from the Philippines greet the delegates. JOSEF KISSINGER © AR

member to do something for Jesus, he said, and is reflected in very practical ways.

He shared the experience of Jerry Duvall, a local church pastor in St. Louis, who rallied his church to share copies of Ellen White's book *The Great Controversy* in the surrounding community. The initiative not only helped reach others but greatly energized his church members, Duvall said after Wilson called him to the podium. "It brought [our] church back together in unity—this is something we can all get behind," he said.

ventist Church. "It was during the course of our interactions with these former rebels that we saw our God move and work to transform these individuals," he shared during the ceremony. "One day the Holy Spirit descended on us, and we opened our hearts and accepted Jesus Christ."

It is a marvelous testimony of God's power, Wilson said. "Likewise, the Holy Spirit wants to use every one of us in Total Member Involvement, as long as we say, 'Yes, Lord! I will go!'"



The team of cyclists poses for a group photo with some of the members of the supporting team, after arriving in downtown St. Louis, Missouri, United States, on June 5, 2022. DAVID B. SHERWIN © AR

CYCLISTS REACH ST. LOUIS AFTER A 1,200-MILE MISSIONARY RIDE

TEAM CELEBRATES THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT, PRAY WITH PEOPLE.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Under a summery early afternoon sun, a group of church leaders, relatives, colleagues, and friends met at Kiener Plaza Park in downtown St. Louis to welcome the I Will Go bicycle ride team on June 5.

The eight cyclists, who had left Washington, D.C., two weeks earlier, completed the last leg of their 1,200-mile (2,000-kilometer) journey west, just hours before the beginning of the 61st General Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Along the way, the cycling group, composed of several church leaders and a church lay member, distributed Adventist literature as they talked to local residents and prayed for their needs.

“There were times when we arrived in a small town and everyone was out there, and we were able to spread out and talk to people,” Australian Union Conference ex-

ecutive secretary Michael Worker said. “When they found out what we were doing, they would ask, ‘Why are you doing it?’ and we were able to tell our story and distribute Adventist literature very easily.”

THE GREATEST THRILL IN LIFE

General Conference Ministerial Association associate secretary Anthony Kent, who also participated in the ride, agreed. “As we were riding, I was praying, ‘Lord, you brought us on this road for a purpose; show us the people You want us to meet.’”

Kent said God answered his prayer, as He led them to people in need of comfort, prayer, and spiritual encouragement. “For me, the greatest thrill in life is to lead people to Jesus Christ,” he said. “When [people] discover the transforming power of Jesus Christ, their lives are never the same.”

Another of the participants, Gen-

eral Conference Health Ministries associate director Torben Bergland, reflected on the health component of the initiative. “It is amazing what the body can do. I had been a cyclist for more than 30 years, but I had never done something like this before,” Bergland said. “For me, it has been an eye-opener, how your mind can often be a limitation, not your body.”

But the witnessing component of their journey was what most impressed Bergland. “We met people who had never met an Adventist before,” he said. “For me, it increased my sense of urgency, that we need to reach all those people who are out there, because they are looking for something, they need something, and they are open, if we are just willing to go and connect with them.”

Bergland added that this is just one example of a way to reach others, but it could serve as a model.

“I hope it can inspire other people to be creative, to think how they can use their interests, skills, talents — whatever they have — in a way that they can go out and connect with people out there.”

General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson said that as impressive as the cyclists’ feat was, reaching out to others should not be exclusive of such major initiatives. “All of us can put ourselves in a place when we can honor God with our lives,” Wilson said. “Everyone can do something for Jesus, so we just don’t sit back but do what their jerseys said, ‘I Will Go.’”

DIVINE APPOINTMENTS

A day before, the team had stopped for a special Saturday (Sabbath) program at the Thompsonville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Thompsonville, Illinois, just a few hours shy of the ride finish. During the program, participants told stories about “divine appointments” they believed were set by God.

Participant Rob Hansford, an Adventist accountant in Australia, said that for him, the most frightening part of the journey was sharing his faith with people. “I was scared. But this experience really changed my life. I learned that I can go and tell the story of my family to anyone,” Hansford said.

During the program, Adventist Review Ministries executive editor Bill Knott reminded the in-person audience and those following the livestream that the call to do mission does not originate in us but in God. “We don’t move into serving the church because we think we have something to offer,” Knott said. “It’s Jesus’ call. Without the call, there could be no mission.”

Thompsonville church pastor John Lomacang agreed. In his closing thoughts, he emphasized that the trip did not match most of the participants’ comfort zones. “But I learned that God can do anything with the willing heart,” he said.

Lomacang added that these cyclists might never know the full impact of their ride until they reach heaven. But again, he emphasized, the key is accepting God’s call to reach out. “God can do anything through us if we just say the words, ‘I Will Go,’” he said. ▀

MOTION TO ADD VACCINATION TO THE AGENDA DEFEATED

NEARLY 90 PERCENT OF DELEGATES VOTED AGAINST THE MOTION TO AMEND.

ADVENTIST REVIEW STAFF

A motion to amend the agenda of the GC Session to include a discussion on vaccination was defeated on the first day of business on June 6, 2022. General Conference delegate Jonathan Zirkle had presented a motion to amend. “COVID has caused a lot of problems for our church and has caused a lot of problems for our members,” Zirkle said. Citing a document signed by thousands of Adventist Church members, pastors, and health professionals, he made a request for the church to “reconsider [its] stance on vaccination. I think it is very important we have a discussion on this.”

After the motion was seconded and a couple of members spoke on behalf of the motion, GC president Ted N. C. Wilson went to the microphone to comment.

“Since [the motion] has been seconded, it is fair that we vote on it. But I want to strongly urge this body . . . not to put that issue on the agenda.” Wilson explained it is not a Constitution and Bylaws item; it is not a *Church Manual* item; and it is not a fundamental beliefs item.

Wilson added that the General Conference has stated the position that, as regards vaccination, everyone should make their own decision. “The General Conference has not mandated that people take the vaccination,” Wilson emphasized. “It has given people a choice.”

As other delegates lined up to speak, a motion was made to cease all debate and proceed immediately to voting. The motion to cease debate was passed by 1,581 (84.5 percent) to 291 (15.5 percent) votes. Finally, the motion to add the issue of vaccination to the agenda was defeated, as only 203 (11.4 percent) voted in favor of the motion, while 1,579 (88.6 percent) voted against. ▀

TEN NEW UNIONS VOTED INTO THE SISTERHOOD OF CHURCHES

DEBBIE MICHEL, ADVENTIST REVIEW

On June 6, the 61st annual General Conference Session in St. Louis, welcomed 10 unions into the sisterhood of churches, acknowledging the church's recent rapid growth in several world regions.

ZIMBABWE

In 2018, Zimbabwe was one country and one union of 865,000 members, the second largest union in the world. Following tremendous growth in membership, stewardship, and leadership, the territory is now organized into the Zimbabwe Central and Zimbabwe West unions.

BELIZE

Central America's Belize Union of Churches was organized in 2008 with 31,000 members, 75 congregations, and 30 companies. Today, the union has nearly 49,000 members, 106 churches, 32 companies, 20 primary schools, five secondary schools, one junior college, a hospital, and one clinic. Responding to this rapid growth, on October 14, 2019, the General Conference accepted the recommendation of the Inter-American Division Executive Committee to effect a change of status from union of churches to union mission.

GHANA

The Republic of Ghana is a leader in evangelism, membership, workforce, and finance in the West-Central Africa Division, with the North Ghana Union Mission becoming a union conference beginning Oct. 10, 2021.

NETHERLANDS

Following a survey commission study on the feasibility of either restarting conferences or setting up a union of churches, the General Conference Executive Committee voted to grant the status union of churches with conference status to the Netherlands Union Conference in the Trans-European Division, effective May 2017. This replaces the current Netherlands Union Conference and its constituent entities.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Southeast Asia Union Mission covers 222 million people in seven different countries, including hundreds of people groups and languages. A feasibility study committee set up in 2016 recommended to move union headquarters and personnel from Singapore to Thailand, and to use some of the savings to create at least a couple of leadership positions to grow the Indo-China leadership and give more emphasis to the needs of the Buddhist majority countries. The larger idea was also introduced that perhaps the church does not need a relocation, but a reorganization.

In July 2019, the commission determined that leaving Singapore would finance operation of two unions while providing more resources for better-focused mission in its territory. One union each would be located in Thailand and Malaysia. Assets were divided up between the entities in 2021, and new headquarters constructed close to Asia Pacific International University.

The Southeast Asia Union Mission was dissolved at the end of 2021. In its place, the Southeastern Union Mission now covers the territories of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand with four mission fields, 82 churches, 289 companies, and 36,582 members. The new union has three mission fields, 304 churches, 155 companies, and 60,579 members.

ETHIOPIA

Effective November 17, 2019, the Ethiopian Union reorganized into the Eastern Ethiopia Union Mission and the Western Ethiopia Union Mission. The rationale for this was threefold: The population of Ethiopia has reached 110 million with multiple cultural linguistic and ethnic subgroups. Second, 139 out of the total 174 people groups are unreached. This leaves a huge opportunity for outreach. Third, there is a lack of proper infrastructure in many regions of the country.

Between them, the proposed fields, the Eastern Ethiopia Union Mission, headquartered in Addis Ababa, and the Western Ethiopia Union Mission, share 10 local fields. The unions' memberships both stand at more than 100,000 members. ▀



DELEGATE OF THE DAY PROFILE

PASSION FOR A SOON-COMING CHRIST

WILONA KARIMABADI

It's a great privilege to be alive to attend this congregation of God's people," delegate Fidelia Belta Queen Uche says. Uche, a lecturer and director of the Entrepreneurship Development Center at Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic (Port Harcourt Polytechnic), is attending the Session as a delegate from the West-Central Africa Division. No stranger to the United States, she also attended the San Antonio Session in 2015.

Uche's husband passed away four years ago. The two had been married for more than 30 years and had raised four children together. She is proud of her family — two of her children are medical doctors, one is an accountant, and

another is a lecturer at Clifford University, an Adventist institution in eastern Nigeria. Three of her four children are married, and she has six grandchildren.

The variety of natural beauty found in Africa is often known to people in the West only from scenes in movies and documentaries. Uche is proud to speak of the beauty found in her home of Port Harcourt in the southern part of Nigeria. "Port Harcourt is called the garden city. It is beautiful. We are by the coast and have so many creeks and beautiful beaches. I appreciate nature and love flowers, and there are many places there with beautiful flowers," she says.

Uche loves creating gardens on her property and has a penchant for looking for and planting new flower breeds she hasn't seen before. She is also a fashion designer. "My intention is to teach others," she adds. "When I retire I will open a sewing institute, where I will teach young people to design clothes and be self-reliant."

Transcontinental travel during a worldwide pandemic is not for the faint of heart. But Uche could not stay away from this Session, which was postponed twice. "When I was invited to be a delegate, I was so elated, so excited. I decided I had to take it up and come."

This lifelong Adventist's passion for the church centers most on the coming of Jesus. "That is my best topic," Uche says. "Anytime anything is said about the coming of Jesus I feel so happy. Songs about the coming of Jesus, sermons about the coming of Jesus — that is the passion of the church. That is what I like about the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

"We have so many other churches around us, but they deviate from the coming of Jesus, deviate from telling others about the kingdom of God that is coming soon. It is only the Seventh-day Adventist Church I can see that has the passion to point people to the soon coming of Jesus Christ. I was born into a Seventh-day Adventist family, I have been in this church all my life, and I will die a Seventh-day Adventist. Nothing will distract me from it." ❖

WHEN THE SPIRIT FALLS



MARK A. FINLEY

Some assignments seem difficult; others seem impossible. When Jesus said to His disciples, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8), the task seemed impossible from a human perspective. How could a small, frightened group of disciples ever shake the Roman world?

