

# ADVENTIST REVIEW



GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION BULLETIN

7

JULY 10, 2015

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# Breath of Life

● Making Disciples

● Sharing Christ

● Planting Churches

**Kingdom growth.** It's one of the results when Christ's followers carry out the Gospel Commission.

When Jesus says in Matthew 28:19, 20 to make disciples everywhere, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we, at Breath of Life, take this mandate seriously.

This year the Lord has led us planting new churches. The new Breath of Life Church in San Antonio, TX, is off to an anointed start with nearly 150 newly-baptized members! Soon, we're off to St. Louis, MO, and then onto Stamford, CT, following Christ's lead to plant yet another church this year!

After more than 40 years of Bible preaching and teaching through television, radio, seminars, revivals, and evangelistic campaigns, God has given us the great honor to plant 14 new churches and baptize more than 20,000 souls—and that's just part of the legacy of Breath of Life!

To join us in sharing the wonderful messages of Jesus Christ, and to grow His kingdom by planting more churches in these exciting and challenging days, we ask for your continued prayers and financial support.

For great Bible resources, an archive of past programs, to join our weekly prayer group, and/or to contribute financially to Breath of Life, please contact us today:

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**Dr. Carlton P. Byrd**  
Speaker/Director



Kate Filkoski, a volunteer at food services, smiles as she sells one of the 95,000 meal tickets sold online and on site. DOMINIK ZEH AR/ANN

## A PEEK BEHIND THE SCENES AT GC SESSION

MEET THE PEOPLE WHO FEED YOU AND MAKE DELEGATES' VOICES HEARD

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW/ANN

Days after delegates return home from the General Conference (GC) session, a crew will still be packing up and shipping truckloads of equipment back to the world church's headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Like the conscientious captain of a parting ocean liner, they were the first to arrive in San Antonio and will be the last to leave.

"This is a big ship, and the whole team

here is steering it to take it successfully to the harbor," said Artour Vasmout, director of Information System Services for the General Conference. "The first plans were laid years ago, and now we are getting close to our destination."

Starting in the summer of 2014, Vasmout's team conducted interviews with every GC department involved in the session to deter-

mine their equipment needs and acquire it for shipment to San Antonio. His department shipped 85 desktop computers, 50 laptops, 45 printers, and miles of network cable, among other equipment.

"We filled two tractor-trailer trucks," Vasmout said.

At the front end of the Alamodome, at floor level and just before the stage, is what Vas-





Nancy Lamoreaux, chief information officer of the General Conference, is at the helm of the information technology services.

DOMINIK ZEH AR/ANN

mout calls “the cockpit of the ship.” This is the place where GC information software developer Ean Nugent fields delegates’ requests to speak on a screen, after they scan their badges at six different stations across the floor.

“The system’s debut was two GC Sessions ago,” Nugent said. “But for this session it has undergone important updates.”

Team members seated beside him make sure the delegates’ names appear on large screens in the stadium when they stand at one of six microphones at the strategically placed stations across the floor. They also ensure that a two-minute countdown starts as soon as a delegate begins to speak.

Half a mile (800 meters) northwest of the Alamodome, the bustling Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center confirms that nothing is as simple as it seems at an event of this size. Hotel assistants, security personnel, and food services managers come and go to make sure everything runs as smoothly as possible.

“This is just the main dining area,” said Adrian Hamblin, assistant to the director of food services, as he waved goodbye to guests after lunch. “There are three additional smaller dining halls set up at the Alamodome.”

By smaller, he means that the three halls combined feed about 1,000 people: the Alamodome technical staff, members of the North American Division, and the nominating committee. The convention center hall feeds 5,000 delegates, guests, and their families on weekdays and 7,000 on weekends.

Hamblin, who actually works for Hope Channel at GC headquarters in Maryland, has switched from his television scheduling responsibilities for a few days to make sure people can get their cards scanned and access the eating area as fast as possible.

“We have a dozen volunteers helping us with the scanning process,” he said. “And with multiple scanner access points and 20 buffet lines on both sides, our goal is to get 4,000 people eating in no more than 30 minutes.”

Nancy Lamoreaux, GC chief information officer, who is overseeing the logistics, called the volunteers the unsung heroes of the session.

“Even when most people may not see them, their commitment and hard work has made a world of a difference,” she said.

Even with the assistance of the mostly young volunteers, the logistics of the Session would not be complete without the support of lo-

cal and national companies that competitively bid for contracts to provide additional services in the Alamodome.

