

# ADVENTIST REVIEW

JUNE 10, 2022

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**“We feel we are one family and really appreciate this constant support from our world church.”**

**Stanislav Nosov, p. 8**

# NEWS



Busi Khumalo (left) loves nothing more than inspiring young people to connect with Christ. DAVID B. SHERWIN © AR

## **FOR NEW WORLD CHURCH YOUTH DIRECTOR, IT'S ALL ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE**

**BUSI KHUMALO STARTS HIS NEW ROLE BY LOOKING AT GOD AND THE YOUTH OF THE CHURCH.**

**WILONA KARIMABADI**

**B**usi Khumalo stands in the entryway of the vast hall used for food services during General Conference Session. He has an expression on his face that is part astonishment, part shock as people greet him. Multiple texts and WhatsApp messages are congratulating him for being elected as the Youth Director for the world church. There is no time to respond to all the messages.

For the man who felt a calling to

ministry at a young age, working with youth wasn't at the top of his wish list. In fact, there came a moment when even the call to ministry was pushed aside. "When I finished high school. I got confused. I thought I should venture into medicine. But then the calling for ministry was much stronger than the calling to medicine," Khumalo says.

Sometimes when you tell God your plans, you make Him chuckle. "It was never my ambition," he

laughs. "Years before, I vowed to my wife that I didn't have the qualities to become a youth director. But God was listening to that, and He must have been saying, 'I'll teach him a lesson.'"

The Southern Africa Union Conference president called him to fill the vacant youth ministry position. Khumalo wasn't sure, but the president assured him God would equip him. Soon he fell in love with how wonderful Adventist youth can be.

The rest, as they say, is history.

But the last thing Khumalo wants is for any of this to be about him. It's the youth of the church that matter. Adventist youth, and what God can do through them. His first message to Adventist youth around the world underlines that:

"I'm undeserving of this appointment, and it proves God can point

**"I'M UNDESERVING OF THIS APPOINTMENT, AND IT PROVES GOD CAN POINT HIS FINGER AT ANYBODY,"**

his finger at anybody," he says. "As long as you are willing to be used of God, you can be attuned to the voice of God. Just like Samuel who was a small boy living with this veteran priest, Eli, when God chose Him. You may feel that you are too insignificant in your church or wherever you are, but God can use you."

"When you look at those we call our pioneers, Ellen White was only 17 years old. Most of our pioneers were very young. So God can use you in your particular sphere of influence. And many of you are very, very, talented. I want to challenge you. You need to be willing to be sensitive to the still, small Voice—the Holy Spirit who is calling each one of you to connect with Jesus. Go on God's errands, because that's what youth ministry is all about." ❖

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\*Due to the unusual circumstances prevailing in the Euro-Asia Division, the Euro-Asia Division caucus, General Conference Session Nominating Committee, and the General Conference executive officers recommend to the General Conference Session to extend the term of office of the three Euro-Asia Division officers until the 2022 Annual Council.





## ADDITION TO THE CHURCH MANUAL GALVANIZES ADVENTIST POSSIBILITY MINISTRIES

LEADERS MOVE TO SUPPORT GREATER INCLUSION OF THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

**A**n addition to the *Church Manual* that emphasizes the importance of including all church members in ministry was voted by the delegates to the 2022 General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, United States.

Delegates voted overwhelmingly to accept the new paragraphs, which call the church to awareness that the deaf have been defined as a unique culture with their own social behaviors and beliefs. It also calls local church boards to appoint an Adventist Possibility Ministries leader. It adds, “It is imperative for the leader to be compassionate, and to serve with an approach that fosters empowerment and participation.”

Finally, it also calls for local church boards to establish a committee for possibility ministries to encourage members with special needs and to learn how to effectively connect with them. It reads, “It should create witnessing programs, recommend how to make church facilities more accessible, help solve transportation programs, and recommend ways to assist in the discovery of roles or ministries

that bring a sense of meaning and fulfillment.” The addition stipulates that the committee is chaired by the possibility ministries leader and that the pastor should serve as an ex officio member.

### COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

Several delegates approached the microphones to commend the initiative. North American Division delegate Diane Thurber said that as a long-time advocate for people who are blind through Christian Record Services, she could attest that it is a very important addition to the *Church Manual*. “Adding this section . . . will raise awareness and ensure there is representation at the local church.”

Patrick Johnson, from the Trans-European Division, also affirmed the motion, adding that “it’s been a long time coming, and we are happy that this is here.”

Larry Evans, GC leader assigned to Adventist Possibilities Ministries, agreed. “We are very excited about seeing this developed for the world church,” he said. “People, whether they can’t speak, or see, or hear, or walk; whether they are orphans

or vulnerable children; whether they are widows or widowers; whether they are caregivers—all of those groups fall within this special ministry.”

GC delegate Jeffrey Jordan, an Adventist pastor who is deaf, used a sign language interpreter to share his thoughts: “There are millions of people who are deaf who are not still represented,” Jordan said. “I am happy to be the representative as a deaf individual here on the floor. We are supporting this motion . . . to be more inclusive of the deaf, the blind, and all those people who are on the list you have read, and each person that has a possibility that God can use.”

Martin Altink, from the North German Union Conference, approached the microphone visibly moved by Jordan’s words. This is “only a start of something that can be bigger. The world is watching us to see how we treat each other. When we treat each other well, we will grow. Please get involved in this ministry.”

Others also voiced their support, including Paulina Villalon Alvarez, a delegate from the Chile Union Mission who works in education for students with special needs. “I congratulate the church on this motion,” Alvarez said. “At the same time, I think we need to educate our churches regarding this topic. All ministries—ushers, those working with children, everyone—need to be aware of it.”

The motion passed with 99.6 percent of the vote. 🗳️



Pedro and Cecilia Iglesias (left) receive the Spalding Medallion from Elaine and Willie Oliver (right). DANIEL GALLARDO / IAD

## IAD FAMILY MINISTRIES LEADERS AWARDED SPALDING MEDALLION

**PEDRO AND CECILIA IGLESIAS COMMENDED FOR THEIR DECADES-LONG WORK FOR ADVENTIST FAMILIES.**

LIBNA STEVENS, INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

The General Conference (GC) Department of Family Ministries conferred the Spalding Medallion on Pedro and Cecilia Iglesias of the Inter-American Division (IAD) during a special luncheon held at the 61st General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, United States, on June 8, 2022.

Family ministries directors from around the world gathered briefly in person, after only being able to connect online during the past two years. “This is so exciting!” Elaine Oliver, GC associate director of Family Ministries, said. “We are so blessed to have the best team to work with. What we do is so critical to the mission of the church.”

The Iglesiases have been serving as IAD Family Ministries directors since 2010 and are also responsible for other administrative and departmental functions in Secretariat and the Ministerial Association for the division.

“Pedro and Cecilia are top-drawer leaders,” GC Family Ministries director Willie Oliver said.

“They are laser focused on ministering, committed to Jesus Christ and family ministries.”

Their dedication to the work of family ministries and their creative implementation of Bible principles, their knowledge of family issues, and their gifted and winsome way of presenting the dynamics and processes of developing and sustaining marriage and family relationships have earned them the Spalding Medallion, Oliver said.

To be a recipient of the Spalding Medallion, a person or couple must do much more than simply be a director, Oliver said. The Iglesiases received the forty-eighth medal conferred on an individual or a couple in four decades.

“The Iglesiases both have an excellent grasp of the vision of the world church for marriage and family and their strategic and deliberate implementation of that vision, and have a gifted way of using the tools and resources of family ministries to directly impact the lives of individuals and families,” Oliver added.

As an ordained minister, Pedro has served the Seventh-day Adventist Church for more than 39 years as a district pastor, departmental director, and conference president. He has also served as union secretary and union president, and he currently also serves as associate secretary for the IAD. A native of Colombia, he holds a master’s degree in family relations, and three bachelor’s degrees: in theology, education, and technology management.

Cecilia has served the church at the conference, union, and division levels for the past 36 years. Born in Ecuador, she was trained as a secondary school teacher and family therapist. She holds a master’s degree in family therapy and a bachelor’s degree in home economics.

The Iglesiases are co-authors of the book *How to Create a Heavenly Atmosphere in Your Home*. They write a monthly column in *Priorities* magazine, published by the Inter-American Division Publishing Association and are hosts of a television program on family issues featured on Hope Channel Inter-America.

They have been married for 37 years and have two children and two grandchildren.

“We are very moved right now because I thought that my first responsibility with Cecilia would always be as an administrator,” Pedro said. “We have been administrators in different responsibilities since 1992, and for some reason, [the church] would appoint us to be president and family ministries director in either local fields or at the union level.”

It's the first award they have ever received, Pedro said. "We accept it humbly, with heartfelt emotion, because family ministries has been our priority, and we hope to continue serving God in this area of ministry.

"This will be the only plaque we will keep in our living room," Pedro said as Cecilia stood next to him.

"We have worked together for family ministries for more than thirty years; it's been our passion," Cecilia said.

### THE SPALDING MEDALLION

Inaugurated in 1990 by then GC directors of Family Ministries Karen

and Ron Flowers, the Arthur & Maud Spalding Medallion was named after the first couple to lead family ministries in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

On October 8, 1919, the GC Committee created the Home Commission, which became operative in 1922 with director Arthur W. Spalding, who worked in this capacity with his wife, Maud, until 1941. Spalding created literature for the education of the entire family. A series of leaflets was produced dealing with different phases of home life, entitled The Christian Home Series. Arthur wrote the lessons, and Maud graded them.

The Home Commission became

part of the Department of Education in 1941. Over the next 34 years, marriage and family life programs were promoted by Parent and Home Education secretaries: Florence Rebok (1941-1947); Arabella Moore Williams (1947-1954); Archa O. Dart (1954-1970); and W. John Cannon (1970-1975).

In 1975, at the GC Session held in Vienna, Austria, Delmer and Betty Holbrook were elected directors of the Home and Family Service. Delmer Holbrook, who served as director of Family Ministries (formerly the Home and Family Service) with his wife, Betty, from 1975 to 1982, was the first recipient of the Spalding award. ▀



### Associate Treasury Team

**Front Row (Left to right):** Josue Pierre; Daisy Orion; Timothy Aka;  
**Back row:** Richard Stephenson; German Lust; George Egwakhe





A delegate from Ukraine hands flags to Session delegates. JAMES BOKOVOY © AR

## PRAY FOR UKRAINE

DEBBIE MICHEL, ADVENTIST REVIEW

**W**ith tens of thousands of people killed and millions forced to flee their homes since Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine in late February, Adventist churches around the world responded with an outpouring of compassion for the besieged nation.