The odds were against them. The population of the Roman Empire in the first century was between 59 and 76 million. The band of believers that met in the upper room the 10 days before Pentecost numbered a mere 120. The ratio of Christ’s followers to Roman society was 1 to 500,000.

The book of Acts is the story of transformed disciples, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Acts 2 records the story of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the fullness of heaven’s power. The results were amazing. Luke testifies that “those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41).

Though the Spirit’s power they accomplished in one day what would have taken decades in their own strength. But that was just the beginning. Acts 4 continues this triumph of the grace of God. “However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand” (Acts 4:4).

When the Holy Spirit is poured out in the fullness of heaven’s power, miracles happen. The impossible becomes possible. Insurmountable obstacles fade into insignificance. In the first century the bastions of hell were shaken, and “believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (Acts 5:14). Some historians estimate that by the end of the first century there were as many as 1 million believers, or one in every 60 people, in the Roman Empire.

The Bible predicts that God will pour out His Spirit again at the end of time. Ellen White writes, “The lapse of time has wrought no change in Christ’s parting promise to send the Holy Spirit as His representative. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If the fulfillment of the promise is not seen as it might be, it is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be. If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit.”

The task of completing God’s mission on earth might seem impossible, but God will pour out His Spirit in latter-rain power on a praying people totally consecrated to doing His will. The work of God on earth will be finished. The mission will be completed. Christ promises that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). May that day come soon, and may we be the generation that experiences this mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit. ▀

*Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 50.

Mark A. Finley is assistant to the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

“SHAMELESS AUDACITY”



DWIGHT K. NELSON

A friend drops by at midnight. You have no food, so you race next door hoping to awaken your neighbor. Needless to say, your neighbor isn't happy! He refuses to answer. But you keep ringing his doorbell. And here's how the story ends:

“I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need” (Luke 11:8).¹

“Shameless audacity.” Isn't it high time God's people display some “shameless audacity”?

Let's say we go shopping. As we walk in, a salesperson calls us over. “I'm going to give you one of two gifts. In fact, I'll let you open both before deciding which you'd like to have.”

I open the first box. Inside is an expensive watch. “Wow!” I exclaim.

“Now, the second gift.” Inside is a card: “Granted to the bearer the entire inventory of this store.” I look at the expensive watch. “Which one should we take?” I ask you.

“The card! Because we get the watch *plus* the entire store!”

“With the reception of this gift [the Holy Spirit] all other gifts would be ours; for we are to have this gift according to the plenitude of the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive.”² Like the illustration, one gift brings every other gift—every blessing with it!

The one gift we must ask for at the commencement of this General Conference Session is the one Gift that brings



all others. When you have the Holy Spirit, you have Jesus. And when you have Jesus—you have everything.

The Holy Spirit will bring *My presence*: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever. . . . I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:16-18).

The Holy Spirit will teach *My truths*: “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (verse 26).

The Holy Spirit will offer *My testimony*: “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father . . . he will testify about me” (John 15:26).

Five years ago I was given a book called *Steps to Personal Revival*, by Helmut Haubeil.³ That book changed my life; my ministry; and the way I pray, lead, preach, and live. No one ever told me we are to pray for the *daily* baptism of the Holy Spirit. The original Greek in Luke 11:13 reads: “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who [daily, continually] ask Him?”

“Morning by morning [Jesus] communicated with His Father in heaven, receiving from Him daily a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit.”⁴ If the Saviour of the world needed the daily baptism of the Holy Spirit, how much more do leaders, members, pastors, evangelists, and teachers of the Adventist Church? It cannot be a once-a-quinquennium or twice-a-year emphasis whenever delegates gather. Unless we discover a daily connection with Jesus through the Holy Spirit, we will not be able to pull off Pentecost. Unless there is daily baptism, there will not be collective revival—period.

As William Miller said, “Today, TODAY, and TODAY until He comes.”⁵ And He’s coming sooner than you think. “Nothing but the baptism of the Holy Spirit can bring up the church to its right

position, and prepare the people of God for the fast approaching conflict.”⁶

Let us call upon the Holy Spirit with shameless audacity. “Today, TODAY, and TODAY until Jesus comes.”⁷

Dwight Nelson is the lead pastor of Pioneer Memorial Church, in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible texts are from the New International Version.

² Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1995), p. 221.

³ Helmut Haubeil, *Steps to Personal Revival* (Vienna, Austria: TOP Life Wegweiser-Verlag GmbH, 2016).

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, November 21, 1895.

⁵ Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1945) pp. 179, 180

⁶ Ellen G. White, Letter 15, 1889, Manuscript Releases (Silver Spring, Md.: EGW Estate [Nos. 97-161], 1987) vol. 2, p. 30.



TRUSTING GOD'S WORD



BARRY C. BLACK

I was failing ninth grade with a consistent D average, more than I deserved. My teachers refused to make me repeat a grade, not because they were merciful, but because one year with me was enough. This all took place at a Christian school that exposed me to God's Word. One day my life was changed by reading Matthew 5:41: "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles" (NIV).

Immediately I decided to do everything twice, reading chapters, writing essays, and preparing for exams. I challenged myself to go beyond the minimum. That simple commitment enabled me to go from a ninth-grade failure to a tenth-grade valedictorian. God's Holy Spirit-inspired Word transformed my life. I discovered a supernatural ally who provided me with the life-transforming resources of sacred Scripture.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

God gave us His Holy Spirit to be our comforter (John 14:16) and helper (verse 26). This Spirit guides us to truth (John 16:13), prays for us (Rom. 8:26), lives in us (1 Cor. 6:19), and provides us with the resources of sacred Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Because of the Holy Spirit, Scripture isn't a private human invention, for holy people spoke and wrote inspired by Him.

Second Peter 1:20, 21, states, "Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God" (NLT).^{*} It's simple. The message of the Bible originated with God and not humanity.

As we begin digesting the Spirit-inspired Word, spiritual growth happens. We no longer have to guess about humanity's origin and purpose: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? We don't have to be puzzled about our destiny or speculate regarding the final destination toward which the whole creation moves. The Holy Spirit has provided the words and interpretations that solve these riddles.

The Holy Spirit informs us of the coming of a Messiah, providing a detailed description of His life. The Holy Spirit inspired people to paint word pictures of a child who would be born of a virgin in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and would flee to Egypt. This child would dwell in Nazareth, receiving an anointing by the Holy Spirit to minister throughout Galilee (Isa. 61). The prophets foretold this Messiah would heal the sick and be rejected by humanity, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities (Isa. 53).

Remarkably, the Holy Spirit provides the resource that enables believers to please God. He inspired the Holy Bible, which produces faith: "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). We develop faith by hearing God's Word. "And without faith, it's impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6, NIV).

Thank God for the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Book that produces the faith that pleases God. Trust God's Word. 🦋

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Barry C. Black serves as the sixty-second chaplain of the United States Senate.



**TRAIL
BLAZING
WITH A
HEART FOR GOD**

Ella Simmons reflects on her historic appointment and the path ahead.

WILONA KARIMABADI

Ella Simmons is a proud daughter of Louisville, Kentucky. She’s also an educator, wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and the first female General Conference vice president. To spend time with this kind, soft-spoken, compassionate human being with a big heart for people is to sit face to face with a historymaker whose life has been led by her Creator.

Hailing from a tight-knit Baptist family, Simmons was raised with five brothers, which prepared her for what was to come. As an elementary school student during desegregation, she wasn’t always aware of the political and social unrest related to integration brewing all around her. “Our neighborhood was racially mixed, so I didn’t understand exactly what was going on, except that I was going to attend the other school where my other friends, my White friends from the neighborhood, attended. For me, it was neither positive nor negative, just a change. But my parents were not so sure that it was safe, because of the kinds of things that were happening in the country,” she says.

Wanting to instill confidence and grit in their little girl, Simmons’ parents allowed her to walk to school by herself. But what she didn’t know was that they followed her in secret. “They would walk me to school that way so that I would feel independent, but they didn’t trust society. As it turns out, things were very peaceful in our town, at least in our neighborhood,” she adds.

JOURNEYING

Simmons met her husband, Nord, in high school. But these were the years during the Vietnam War, and life was changing rapidly for many in their circle. “My husband and I were great friends in high school, buddies. Right after high school, as we were about to part ways to go to different colleges, we suddenly realized that we really wanted to be together,” she says. “[This] was the Vietnam War era. And lots of our friends were being shipped off to war; many of them were being killed. And so, of course, being swept up in this great romantic saga, I thought, *Oh,*

he’s going to go to war. So we decided that I would refuse my scholarship to Andrews University, and he would refuse his scholarship to Hampton University. We were just going to get married and to do our education along the way.” As one would imagine, this caused great distress in Simmons’ family. But the young couple was determined. So at the age of 18 Simmons became a married woman.

She had accepted the Adventist message just a few years before through an evangelistic meeting. “I know it was providential because God placed this big tent literally across the street from our home. Prior to that, for about two years, I had been trying to comprehend certain biblical truths on my own and wrestling with discrepancies between what I was reading and learning from the Bible and the lifestyle practices of my Baptist family and friends that did not exactly match what I was reading,” she says.

“I started on this journey [as a young teen], trying to trace the history of the Sabbath and figure out how changes had come about. At one point we had a rabbi and one or two Christian pastors come to our high school to do a panel discussion on religious differences. We questioned them about religious beliefs. I can remember to this day my impromptu question: ‘By whose authority was the Sabbath changed from Saturday, or the seventh day, to Sunday, the first day?’ It blew everybody back. But I had been thinking about these things privately prior to that. And so through finding such answers to my questions I became Adventist.”

Well into her career in education, Simmons heard God’s call to Oakwood University (then Oakwood College), where she took on the role of vice president for academic affairs. After the 2000 General Conference Session in Toronto, Canada, Simmons was invited to serve at La Sierra University as vice president for academic administration and provost. “We lived in Riverside, right there near the university, and we loved every moment of it and enjoyed La Sierra immensely. But then we felt the calling to come away. It was an Abraham and Sarah experience. We didn’t know where we were going; we had

“We must live that love to which Jesus has called us, all of these many nationalities and races and ethnicities and gender and age groups together in the Adventist Church.”

no clue. God just told us to leave. And so we sold our house just prior to graduation that year.” With no clear path ahead, Simmons was looking forward to teaching at the graduate level. She even had invitations to serve as president at other Adventist universities. But God said no to those options.

HISTORY MADE

“The the GC president, Jan Paulsen, called me into his office and surprised me with what he was considering in terms of my being nominated to serve in the General Conference as vice president. My initial reaction was just to laugh. Dr. Paulsen said, ‘I’m serious. What would you think?’ After collecting myself, I said, ‘Well, if this should come about, I would do what Nord and I always do—we would pray about the situation. If God calls us, we will serve.’ And he said, ‘Well, that’s all I need to hear.’”

When her name came to the floor at the session, Simmons fully expected a barrage of negative commentary. Husband Nord, who could not bear to witness that, didn’t even attend that business session. But there was nothing of the sort. “After a few positive speeches the yellow cards went up. From my view, it appeared that a sea of yellow cards went up, and I thought, to my surprise, *They’re doing this*. The next thing, I was called to be introduced. Moving forward, I prayed, ‘Lord, don’t let me trip and fall walking across the stage to this platform.’”

As the first and currently only female vice president to serve the General Conference, Simmons feels that her childhood training with five brothers equipped her to meld into “the brotherhood” and hold her own. She was, from the first, welcomed and supported by her male vice presidential colleagues.