“We’ve brought two and a half semis of just lighting equipment,” said David Jackson, lighting designer for ID Systems, a Houston- and San Antonio-based company that provides lighting and audio solutions to massive public gatherings. “If we take into account our audio systems, well, we are talking about five truckloads of equipment.”

Another company provides the event’s staging, which includes the setting up of risers and platforms, as well as flow pipe and drape systems, railing, and ramps. And yet others provide video screen, audio, and wireless solutions.

“There is a whole crew of technicians working here,” Jackson said.

Labeling and re-labeling is a big thing in the Alamodome. Sports offices suddenly have become rooms for board meetings, and the home-team locker room has transformed into “Platform Management” headquarters.

“We are in charge of the flow of the worship service,” said Kenneth Denslow, platform director for the event, speaking on behalf of a dozen people working in his makeshift office. “This includes overseeing the coming and going out of the platform, the flow of the music, and generally speaking, the seamless roll of the program.”

Denslow said his team works in consultation with the program committee, a larger



Seated in front of the stage, a member of the IT team scans badges for delegates who wish to speak. DOMINIK ZEH AR/ANN

body responsible for everything that happens on the stage other than the business meetings. He said his team has come a long way in the weeks and months leading to the session.

“Reaching this point has demanded countless hours spent in meetings and planning,” he said.

Up on level four of the Alamodome, volunteers interpret from the English spoken on the floor into a dozen languages.

“I am here because the Lord has been very good to me and because my wife covered my airfare,” interpreter Benjamin Giang said with a smile.

Giang, a chemist by profession, came out of retirement to serve as a Chinese-language interpreter in California courts.

Interpreters at the session are not paid for their task, though some of them get free meals or get their expenses partially reimbursed by their local fields. The job can be challenging,

especially when delegates speak quickly at the microphone on the main floor far below.

Samuel Simorangkir, communication director for the West Indonesia Union Mission and interpreter into Bahasa Indonesian, said the trip to San Antonio was easy.

“I used money from my own pocket to get here,” he said with a sigh. His local church territory covered half of his traveling and lodging expenses.

“Still, I consider it a blessing,” he said.

## World Views

Newly elected division presidents and MENA president pose together: (Back from left) Ezras Lakra (SUD), Daniel Jackson (NAD), Raafat Kamal (TED), Homer Trecartin (MENA), Blasious Ruguri (ECD), Glenn Townsend (SPD), Jairyong Lee (NSD), Leonardo Asoy (SSD). (Front from left) Mario Brito (EUD), Israel Leito (IAD), Erton Köhler (SAD), Michael Kaminskiy (ESD), Paul Ratsara (SID). Not shown is WAD president Elie Weick-Dido; his photo will be in tomorrow’s bulletin (Bulletin 8).

PHOTO: DAVID B. SHERWIN



# ELECTED GC DEPARTMENT OFFICERS AND DIVISION LEADERS

BY ADVENTIST REVIEW/ANN STAFF

## GENERAL CONFERENCE DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

**Children's Ministries associate:** **Saustin Sampson Mfuné** (incumbent).

**Communication associate directors:** **Andre D. Brink** (incumbent), **Garrett Caldwell** (incumbent).

**Education associate director:** **Julian Melgosa** is a professor of Education and Psychology at Walla Walla University. He has a bachelor's degree in Education and a master's degree in Psychology, both from the University of Madrid. He also has a doctoral degree in Educational Psychology from Andrews University.

**Education associate director:** **Hudson E. Kibuuka** (incumbent).

**Education associate director:** **Mike M. Lekic** (incumbent).

**Education associate director:** **John Wesley Taylor** (incumbent).

**Health Ministries associate director:** **Fred G. Hardinge** (incumbent).

**Health Ministries associate director:** **Katia Reinert**, director of Health Ministries for the North American Division. Reinert is a family nurse practitioner and public health clinical nurse specialist with training in depression treatment and the integration of faith and health. Prior to accepting the call to serve as the Health Ministry director for NAD, she was the health ministry clinical supervisor and faith community nurse coordinator for Adventist HealthCare. Reinert holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Washington Ad-

ventist University, a Master of Science in Nursing from Catholic University of America, and a Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing in Baltimore.