“Pray for Ukraine” began trending, and doors were flung open to welcome the four million who have fled Ukraine. Many of them were welcomed into other countries, where they are now receiving food and accommodation from other church members.

As a thank-you for this support, the Ukrainian delegation to the 61st General Conference (GC) Session showed their appreciation by greeting delegates entering the dome with gifts of small Ukrainian flags and magnets.

“We feel we are one family and really appreciate this constant support from our world church,” Stanislav Nosov, president of the Ukrainian Union Conference (UUC),

said. “We want to express our gratitude to all churches around the world.”

The Ukrainian delegation is seated with GC delegates at the Session. The GC Executive Committee voted unanimously in April to attach the UUC, the church’s administrative region covering the country of Ukraine, directly to the GC until other comprehensive arrangements can be made. Previously, UUC was part of the Euro-Asia Division (ESD).

Nosov explained that the UUC has continued to receive prayers and generous support from the General Conference and, as a result, is providing 90,000 loaves of bread daily, clothing, and gasoline for people to drive out of dangerous areas. The houses of worship are now converted into places of shelter.

Amid the turmoil, the church faces mounting challenges. Seven members were declared dead. Eleven are missing. Five hundred

houses owned by members were destroyed. Five thousand two hundred apartments or homes were partially destroyed.

But through all of this, leaders are seeing God keep His word to watch over His children. Prayers are being answered, and the evidence is hard to miss. Many Bibles were donated, and people are opening their hearts to God’s Word.

“There is a spiritual revival happening,” Nosov says.

Church buildings are packed. In May 2022, more than 150 were baptized. Last Saturday (Sabbath), 36 people were baptized. “We still see that God is in control, and it’s great to see that in our country,” Nosov adds.

If there’s any doubt that God is still accomplishing His purpose, Nosov says, you need look no further than the Ukrainian delegates’ presence at the Session.

Currently, Ukraine has a ban on men ages 18 to 60 leaving the country in anticipation that they may be called on to fight. The conference leaders prayed and took a leap of faith by purchasing plane tickets to travel to St. Louis before special permission was received. With less than a day left before they were to leave, the minister of culture himself called to grant permission. ▀

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# DEVOTED FOR LIFE



**CHARISSA TOROSSIAN**

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE  
PRESENTED THURSDAY  
MORNING, JUNE 9, 2022

**W**hen Mary Magdalene first met Him, her life was a mess. Luke 8:1-3 tells us Jesus cast demons from her seven times! Imagine the kind of life Mary was living, if, when she met Jesus, demons called her “home.” The day Mary met Jesus, He changed her life (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). After she met the Master, she became His magnet. She devoted her finances to His cause. Wherever He went, she went too. By every action of her life, she placed Jesus first.



## TRUSTING HIM, EVEN WHEN IT'S HARD

When Mary and Martha's brother, Lazarus, fell sick, the sisters sent a message to Jesus. He replied, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (John 11:4). We have the benefit of knowing Lazarus was going to be resurrected, but all the sisters knew was that Jesus said Lazarus wouldn't die and he did. What do you do when you pray for someone and they die?

Four days later Jesus came, and Mary ran to fall at His feet (verse 32). Oh, that her habit would be ours! "It was for Lazarus that the greatest of Christ's miracles was performed."<sup>1</sup> Lazarus' experience reminds us to pray no matter how hopeless the outlook, because even though He appears to be four days late, God is still on time.

## A CROWNING ACT

The crowning act of Mary's devotion to Jesus happened the week before Calvary. Simon, a Pharisee Jesus had healed from leprosy, invited Jesus to his home in Bethany as a way of saying thanks. Contrary to traditional custom, Simon didn't treat Jesus as the honored guest. All went well, until an uninvited woman whom John identifies as Mary (John 11:2), the sister of Martha and Lazarus, entered the room.

While listening to Jesus, Mary heard Him speak of His death. She had purchased an alabaster box of perfume—worth an entire year's salary—for the sad day when she would anoint His body. But now the word on the street was that Jesus was about to be crowned King.

Mary had the perfect gift for a King. Martha told Mary she was catering for Simon's feast, and that Jesus was going, too. Mary saw her golden opportunity. She entered the house, "stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil" (Luke 7:38).

At Jesus' feet, the memories of *all* He had done for her, and *everything* He meant to her flooded her mind. Suddenly her gift seemed

so inadequate to give to Jesus. As she broke her box, a fountain deep inside her broke with it and the tears began to flow. The Bible says a woman's hair is her glory; Mary lay hers down at Jesus' feet. Her act told Jesus, *Lord, the lowest part of You is higher than the highest part of me.*

As the scent of sacrifice filled the room, Judas smelled the money. The disciples joined him in a chorus of criticism: *We love Jesus too, but this is ridiculous! She just poured 300 denarii down the drain that could've been given to the poor!* (see John 12:4, 5). To put this in perspective, when Jesus fed the 5,000, it was 5,000 men plus their wives and children, and Philip told Jesus 200 denarii wouldn't cover the bill (John 6:7). But 300 denarii might have. Mary's gift could've funded the feeding of thousands.

As Simon watched, the Bible tells us that he said to himself: "If Jesus were a true prophet, He'd know this woman is a sinner" (see Luke 7:39). This is the Bible's delicate way of saying Mary had lived a life of open immorality. How did Simon know this? How would a woman from a family like Mary's end up being demon-possessed and a prostitute?

*The Desire of Ages* tells us what is implicit in the text: "Simon had led into sin the woman he now despised. She had been deeply wronged by him."<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, Ellen White says Simon was Lazarus' uncle, which made him her uncle, too!<sup>3</sup> Jesus could've exposed this massive skeleton in Simon's closet, but He didn't. Instead, He told a parable that concluded with this punchline: Those who are forgiven much, love much. Then turning to Mary, Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven" (verse 48).

He then went on to say, "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Matt. 26:13). Jesus wanted the whole world to smell the fragrance of Mary's gift! Why?

In her alabaster box broken at His feet, He saw His body, soon to be broken for us. In its precious perfume running to waste on the floor, He saw His blood "shed for many for the

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# Jesus saw in Mary what He longs to see in us all: a mirrored reflection of His character.

remission of sins” (verse 28), but hardly appreciated. In her motive He saw a reflection of His own in dying for us. Nothing but love led Jesus to Calvary! In the extravagance of her sacrifice Jesus saw the love of heaven poured out. Jesus said, “She has done what she could” (Mark 14:8). He has done all He could to save us, too.

## A MIRRORED REFLECTION

Jesus saw in Mary what He longs to see in us all: a mirrored reflection of His character. Judas could sell Jesus for 30 pieces of silver; but He’s worth so much more. He’s worth breaking the alabaster box of your life over. What is Jesus worth to you?

Some find it hard to stand for a living Saviour; Mary stood loyally by a dying one. From the day Jesus rescued her till the day He died for her—she was His devoted disciple. She was last at the cross and first at the tomb.

On that Sunday morning when she found the tomb empty, she was the one who raised the alarm with the disciples. Peter and John raced back to see it because of her. “Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb” (John 20:10, 11).

Peter and John can go home; Mary can’t. Loving devotion to Jesus glued her to this place. When everyone walked away from her, Jesus had stayed. When no one had believed in her, Jesus had seen value in her. When her family hadn’t supported her, Jesus had stood up for her. When her brother died, Jesus had come and brought life. When the disciples had criticized her, Jesus had defended her. When she’d been abused, Jesus’ love had brought healing and peace to her wounded heart. Angels appeared to Mary and she didn’t even blink, because she was looking for Jesus.

“Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know

that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, ‘Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him, ‘Rabboni!’ (which is to say, Teacher)” (verses 14-16).

No one spoke her name like Jesus! “Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to Me [Don’t hold me back], for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’” (verse 17).

I don’t blame Mary for wanting to hold on to Jesus! But Jesus tells her to let Him go for a very important reason. “[He] refused to receive the homage of His people until He had the assurance that His sacrifice was accepted by the Father.”<sup>4</sup>

Jesus was going to ascend to heaven in order for His sacrifice to be accepted. Imagine the excitement that pulsed throughout the unfallen universe. All heaven was waiting for this moment. But all heaven waited, because Jesus knew that in the shadows of that garden was a devoted, weeping woman looking for Him because she loved Him.

After this encounter, in my mind’s eye, I see her breathlessly bursting into a well-bolted upper room exclaiming: “I’ve just seen Jesus!” Seeing the Lord changed everything for Mary, and it changes everything for us, too. Revelation 14:4 describes a people at the end of time “who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” Because, like Mary, they love Jesus. Will you say with me today, “Lord Jesus, I will go for You and be devoted to You till You come”?

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 524.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 566.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, May 9, 1900.

<sup>4</sup> E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 790.

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**Charissa Torossian** is a prayer coordinator and part of the evangelism team for the North New South Wales Conference in Australia.

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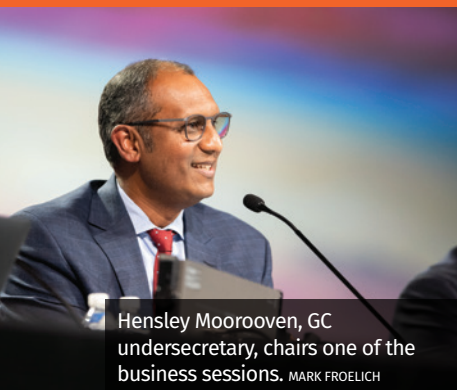


General Conference  
Sabbath School and  
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# SESSION

# GALLERY



Hensley Mooroven, GC undersecretary, chairs one of the business sessions. MARK FROELICH



Olga Krupska sings in two languages for the Wednesday evening devotional. DAVID B. SHERWIN



JOSEF KISSINGER



Shawn Boonstra and Enno Müller discuss covering the Session in the Adventist Review office. JAMES BOKOVOY



MARK FROELICH



Gem Castor offers prayer at the conclusion of the Wednesday morning devotional. JOSEF KISSINGER



DAVID B. SHERWIN

Some of the elected division presidents and their wives as they are introduced to the delegates.  
JOSEF KISSINGER







## LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

*When should we  
expect results?*



**IVAN RIAPOLOV**  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION,  
EURO-ASIA DIVISION

**T**his week I had a surprise encounter at the General Conference Education department's joint dinner for presidents of Adventist universities and education directors from all around the world. It was a significant event for all the educational leaders but also a moment to reconnect with friends hailing from many countries, from Argentina to Zimbabwe. Let me share the surprise encounter I had.