But in segments of the larger African American Adventist community, news of her appointment was not met with enthusiasm initially. “The e were those in the community who felt that I had been part of some conspiracy to keep an African American man out of the mix. Initially there was some resentment. Some others

felt that if they were going to choose a woman, that I should not have been the one,” says Simmons.

“I had to rely on this being God’s decision, not Elder Paulsen’s, not a Black caucus’s, not women’s ministries,” she adds. “It had to be from God directly to me. And I’ve always felt that that was the case. I never aspired to this. I was never looking for it. I was blindsided.” In a short time and through open conversation, such issues surrounding her election were resolved.

MOVING FORWARD

Now 17 years on, the time has come for Simmons to get some much-needed rest. As part of her role as a vice president, a considerable amount of her time has been devoted to international travel and involvement in other General Conference departments. She is, perhaps above all, a tireless advocate for women and people of color, and opposes racism, classism, and nationalism in all their varied forms, especially in the church. Additionally, she will continue to write for the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* and perhaps get to teach a little.

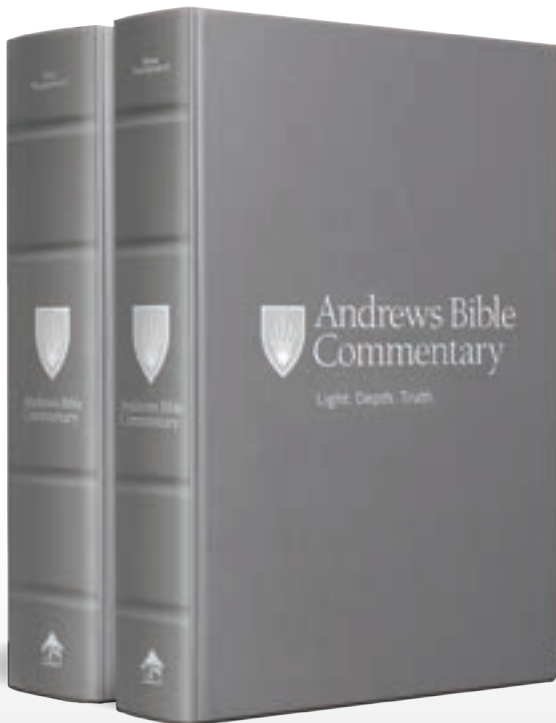
As she reflects on her service to the world church, Simmons has great burdens on her heart. “This world is in turmoil, violent social upheaval; and often we as Adventists simply say it’s because we’re living in the last days, and shrug it off. That hurts me. My heart aches when we do that. We are here for a specific purpose and must stand up and face the crises for what they are here and now, as early Adventists did. We must let it be known through word and deed—mostly deed—where we stand, where God stands, on these issues and atrocities. We must live that love to which Jesus has called us, all of these many nationalities and races and ethnicities and gender and age groups in the Adventist Church. Let’s live it and let the world look on and say, ‘We can’t get along here, but look at those people living in harmony and unity. What’s happening with them? How can they do that?’ And then we can say, ‘It is Jesus, and Jesus alone. Don’t you want to know Him? Don’t you want that too?’”

Wilona Karimabadi serves as an assistant editor at Adventist Review Ministries.



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SECRETARIAT

Where the heart of mission beats



An Adventist volunteer at work in Timor Leste.

General Conference (GC) Secretariat is where the heart of mission beats: we collect and use data to track our growth around the world and use that data strategically to mobilize our members in the fulfillment of our mission. More than 8 million people have joined our ranks during the past seven years. Despite the pandemic, GC Secretariat recruited, trained, and sent in excess of 100 missionaries for service in 2020 and 2021 alone.

DATA

We live in a world of data. Since its foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1863—well before collecting data became all the rage—GC Secretariat has kept meticulous records in the form of minutes and reports. In 1867 we added statistics to the mix. Why? Because we serve a God who is anxious that none of His children be lost.

He gave His disciples the mandate to “go . . . and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son

and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Reports and statistics are therefore markers of our progress toward that goal. GC Secretariat keeps records not only of baptisms and of membership, but also of the number of congregations, schools, hospitals, publishing houses, media centers, and, not least, workers actively engaged in gospel ministry. All these figures reflect the multiple resources God has placed in our hands to use as we work for Him.

STRONG NUMERICAL GROWTH

When the GC was founded in 1863, there were an estimated 3,500 members in 125 churches. Twenty-two ordained ministers and eight licensed ministers were on the church payroll. By the time you read these lines, in remarkable fulfillment of the parable of the mustard seed (see Mark 4:30-32), at least 22 million men, women, and youth will make up the ranks of those who proclaim the three angels’ messages.¹



Divisions	13
Union Conferences	63
Union Missions	60
Union of Churches Conferences	11
Union of Churches Missions	4
Local Conferences	418
Local Missions	313

They are scattered in 212 countries and territories where the work is formally established,² and attend 95,297 churches and 72,975 companies in 168,272 locations. More than 20,924 ordained ministers make up the army of 322,120 full-time or part-time employees.³ All our members and workers are represented at the session by 2,713 delegates who will attend in person or via electronic means.

A network of 882 administrative units operate under the overall strategic and administrative coordination of the GC. All of this has grown organically during the past 159 years—one person at a time through the work of the Holy Spirit, combined with multiple agencies.

But how did our ranks increase since our last session in 2015? During the past seven years 8,547,426 people have joined us through baptism or profession of faith. That’s an average of 1,221,060 a year! The highest number ever was reached in 2018, with 1,383,427 new members in that year alone.

Our membership crossed the 20-million-member mark at the end of 2016. With the pandemic, our growth slowed down a bit, but did not stop. Despite the lockdowns, 803,430 people took a stand for Jesus in 2020. In 2021 the number of

total accessions reached more than 1 million baptisms once again.

Our members were engaged in multiple ways, via electronic technology, but also by bringing comfort to those bereaved by the loss of loved ones and by bringing aid and relief to those affected by the pandemic.

Membership losses are unfortunately a significant factor in dampening our statistical growth. We conduct regular audits to obtain a more accurate picture of our numerical strength. Sadly, these reveal that for every 100 new converts, we have lost an average of 53 of them during the past seven years. It shows that we need to invest more resources in retention and discipleship.

Some divisions, such as the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, the South American Division, the Inter-American Division, and others, have undertaken programs of systematic reclaiming of our lapsed members. As a result, starting in 2017, when we began tracking the results of these efforts, we were able to reclaim at least 277,163 of them who were rebaptized and reintegrated into fellowship.

Data is important to understand the dynamics of the respective regions around the world. Our office reported in 2015 how a massive shift of our membership had taken place during the previous decade. The Global South is exhibiting a dynamism that has gone from strength to strength, especially in Sub-Sahara Africa and Pacific regions such as the Philippines and other islands.

Baptisms in Africa have grown from 30 percent of total baptisms in 2003 (year of the restructuring of the work on the continent) to 58 percent in 2017. Meanwhile, the proportion of reported membership on the African continent has gone from 33 percent in 2003 to 44 percent in 2020! Countries and regions such as Tanzania, Uganda, and northeast Congo have had consistent growth rates of 8 to 12 percent per year.

On the other hand, the 10/40 window (the region of the world encompassing northern Africa and

Asia, where two thirds of the world population live) remains difficult to reach, greatly challenging our resources. Progress among Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and atheists is slow, and requires a long-term commitment of missionary resources. As for the Global North, it is now in a post-Christian phase that challenges the church to share Jesus in ways that are authentic, attractive, and creative.

STRATEGIC PLAN AND REBALANCING OUR MISSIONARY RESOURCES

With that in mind, GC Secretariat has adopted an agile approach to strategic planning, allowing us to be forward-thinking and proactive. It intentionally connects our long-term vision to our day-to-day decisions, for sustainable results. With a strong sense of purpose and a culture that supports growth, the GC Secretariat strategic plan helps the secretariat offices at all levels understand their mission and connect their work to real outcomes.

In its responsibility for the overall mission strategy of the church, GC Secretariat also made recommendations that our missionary budgets be rebalanced, away from sending missionaries to well-established institutions, and towards mission-critical positions in countries of the Middle East, Asia, and other 10/40 window countries. The goal is for 70 percent of our budgets to be invested in direct-contact mission by 2032.

This will translate into approximately 280 missionaries serving unreached people groups and in unentered regions. A concerted effort to create urban centers of influence (UCIs) and other creative outposts is taking place to reach populations who have never even heard the name of Christ. Priorities are based on a list of carefully developed criteria that help identify and free up budgets for frontline work.

**PEOPLE
ADVANCING THE WORK IN COVID TIMES**

Between 2015 and 2021, 528 missionaries left their homeland for an international field of

service. Even during the pandemic and despite difficult circumstances and many delays, missionary families reached their host locations.

Top Three Sending Divisions	Families
North American Division	103
South American Division	70
Southern Asia-Pacific Division	47

We have witnessed miracles of how God worked to arrange visas, work permits, and travel arrangements at just the right time. There are currently 367 international service employee (ISE) families. Counting spouses and children, 1,210 individuals are serving as missionaries across the globe. These 367 families come from every division of our world church.

Our ISEs have been affected by the pandemic, as has everyone in every corner of the world. Sadly, four of our missionaries succumbed to COVID-19.⁴

**MISSION
THE OFFICE OF ADVENTIST MISSION**

Through the multiple missionary and church planting projects it sponsors, the Office of Adventist Mission—a department of GC Secretariat—continues to be a vital resource to advance mission in the hard-to-reach regions of the world. It directly impacts mission giving by keeping church members informed of what happens with their mission offerings through its mission quarterly, inside stories, *Mission Spotlight*, *Mission 360* magazine, and *Mission 360 TV* program.

It also oversees the activities of six Global Mis-



sion centers. These are the centers for East Asian Religions (CEAR), for South Asian Religions (CSAR), for Secular and Post-Christian Mission (CSPM), for Adventist-Muslim Relations (GCAMR), the Global Mission Urban Center (GMUC), and the World Jewish-Adventist Friendship Center (WJAF). The office funds strategically important mission projects through its Global Mission Pioneer program, and increases Adventist presence by funding urban centers of influence (UCIs). Since 2015, more than \$8 million was invested into 125 UCIs, as well as \$70 million in Global Mission projects.⁵ These funds went to support 11,390 Global Mission pioneers.⁶

ADVENTIST VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Since 1996 the Office of Adventist Volunteer Service (AVS) has challenged, equipped, and sent thousands of volunteers to answer calls around the world. Young people are often sent and sponsored by their colleges or universities. By taking a year off, they get to learn and taste the rewards of mission service. More mature people planning to stay active after retirement get to share their knowledge and experience. Together they provide an invaluable service to schools, universities, hospitals, media facilities, and other entities. Since 2015 the office has facilitated the deployment of 9,103 volunteers to serve at least one year in as many as 116 countries.



Find a Call - Adventist Volunteer Service
www.adventistvolunteers.org

THE INSTITUTE OF WORLD MISSION

The Institute of World Mission (IWM)—a training resource of the General Conference Secretariat—prepares missionaries for effective cross-cultural service and witness. It does so by providing three-week in-person training sessions for missionaries and their children to help them

adjust to their new environment. Its curriculum focuses on five objectives: spiritual growth; biblical thinking; missiological reasoning; wholistic living; and incarnational service.

Between 2015 and 2022 IWM conducted a total of 20 institutes in Brazil, Greece, Mexico, Thailand, Turkey, and the USA. It trained 1,125 individuals, including 330 children, who came from 79 countries and went to serve in 108 countries. IWM also supports returning missionaries by providing a debriefing opportunity. It assisted 199 adults, 46 children, and 61 teens between 2015 and 2021 to facilitate their adjustment back to their home culture.

Since 2018, online learning has become an essential part of IWM training. The Institute launched podcasts and webinars featuring a rich variety of practical cross-cultural mission topics. In 2019 it unveiled LearnMission.org, a learning platform for online courses, featuring, among other resources, the book *Passport to Mission*, published in several languages.