**Health Ministries associate director:** **Zeno L. Charles-Marcel, MD**, is vice president of Medical Affairs at Wildwood Lifestyle Center and Hospital in Georgia, United States. He has been a speaker with the WEIMAR Reversing Diabetes Seminars, worked at the Lifestyle Center of America, and has been involved in health evangelism in several countries. He currently also serves as interim director of International Health Center: Vida Sana, the lifestyle center at the La Carlotta Hospital in Montemorelos, Mexico.

**Ministerial associates (all incumbents):** **Jonas Arrais**, Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses, Retirees, Ministerial Resources, and editor of *Elder's Digest*; **Robert Costa**, Evangelism and Church Growth; **Willie Hucks II**, associate editor of *Ministry* magazine; **Anthony Kent**, Continuing Education, PREACH; **Derek Morris**, editor of *Ministry* magazine.

**Public Affairs and Religious Liberty associate director:** **Nelu Burcea**, Communication, and Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for Romanian Union Conference. Previously he was director of Hope Channel Romania. Burcea has two master's degrees—one in Management and the second in Media and

Marketing. He also holds a doctoral degree in Management from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies.

**Public Affairs and Religious Liberty associate director:** **Dwayne O. Leslie** (incumbent)

**Planned Giving and Trust Services:** **Gary W. Dodge**, director (incumbent, asked to serve until Annual Council). **Chuck Simpson**, associate director (incumbent, asked to serve until Annual Council). **Wilfredo Sumagaysay**, associate director (incumbent, asked to serve until Annual Council).

**Publishing director:** **Almir Mauricio Marroñi** has been serving as a vice president for the South American Division since his appointment to the position in November 2011. He has spent 28 years in publishing work leadership in various levels in South America. Marroñi holds a bachelor's degree in Theology from the Adventist University of Sao Paulo, and has been pursuing postgraduate studies in marketing and business administration at SPEI in Curitiba, Brazil. His wife, Wiliane, is Women's Ministries director of the South American Division.

**Publishing Ministries associate director:** **Wilmar Hirle** (incumbent). A second Publishing Ministries associate position is still vacant.

**Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director:** **Ramon Canals** is vice president for Hispanic Ministries and director of the Min-



Euro-Asia Division treasurer Brent Burdick and his family are greeted by the delegates. JOSAFAT ZEMLEDUCH AR/ANN





# SPECIAL SABBATH OFFERING TO GO TO YOUNG PEOPLE

**MONEY TO BE USED FOR YOUTH- AND CHILDREN-LED EVANGELISM.**

BY SANDRA BLACKMER, ADVENTIST REVIEW/ANN

A special mission offering that will be collected during the General Conference (GC) session's second Sabbath worship service, July 11, 2015, will challenge attendees to put their money where their mouth is.

The money is slated to fund thousands of youth-driven mission projects worldwide.

"We often talk about how young people are vitally important to our church's life and mission," said Gary Krause, director of the Office of Adventist Mission. "This special offering shows we mean it."

The General Conference session offering will be used by Adventist young people, ages 25 and younger, for outreach and evangelism, according to a vote approved by delegates of the 2013

**For division offering dates, go to 2015. [gcsession.org/offering](http://gcsession.org/offering). To learn more about Give Them the Keys, go to [vimeo.com/123346544](http://vimeo.com/123346544).**

Annual Council. Each division and the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission are to establish committees in which 75 percent of the members comprise children and young adults from elementary school through college age. The committees will develop youth-led projects funded by the special offering. No matching funds will be required.

Linda Mei Lin Koh, GC Children's Ministries director, said the offering would motivate and generate new and untried ideas among young people and encourage them to play a more active part in the life and mission of the church.

"We want to encourage those serving on the committees to be creative and to come up with new and novel ideas for evangelism and outreach that have never been done before," Koh said.

The initiative, coined Give Them the Keys, represents a new philosophy to engage young people in the mission of the church, GC Youth Ministries director Gilbert Cangy said.

"We're going beyond saying 'We have a plan' to saying 'God has entrusted you with gifts from the Holy Spirit' " he said in a GC-developed video about the program. "Now we want you to prayerfully engage that spiritual giftedness within your community."

An offering for youth-led evangelism also has been assigned for collection on selected dates in all the world divisions.

isterial Department for North Pacific Union Conference. Previously he served as an evangelist and coordinator for the Hispanic work and an associate Ministerial director in the Oregon Conference. He holds a master's in Divinity and a doctorate in Ministry from Andrews University.