After dinner and greetings, hugs, and quick handshakes, when the delegates had to return to the main hall to participate in the evening session, someone reached out to me. I read on his badge that he represented the Ethiopian Adventist University, and we started to chat. He wanted to know where I came from. I introduced myself and told him about my ministry in the Euro-Asia Division. He replied in workable Russian that he had been to one of the countries of our division. After that, he added a few words in Ukrainian.

I felt overwhelmed. Here was a pastor from Africa standing before me, whom I would not expect to speak any Slavic language. It turned out that my new friend had studied from 1979 to 1984 in Ukraine, at one of Kharkiv's universities. This made my day. I told him that my wife and I were born and raised in Kharkiv and that my parents live there right now. Now it was his turn to be surprised. He shared how the members of the church in Kharkiv received him in their homes, treated him like their own son, and showed such love and warmth to him. He was so grateful to all those people who, more than forty years ago, cared for him, he told me. He shared his great concern about what was happening in "his country Ukraine" and that his family was regularly praying for peace and protection for brothers and sisters in Ukraine. We hugged, took pictures, and said goodbye.

God is great, and He works in us a soft heart, a heart capable of showing kindness and love to our neighbors. How many times have we been to foreign countries and unfamiliar cities and received kindness? How many times have we witnessed the love of church members willing to take care of a guest? I remember many occasions when we were received with kindness, invited to share a meal, and offered a comfortable place to stay overnight. We never ended up stranded anywhere, all alone. That's what church is all about. We are one family, ready to show God's love in practice. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34, 35, NIV).

I pray that God will help us to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit so that our practical Christianity has the same impact on the lives of people around us as the ministry of lay members at the church in Kharkiv did on the life of the future president of Ethiopian Adventist University! 🍀



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## SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION

*I will go to seek, save, and disciple for Christ.*



**W**ith a population of more than 1 billion, the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) is an extremely diverse territory covering 14 countries. More than 850 million of the population belong to unreached people groups. The countries of Brunei, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam, Pakistan in the Middle East, and Sri Lanka from South Asia constitute the kaleidoscope of cultures in the SSD territory. Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism are the major religions practiced in these countries; only the Philippines and Timor-Leste are predominantly Christian.

It's a challenging landscape for the division's 1.7 million church members to cultivate, yet it's one in which 11,360 churches and companies, led by 3,000 pastors, are called to engage.

The Adventist Church in SSD is known for its health and education services. Considered strong assets in the community, our 19 Adventist health-care institutions and 984 schools ably support the Lord's work by disarming prejudices and making inroads for the gospel. In addition to these gospel workforces, an army of 5,750 literature evangelists spreads the good news directly to homes through

books and magazines printed by the five publishing houses in the division.

### LAY-LED CARE GROUPS

#### FOCUS ON CHRIST'S METHOD

Care groups, guided by Christ's method of mingling with people as one who desired their good, showing sympathy, ministering to their needs, winning their confidence, and bidding them follow Him, are instrumental in bringing precious people to Christ. There are 35,015 care groups in the SSD territory. More than 500,000 people have been baptized from 2015 to 2021 as a result of these small groups.

Small groups have been holding "big" harvest and praise celebrations in all unions and attached missions. The highlight of these events is the mass baptism of care group converts. Retirees are retreaded too! We held three retirees conventions to encourage them in lay-led evangelism.

Our young people have been very active in missionary work even during the pandemic. The Voice of Youth initiative was embraced with enthusiasm and youthful zeal even as our youth crossed new boundaries, trekked mountains, forded rivers,





braved storms, and paddled in flooded areas to preach the gospel. Youth Ignite led to more than 10,000 baptisms during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **MISSION TO MUSLIMS**

Muslims are the largest religious group among peoples in the SSD territory, and Islam is practiced mainly in Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan. Adventists seek a peaceful coexistence with Muslims. In turn Muslims send their children to Adventist schools, and patronize our hospitals, dental clinics, health clubs, and restaurants, which lead to many missional engagements.

To deliberately expand Adventist Muslim Relations (AMR), the Global Missions Center held intensive trainings for AMR coaches around the division, and equipped more than 500 coaches. Adventist Mission also launched and actively supervises AMR projects that range from schools to Adventist houses of worship that are familiar to Muslims.

There are 13 Muslim tribes in southwest Mindanao, Philippines; three have been already reached by Socioeconomic Uplift Literacy Anthropological and Developmental Services (SULADS). The group builds literacy centers for indigenous tribes in the southern Philippines and communicates biblical truth with cultural sensitivity.

To date, the South Philippine Union Conference has established 47 mission schools run by 140 para-teacher volunteers. Eleven are located in conflict areas in Muslim Mindanao. Almost 500 baptisms took place from 2016 to 2019.

### **BRIDGES TO BUDDHISTS**

Buddhism holds a solid grip in the countries of Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, where we have 560 churches and companies. Two hospitals, two media centers, and 124 Adventist schools are helping to break down barriers.

To reach out to Cambodians, ASAP Ministries, a supporting ministry, built the Essential Life Center in Battambang. Its restaurant and classrooms provide space to teach health, English, and

music lessons. Recently ASAP Ministries bought land for a Khmer Bible School.

In Myanmar the keys to mission work are two orphanage centers and seminaries that offer courses in business and education, attracting many non-Adventist enrollees. The Lord grows His kingdom in Cambodia through students that accept Jesus in the Kantrok Adventist School and the Butterfly Paradise Orphanage, operated by the SALT Ministries, another supporting ministry. The Butterfly Paradise has a nursery and souvenir shop to generate funds, but this is second to the goal of pointing visitors to the Creator God.

One of the outreach activities “Jesus for Asia” runs in Thailand is a rock-climbing center right beside a Bangkok university as an opening wedge for gospel conversations.

### **CONNECTING WITH THE CHINESE**



Chinese emigres comprise about 25 million across the SSD territory. One element of Adventist church culture that interests them is a healthy lifestyle. Chinese Adventists in Indonesia minister to fellow Chinese through health-based radio shows, establishing a Club *Sehat* (“health” in Bahasa), and operating health grocery stores in Jakarta.

Practical and sustainable, these centers of influence have been established in six cities promoting health camps and seminars, fun runs, and when the seekers are ready, introducing them to Christ, our Saviour.





In 2018 the SSD formally established Chinese Ministries. Division leaders developed digital material that builds bridges connecting Chinese people to the Bible and Jesus Christ. The mobile ministry, WeChat, has attracted 10,000-plus subscribers. Chinese and English Bible study lessons are also available online. Public evangelism to reach Chinese communities in six countries has resulted in church planting efforts.

### REACHING SECULAR AND POSTMODERN PEOPLE

In secular, postmodern societies such as Singapore, church growth is facing serious challenges. Yet mission endeavors for the affluent must never be neglected. All nine Adventist churches engage the community through health programs and the annual Pay It Forward activity for elderly persons and their families. This Adventist Community Services (ACS) program by the Singapore Conference is recognized by the National Council of Social Services for its wholistic wellness approach.

### MISSION IN SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is relatively young in the socialist states of Vietnam and Laos. Mission work is growing, albeit slowly, and the future is promising despite some challenges.

A total of 20 organized churches and 179 small

congregations worship on Sabbaths. Government regulations make it difficult to start “Adventist” schools in Laos, so members witness for Christ through prayers, community service, and language schools.

In Vietnam we inaugurated the first center of influence through generous help from the General Conference (GC). Built in the heart of Hanoi, the center houses a foreign-language school, ADRA Vietnam’s headquarters, and meeting halls for two congregations.

### EVANGELISM DURING PANDEMIC THROUGH DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

During the pandemic, SSD membership has grown by leaps and bounds thanks to partnership with GC leadership. Digital evangelistic presentations by GC president Ted Wilson, and Duane McKey, president of Adventist World Radio (AWR), covered the territory of all three Philippine unions and prepared the way for evangelistic efforts on the ground. This resulted in more than 30,000 baptisms, including several hundred anti-government rebels who assimilated back into the community.

AWR opened the first Center for Digital Evangelism (CDE) in the SSD headquarters. Volunteers from the Philippines, India, and Nepal, together with four staff members, work together to help people know more about God, answer Bible questions, or provide a listening ear.

The main Facebook page is Answers for Asia, and toll-free numbers are available for the Philippines and India. A dormitory for 50 volunteers was finished in December 2020. Apart from digital evangelism, the team conducts cell phone evangelism (CPE) to send “Revelation of Hope” audio messages. Everyone can be a missionary when armed with a smartphone!

### 1,000 MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

In 2017 the SSD raised 7 million Philippine pesos (US\$140,000) to support the SULADS and 1,000 Missionary Movement, which sends young missionaries to remote regions. During the past seven



In places where the gospel is most difficult to preach, God is doing the biggest part of the work to win people back to Him.

years the movement has sent 749 missionaries, built 48 churches, established 88 congregations, and led 2,950 to baptism. Trainings used to be conducted on its Silang, Cavite, Philippines campus. East and West Indonesia have their own training schools now, and Myanmar is in the process of establishing one.

#### **SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRY**

Special Needs Ministries (SNM), in its fifth year in SSD, has made groundbreaking efforts for churches to accept and minister to persons with disabilities. Adventist Deaf Ministry (Philippines) conducted seminars for sign language interpreters and Deaf Evangelism, resulting in more deaf baptisms.

Adventist University of the Philippines held the first SPED Congress and gave free dental checkups to those with special needs. Student interpreters were on hand to assist with the event.

Gospel Outreach Ministry recently assisted SULADS in building the first Adventist school for the deaf in the Philippines.

#### **ADVENTIST AVIATION**

In the 10/40 window vast areas are accessible only by aircraft. We are thankful to Palawan Adventist Medical Aviation Services (PAMAS) in the Philippines and Adventist Aviation Indonesia (AAI) for serving these isolated places. PAMAS and AAI transport missionaries and medical and health equipment, and also provide emergency medical evacuation for mission outreach.

AAI employs medical missionaries and teachers for mission schools across Papua. PAMAS Palawan has already built two schools for the ethnic minority and has built a total of nine churches.

#### **CENTERS OF INFLUENCE**

SSD has established urban centers of influence in many places across the territory. The latest one is the Life Hope Impact Center located on the SSD campus in Silang, Cavite. This four-story building will house the AWR-CDE on the ground floor, the General Conference Auditing Services regional office on the third floor, and guest rooms on the fourth floor. The second floor will be used to promote a healthy lifestyle by featuring a vegetarian restaurant, sauna baths, a fitness gym, and healthy cooking demonstrations.