VIVIDFAITH

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a dramatic increase in the use of virtual methods. Our platform VividFaith.com was launched in 2020, just in time to meet that emergency. VividFaith helps connect people with service opportunities at every level of the church. It was created to involve a greater number of church members in mission, both in their local community and in the world church.

It does so by providing a central portal to advertise opportunities, while increasing the pool of available and qualified applicants for mission-focused vacancies. It consolidates resources and streamlines the recruiting processes among our many entities.

VividFaith.com aims to be the church’s central hub to empower people for service (including





One of the first fruits of Mission Unusual Tokyo, a partnership between GC Secretariat and the Japanese Union

JAPANESE UNION

volunteer service, career employment, freelance, group mission projects, etc.), as well as churches and institutions, for greater missionary accomplishments. Later versions will be even more interactive. They will allow users to share personal experiences, to follow others on assignments, to access a rich trove of resources about mission service, and even to raise funds for projects.

CONCLUSION

Thousands of individuals have lent their support to Secretariat over the past seven years, but none more than my predecessor G. T. Ng. After a rich career in mission beginning in 1973 in Cambodia, he decided in 2021 to pass on the baton. We owe him a great debt of gratitude for the leadership he gave to GC Secretariat since 2010. His vision, wisdom, and wit have been greatly appreciated. His energy and dedication have made many of the accomplishments outlined in this report possible.

Much has been accomplished to strengthen the church in its mission. We are now armed with ample data to help us focus our resources in the most efficient ways possible. Our most important resources, however, are people, and we will continue to invest in their recruitment, training, and support to help them achieve God's mission. The past seven years have increased its urgency. In keeping with our commitment, our heart beats ever faster to facilitate its fulfillment, soon. 📌

¹ As of December 31, 2021, there were 21,912,161 baptized Seventh-day Adventist members. All statistics are taken from <https://www.adventist.org/statistics/seventh-day-adventist-world-church-statistics-2021/> and are updated by Archives, Statistics, and Research, a department of the General Conference Secretariat.

² Out of 251 countries and regions recognized by the United Nations in 2021.

³ This includes institutional workers operating our schools, universities, hospitals, publishing houses, and media facilities.

⁴ Another missionary spouse passed away from non-COVID-related causes.

⁵ \$42,240,221 was contributed by the General Conference and its divisions, and \$28,217,965 by unions, conferences/missions, and other donors.

⁶ Another \$1,428,486 was committed to Global Mission Center pilot projects.



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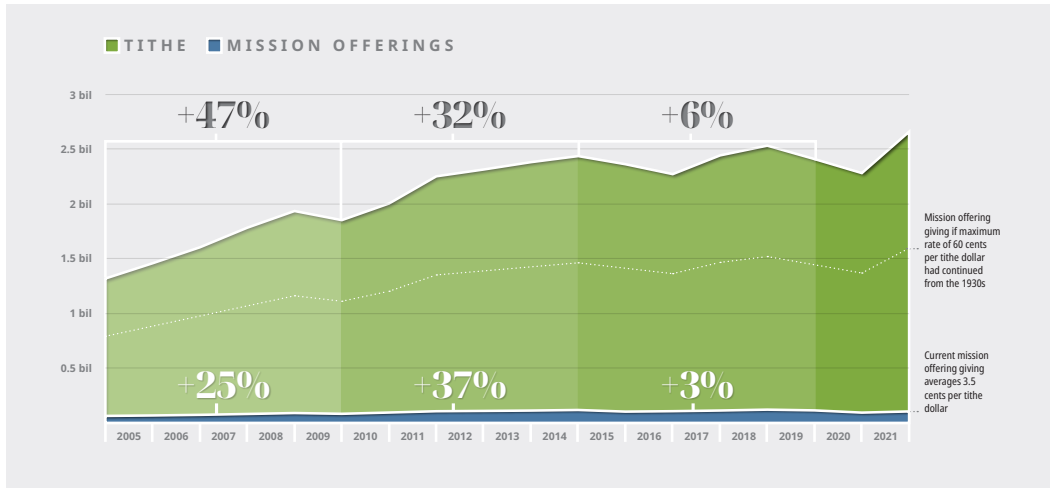
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TREASURY

Partnering with God: Our mission, His money



God raised up the Seventh-day Adventist Church with a special end-time message to tell the world. Though the faithfulness of nearly 22 million members, God provides the resources necessary for us to accomplish the sacred mission to which we have been called. What a privilege is ours to partner with the Divine! By our obedience in returning God’s money, we enable His mission to move forward through the power of His Spirit.

When the General Conference organized in 1863, records tell us there were 125 churches reporting a total tithe of \$8,000. Nearly 160 years later, with more than 90,000 churches, the data shows approximately \$2.7 billion in tithe, \$1 billion in local church offerings, and \$81 million in world mission offerings. This is God’s money to be used for the mission He has entrusted to us.

Ellen White penned that “every dollar of our means should be considered as the Lord’s, not ours; and as a precious trust from God to us; not to be wasted for needless indulgences, but carefully used in the cause of God, in the work of saving men and women from ruin.”¹

The mission before us is great, but “as [our] will . . . cooperates with the will of God, it becomes

omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings.”²

GLOBAL TRENDS IN GIVING

The quinquennium saw modest increases in terms of total world tithe and mission offerings for the period. For world tithe, a total of \$12 billion was faithfully returned by church members representing a 6 percent increase from the previous quinquennium ending in 2014. By way of comparison, the previous quinquennium’s total world tithe increased by 32 percent.

For world mission offerings, a total of \$429 million was provided by church members who understand our worldwide mission and supported it by their giving. The total world mission offerings represented an increase of 3 percent from the previous quinquennium ending in 2014. By comparison, however, the previous quinquennium had an increase in total world mission offerings of 37 percent.

Giving for world missions has been on a steady decline over the years. Today, for every dollar in tithe returned by church members, an average of 3.5 cents is given for world mission offerings. In



the 1930s, the peak of giving for world missions, the average was 60 cents. Certainly there needs to be a revival in world mission support and a renewed commitment toward taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to places both near and far.

The e is a work for us to do beyond the borders of our local vineyard, and here we are guided by the counsel of God’s inspired messenger: “To show a liberal, self-denying spirit for the success of foreign missions is a sure way to advance home missionary work; for the prosperity of the home work depends largely, under God, upon the refl x influen e of the evangelical work done in countries afar off.”³ This counsel clearly indicates that the more we support mission outside our local area, the more successful will be our local mission.

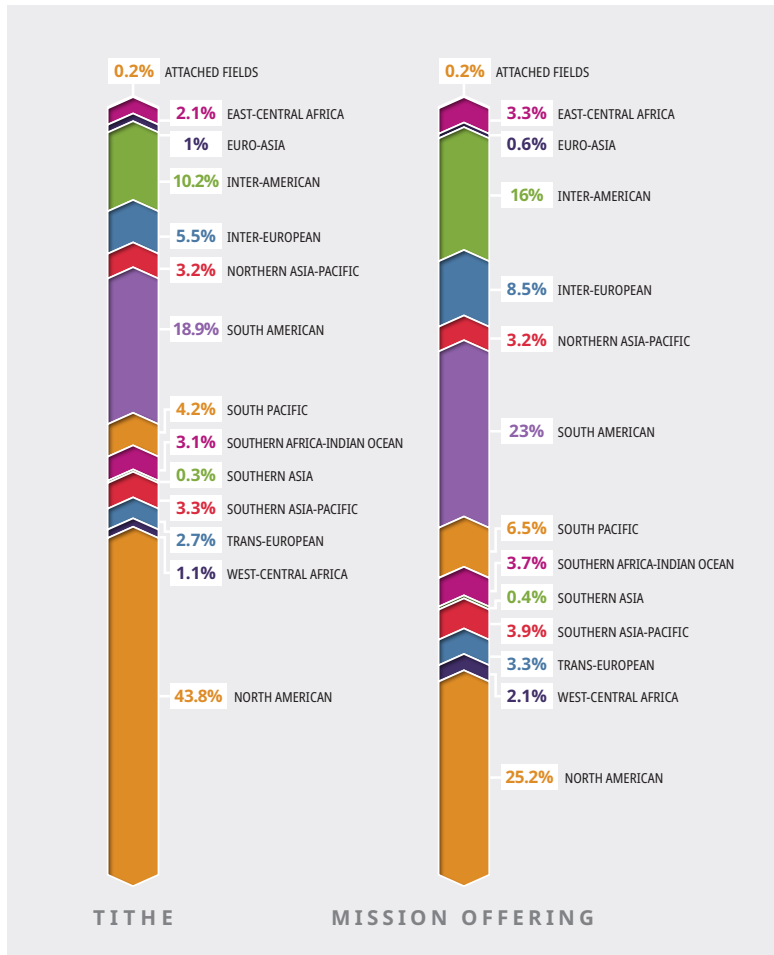
World tithe and mission offerings are accounted for by each division and attached field . Traditionally, giving trends in the North American Division (NAD) have been compared with the composite of other divisions and attached field . Throughout the quinquennium and into the plus period through 2021, the average tithe from the NAD represented 44 percent of the total, while the composite of other divisions and attached fields represented 56 percent. For mission offerings those percentages were 25 percent and 75 percent, respectively.

FINANCIAL POSITION AND PERFORMANCE (2015-2019)

The fi nancing model for mission adopted by our church involves sharing resources between various levels such as

the local church, mission/conference, union, and the General Conference (GC).

From the resources shared with the GC, mission is supported throughout the world fiel . At the end of the quinquennium, the balance of cash and investments was \$344 million, representing a 7.9 percent increase from the start of the period in 2015. Total assets increased by 5.6 percent to \$513 million, total liabilities decreased by 7.1 percent to \$51 million, and total net assets increased by 7.2 percent to \$462 million for the same period. At the end of the quinquennium 67.1 percent and 74.4



percent of total assets and net assets, respectively, were held in the form of cash and investments.

The total revenues and gains for the quinquennium were an annual average of \$243 million, of which 40.2 percent was from tithe; 31.7 percent from offerings; 4.7 percent from investment return; 4.7 percent from engagement fees charged by the General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS); 5.2 percent from gifts and bequests made by church members; 9.1 percent from restricted resources released to their intended purpose; and 4.4 percent from other sources.

The total expenses for the quinquennium were an average of \$240 million, of which 32.2 percent was for appropriations to world divisions, GC institutions, separate units operated by a board, and the 10/40 window. Other program expenses represented 35.2 percent of total expenses while support expenses accounted for 13.5 percent. The International Personnel Resources and Services (IPRS) and GCAS together accounted for the remaining 19.1 percent.

At the close of the quinquennium the GC reported 90.68 percent of the recommended amount for working capital and 104.63 percent in liquid assets as compared commitments.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic was both destructive and disruptive. Left in its wake are millions dead, businesses shuttered. Life as we know it will never be the same. The effects of the pandemic have not been limited to the threat to human life or economic well-being, however. It has also been a threat to sustaining our church family fellowship. More than two years later many church buildings remain closed. We thank God for the blessing of technology that keeps us virtually connected, but digital fellowship is not ideal. The ease is only so much Zoom can do.

GC financial operations were not immune to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Church leaders prayerfully sought the Lord for wisdom on what

urgent and critical decisions to make in response to the reality of a significant financial downturn. The unwritten decision was to *remain financially viable, survive the crisis without affecting core mission, and adapt our operations to accomplish these goals.*

FINANCIAL POSITION AND PERFORMANCE (2021)

We are now two years into the new quinquennium and praise God for the rebound in our financial situation after a downturn during 2020. This allows us some breathing room to engage in more strategic thinking and action on how best to make use of God's resources for mission. We cannot continue with a "business as usual" mentality. After comparing data from 2019 with 2021, a picture of God's blessings emerges, inspiring us to continue being faithful stewards of the resources He provides for our mission.