**Secretary associates:** John Thomas, Gary Krause, Karen Porter (all incumbents).

**Stewardship:** Erika Puni, director (incumbent, asked to serve until Annual Council). Larry Evans, associate director (incumbent, asked to serve until Annual Council). Mario Nino, associate director (incumbent, asked to serve until Annual Council).

**Treasury associate:** Delbert B. Pearson, has served as Planning director for General Conference Adventist Mission since 2010. He previously worked in the GC Information Systems Services and as secretary-treasurer for the Bermuda Conference. A Treasury associate position is still vacant.

**Women's Ministries associate:** Raquel Arrais (incumbent).

**Youth Ministries associates:** Jonaton Tejel, (incumbent). Pako E. Mokgwane, director of Communication, Stewardship Ministries, and Youth Ministries for the Botswana Union Conference. Jiwon S. Moon, associate director (incumbent, asked to serve until Annual Council).

## DIVISION SECRETARIES AND TREASURERS

**East-Central Africa Division (ECD):** Alain G. Coralie, associate secretary for ECD. Jerome Habimana (incumbent).

**Euro-Asia Division (ESD):** Viktor V. Alyeksyeyenko, president of Ukrainian

Union Conference. Brent B. Burdick (incumbent).

**Inter-European Division (EUD):** Barna Magyarosi, Education and Family Ministries director for the Inter-European Division. Norbert G. Zens (incumbent).

**Inter-American Division (IAD):** Elie Henry (incumbent). Filiberto M. Verduzco-Avila (incumbent).

**North American Division (NAD):** G. Alexander Bryant (incumbent); G. Thomas Evans (incumbent).

**Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD):** Position of secretary to be filled at Annual Council. German Lust, vice president for Finance, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS).

**South American Division (SAD):** Edward Heidinger Zevallos, president of North Peru Union Mission. Marlon de Souza Lopes (incumbent).

**Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID):** Solomon Maphosa (incumbent). Goodwell Nthani (incumbent).

**South Pacific Division (SPD):** Lionel H. Smith (incumbent). Rodney G. Brady (incumbent).

**Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD):** Saw Samuel (incumbent). Max W. Langi, undertreasurer of SSD.

**Southern Asia Division (SUD):** Measapogu Wilson, president of East-Central India Union Section. Position of treasurer to be filled at Annual Council.

**Trans-European Division (TED):** Audrey E. Andersson (incumbent). Nenad Jeuranovic (incumbent).

**West-Central Africa Division (WAD):** Kingsley C. Anonaba, director of Evangelism, director of Global Mission, and associate director of Sabbath School and Personal Ministries for the Eastern Nigeria Union Conference. Emmanuel S. D. Manu (incumbent).



Raquel Arrais, Women's Ministries associate director, empowers her sisters with her morning message Tuesday, July 7.

PHOTOS BY DOMINIK ZEH/AN

## ADVENTIST WOMEN FIND A MESSAGE ALL THEIR OWN

**SPECIAL SPIRITUAL MEETINGS ARE ORGANIZED FOR WOMEN AT THE GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION.**

BY WILONA KARIMABADI, ADVENTIST REVIEW/ANN

A mini-retreat for women was held this week at the General Conference (GC) Session.

Women attended for many reasons. Perhaps they were in San Antonio because their spouses were delegates, or because they always wanted to attend a GC Session and this was their first; or maybe they were Session veterans, attending for the fourth or fifth time.

The reasons were as varied as the women holding them. But first and foremost, scores of women came to meetings organized by the General Conference Women's Ministries and Shepherdess International to hear something from God just for them.

"What we offered women was a mini-retreat where they could come aside in the mornings and have a good sermon presentation focused for them, and then in the afternoon, we had some seminars to empower women with new information," says Heather-Dawn Small, General Conference Women's Ministries director. Translation services for the meetings were offered in five languages: French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, and Korean.

"While morning talks were based on the general theme for the Session, 'Arise, Shine, Jesus Is Coming,' afternoon seminars were specifically chosen for personal development and outreach," she adds.

Ministerial associate secretary Janet Page,

who gave the morning message on Wednesday, spoke about the need for women to pray about and prepare for life's challenges with hope as they juggle marriage, motherhood, and careers. Page spoke in a practical and highly personal tone that most women present could easily relate to. "When you pray together and things get worse, thank God that He's working. Step out in faith and thank Him and believe it," she said.

Many women who attended found much inspiration just in the sisterhood of believers in this multicultural movement of ours. "It was very touching to be with and to meet so many other women from the church around the world where you can really feel the fellowship of God's children," says Lanieflor Malabad, from the Philippines. "Especially when prayer time came and you embraced with others from other countries, it was a wholesome experience."