Other urban centers of influence were established in Hanoi, Vietnam; the Peace Music Academy in Thailand; the Adventist International School in Timor-Leste; and the Essential Life Center in Cambodia.

#### **ADVENTIST VOLUNTEER SERVICES**

SSD has 50 volunteer missionaries serving our division, and 29 more are outside our borders. Many of the volunteers are serving as teachers and health workers.

#### **UNITY AMID DISASTERS, DIVERSITY**

Our territory had its sizable share of disasters—leaders' untimely deaths, turbulence in nature, political unrest, and health crises. These join the already-existing obstacles in reaching countless cultures with the gospel. It's a difficult landscape for mission. Nonetheless, we depend on God as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission.

We are united even in times of crisis. We respond to the rigors of ministry and service to seek, save, and disciple for Christ. We take comfort and consolation in the fact that in places where the gospel is most difficult to preach, God is doing the biggest part of the work to win people back to Him. ✍

## TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION

*Reach Europe*



**W**hen Oxford scholar Reginald Heber wrote the famous mission hymn “From Greenland’s Icy Mountains,” he could easily have been describing the Trans-European Division (TED). His lyrics cover the imperative for sharing the gospel to every corner of the globe, starting from the northernmost reaches of the TED to the southernmost. Those lyrics, written just 55 years before the first Adventist missionary arrived in Europe, soon became a reality through European Adventism’s outward-looking focus. Despite an initially small base, European pioneers influenced mission in Africa, Asia, South America, and beyond.

### **NINETY YEARS OF MISSION**

In 2019, the TED celebrated 90 years of mission both at home and overseas. Despite the considerable setbacks of two world wars, years of Communist totalitarianism in Central and Eastern Europe, and more recently the ravages of secularism, the

division has a rich history. This was explored in David Trim’s celebratory book *A Passion for Mission* and in a short video documentary.<sup>1</sup> Trim noted that throughout TED history 1,000 missionaries headed overseas to share the Adventist message across large swaths of the world.

Today the major challenge for the 11 unions and three attached fields that make up the TED is that, while European Adventism sent missionaries out to others, Europe itself has stagnated spiritually. In some countries only 4 percent of the population attend church,<sup>2</sup> while in other former Communist states, religion has been revived as more cultural than life-changing.

Nevertheless, mission is alive in Europe! We praise God for the 88,355 members,<sup>3</sup> some 600 pastors, and 1,401 churches and companies that are spread across TED territory: from Greenland’s icy mountains, down through secular Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, to more traditionally Catholic, Orthodox, or Muslim coun-





tries as we head south and east through Poland, Hungary, and the former Yugoslavia toward the balmy Mediterranean climates of Greece and Cyprus.

Artur Stele, General Conference (GC) vice president, stated emphatically during the 2018 TED year-end meetings, “You are not big in numbers but big in challenges.” Listening to the mission reports, the challenges, even the requests in special times of prayer, he emphasized that “you are big in providing the key for the future of mission,” noting that the same issues faced in increasingly secularized Europe are becoming apparent in other parts of the world.<sup>4</sup>

In this report we share some key factors in TED strategy. You can find more details of these reports on [www.ted.adventist.org/news/](http://www.ted.adventist.org/news/).

### **NETWORKING**

Leading up to the 2015 GC Session, the TED administration, under the leadership of Raafat Kamal, undertook a listening exercise. Strategic Focus meetings with key leaders, specialists in various professions, and innovative lay leaders led to key focus areas linked to health, families, youth, children, and education. Other departments, such as communication and media, were reworked to provide better support and training.

The result was a “breaking down of silos” as departments worked together on common initiatives linked to mission. Departmental directors and officers now meet monthly as a mission board to discuss and vote funding for projects, discuss cooperative initiatives, and focus on major themes and challenges across the division.

### **CREATIVE EVANGELISM**

Daniel Duda oversees education and Adventist Mission and is willing to take a risk for the gospel. One of his favorite projects is the Three Angels Motorcycle Club in Novi Sad, Serbia. This Adventist group of bikers mix and befriend others in the biking community and have produced special literature focused on their needs.

“We have voted more than £1 million (US\$1.4 million) on 301 mission projects and 133 church plants,” Duda reports. These include 12 centers of influence, and a network of “Messy Churches” that are having a significant impact on children and their families in hard-to-reach communities in Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, and many other countries.

Funding also provided significant support for evangelistic programs during the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. This included a coordinated network of public lectures across Serbia; a historic Bible search and public lecture that drew significant crowds in Nicosia, Cyprus; a reenactment of Luther nailing his 95 theses to a church door in a public square in Poland; a reformation weekend in England that opened the church headquarters estate to the public with a special worship and fun day; and an innovative video series, *Reformation Journey*, that reached out in a format accessible to teens and young adults.

The TED also supported social projects such as Invasion of Love in Jajce, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Adventist youth spent a week in the community painting park benches, offering free car washes, handing out roses, and running health and community programs. This was especially significant in an ethnically divided community still suffering from the aftereffects of war. In a cultural setting in which Adventists find it hard to make an impact, seeing youth working together toward a positive goal encouraged local citizens to be proud of their community, built self-esteem, and assisted in the reconciliation process.

In Wales the British Union Bible Correspondence School successfully experimented with *Let's Explore*, a children's Bible study program designed for 7- to 12-year-olds. “What is so exciting is that families from outside the Adventist faith community are registering to join in as well,” states Maureen Rock, the Bible school principal. One hundred children have now graduated, and Rock reports that Welsh children are involved in recording the next series.



## CROSSING DIVISION BOUNDARIES

Sometimes two is better than one. In a series of initiatives, the TED has partnered with the Inter-European Division (EUD). Projects have included a family life accredited training program, a health symposium, the continued development of the Intergenerational Church of Refuge (iCOR). An annual GAiN Europe initiative has garnered worldwide acclaim, not just in training communicators and media personnel from around Europe, but for engaging in cross-network projects that have reached out beyond the boundaries of Europe to produce films, books, and social media that address important topics and assist mission.

The GAiN network project, *Fathers*, won an award at the prestigious Religion Today international film festival. A 2020 project, *Uncertainty*, has generated a five-part documentary series with contributions from Europe, Africa, Asia, and Inter-America; a feature film from South America; and a Sonscreen student documentary from the North American Division, along with a book and social media spots.

## YOUTH CONGRESS

By far the largest pan-European event was the 2018 Youth Congress in Valencia, Spain. More than 4,000 young adults gathered under the theme “The Journey.”

“For me, this was an amazing experience,” Kamal states. “In the hot Spanish sunshine they could have been out on the beach or sightseeing, but to see thousands of youth attending worship and workshops, learning new skills, making commitments for Christ, and then going on the streets to witness—I was inspired.”

“These youth give me hope,” enthuses TED youth director Zlatko Musija, noting that “we need to continue engaging with them after returning to their homes. Their witness can help change Europe.” That engagement has continued, including the launch of *Youth Alive* in Albania

and Lithuania during the past year.

It has also continued at camporees and summer camps, which provide a rich environment for nurture and growth, not just among Adventist youth, but among their friends. In Scandinavia and such countries as Latvia, almost half of the baptisms come as a result of Pathfinders.

In the UK both North and South England Conferences have expanded their youth camp facilities, recognizing the life-changing choices that are made in such locations. In Poland their youth-led annual camp meeting attracts almost 20 percent of their total church membership. Those that “were once youth” still come because they enjoy the atmosphere, while the camp itself generates a high percentage of annual baptisms.

## ADRA EUROPE

One very fruitful partnership is the development of ADRA Europe.<sup>5</sup> The TED and EUD used to have separate ADRA directors. With the current need for cooperation and coordination, particularly in response to the European refugee crisis, networking 38 offices, and training, ADRA Europe was established as an office near the European Parliament in Brussels.

The first World Refugee Sabbath came as a result of a joint ADRA/TED/EUD crisis summit in Zagreb in January 2016. With many projects running throughout the year, this special joint initiative has continued to highlight the plight of refugees and the heartwarming solutions being provided both by church members and ADRA. World Refugee Sabbath programming has been hosted by the TED and EUD communication departments in Greece, France, Italy, Serbia, and Germany, with reports from across Europe and the world.

We have been especially blessed to see the caring attitudes of our members who have gone out of their way to provide support. For instance, in England a joint ADRA local church project is

## Our mission is to connect with our communities, inspire them with the gospel, and enable change.

providing afterschool classes for migrant children who have often missed out on years of education, while Ireland and Sweden have both seen effective Pathfinder refugee programs.

The spring of 2022 witnessed war break out in Ukraine. By late March 4.2 million people had crossed the international border out of Ukraine as refugees, according to the United Nations refugee agency.

### TOTAL MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

The Total Member Involvement (TMI) initiative spurred members' imagination. This has led to significant lay-led programs; a youthful church plant, "Kompass Church," in Tallinn, Estonia; another plant in a refugee center in Ireland; the development of Public Campus Ministries on a range of campuses—with particular success in Serbia and the United Kingdom—and the establishment of 12 centers of influence, the most successful of which is the The Cuisle Center, tying in with a long-running Mission to the Cities program in Dublin, Ireland. The Cuisle Center attracts a wide-ranging community to a variety of health, counseling, craft, and spiritual programs, while the church in Dublin itself has grown from one single congregation to a total of five, spread across the city.

### SUPPORTING PASTORS AND LEADERS

In a support program developed jointly by the Ministerial Association and Family and Health Ministries, the TED has continued to seek best practices for helping pastors and elders avoid burnout and deal with real issues of mental health.

This has involved training programs and retreats, such as a major European Pastors' Council (EPC) in Belgrade, Serbia, attended by 1,200 pastors, pastoral spouses, Bible workers and church leaders, as well as support events designed specifically to support our female pastors and leaders.

"Those leaders were enthused," stated Patrick Johnson, Ministerial Association secretary, noting that the days were specifically geared to connect, inspire, and change each participant, offering a rich mixture of



biblically based theology, innovative worship, practical workshops, and time for sharing ideas.

The EPC was a major training event that added to the myriad regional and local events led by each director, together with their counterparts across the unions and attached fields. Their aim? To be trainers of trainers, thus enabling all members to share our beautiful Adventist message more effectively across Europe.

"I am impressed by the commitment of our members and leaders," reflects Kamal. "As I review the many hundreds of reports of initiatives and activities that come across my desk, it reminds me of the apostle John's words: 'Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name' [John 20:30, NIV]."