At the end of 2021 the balance of cash and investments was \$414 million, which represented a 20.3 percent increase from 2019. Total assets increased by 15.9 percent to \$594 million, total liabilities increased by 23.1 percent to \$62 million, and total net assets increased by 15.1 percent to \$532 million for the same period. At the end of 2021, 69.6 percent and 77.8 percent of total assets and net assets, respectively, were held in the form of cash and investments.

The total revenues and gains for 2021 were \$270 million, of which 33.6 percent was from tithe; 26.8 percent from offerings; 3.2 percent from investment return; 4.4 percent from engagement fees charged by GCAS; 14.5 percent from gifts and bequests made by church members; 9.0 percent from resources released for use because the restricted purpose for which it was given would be satisfied; and 8.5 percent from other sources.

The total expenses for 2021 were \$215 million, of which 32.4 percent was for appropriations to world divisions, GC institutions, separate units operated by a board, and the 10/40 window. Other program expenses represented 34.8 percent of total expenses while support expenses

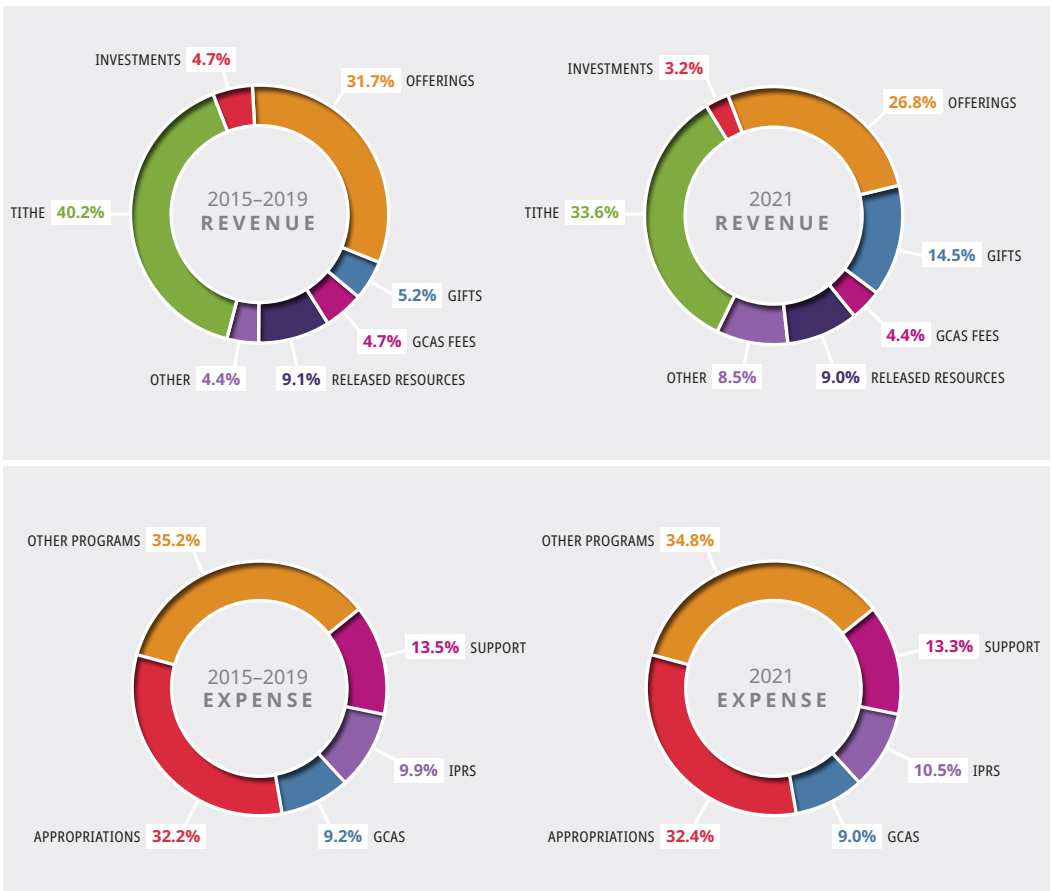
accounted for 13.3 percent. IPRS and GCAS together accounted for the remaining 19.5 percent. These percentages are consistent with the average for the quinquennium.

At the close of 2021 the GC reported 97.61 percent of the recommended amount for working capital and 112.61 percent in liquid assets as compared to commitments. Both measures were higher than 2019.

FUNDING DIVISIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Each year the GC provides regular and special appropriations to support the work of its divi-

sions and attached fields in their respective territories, its institutions, and for activities taking place in the 10/40 window. The amount provided in appropriations has remained relatively stable throughout the quinquennium. The distributions of appropriations made in 2021 are consistent with those made throughout each year of the quinquennium. Of the \$67.6 million provided in appropriations for 2021, 55.0 percent went to divisions and attached fields; 40.9 percent was for GC institutions; and 4.1 percent supported activities taking place in the 10/40 window.



TREASURY CONTINUED

FUNDING A GLOBAL MISSION PROGRAM

The Global Mission program administered by the Office of Adventist Mission is our official initiative to engage all church entities in starting new groups of believers in unentered geographical areas and among unreached people groups. Mission offerings and restricted donations are the key sources of funding for this program. For the quinquennium 5,467 projects were funded, with a total of \$50.7 million, utilizing an average of 1,600 Pioneers each year who accepted the challenge to enter new territories and reach new groups of people. Funding came from participation between the GC (41.0 percent), divisions (17.6 percent), unions (15.0 percent), local fields (20.1 percent), and other sources (6.3 percent).

FUNDING THE IPRS PROGRAMS

The GC IPRS is the human resources department for missionaries around the world from the time they are appointed until the time they return to their home country. It acts as the liaison between the world church headquarters and divisions in employing international service employees (ISEs).

As of December 2021, 367 ISE families from 66 countries served in 82 countries. The divisions sending the greatest number of ISEs were the North American Division, the South American Division, and the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. The largest allocation of the General Conference budget—at 16.5 percent, equaling an annual average of \$27.2 million—is given to support the mission program administered by IPRS.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The church is not immune to prevailing economic shifts and the turbulence created by these realities as we engage in the Great Commission. From a financial perspective, there are at least five challenges that we will continue to face as a church:

- Balancing growth and stability;
- Ensuring sufficient working capital and liquidity;

- Moving toward higher levels of self-support;
- Dealing with uncertainties because of geopolitical conflict, currency volatility, and changes in regulatory environments;
- Understanding paradigm shifts brought about by crisis events, new technologies, and changes in generational thinking.

Regardless of the challenges and others that will emerge, we are assured that God is with us. Turbulent economic times should not disturb our minds, for we are partnering with the Divine, whose “purposes know no haste and no delay.”⁴ In this our holy endeavor, there is no such thing as failure! Listen to Ellen White: “Workers for Christ are never to think, much less to speak, of failure in their work. The Lord Jesus is our efficiency in all things; His Spirit is to be our inspiration; and as we place ourselves in His hands, to be channels of light, our means of doing good will never be exhausted. We may draw upon His fullness, and receive of that grace which has no limit.”⁵

NOT BY OUR MIGHT

The mission before us is clear: We are to preach the gospel of the kingdom in all the world as a witness to all the nations so the end can come (Matt. 24:14). All of who we are and what we do must be aligned with this high and holy calling. As we partner with God, we have our mission, and we have His money. Our faithful duty therefore is to be both stewards of the mission and the money. With God we have nothing to fear—not even failure itself. Jesus is coming; let us get involved and finish this work—not by our might, nor by our power, “but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6).⁶

¹ Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 214.

² Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 333.

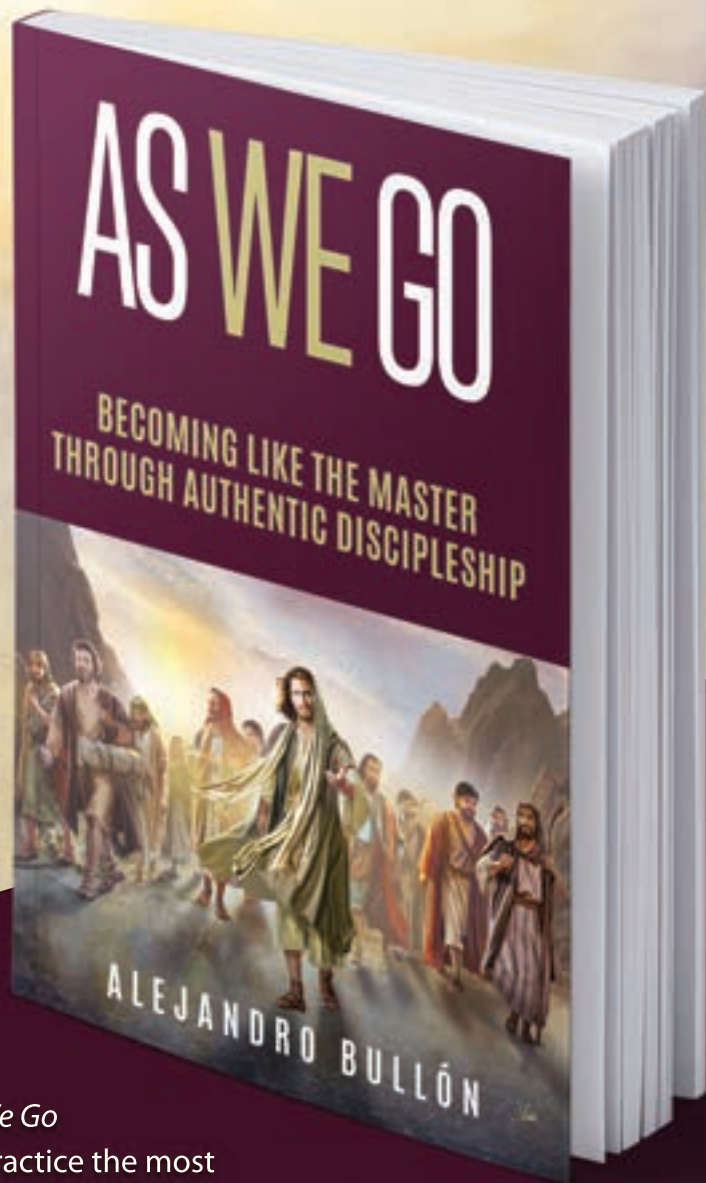
³ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 465.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 32.

⁵ E. G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 19.

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“I will go”
is only the
beginning.

**The joy is in
the journey!**



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I BELIEVE!



TIMOTHY STANDISH

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE
PRESENTED MONDAY
EVENING, JUNE 6, 2022

Many consider themselves more sophisticated, more intellectual, more rational than anyone who believes the Bible. Who would trust what the ever-confident atheist evangelist Richard Dawkins called “a local origin myth of a tribe of Middle-Eastern camel-herders”?¹ Who would believe ancient Scriptures over the advancing and irrefutable knowledge that science reveals to modern sophisticated people who have moved beyond superstition?



Anyone contemplating this kind of argument might want to pause and remember that the history of science is the history of brilliant scientists being wrong. Science provides no way of knowing if current scientific understandings are correct, until we discover that they are wrong in light of new information. Believers have an unquestionable defense. God's Word actually is true and serves as a standard against which all theories either stand or fall. What is true remains true no matter what we think or believe, or who discovers and shares it.

People claim to desire truth, but truth cuts down our cherished fantasies and human heroes. Take as an example David, whose sins are unflinchingly recorded in the Bible. He was a sinner, but also an ancestor of Jesus. He was the psalmist who penned words that still inspire:

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Ps. 19:1).