Internationality and idea sharing were big parts of the programming as each day featured women's ministries reports from different divisions.

"We had every division give a video report," says Small. "The women got to see what happened in different parts of the world, and it was inspiring for them to see women doing different things, adding to their level of motivation and excitement and helping them

think, *This is wonderful; let's go out and do something.*"

Our church's sisters—wives, mothers, grandmothers, aunts, daughters, and friends—are pillars of their families and communities. Master multitaskers, nurturers, and teachers, the women who attended these meetings found themselves inspired and refreshed by what they saw and heard. "I'll tell you, they [the meetings] were wonderful," says Caroline Sutton, from the state of Alabama in the United States of America. "They gave me the renewal, refreshment, and encouragement I have needed. I really appreciated the Christ-centered focus and mutual support. We women have so many things in common, and we don't have to let distractions turn us away from what's really important."

Small hopes her fellow sisters left with big takeaways from the meetings. "I hope they took away all the information they got from the seminars and will go back to their churches and share it," she says. "I hope they took away renewed passion for women's ministries just by being among women from different countries and hearing their reports. And I'm hoping they feel inspired and have the impetus for the next five years to say, 'Wow, we're going back to our churches, and we're going to make something happen.'"





GERALD A. KLINGBEIL

## MY TAKE

### The Day After

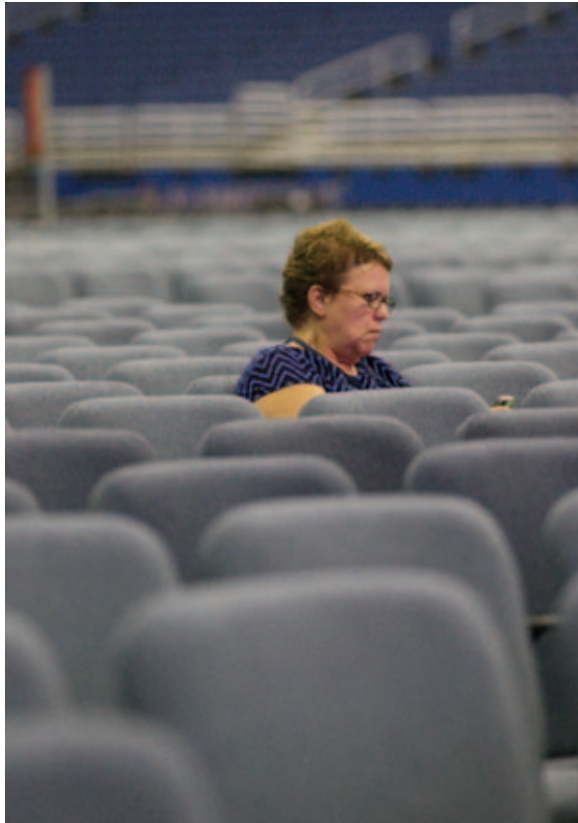
**O**n Wednesday, my church voted on a question that has occupied members all around the globe for the last five years. The question before the body had to do with the relationship between Scripture and culture, church structure, unity, and, ultimately, trust. The voting results: 1,381 delegates voted against the motion on the floor; 977 delegates voted for it; 5 delegates abstained. As a faith community we decided that this is not the time to give individual divisions authority to ordain women to the ministry.

I sat on the floor as one of the delegates.

I was proud of how the chair, Mike Ryan, one of the general vice presidents of the General Conference (GC) and retiring after this session, led the proceedings and underlined key values that should characterize any Adventist conversations involving different opinions: respect, Christ-likeness, and an open ear that truly listens.

I was proud of the way we all recognized the importance of prayer in this crucial moment. Thousands and thousands of prayers went up to our heavenly Father from the Alamodome yesterday—and millions more from around the world. It's good to know that there is no danger of a power overload on God's grid.

I appreciated the passion of the delegates on both sides of the ordination aisle and their attempt to show respect and restraint. I heard pleas for faithfulness to Scripture, for recognizing different cultural realities, and for unity. Some delegates asked for unity in diversity; for others this unity expressed itself in globally shared policies. I heard repeatedly that this issue should not be confused



KENN DIXON AR/ANW

with a Fundamental Belief or be elevated to be one of the pillars of Adventist faith.

I felt unease when I heard some harsh reactions to a passionate plea by former GC President Jan Paulsen. It felt like lack of respect for an elder statesman who served this church for decades. It was an indicator of the charged atmosphere.