Our mission and activities in the TED aim to connect with our communities, inspire them with the gospel, and enable change. Our aim is big and may seem impossible, but, by God's grace, we seek to reach out to the varied cultures and religious attitudes in Europe and let people know that by believing, you may indeed have life in His name. 📌

<sup>1</sup> <https://ted.adventist.org/news/1524-a-90-year-passion-for-mission-highlighted-at-ted-year-end-meetings>

<sup>2</sup> <https://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2018/06/12094011/Appendix-B.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Figures as of December 2019

<sup>4</sup> <https://ted.adventist.org/news/1373-ted-providing-the-key-for-the-future-of-mission>

<sup>5</sup> <https://adra.eu/>



# IN THE BEGINNING . . .

*There was love*




**NOEMÍ DURÁN ROYO**

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE  
PRESENTED THURSDAY  
EVENING, JUNE 9, 2022

**S***urvival of the fittest. Struggle for existence. Red in tooth and claw.* These expressions, connected to the concept of natural selection, sound familiar to anyone who knows the theory of evolution. According to this theory, natural selection is not only an accurate description of the natural world, but also the source of all biodiversity and the engine that keeps nature constantly changing and properly working.

In contrast, for a Bible believer the impressive array of life that we see in nature did not arise from chance, fight, and death. On the contrary, each element of the exuberant canvas of Planet Earth was carefully designed, and it was good. The system as a whole, based on peaceful interactions and fruitful cooperation between all organisms, was *very good*.



There was no shortage of resources, and no suffering was attached to the act of feeding. Plants provided food for people and animals, but they benefited from the relationship as well. While eating from their flowers and fruits, animals helped plants reproduce by transporting their pollen and seeds away.

The environment, animals, and plants were interconnected in many ways. Think of photosynthesis: plants growing themselves from water, air, and sunlight. Amazingly, the component of air that they intake, carbon dioxide, is precisely the waste product of our breathing process. And the waste product of plant photosynthesis is oxygen, the exact gas we need to survive.

#### **THE ENTRANCE OF SIN**

Nature is not such an idyllic setting anymore. There is fighting, predation, illness, plagues, suffering, and death. The prevalence of all these calamities in our planet has been used by some to question the very existence of God, and even worse, to question His all-powerful and all-loving nature.

The Bible has an answer to this as well, an answer that has nothing to do with God's character or intentions, but with human decisions. Genesis 3 shows us the exact moment when God's perfect system of cooperation and mutual benefit was replaced by another system based on distrust and self-preservation. The consequences came swiftly. God Himself told Adam and Eve that their decision would severely affect animals, plants, and human life.

From that moment, God's original intent for the planet began to blur, and nature started showing a mixture of confusing features. But even after more than 6,000 years of decay, sin could not erase the Creator's plan for Planet Earth. In the first chapter of her book *Steps to Christ* Ellen White wrote that "even amid the suffering that results from sin, God's love is revealed"<sup>1</sup> in nature. Hundreds of recent research studies prove her right.

#### **RECOGNIZING GOD'S FINGERPRINT IN NATURE**

During the past several decades there have been significant advances in the field of animal

behavior. Most of the research has focused on social animals with high cognitive abilities, and scientists have discovered that many social species have rich emotional lives.

In his book *The Age of Empathy* world-renowned primatologist Frans de Waal defends the idea that the lives of wild animals are not ruled by competition and selfishness, as predicted by natural selection. In contrast, he presents countless examples of cooperation, kindness, and generosity among animals. He also affirms that both humans and animals are *preprogrammed* to feel empathy!

In 2011 a team of scientists at the University of Chicago published a study that tested if rats feel empathy. Researchers put pairs of rats in cages. One of the rats was restrained in a clear tube, the door of which could be opened only from the outside. The other rat was free to move around.

The free rat explored the tube and learned how to open the door to release its companion, but it wouldn't if the tube was empty or contained a toy rat. Researcher Peggy Mason stated: "All of this tells us that acting on empathic feelings to help another in need is a biological and in fact a neurobiological mandate. It's in our brain."<sup>2</sup> Empathy, the capacity to feel for others and the drive to help them, seems to be engraved in the brain of even "simple" animals such as rats.

Compassionate empathy is found in animals large and small. A research team of the Amboseli Trust for Elephants studied wild elephants in southern Kenya for more than 40 years and recorded hundreds of empathic behaviors. They saw female elephants helping babies that fell into ditches and a male pulling a tranquilizing dart out of another male, dropping it on the ground and touching the wound gently.

Empathy and altruism are related concepts. To test if chimpanzees would act altruistically toward others, de Waal's research team performed an interesting experiment at the Yerkes National Primate Research Center in Emory University.

Two chimpanzees were placed in adjacent cages. One of them was trained to give a token to the researcher in exchange for food. The chimp could choose between tokens of two different colors. If he chose the red token, he was



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## God's essence is love, and that love was to be reflected in each of His creatures.

given food, but the partner received nothing. If he chose the green token, both chimps received food. The results of the experiment were significant. The chimpanzees chose green over red except during the control trials, when there was no partner.

Although this happened in a laboratory-controlled environment, chimpanzees have shown to be empathic and capable of altruistic acts in real life. There is a colony of chimpanzees under continuous observation at the Yerkes Research Center.

Peony, an old female with arthritis, has difficulty walking and climbing. When the group meets together on a high platform for a grooming session, the young females help Peony climb, pushing her from the back. They also go back and forth to the water fountain, filling their mouths with water for Peony to drink.

Another example of tremendous care in chimpanzees was reported by Japanese researchers studying a wild population in Tanzania. A mother and her older daughter took care of a severely disabled little sister with spinal damage who could not walk or sit up on her own. The two adults shared the responsibility of transporting and feeding her, keeping her alive for almost two years.

It seems that many animal species show behaviors of empathy and care for the members of their social groups. What about outsiders? Do animals care for others that are not their own? These behaviors are more difficult to observe, but a documentary by Wildlife Films called *The Eye of the Leopard* portrayed a female leopard that, after killing a baboon, discovered a small baby baboon clinging from its fur and took care of him for several hours.

Some scientists explained this as an “anomaly,” a “mistake” that misdirected the leopard’s motherly instincts. But what if there was no mistake? What if that was the original universal empathy engraved in the brain of the leopard overcoming the post-sin predatory instincts?

Another scientifically documented example is a bottlenose dolphin mom that adopted a calf of a different species, a melon-headed whale. The female was observed in the coastal waters off French Polynesia swimming together with the adoptive son, nursing and taking care of him for three years.

The observation was described as a *rare phenomenon*, because biologists who believe that natural selection rules the world find no sense in animals helping unrelated individuals. For the Bible-believing scientist, however, empathy, altruism, and selfless care for others, regardless of their background, is what should be expected of all God’s creatures, at least in their original plan. These behaviors could be hints of what once was, evidences of the universal love and care that once ruled the world.

### LOVE ON THE MOVE

When we look at nature from a biblical perspective, trusting that the Bible tells us the truth about the origin of life, we find much evidence that aligns perfectly with the Genesis story. God created humans in His image, but the rest of creation was made under the same principles of love, wisdom, and beauty.

God’s essence is love, and that love was to be reflected in each of His creatures. Each in its own level, animals were designed to show that the loving character of God and humans were intended to convey the most complete representation of that love.

We betrayed our Creator, but God did not give up. He had already thought of a solution, and the solution was, once again, love—empathic, compassionate, selfless love. More than 6,000 years of sin were not able to erase love from the behavior of animals. Why? Because love cannot be quenched or swept away. Love is the greatest virtue, and without it, we are nothing.

The same Bible that tells us about God’s love tells us that Jesus is coming. Soon there will be no more mixture of features, no more confusing messages. God will remove violence, suffering, and death forever.

In the beginning there was love, and very soon there will be love again. Pure, unselfish, absolute love. The God of love will dwell with His people; we will be His people, and He will be our God. ✎

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/rats-show-empathy-too>.

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# Endless Possibilities



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Jesus in John 10:10

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# WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION

*Everyone in mission*



West-Central Africa Division



The West-Central Africa Division (WAD) is one of the largest territories of the world church, including 22 countries. Its diversity is one of its greatest attractions, and its challenges lead WAD to the Source of inspiration and creativity. Our vision is to reach 1 million members!

The rubble and traces of a war that shook Côte d'Ivoire are still visible on Béliér ("ram" in English—an animal that symbolizes strength and sacrifice) Street. The impact of bullets and rockets is noticeable on the walls of the well-guarded former presidential palace. From there, it's not far to WAD headquarters, located at the center of the diplomatic residence district in Côte d'Ivoire. By the grace of God, WAD leadership enjoys local diplomatic prerogatives from the Ivorian government.

There are five official languages in our territory: Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. Nearly 1,000 other ethnic languages are spoken in hamlets and cities, where close to 450 million people live. WAD territory extends from Cabo

Verde to Congo. Ten of the 22 countries are part of the 10/40 window, and 12 of them are among the poorest nations in the world. And when we consider Benin, the world capital of voodoo, and Nigeria, the world capital of Pentecostalism, the task promises to be daunting.

This large patchwork combined with terrorist threats from Salafi jihadists and Boko Haram (in Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, etc.) is nonetheless a motivation for our mission. Our greatest resource is resilient people, tested by calamity, who persevere despite difficulties. Our greatest challenge is finding avenues to reach a diversity of cultures, languages, and faiths. WAD has established the Adventist African-Traditionalists Relation Center at Babcock University to reach traditionalists in Africa.

Seeking God in fervent prayer, surrendering to the Holy Spirit for creativity and resilience, involving each member in community service, are the secrets that have guided the church through turbulent times.



## EVANGELISM AND, AGAIN, EVANGELISM

We have mobilized leaders, pastors, and members in evangelistic programs every year. Initiatives such as “Horizons of Hope 2017,” “Pentecost 2018,” “Hope 2019,” “ACT 2019,” and “Hope 2020” resulted in 305,468 baptisms between 2016 and 2021. During the COVID-19 crisis we baptized



nearly 71,000 people. Behind the figures, there are deep and striking experiences of men and women delivered from the clutches of the devil.

Xavier was in the grip of witchcraft—his life doomed to the destruction to which evil spirits were leading him. He was delivered from the power of Satan. Adama, a young Malian student, was threatened with denial by her own father. She said “Yes” to Jesus during a campaign held by Pastor Elie Weick-Dido, WAD president, in Yaoundé.

Nkrumah was a prisoner in Kumasi, Ghana. He listened to a message from Pastor Yeboah on a local radio in his prison cell. The message contrasted sharply with other messages focusing on prosperity. He never missed a single show from that day on. After his release from prison, he was invited to an evangelistic campaign held by Pastor Canales. He walked for three miles. There he found the preacher he listened to on the radio and asked for baptism. He got involved setting up the campaign site, inviting other people to join him. By the end of the program he had brought 20 other people to Christ. All of them were baptized together with Nkrumah.