THE HEAVENS REVEAL TRUTH

If it were not revealed in Scripture, could anyone know if this is true? The heavens are glorious—this is true irrespective of whether or not someone agrees. Truth such as this are more discovered and recognized than proved. Science is just one discipline using a particular approach to discover truth about nature, but without an understanding of the Creator, it is little more than a blind collection of information. Let's look at some of what science can tell us about the night sky's most obvious heavenly body, our moon.

The moon helps us tell time, and the way it is illuminated by the sun reveals its spherical shape, opening our minds to the prospect that other lights in the heavens may also be spheres. But what if we never saw the moon? Would it still be a sphere? Would it still declare the glory of God? These are questions that we have to contemplate only in theory.

Some planets lack a significant atmosphere; others have an opaque atmosphere; but God designed our transparent atmosphere so we can look up and learn that part of the moon's beauty is its vital role in the maintenance of life. The moon stabilizes the earth's axis, allowing life to thrive. It also happens to be the precise size and distance away from us to almost perfectly eclipse the sun,

permitting us to study the sun's corona, which reveals information vital to our understanding of the sun and other stars. But there is much more. From our position in the universe we can discover that earth is in just the right place, not just for our survival, but for our study of the universe.

The Creator wanted us to learn how amazing this system is. The German astronomer Johannes Kepler put it this way in a 1599 letter to mathematician Georg Herwart von Hohenburg:

"To God there are, in the whole material world, material laws, figures and relations of special excellency and of the most appropriate order. . . . Those laws are within the grasp of the human mind; God wanted us to recognize them by creating us after his own image so that we could share his own thoughts."²

God also provided us with naturally curious minds and finely tuned senses to gather information about our world. There is beautiful symmetry between our capabilities and the world in which we live; each sense is breathtaking. Consider our sense of sight. Sight requires light-sensitive cells in a specific arrangement, a system for focusing light onto them, a way to transmit and process each signal from these cells, integrating it with signals from about 100 million other light-sensitive cells in each eye, and finally, a conscious part of our being that understands what is being observed. For most of us, all of this happens effortlessly in an instant.

Do you think a response of praise at discovering this amazing system is elicited in someone who doesn't believe the Bible? God's Word is a "lamp unto [our] feet and a light unto [our] path" (Ps. 119:105, KJV). Without it, we see the heavens and may even be impressed, but we miss the true wonder.

Take, for example, the brilliant popularizer of cosmology, Carl Sagan. He saw far more of the heavens than most people, yet when framing his breathtaking television series *Cosmos*, Sagan's summary was: "The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be."

When blinded by false beliefs, none of the beauty, none of the incredible scale, none of the laws by which it operates, mean that "the heavens declare the glory of God." The heavens speak, but without the Bible, we remain deaf and blind.

I believe because, without belief in God's Word, I would be blind.

A Creator who fashioned a wonderful world, then redeemed it and offers salvation to all who want it? Considered by some to be pure nonsense.

There is no reason to expect ever-greater exhibitions of brilliance as we explore the atoms and everything composed of them. If we do happen across wonders, maybe it is the universe we should worship, but this still provides no hope, and the world remains a place filled with struggle, suffering, and death. It does not reveal love.

GOD'S WORD REVEALS TRUTH

Believing God's Word cures this blindness. Solomon recognized a fundamental truth: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7, KJV). Without the revelation of God in Scripture, we cannot gain true knowledge of anything else, only twisted and strong delusions (2 Thes. 2:11). Believers may not immediately have a perfect understanding—there will always be mysteries—but there is hope of discovering some aspects of truth that are sublime, fascinating, and profoundly helpful. The great Christian philosopher Anselm of Canterbury put it this way:

"I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but rather, I believe in order that I may understand."³

I am not ashamed to say that I believe (2 Tim. 1:8), because without belief in God's Word, I would be impaired. But remember the price of truth. It is a sharp-edged sword cutting through every treasured falsehood. It demands obedience that I, as a terrible sinner, do not always feel naturally inclined to yield.

For example, a powerful delusion sweeping through society rejects the equality that we all enjoy as descendants of Adam and Eve and adopted children of God through Jesus Christ (1 John 3:1; Gal. 4:4, 5). When this truth is rejected, the value of a human becomes rooted in something other than being human, created in the image of God and of such value to the Creator who gave His life for each of us.

In this false philosophy, human value is shifted to some arbitrary characteristic that individuals may or may not possess. It may be the side of a

border they live on, the color of their skin, their ancestry, or—possibly most insidiously—their abilities. In this view human rights are not absolute, granted by the Creator, but somehow decided on the basis of criteria that we make up ourselves.

LOVE DEFINES GOD'S TRUTH

The Bible's message of unity is rejected, and humanity is fractured into an unlimited number of classes ranked according to arbitrary scales, each in an endless struggle for survival. As Bible believers, we are called to be uniters, recognizing that all have a place and role in the family of God, lovers of those who hate us (Matt. 5:43), champions of those who are oppressed and marginalized (Prov. 31:8, 9). Most important, the Bible reveals that all human life is of infinite value, because life is God's gift. It is not ours to take from anyone.

In this world—rebellious against its Creator—believers will face derision, opposition, mockery, and any number of other troubles, but we will believe what is true. We may fear the consequences, but we will see that the heavens do declare the glory of God, revealing that He is love (1 John 4:8).

We also see each other, however humble and weak from sin we may be, as genuine brothers and sisters made one in Christ, each member of the body of Christ functioning in a unique and essential way (1 Cor. 12:12-14). Together we have hope, because the truth revealed in God's Word is that Jesus Christ is our Creator and our Redeemer. He has overcome the world (John 16:33)

Love has already triumphed, and we may be at peace in the midst of the most violent storm. Because I believe, I can see beyond the storm, and I am not ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16). I believe that the Bible is God's Word. I believe that God's Word is true. ■

¹ Richard Dawkins, "Sadly, an Honest Creationist," *Free Inquiry* 21, no. 4 (2001): 7, 8.

² Carola Baumgardt, 1599 letter to Herwart von Hohenburg, in *Johannes Kepler, Life and Letters* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), p. 50.

³ Anselm of Canterbury (Anselmus Cantuariensis), c. 1077, *1 Excitatio mentis ad contemplandum Deum, Proslogion*, <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/anselmproslogion.html>.

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GC
22

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A GATEWAY TO THE FUTURE



DIOGO CAVALCANTI
EDITORIAL COORDINATOR,
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In the heart of St. Louis shines the Gateway Arch, the tallest monument in the United States. Its massive 43,000 tons (39,000 metric tons) are deeply rooted in front of the Mississippi River and reach the incredible height equivalent of a 63-story building. Trams move inside this megastructure, delivering people to and from the top. Visitors enjoy outstanding views of up to 30 miles (48 kilometers) away. The monument that figures as a graphic icon of the present GC Session has a profound historical and cultural relevance.

The national park named for the Gateway Arch was founded in 1935 in honor of Thomas Jefferson. He arranged the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and dreamed of a transcontinental United States. Trying to capture this spirit, the gigantic steel arch suggests a look to the West and speaks of the indomitable search for new possibilities.

The park has something else significant: the Old Courthouse, which became one of the main stages of civil rights history. In that place, in 1846, the African American Dred Scott filed a lawsuit to regain freedom for himself and to free his wife, Harriet. At that time, their wages were being paid by a third party to their so-called owner, Irene Emerson. After a lengthy process, the courthouse denied their request. This disappointing result reverberated through the country and became one of the critical issues related to the American Civil War. The same courthouse denied Virginia Minor the right to vote when she sued for it in 1872, resulting in another wave of change.*

Overall, Gateway Arch National Park links both contradictory and complementary memories in an attractive way. It conveys concepts of nation and nationality, civilization and individual rights, glories and dramas. Its futuristic, bold metallic lines invite us to envision a brighter tomorrow.

The Arch might easily be a symbol of what the GC Session stands for. In this unique gathering, we celebrate the advances of recent years. We admire the institutional strength and human diversity of an eschatological movement that crosses the skies (Rev. 14:6), calling the world's attention to Jesus' soon coming.

At these meetings, we are also reminded of our shared identity and the precious heritage our pioneers have granted us in every country. Indeed, at the GC Session, we embark on an audacious enterprise in which smaller and bigger votes paint the future.

Therefore, seven years after San Antonio, we cannot afford to be mere spectators of a festive event, no matter how much we enjoy it. After COVID's deadly tsunami, we don't come to the Session to sit down in apathy. In the shadows of war and uncertainty, we haven't come to St. Louis to be tourists!

Above all, we have come here to ask for a renewed spirit of commitment, love, and service. There are still billions who need to be reached. All around us, we find extremes of luxury and poverty, skepticism and hostility, moral compromises and theological metastasis, dwindling communities and eroded ideals. Humanitarian catastrophes challenge us to get engaged.

Another bold arch of faith and hope rises in St. Louis. We have a great "West" before us and a Righteous Judge above, who appeals to our hearts: "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" Let our answer be, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isa. 6:8, NIV). 🍀

* See "The Dred Scott Case" and "Virginia Minor and Women's Right to Vote" in National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/jeff/index.htm>.

INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION

Educating, serving, evangelizing



More than 500 people meet at the Église Adventiste Galaad in Diquini, Carrefour, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, during the second week of an evangelistic series held January 2020. The church grew out of a small group that began meeting after an earthquake devastated the island in January 2010. The Galaad Adventist Church grew from a group of 50 to more than 350 members today.—LIBNA STEVENS/IAD

Since the arrival of the Adventist message in Inter-America, thousands of members discovered their passion for Jesus and dedicated their lives to spreading the gospel to expand the kingdom of God. That passion continues to pulsate in the hearts of many today who, selflessly, inspired by the Holy Spirit, share hope for the honor and glory of God.

We praise God for His infinite mercies and providence for His church and for preserving the spirit of countless pioneers. These men, women, and children, moved by the conviction of having received a divine calling, and with the certainty that each step was led by the Lord, left their native countries and traveled long distances to proclaim the good news of salvation.

They came to Inter-America exemplifying a spirit of hard work, courage, devoted service, and determination.



Members of the General Conference and some of their family pose for a photo during Executive Committee meetings in San Francisco, California, United States, May 1922, when the Inter-American Division was organized.—INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION FILES

GROWTH SINCE 1922

It is with that heritage that the Inter-American Division (IAD) was organized in 1922 with a membership of 7,500 and 221 organized churches, grouped in nine mission fields. Although the Adventist message entered the region in the early 1880s, it wasn't until May 26, 1922, that Adventist world leaders officially voted it as a division at General Conference Session.

Today the church continues moving forward with more than 3.7 million members, worshipping in more than 23,000 churches and companies, organized in 156 conferences and missions, administered by 24 unions.

Each of Inter-America's Adventist schools and educational institutions, clinics and hospitals, food factories, publishing houses, Hope Channel Inter-America television and media centers, radio stations, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) offices, and centers of influence remains dedicated to crowning the mission not here on earth, but in the heavenly kingdom.

MEMBERS' FAITHFULNESS

Without a doubt our church members' faithfulness and commitment keeps the mission going throughout Inter-America. In spite of health, social, and economic challenges facing the countries in our territory and the world today, we see miracles and the manifestation of divine grace. Church



members continue to share their tithes and offerings, advancing church growth by leaps and bounds.

We are inspired by 1 Samuel 7:12 in declaring God's goodness this centennial year: "The Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer saying, 'Thou far the Lord has helped us'" (NIV).

The assurance from the Spirit of Prophecy continues to resonate in Inter-America: "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."*

The growth of the church in the 42 islands and countries that make up the IAD territory can be seen in the approximately 150,000 people who give their lives to Jesus every year. From 2015 to the present, 2,400 new churches and companies have been organized. That represents one church organized almost every day during the past seven years.