Nkrumah’s testimony demonstrates the effectiveness of media ministries. Hope TV Ghana and a dozen radio stations reach millions of people



every day. In addition, the church has begun using social media after the COVID-19 pandemic.

A district pastor had the brilliant idea of using Facebook for outreach. Several baptisms crowned his efforts. One of the most remarkable experiences was that of a Catholic seminary teacher who called him one morning asking for baptism for her and for her family. Thanks to messages on WhatsApp and Facebook, this woman encountered the truth.



Gangsters, thieves, high personalities, and noble men and women of all faiths made a covenant with Christ during the evangelistic meetings. Such harvests came after intense moments of prayer and training. Every year the 10 Days of Prayer initiative is taken very seriously in WAD. Nigeria has organized prayer conventions, mobilizing tens of thousands.

Our youth are trained to be a sermon. More than 180,000 of them are active every year during the Global Youth Day. More and more people are taking care of orphans, widows, and people living with disabilities and special needs. We recently held the first camp meeting for persons with special needs in northern Nigeria. We also organized the first deaf convention in our territory.





## EDUCATION

Women are one of the major forces in our division. More than 4,000 women attended the Kumasi Congress in Ghana in August 2019, and 2,000 of them graduated from Griggs University. They received certificates for leadership training. As a milestone of professionalism, WAD Archives and Records Center is the first in the world to be accredited with the “Approved” status from the ASTR.



All secretariat services of the 10 unions in WAD have integrated the Adventist Church Management System, ACMS. So far, more than 70 percent of the membership has been registered.

The Health Ministries Department teamed up with Adventist Mission in various cities for health expos and Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking seminars. Every year a United States-based team of eastern Nigerian doctors, nurses, and paramedics engage in a medical outreach in the state of Enugu.

We have developed consistent dialogue with other religious groups in a context of radicalism and secularism storms that are raging in Africa. We praise God for a recent inauguration of an ADRA Community Center in Nouakchott, Mauritania, a Muslim country.



We are conscious that wars and conflicts are not the only threats to Africa. Lack of education is one of the scourges to combat. WAD is among the territories that have collected the most signatures for the ADRA International initiative “Every Child. Everywhere. In School.”

In our territory, five universities host more than 20,000 students. Both Babcock University (BU) and Valley View University (VUU) are division institutions. VUU is registered as the first ecological university in Africa. University faculty baptized more than 2,000 people during the 2016-2021 period. BU is one of the most influential universities in Nigeria. The Ben Carson Faculty of Medicine opened in 2012. For the fourth time in a row, BU clinched first place in the World Branding Forum in Education category in Nigeria. More than 1,400 people were baptized in BU during the 2015-2021 period.

## VISIBLE GROWTH

WAD is grateful to God for the growth over the years. Thousands of people attended the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the first Black conference in Africa. The event took place in Kumasi, Ghana. Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference (GC), was present and visited



the president of the Republic of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo. President Akufo-Addo also attended the celebration of the centenary of the Ashanti New Town church in Kumasi in October 2021.

During the past seven years Togo and Benin have become conferences. This shows our church

is growing right in the world's voodoo epicenter. Other new conferences across the territory have emerged in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria.

We are planning for the future. We have bought properties in Côte d'Ivoire where we plan to build new offices and the future administrative headquarters for the division. An office annex was established in Abuja, Nigeria. We have also purchased properties in Senegal, remodeled the guest house in Abidjan, and built a 50-room guest house in Monrovia, Liberia. Considering the welfare of our local churches and employees, a heritage fund has been established. This fund is of great help to the mission of the church and to many of our employees in some of our unions, and most especially in Ghana.

### GOD'S PROVISION DESPITE CRISIS

The whole world has been on edge for the past two years, and the most fragile economies are paying a heavy price. The Lord is sustaining the church. Terrorism and political instability in seven countries of our division have caused more than 33 million people to be in a "crisis" situation.

The GC and WAD expressed empathy and support to the Ungwan Bayero community in Zango Kataf, Kaduna State, Nigeria. We helped more than 250 Adventist families whose houses were burned during a bandit attack. Some members were shot dead; 25 members were hospitalized as a result of bullet wounds sustained during the ambush.

When interviewed about God's work during the past seven years, WAD president Elie Weick-Dido said: "To God be the glory for His goodness toward our territory. We are grateful to the GC and the world church for the support and prayers. With the Lord we will be more than conquerors!"

As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace" (Rom. 10:15). Those feet are ready to go where the Boko Haram is striking. Those feet are ready to go where the Salafi jihadist movements are killing. Those feet will go until WAD reaches the "golden strand." We encourage all our members to say—"I Will Go!"

## EDUCATION STATISTICS

Total Number of Schools:	<b>1,195</b>
Total Number of Students:	<b>220,764</b>
Number of Universities:	<b>5</b>
University Students:	<b>20,100</b>
Total Number of Teachers:	<b>11,128</b>
Total Number of Graduates:	<b>13,613</b>
Number of Students Baptized:	<b>2,267</b>

### VALLEY VIEW UNIVERSITY FACTS AND FIGURES

- » First ecological university in Africa
- » 1,901 baptisms (2016-2020)
- » 200,000 patients in the medical center
- » Ranked seventh among more than 100 universities in Ghana
- » First university in Ghana to develop an ecological concept (eco-Master Plan, biogas, waste water treatment, water harvesting, nutrient application, etc.)

### BABCOCK UNIVERSITY FACTS AND FIGURES

- » 193,385 patients in the medical center
- » 35,240 undergraduate enrollments (2016-2019)
- » 1,318 baptisms (2015-2019)
- » First university to clinch the World Branding Forum's Best Brand Award (Education category, Nigeria) four times
- » First tertiary institution among 114-plus Adventist-owned universities to run programs in law and medicine in sub-Saharan Africa.

## DIVISION STATISTICS

Churches:	<b>5,064</b>
Companies:	<b>5,441</b>
Membership in 2015:	<b>683,318</b>
Membership in March 2022:	<b>915,736</b>
Sabbath School Membership in 2015:	<b>812,000</b>
Sabbath School Membership in 2021:	<b>1,062,480</b>
Employees:	2015= <b>6,376</b> ; 2021= <b>7,776</b>
Small Groups:	2015= <b>35,000</b> ; 2021= <b>189,025</b>
WAD Population 2019:	<b>447,136,467</b>
WAD Members 2022 (first quarter):	<b>915,736</b>
Adventist Percentage to Total Population =	<b>0.19%</b>

# MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA UNION MISSION

*Step into impossible*

## GOD'S BLESSING

The Middle East and North Africa Union Mission (MENAUM) has been able to move forward during the past seven years with support from the world church family. In 2015, 3,500 Adventist members lived among 519 million people, but today we have more than 5,700 members in the territory. In 2015 the Adventist Church had only one member for every 148,000 nonmembers. Today we have one Adventist member for every 99,000 people.

The MENAUM region has more than 53 cities of at least 1 million population. In 2013, 25 of these cities were unentered. Today MENAUM has work in 16 of them. This may seem like a small step, but it means that the world church's investment in MENAUM is making a difference. This progress is the catalyst for the future.

## GROWING CHALLENGES

MENAUM, which has a larger population than all but two of the world church divisions, is home to 20 countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Northern Cyprus.

While church membership has been growing, the population has also increased rapidly from 519 million to nearly 565 million. According to statistics from 2015, if all the Adventists in MENAUM separated into different communities so that no two lived in the same area, and every member contacted one person a day, it would take 405 years to reach every person in the MENAUM territory.

MENAUM has been courageous with God's help, but we have faced many challenges. During the past seven years we've lost many missionaries because of health challenges, loneliness, security issues, visa problems, and feelings of failure.

The situation in the Middle East and North Africa has not been optimistic. Countries in the

region have experienced high instability with war, terrorism, and economic collapse—causing one of the largest refugee crises in human history. Despite these challenges MENAUM continues to move into unentered cities.

## ENTERING WITH WALDENSIAN STUDENTS

Waldensian Students (WS) is a program that plants committed Adventist young adults in major universities to share their faith. Thirty Waldensian students proactively mingle with their friends in 14 cities.

A young man from a highly restricted country studied the Bible with a Waldensian student in a neighboring country and accepted Jesus. His family forced him to join the military. He went to jail because he kept Sabbath while in the military and refused to practice Islam.

While awaiting the trial that would determine his future, he passionately witnessed about the love of God to his fellow inmates and jail officers, and many of them were moved by the gospel. One day an officer whispered to him, "I won't let you die here." Later, with the help of the officer, the young man escaped and became a Waldensian student in a nearby country, to witness about the God of liberation to many fellow students.

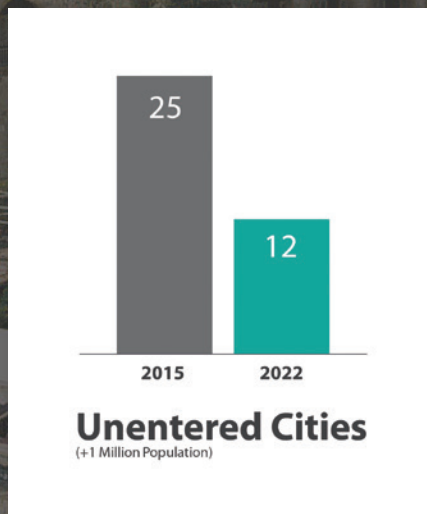
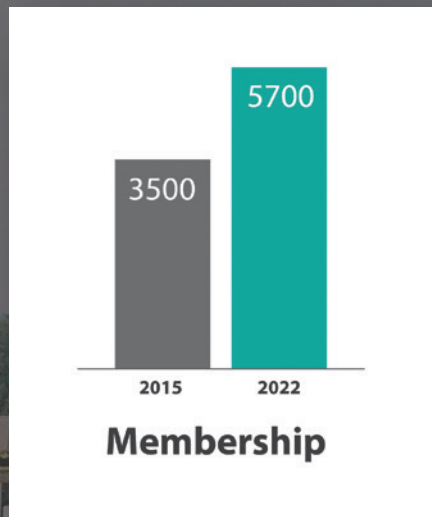
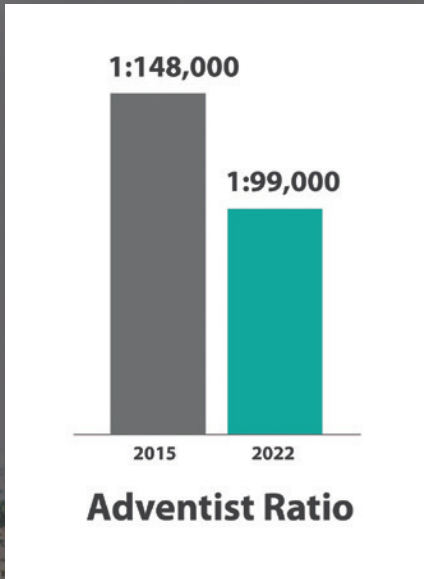
## ENTERING WITH TENTMAKERS

A tentmaker is an Adventist professional, such as a nurse, engineer, English teacher, or university professor, who serves in the secular workplace. MENAUM needs more laborers for the harvest, but we don't have adequate financial resources to hire many people—we rely on dedicated Adventists who will be self-funded through their career. There are currently 45 tentmakers in 14 cities.

## ENTERING WITH GLOBAL MISSION PIONEERS (GMP) AND URBAN CENTERS OF INFLUENCE (UCI)

Fifty-one Global Mission pioneers in 30 cities and the staff of 19 Urban Centers of Influence (UCI) in 13 cities are reaching people every day.





## Through Christ's method of mingling, sympathizing, meeting needs, winning confidence, and inviting people to follow Jesus Christ, they are sharing the gospel.

Through Christ's method of mingling, sympathizing, meeting needs, winning confidence, and inviting people to follow Jesus Christ, they are sharing the gospel.

Abdallah is a shoemaker by profession, a Kurdish Syrian who migrated to Lebanon because of the war in Syria. His family was deeply touched by UCI ministry staff who taught their children.

Abdallah was not close to God, but that all changed. One night he had a dream. In his dream he heard God's voice say, "Do not be afraid; I will care for you." Abdallah committed his life to Jesus. He began sharing with many of his friends what Jesus had done in his life.

It took years, but Abdallah finally gained the courage to stop smoking and was baptized. Now more than 80 people study the Bible in his home, and every Sabbath as many as 100 Kurdish friends join him for services as part of the first Kurdish Adventist congregation. Abdallah is a Global Mission pioneer, reaching out to his own people with the three angels' messages.

### ENTERING WITH DIGITAL EVANGELISM

MENAUM is prayerfully entering our cities with digital evangelism. From 2019 to 2021, 35,000 young Muslims participated in spiritual interactions online, and about 1,400 of them asked for more in-depth Bible studies. Before this, MENAUM Media Ministries established an online spiritual

community for young non-Christians in big cities, and more than 100,000 youth joined.

### ENTERING WITH HEALTH MINISTRIES

MENAUM gospel workers actively use several health methods, such as Health Expos, Breathe Free, and Creation Health, to provide many people with knowledge of physical and spiritual health. We have conducted 30 Health Expos, which served 20,000 people, and trained 200 facilitators for Breathe Free seminars.

### WHO WILL GO? WHO WILL TELL THEM?

In 2022 it would take all the church members 271 years, reduced from 405 years in 2015, to make the first contact with everyone currently living in MENAUM territory. Is the mission more achievable to the human eye because we have reduced 106 years to reach everyone?

Twelve cities with populations of at least 1 million still have no Adventist presence, and the number of cities are growing. We still need people with multiple backgrounds and talents to move into these unentered cities and shine God's light. We need people who can speak the local language; we need students; we need families; we need young professionals to serve as tent-makers. We need committed Seventh-day Adventists who will offer their time and energy to God for the salvation of others. Who will go? Who will tell them? 📌



## DELEGATE OF THE DAY PROFILE

# CHURCH IS NOT COMPLETE WITHOUT YOUTH

WILONA KARIMABADI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

The Philippines is a beautiful part of the world, filled with 1,107 islands and enough sandy beaches and beautiful snorkeling to keep beach enthusiasts happy for a lifetime. But for Michelle De Peralta Carillo, delegate from the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, there is another kind of beauty to be found. “The biggest and most beautiful thing for me there is that there are a lot of young adults serving the Lord, and they are all involved in ministry for God—not only in the city but in the provinces.”

It doesn’t take long to realize that 32-year-old Carillo, a sterile tech and graduate of Manila Adventist College, is a young adult with a huge

passion for inspiring youth to grow in faith. And it’s just part of who she is: “I am one of the youth leaders for my local congregation and a former youth representative for my conference,” she says.

**“For me happiness is to serve God with our whole heart.”**

Carillo made the long journey from the Philippines at the behest of her division’s executive committee to serve as a representative of the Youth department. “It is a priv-

ilege and honor to be here, and a blessing.” She has been enjoying every moment of the daily meetings, and though her hotel is just across the street, she stays glued to her seat so she can always have a great view of what is going on and doesn’t miss a thing.

“My passion is to serve the Lord wherever I go,” she says. “Even before the theme I Will Go was around, I always told my fellow youth, we need to go. We need to spread the news and reach people because God wants us to do that,” Carillo adds. “Some of the youth find their happiness outside in the world, but for me happiness is to serve God with our whole heart.”

For someone so young—not yet a parent herself—the burden she has for keeping youth in the church is very strong. But Carillo isn’t afraid to share that with peers and those even younger. “Church is not complete without youth, so we need to stay. I love Revival and Reformation because, while a lot of us may know the Spirit of Prophecy and our Fundamental Beliefs already, we still need to have revival and reformation in our hearts.”

Carillo has more to tell Adventist young people: “Stay in the church,” she says. “Don’t go away, because the real love, comfort, and healing that you need in your life can be found inside the church—it is in God. We need to help each through the idea of total member involvement, and we need to be a sermon [to the world] to do the things that God wants us to do. The church is a family, and we are one.”



# IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE (WELL, NOT REALLY)



*A look at AR's digital production cycle*

**WILONA KARIMABADI, ADVENTIST REVIEW**

From GC Session to GC Session, *Adventist Review* goes from its normal print schedule of weekly (years ago) to monthly (started in 2015) to daily. As you might imagine, producing a daily magazine at a convention is a mighty achievement all by itself. But this year, the AR team went even bigger by establishing a digital media team whose sole responsibility is to capture video stories to accompany print articles as well as native pieces to post on social media.

Daryl Gungadoo, lead of the AR Media Lab, is heading up the digital operation with AR director of digital media Gabriel Begle. “We’ve got some millennials on loan to us from 3ABN [along with Danae Songy, general manager and morning show host at 88.8 The Journey at Southwestern Adventist University; Phil White, a pastor from Southern California; and Yves Senty from France], and we have them running around gathering stories,” Gungadoo says.

## HOW AND WHY

The digital day starts like this: the entire Adventist Review Media team—digital, editorial, design,

photography, and multi-language columnists—gathers for morning worship at 7:45 a.m. Then, *Adventist Review* executive editor and publisher Bill Knott huddles with leads from each respective part of the team to prioritize assignments. These team leaders then get with their writers, photographers, videographers, and editors to make assignments and send everyone out to get their tasks done.

The video pieces are quickly edited on-site by Brandon Armstrong from 3ABN, who is working with the AR team at the Session. “I’m a full-time editor putting out all the media content that you see. [The team] brings the interviews to me, I’ll edit them, and make them look spicy and nice for YouTube and Facebook. We’ll also take full interviews and cut them up for shorter pieces on Instagram.” There is also a step for quality control. Armstrong will ask Gungadoo or Begle to take a look at pieces that might have certain elements which call for a more careful approach. “They’ll either give me the thumbs-up or say, ‘Eh, maybe we’ll just take that one out.’ But usually, they trust me to just get it out,” Armstrong says.

Gabriel Begle is doing a lot of the producer work—the behind-the-scenes part of the process that involves making calls, coordinating people, and often walking the floor just looking for the people that might have an interesting story that needs to be told. “We try to coordinate and look for stories that are not only of human interest but related to GC Session,” he says.

When digital pieces are ready to go, they not only get uploaded to Adventist Review TV and our YouTube platforms but also are distributed to where the greatest engagement comes from: social media.

Jared Thurmon serves the AR operation in marketing, and at GC Session he is the sole captain of the social media ship. In addition to posting the articles we produce on-site, Thurmon creates infographics based on up-to-the-minute data, prepares photography posts, and gets the videos up. “We are posting every twenty to twenty-five minutes. I would say we are averaging more than twenty posts among all the platforms,” he says. In case you were not aware, we have a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. We’re still toying with the TikTok idea.

While the process seems pretty straightforward, it involves a lot of work and coordination between many people—and that work must be done fast.

Volunteer Danae Songy, whose background is in radio, is a pro at in-the-moment interviewing. But because she is not familiar with the GC structure, it’s been helpful to have “insiders” to help. “Because I am new to the GC scene, I have a lot of gas in the tank, but I don’t know who to talk to,” she says. It’s been helpful to have Begle and Gungadoo point people out. “I’ve met a lot of great people. There have been a lot of delegates, but it’s been exciting to talk to the former GC president and the Ukrainian Union president and his wife.”

#### **ALWAYS WORTH IT IN THE END**

One of the unexpected byproducts of an otherwise intense workload at an event like this is getting a boost to one’s spiritual life and perspective on the church. “The experience here has been enlightening,” camera operator Nick Schwartz says. “There are so many knowledgeable people I’ve been surrounded



by, which has been a real pleasure. And just be going around grabbing interviews with delegates, stage participants, security workers, people on the street, getting different perspectives on what is going on. It’s been so much fun.”

In the digital world, there will always be technical issues to contend with, glitches to overcome, and other ups and downs. So part of the work of the digital team involves making sure the entire team—editorial, photography, and video—has the connectivity needed to do the job. But in the end, the visual product that goes live—the one that our data is telling us people are enjoying most—makes it worth it.

Gungadoo, who says he feeds off the energy and enthusiasm of the younger members of the digital team, thus eschewing lunch, gets excited about the wealth of interesting content that viewers around the world can engage with. “I would say the most interesting interview we did was yesterday [June 8] at 11:00 p.m. at the printing press where our magazines are printed. Hopefully, by the end of the day [June 9], we’ll see a 60-second mashup, from start to finish, of a team photographer making an image to it being printed on the front cover of the magazine.”

And now, thanks to the work of our digital team, you’ll get to see that and so much more. 🍷

# ONE CHURCH, MANY LANGUAGES



Theophile Voilquin  
and Roger Esteves



Yongqiang Liang

## DEBBIE MICHEL, *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

**A**s you exit the elevator on the fifth floor of the Dome at America's Center in St. Louis, a sign reads "Broadcast Media." The area that was once home to sports reporters is transformed for the week of the 61st General Conference Session into a space for interpreters to listen to the Session and relay each presentation continuously to those not able to understand English.