EDUCATING, SERVING, AND EVANGELIZING

Inter-America has extended its legacy of educating, serving, and evangelizing throughout the territory.

During the past seven years the church in the IAD has focused not only on providing formal Adventist education for children, young people, and adults through its nearly 1,000 primary and secondary schools, 13 universities, and its theological seminary, but also ensuring that its leadership and members are trained through various in-person and online training programs, certifications, adopting best practices for ministry, discipleship, and leadership.

Since 2016 thousands of administrators, pastors, educators, department directors, church elders, and laypeople have been certified through Inter-America's territory-wide Segment Leadership Development (SeLD) Conference. This annual conference aims to equip leaders on how to manage the various entities of the church, understand their role, and effectively carry out the mission as they lead.

More than 43,000 church elders have been certified to assist pastors in ministering to the

growing congregations and the more than 74,000 small groups within our territory. Throughout the 24 unions thousands of men, women, adolescents, and children have been equipped through training and certification in the various departments and ministries of the church.

ADRA offices in Colombia, Mexico, and Honduras have expanded their efforts to assist thousands of people who have migrated in recent years from Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti, and other countries, as they travel north in search of a better life for their families. Additionally, the church and ADRA have assisted thousands who were affected by the numerous disasters that hit the territory nearly every year.

New centers of influence across most of the IAD unions have been providing assistance, services, and training to communities across cities and neighborhoods.

During the past seven years, through Possibility Ministries, intentional focus has brought more awareness and care for those with special needs, ensuring that anyone with challenges can have access to church. Professionals and trained



A Venezuelan migrant is checked by a health professional after walking more than 120 miles (195 kilometers) from Cucuta, bordering with Venezuela, to Bucaramanga, in northern Colombia. Thanks to an ongoing initiative by ADRA Colombia and USAID, more than 115,000 persons have been supported with medical assistance, food, and settlements since 2018.—ADRA COLOMBIA

INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION CONTINUED

member volunteers have been ministering to the hearing-impaired, vision-impaired, orphaned, those with mental health issues, the bereaved, as well as those who function as caregivers.

HOPE CHANNEL INTER-AMERICA

With a growing population of more than 308 million people in its territory, the IAD since 2016 has been strengthening its Hope Channel Inter-America network of three television channels in English, Spanish, and French, and 19 media centers. Hope Channel Inter-America continues to inform, teach, and transform lives through satellite channels as well as through cable companies in hundreds of cities and regions.

The heartbeat of the church in the islands and countries of the Caribbean, in Mexico, Central America, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana can be seen in the smiles, hugs, and tears of members, totally involved in leading others to be disciples of the Master.

As a division family we experienced pain and sadness as we mourned the loss of many of our workers and hundreds of members struck by the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 and 2021. We prayed with and for families, pointing to the wonderful hope we have in Jesus to see our loved ones and dear friends on resurrection morning.

Without a doubt it is dedicated church leaders and members that make the difference for Jesus in Inter-America.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Lyneve McLeish of Kingston, Jamaica, facing a diagnosis that her 1-year-old daughter was hearing-impaired, taught her to detect vibrations under her chin to learn about sounds, taught her sign language, and taught her how to read and write and love the Lord. Left a single mother while her daughter Ma-Ester was a toddler, McLeish put herself through college to become a social worker.

She taught sign language throughout Adventist churches across Jamaica and was instrumental in

organizing the first Seventh-day Adventist Church for the deaf in Jamaica in 2017. She is the head elder of the Portmore Seventh-day Adventist Deaf Church in Portmore, Kingston, and ministers to the 85 deaf and hearing-impaired members in the church every Sabbath. Her daughter, now 31, will complete her university studies in social work at the end of this year. She leads the church service and program every Sabbath and is currently giving Bible studies to many who visit the church.

Karina Castillo de Palacio of the West Venezuela Union motivated hundreds of women in her conference to shine the light of Jesus in their workplace, neighborhoods, and communities during the pandemic last year. As Women's Ministries director for the Southwest Venezuela Conference in San Cristobal, she invited women from different pastoral districts to participate in the IAD Women's Ministries certification program.

In September 2021 they organized programs using social media platforms to connect with others, perform community service, and start studying Spirit of Prophecy books. Castillo soon introduced Bible journaling, encouraging her Women's Ministries colleagues to invite their nonchurch friends to study *Steps to Christ*. Every Wednesday at 6:00 a.m., groups met either on Zoom or through WhatsApp to read, pray, and discuss a chapter. They each chose three of their favorite verses mentioned in the chapter and, on their own time, illustrated them in their Bibles. With the most basic of resources, such as crayons and colored pencils, the group grew from 50 members to 1,200 studying the Bible and journaling. At the end of the year, thanks to this initiative, more than 600 women in that group were baptized into the Adventist Church in West Venezuela.

On January 12, 2010, a tragic earthquake rocked Port-au-Prince, Haiti, killing more than 200,000. For Greger Figaro, witnessing for God became an unquestionable mission. As a university professor and an ophthalmologist with his own practice,

Inter-America embodies a solemn commitment to the heritage of the King of the universe.

Figaro escaped death on that evening because he could not make it to class.

People were so afraid to be under any type of structure after the earthquake that they began to sleep in the streets, which were impassable because of debris. Many gathered on the street outside Figaro's home. Touched by the apparent need, he began to offer worship services every week for anyone who wanted to participate.

For more than five years they worshipped under a tent with wooden pews right in the middle of the street, in front of his house. Figaro felt a burden to find property and build a church. He helped raise funds to build one, and today the Église Adventiste Galaad is bursting with more than 500 members worshipping every Sabbath. Figaro said that the terrible trauma of the earthquake gave birth to a beautiful new congregation in their neighborhood who praise God every week.

CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY EVANGELISM EFFORTS

The IAD is celebrating its centennial anniversary with many grand activities. Leaders and laypeople have intensified evangelistic efforts in the spirit of the early pioneers, sounding the three angels' messages and pointing to Jesus' soon coming. Our 24 unions grouped together by region to conduct evangelistic campaigns; since January 2022 the gospel has been proclaimed through in-person events and on radio, television, and social media platforms.

More than 4,000 new members joined the church in March following "The Footprints of Hope" six-week series, hosted online from Montego Bay, Jamaica, throughout the English-speaking unions in Inter-America—namely the Atlantic Caribbean, Belize, Caribbean, Jamaica, and Dutch Caribbean.

More than 21,000 new believers were baptized in the Dominican Republic, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala during the "Don't Give Up, There Is Still Hope" two-week series that visited each country live every evening and broadcast on



Several are baptized at the El Carrizo Dam in Valles de Tijuana in Baja California, Mexico. They are part of more than 23,000 new members who joined the church in May after an online evangelistic series leading up to the national campaign held June 12-19, 2021. —BAJA CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE

radio and social media platforms from March 25 to April 9, 2022.

The first of two French evangelism series took place in Haiti, resulting in more than 8,000 new members baptized into the church. Additional online regional campaigns took place in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Colombia, and Venezuela, as well as in the French Antilles and Guiana territory. An upcoming online evangelistic campaign is scheduled for Mexico, June 18-25, 2022.

Church leaders and members in Mexico are working together to exceed the 23,478 new members who joined the church last year during the first online regional evangelism campaign coordinated by the five unions in the country.

ACCEPTING THE CALL "I WILL GO"

Whether in English, Spanish, French, Creole, Papiamentu, or any of the dozens of dialects in the jungles, deserts, and mountains, there are sons and daughters of God who have accepted the call "I Will Go." They serve, educate, and preach the Word of God so that others can become transformed individuals in Jesus.

Inter-America is full of life, happiness, color, excitement, and zeal. Inter-America embodies a solemn commitment to the heritage of the King of the universe.

Today we give glory and praise to Him who called us to follow Him. We believe in Him, we wait for Him, looking for the glorious day when we will be "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13). 🍀

* Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 196.

INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION

Overcoming the challenges of making disciples

The Inter-European Division (EUD) comprises 20 countries with 330 million people of different languages, national identities, traditions, cultures, and worldviews. These differences do not always match political and geographical boundaries, and have resisted all kinds of merging endeavors. This complexity has increased even more with internal migrations and people immigrating from countries outside Europe.

Most contemporary Europeans don't attend any church, and have received very little or no religious education. On the other hand, humanistic, agnostic, and atheistic ideologies are present in the curriculum at all school levels. In addition, to fill the spiritual emptiness, a growing number of people are involved in several forms of spiritism, esoterism, mysticism, and Eastern philosophies and religions.

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES AND MAKING DISCIPLES

In such a context it is difficult to reach out to people and succeed in making new disciples using just an apologetic-religious approach.

In all our territories relational approaches have proved to be more efficient in winning people's hearts and establishing meaningful relationships, eventually leading them to accept Jesus as their Saviour. It's the method Jesus used to attract and make new disciples.

The EUD Strategic Framework for 2016-2020 identified seven Strategic Focus Areas and Objectives: (1) Growth in Discipleship; (2) Emphasis on Mission Awareness and Involvement; (3) Education; (4) Family Life and Foundations; (5) Comprehensive Health Ministries; (6) Communication; and (7) Personal and Collective Response to Social Welfare Needs of the Community.

All EUD activities and programs are organized with the understanding that teamwork is paramount. It strengthens cooperation among church departments and institutions and prevents overlapping programs and activities that generate stress and burden the church.

We organized several joint activities to foster this cooperative approach. During the EUD departmental advisory held in Seville, Spain, in September 2016, participants dealt with issues of common interest in the plenary meetings. In addition, the departments met separately in breakout sessions to discuss their agendas. Participants appreciated gaining a broader understanding of the multifaceted mission entrusted to us individually and collectively.

EUD department leaders and officers decided to meet monthly to discuss and deal with common interest issues for our evangelistic commission's fulfillment.

An interministries congress on discipleship, dubbed People 7.0, brought together more than 400 Children's, Family, and Women's Ministries leaders in Lignano, Italy, in September 2019. It cast the vision of becoming more efficient disciple-makers inside our own homes and churches, avoiding the painful experience of losing our children and youth.

GROWTH IN DISCIPLESHIP

The primary purpose of all church activities is to make disciples, according to Jesus' command (Matt. 28:18-20). It has to begin with the church. We need to intentionally target all groups of people with particular needs inside the church: children, youth, women, and families.

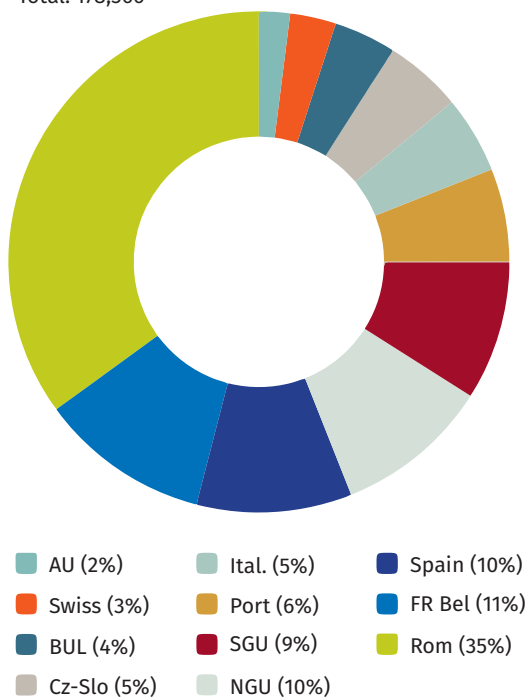
To effectively help our children and young people, we focused on developing solid and stable homes. To help our families, we emphasized education and offered support in this area. We encourage parents to invest quality time in their children's education. They need to organize daily family life in a way that passes on to their children the teachings and example of Christ.

One of the best ways to keep our children and young people in the church is to actively integrate them into helpful service on behalf of the poor, the sick, and those who need help. Some unions have been actively promoting camp meetings in which young people are helping others. These



MEMBERSHIP BY UNIONS

Total: 178,566



activities have been enriching and spiritually edifying for all involved.

The EUD Youth Department has encouraged young people to participate in One Year for Christ, Adventist Volunteer Service, His Hands, and other mission-oriented activities and programs. These activities are attracting a growing number of young people.

EMPHASIS ON MISSION AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT

Our unions are committed to encouraging and involving all members and workers in evangelism, not as an event but as a lifestyle of a committed disciple. This concept is well accepted and implemented in various ways and under different names, such as “Total Involvement” or “Continuous Personal Evangelism.”

In one conference fully engaged in applying this approach, the total number of baptisms went from 90 in 2018 to 395 in 2019. Consequently, church members train and mentor other members. Pastors learn how to coordinate the entire process of reaching out and making and feeding new disciples, who become disciple-makers themselves.

SMALL GROUPS AND SABBATH SCHOOL ACTION UNITS

In many of our unions the open and friendly atmosphere of a home small group has been a valuable means to involve church members in the disciple-making process. Moreover, they can easily invite their friends and acquaintances to such meetings, especially in highly secularized environments.

To be more effective in some countries, the home small group is associated with a Sabbath School Action Unit. Members gather not only to study the lesson but also to pray together, encourage each other, and work together to bring those they love into a closer relationship with God.

This combination has proved to be an efficient instrument to revive the spiritual life of our church members and those whom they are trying to help. So, for example, a stagnant church woke up and started to thrive, giving birth to two new churches.

Thanks to Zoom, during the pandemic lockdowns the number of small-group activities and attendance increased exponentially. Using this technology, one of our unions organized a 40 Days of Prayer program involving nearly 800 homes simultaneously. After a brief general introduction and a spiritual message, they split into small groups.

CREATION MOVIES

Some of our conferences have been projecting films on Creation, specially designed to lead people to the Creator, in large cinemas and theaters. Since the Swiss-German Conference started this endeavor in 2009, more than 20,000 people have attended these presentations. Many have become good friends with our church members, begun studying the Bible, or participated in the church. To continue

to attract people from the same territory, movie producers and directors started to integrate prophecy and other Bible topics into their shows.

BIBLE EXPOS

Several years ago the Spanish Union realized that despite their territory's highly secularized environment, people were interested in learning more about the Bible. In response to the public's interest, they developed a very attractive and successful exhibit with materials that give people a better understanding of the Bible and the Adventist message. Creation, the Flood, God's law, and the sanctuary—with its utensils and priests (real people dressed as such)—are presented in such a way that catches attention. Though the expo, people embark on a journey that awakens a desire to know the Bible and study it more profoundly. Some unions are currently using and adapting this material with great success.

EDUCATION

The schools in our territory continue to develop conceptually, train wholistically, and grow numerically. They have a significant impact on the general population. Our schools have either reached their maximum admission capacity or have significantly increased their enrollment. For that reason the EUD executive committee voted a 5 million euro financial grant to develop primary and secondary education institutions from 2018 to 2022. In April 2022 EUD granted an additional 3 million euros for education projects.

EUD is genuinely committed to fostering professional excellence in ministerial training and practice. The Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (BMTE) defined a core curriculum for pastoral education, with an increased emphasis on topics relating to evangelism and practical theology. Currently the Adventist Church in the EUD runs 41 elementary schools, 31 secondary schools, three nursing schools, and seven tertiary-level institutions.

FAMILY LIFE AND FOUNDATIONS

Families' stability is crucial to the prosperity of the church and the society in which we live. The EUD has invested in supporting its unions with several activities and materials to help families grow stronger spiritually. To help families cope with postmodern, post-Christian society, EUD unions are actively involved in organizing camp meetings, retreats, seminars, and other helpful events.

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH MINISTRIES

Considering the growing costs and complexity of health-related issues, people are increasingly interested in keeping themselves in good health. Cooking classes, health conferences, health clubs, health expos (for adults and children), fitness centers, vegetarian restaurants, lifestyle clinics, health publications, and websites have been helpful means of reaching out to people and helping them to discover the natural Source of life and healthy living—Jesus Christ.

In 2018 the Pan-European Health Conference was organized in Bucharest to help medical professionals embrace a more wholistic approach to health care, including spirituality.

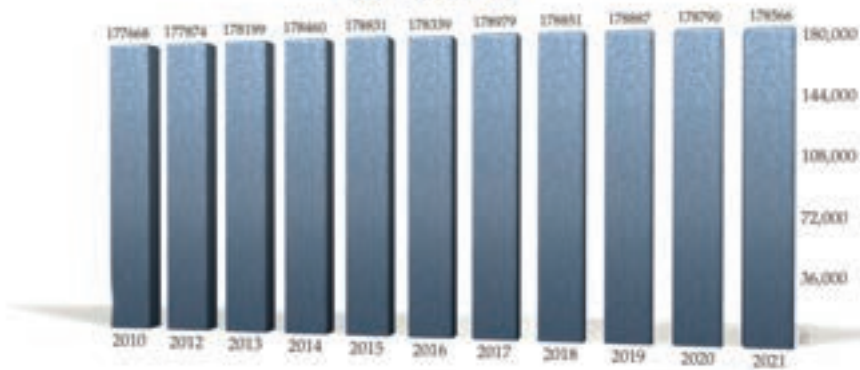
COMMUNICATION

Modern technologies offer an almost unlimited array of possibilities to spread the gospel message quickly and efficiently. The EUD Communication Department has been working to improve a network that facilitates the exchange and distribution of the materials produced by the various media centers.

Several Internet, radio, and TV stations constantly broadcast programs that have a very positive impact and response from our viewers and listeners. Several centers of influence work with Hope TV stations in some countries. Some of these centers are libraries where people can read and borrow books. Others are offering training programs and activities related to a healthful lifestyle. The objective is to make friends with these people and share the gospel message with them. On aver-

The Adventist Church in EUD is alive and engaged in accomplishing the mission God has entrusted to us.

EUD Division Yearend Membership: 2010–2021



age each day, 300,000 podcasts are downloaded. One third of them are from places across the world. Many people eventually come to our churches because of radio and TV programming.

SOCIAL WELFARE


All across our territory local churches have been encouraged to develop projects of support for their communities in partnership with local authorities, humanitarian organizations, private companies, and businesses. Every week thousands of volunteers serve the community in food distribution projects. They offer support to low-income families, dispense aid to homeless people, and build the capacity of these communities. Many refugees and immigrants come to our churches and decide to stay as members through social care. Many churches experience a renewal of their commitment as disciples of Christ as they engage themselves in serving those in need.

The know-how and preparedness of our churches have proved to be a great asset. When the war broke out in Ukraine, we realized with great appreciation how quickly and efficiently the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and several local churches reacted. They brought cars, vans, and buses with food and the most crucial items to give out to thousands and thousands of Ukrainian refugees entering EUD territory through the borders with Romania and

Slovakia. The refugees came to a big tent where they could rest, receive comfort, and nourish their bodies before continuing their journey.

ADRA Romania was on hand at the beginning of the crisis, receiving refugees at the border and providing accommodation. In addition, approximately 8,000 church volunteers were involved in different kinds of projects. By mid-April they had run eight projects for nearly 4 million USD and benefited 418,072 people. They also organized 27 humanitarian convoys into Ukraine, transporting 291 tons of goods.

ADRA Slovakia started at the same time with an initial project for 25,000 people with a particular focus on children, transport logistics, and protection. Some weeks later a network project started. This second project will benefit 50,000 internally displaced people for four months with packages containing food and hygienic items. In addition, ADRA Slovakia is also helping eight ADRA Help Centers organized in cooperation with our churches. Our work with refugees, immigrants, and others in need has come to the attention of national and local authorities who appreciate and support our humanitarian endeavors.

Despite the challenges posed by the secular context in which we live, the Adventist Church in EUD is alive and engaged in accomplishing the mission God has entrusted to us. We believe that mission is possible and greatly enhanced when Christ's compassion and care abide in our hearts! 

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SESSION

GALLERY



General Conference vice president, Ella Simmons, chairs the afternoon business session. MARK FROELICH



JOSEF KISSINGER



Welcome to the family! JAMES BOKOVOY



Praying for peace in Ukraine JOSEF KISSINGER



Trans-European Division delegates register for the Session. MARK FROELICH



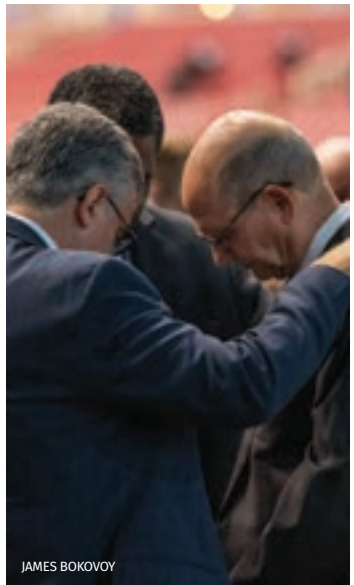
Interpreting through sign language for the Session JOSEF KISSINGER



United States Senate Chaplain, Barry Black, delivers the Monday morning devotional remotely. JOSEF KISSINGER



MARK FRÖELICH



JAMES BOKOVOY

FIRST BUSINESS MEETING

Sixty-First General Conference Session, June 6, 2022, 10:00 a.m.

VOTED, To appoint the following as members of the standing Nominating Committee for the 61st General Conference Session:

Aguillon López, Luis Alonso	Cherukuri, Vijay	Hunsaker, Andetta R	Mills, Phil
Alves Barbosa, Clewton Marcio	Chilundo, Alfredo J	Inada, Yutaka	Misiani, Samuel Otieno
Alves Caxeta, Sérgio Alan	Chisuwo, Rhoda	Injety, Vincent	Mitekaro, Musa Gidion
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Assam Assam, Jean Paul	Collie, Elsie	Johnson, Mark A	Muhune, Robert S
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Assienin, Salomon Grah	Cooper, Lowell C	Kabuye, Stephen Gingo	Muñoz Perrin, Aldo Arely
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Badu, James Kwaku	Currow, Stephen John	Kaligithi, Sudhakar	Munambeza
Bana, Abel Anak Johnny	da Costa Ribeiro, Mark Wallacy	Kang, Joshua Soongi	Murhima, Desire Kahwira
Banks, Rosa	Da Silva, Moisés Moacir	Käsk, Ivo	Musara, Godfrey
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Bent, Melissa Tania	Decker Jr, Edward Thomas	Kim, Nak Hyung	Ndlovu, Chiedza
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Bindosano, Yotam	Devadhas, Daniel	Ko, Fei Li	Nedley, Neil
Bizirema, Jonathan	Devaputhrappa, Samuel	Kook, Shurman R	Newton, Bradford
Blythe, Adlai	Djossou, Adjeoda K	Koroma, Michael Saidu	Ng'andu, Alvert Namasamu
Bondarchuk, Lev	Donaldso, Angelo Paulo	Krupskyi, Vladimir	Nino, Alvaro
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Bower, Lesleigh A E	Dyrud, Marianne	Lagoa Costa, Jose M	Nkonya, Samuel M
Brooks, Eglan	Dzul Trejo, Jose E	Lambert, Chris Kwesi	Nosov, Stanislav
Brown, Everett E	Erthal de Medeiros, Edson	Langai, Newton	Ntunzwenimana, Enock
Buchneu, Viachaslau	Escobar, Marcial Antonio	Lanka, Lazarus Prabhakar	Nunes de Freitas, Emerson
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