Simultaneous interpreters play one of the key roles in a Session communicating to a global church. According to the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics and Research, more than 500 languages are used in Adventist publications. So it seems only fitting that a global church established in more than 200 countries would devote resources and effort to these international members.

Longtime interpreters coordinator Odette Ferreira retired at the end of the 2015 session, so the responsibility has now fallen to British Columbia pastor Roger Esteves. He receives significant assistance from General Conference treasury staff member Theophile Voilquin. Together they are coordinating a group of 45 translators in eight languages: Korean, Chinese, German, Romanian, Russian, Portuguese, French, and Spanish. Many are church employees, but a good portion of the interpreters are volunteers who took vacation from their private or public sector jobs, including one who's a professional interpreter for the United Nations.

## HARD WORK

For the uninitiated, the job of simultaneous translating may look easy. But it's far from it.

Esther Val Bonzil of Canada, who interprets from English to French, explains: "It requires for your mind to hear at the same time as you process the information, and then turning it into another language that you speak, while at the same time listening to the next sentence."

To alleviate some of the burden of trying to figure out the speaker's words on the fly, advance copies of presentations are sometimes available. But since that's not always the case, working in shifts is





Esther and Daniel Val Bonzil PIETER DAMSTEEGT

recommended to give the brain a break. Esteves has organized the group so that interpreters are paired together and are encouraged to take turns working for 30 minutes at a time. But he allows flexibility. For instance, when there's a video presentation, the Portuguese interpreters enjoy working together by alternating voices for the various speakers.

But there's one interpreter who doesn't have the luxury of a teammate. Marius Andrei is the only Romanian translator, and so far he seems to be doing fine. He says he never received formal training in learning English and considers his ability to speak the language a gift from God. While it's not easy conducting simultaneous translation for upwards of 12 hours a day, by God's grace he presses on. "It's not easy for the delegates to stay in the [dome] and listen to all the explanations and vote all the time, so I'm doing the same thing," he surmises. He also has a choice. "If I cannot do it anymore, I will take a break and start again."

#### **POSSIBLE CHALLENGES**

Some of the challenge for the interpreters is unfamiliar technical words and phrases. Words such as bylaws, amendment, or even division—as in the phrase “world church divisions”—can

present an issue, according to Spanish translator Ismael Castillo.

Castillo is part of a six-person simultaneous interpretation team from the Texas Conference, and he says that in addition to wrestling with technical words, they are sometimes faced with the difficulty of interpreting Spanish speakers from other parts of the world. “In the U.S. you know how someone expresses a thought, how it begins and you kind of know where it's going,” he explains. “But when you have someone from [countries outside the U.S.], I found myself interpreting and then halfway through, I don't know where that person is going, and I feel kind of insecure. I had to stop a little bit, because at the end of the day, you don't interpret word by word, you interpret thoughts.”

Overall, the interpreting operation seems to be humming along smoothly, with few hiccups.

Esteves says the reality of managing the simultaneous interpretations hit him last week: What if a repeat of San Antonio happened, where suddenly the meeting came to a halt because of a technical issue? He imagined this scary scenario. “Everybody's going to be looking up to where we are, and say, ‘What are you guys doing up there?’”

He laughs and says, “I'm determined to not let that happen.”

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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS IN THE CHAIN GANG

# CRIMINAL CONSIDERATIONS

*If keeping the Sabbath means breaking the law, have you really committed a crime?*

**A**t the close of the nineteenth century, Sunday laws experienced something of a revival in America. Beginning in 1864, a lobbying group known as the National Reform Association began in earnest to petition Washington to entrench America’s status as a Christian nation in the U.S. Constitution. When its campaign went nowhere, the group turned its attention to various Sunday laws at the state level—or “blue” laws,<sup>1</sup> as they were often called—encouraging renewed adherence to those laws, since most states had not enforced them in many decades.

## THOU SHALT WORSHIP

The idea of legally prohibiting labor on the first day of the week certainly wasn’t new; it had ironically followed some of the early colonists across the Atlantic, who were emigrating to free themselves

**SHAWN BOONSTRA**

from state interference with their personal faith. Upon their arrival, a number of prominent communities promptly enforced Sunday observance by law.

This second state-level attempt by the National Reform Association paid off, and before long it spelled trouble for a number of Seventh-day Adventists, who found themselves being prosecuted for the “crime” of laboring on Sunday. Willie White himself was arrested in 1882 for operating Pacific Press (then in Oakland) on the first day of the week. In other states—most notably Tennessee—Adventists were sentenced to serve on chain gangs for following their conscience.

The church’s warning against Sunday laws was not born out of paranoid fantasy: it was a present reality for many members. According to a statement in the *American Sentinel* of September 5, 1895, “In both Henry and Rhea counties, Tennessee, the chain-gang had fallen into disuse because it was found to be unprofitable, and it was revived specially for the punishment of Seventh-day Adventists. This is indicative of the temper of the Tennessee authorities.”

#### FOR CAUSE

Our understanding of prophecy reveals that these sorts of laws, and the religious persecution that accompanied them, were just a warm-up act; we will see them again.<sup>2</sup>

Given the deeply emotional struggles our pioneers faced, and our understandable wariness of church-state complications, it isn’t surprising that the specter of yesteryear’s chain gangs made an appearance on the floor of the Session in St. Louis Wednesday morning, June 8. The assembled delegates were considering an amendment to the bylaws designed to enable the General Conference Executive Committee to remove members “for cause.” The amendment reads:

The phrase “for cause” when used in connection with removal from an elected or appointed position, or from employment, shall include but not be limited to 1) incompetence; 2) persistent failure to cooperate with duly constituted authority in substantive matters and with relevant employment and denominational policies; 3) actions which

**The amendment doesn’t bind the church to respond to each and every criminal conviction indiscriminately, regardless of the nature of the member’s crime.**

may be the subject of discipline under the Seventh-day Adventist *Church Manual*; 4) failure to maintain regular standing as a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; 5) theft or embezzlement; or 6) conviction of or guilty plea for a crime.

The proposed amendment passed with a 90-percent majority, but not before it raised a few eyebrows—including mine. Do we really want the civil authorities deciding who is serving on our Executive Committee? I suddenly found myself paying attention, eager to understand what was being recommended.

In reality, the proposal didn’t suggest anything that isn’t already the practice of the church. “The words ‘theft or embezzlement’ have been incorporated into the model constitutions and bylaws and are also in the reasons for discipline of ministers,” general counsel Karnik Doukmetzian said to the assembly when debate over the motion started. “They have been in working policy for a number of years now. This is not something new; we are simply adding this to the General Conference Constitution.”

The strong support for the motion suggested it was not an issue for most people, but it *was* pointed out from the floor that Christians, including Jesus Himself, have been convicted of crimes of conscience since the beginning of the church. And it’s true: Paul was sentenced to death by the government, and so was Peter. Countless Christian martyrs have been tightly lashed to a stake after being labeled a criminal. What constitutes a “crime” can vary dramatically from place to place, or as history progresses.

Would this amendment require the Executive





## How many stories have appeared in the headlines, featuring denominations that ignored criminal abuse?

it is unfortunate that there are possibilities and perhaps . . . there could be instances in which the church has come under scrutiny and challenge as a result of a person in a position to take action who did not.”

### ALL IN

The church is, after all, made up of very fallible humans, and when faced with the unpleasant task of dealing with problematic individuals, some people occasionally flounder and choose not to deal with the turmoil and confrontational heartache that go along with it. Fortunately, it doesn’t happen often, but it *does* happen. So it certainly doesn’t hurt to have another level of accountability.

Caution, of course, is wise, especially given our history with (and anticipation of) the criminalization of our belief and practice. There is, however, another side to this coin that is equally important: Christian organizations have unfortunately earned a reputation for sweeping criminal behavior under the rug, hiding it from the public and pretending it never happened. How many stories have appeared in the headlines featuring denominations that ignored criminal abuse? With the ratification of this amendment, we have a degree of certainty that the Executive Committee doesn’t intend to be among those who turn a blind eye to such things.

Could a policy like this be abused or misapplied? Sure. That’s true of *any* working policy, which is why the decision hasn’t been left with a single individual. A substantial majority of the body that represents *all* of us must make the call, which makes it unlikely that it will be misused.

Could this create a problem for us with governments in the future? I’m not convinced, because it doesn’t bind the church to action over any and all perceived “crimes.” It’s not as if the state can swoop in and demand that we shut down operations and dismiss everybody because we’re holding a meeting on Sunday because they have declared us criminals. (I mean, sure, they *could* hypothetically do that, but not based on *our* policies.)

And when the scenarios predicted in the latter half of Revelation 13 finally come into play? It doesn’t seem likely that the GC Executive Committee would still be meeting at that point. 🗡️

<sup>1</sup> Some believe they were termed “blue laws” because they were first printed on blue paper in the state of Connecticut, which is likely an urban legend, since not one copy on blue paper has ever been discovered.

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly enough, there is something of a legal precedent for treating Sunday differently from other days of the week buried in Article I, Section 17 of the American Constitution, which gives the President “ten days (Sunday excepted)” to return a law to Congress.

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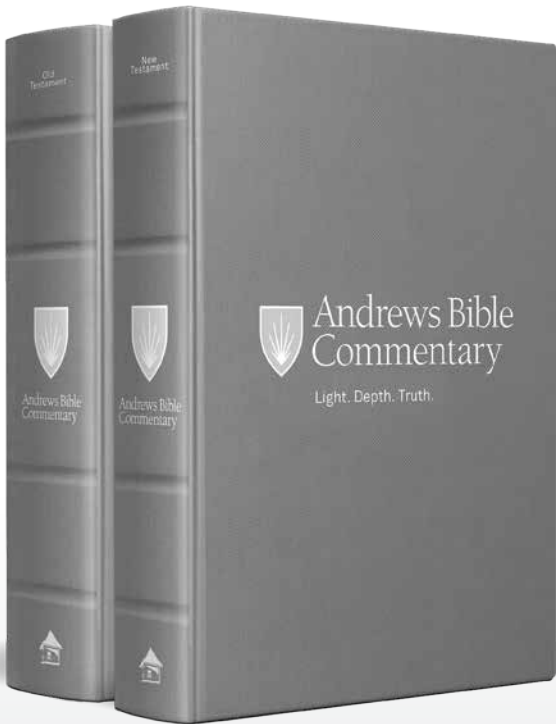
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