Following the announcement of the vote, I saw tears and worried faces. How would we wake up after a vote that apparently saw losers and winners?

Today is another busy day in the Alamodome—and yet, in many ways, things seem different. There is ample commentary on this significant decision—on Facebook, in blogs and news outlets; even the *Washington Post* weighed in on the reporting.

I wonder about my church and its

young adults. I wonder about the power of the majority and the sense of helplessness of the minority. I wonder how we will deal with other issues that are closely linked to culture and our interpretation of Scripture. I long for a “Word from the Lord”—and then my heart becomes quiet. I trust the Good Shepherd who is leading His sheep and cares for their well-being. I trust that God’s will is truly done, “on earth as it is in heaven.” I hang my helpless soul on Jesus, as Ellen White loved to write over and over again, when she felt troubled and worried about God’s end-time people.

What do Adventists do when they have to wait? They start singing (as we did yesterday while waiting for the announcement of the vote) and find strength in powerful hymns. “Amazing Grace” still quiets my soul. “When He Cometh” makes my heart burst

with anticipation. “Crown Him With Many Crowns” always brings tears to my eyes.

When they have finished their songs and their hearts have been stilled and all the tears have been shed, however, Adventists start moving. Not to a program or a pipe. They are moved by the billions who have not yet met the Lord carrying the crown of thorns. They join hands to serve those needing hope and comfort. They are ready to be the hands and feet of Jesus, because they know that “soon and very soon, we are going to see the King.”

They wait and work and worship — together. 🌱

**Gerald A. Klingbeil** is an associate editor of the *Adventist Review* who is anxious to see God break through.



## HIGH TEMPS, OVERGROWN YARDS NO MATCH FOR IMPACT DELEGATES

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN, ADVENTIST REVIEW/ANN

**J**uly 7, 2015: The temperatures hit 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius) as a bus with 33 Impact San Antonio delegates emptied at the Redeemers Praise Church, at the corner of S. Pine Street and E. Commerce Street, an area of San Antonio with abandoned homes, stray dogs, overgrown yards, and people to care about.

The first words of advice from community service project coordinator Isaac Ayana: “Just love them. Show them the love of Christ.”

With that, delegates divided into three groups. One group was assigned to partnering with Life Health Network’s expo for children in a neighborhood park.

Young registrants at the health expo completed interactive activities at eight stations (NewStart principles reworked under the acronym BE STRONG)—15-minute stops where the children, assisted by Impact delegates, participated in a fun activity and learned a health principle.

The other two groups were assigned a community service project that involved significant landscaping for several homes in the

southeast neighborhood. Ayana, an Adventist who works with the nonprofit Dream Center San Antonio, wasted no time giving quick instructions about tools, bags, gloves, water bottles, and what to expect at each house. After the briefing and prayer, Ayana led the reloaded bus to two different neighborhood blocks in his white Silverado laden with lawn mowers, ladders, scythes, rakes, and gas powered weed trimmers. Impact delegates got to work immediately in the residents’ yards.

A few hours later, front, back, and side yards of six houses were immaculately groomed, more than 100 water bottles were emptied, and sweaty delegates returned to their yellow bus sharing stories—about elderly resident Virginia; about single, working mom Pam; and others.

While a few picked up new skills in landscaping, all came back with the realization that caring for people in their communities goes a long way. And that by caring for others and loving them, they themselves would be drawn closer to God.



Marah Irving, a delegate from Fort Worth, Texas, said, “I wanted to do something that would keep me energized the whole week. But I didn’t realize the impact this experience would have on my spiritual life. . . . I’ve been praying more, and I’ve gotten closer to Christ through this experience.”



# OUR 10 FAVORITE QUOTES FROM THE 2015 GC SESSION



**10** “These people [Adventist Review staff] must be up all night long, and I would like to go on record that we appreciate what they’re doing.” —**Gerry Karst**, retired General Conference vice president and delegate

**9** “Women, we love you!”  
—**Bruno Vertallier**, Inter-European Division delegate, retiring division president

**8** “If the first six days were not literal days, why do we rest on the literal seventh day?”  
—**James Standish**, South Pacific Division delegate



**7** “There is no loneliness where Jesus is.” —**Mathilde Frey**, GC devotional speaker, former Old Testament professor at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies

**6** “There is such a large crowd here that the treasurers are wondering whether they can take up an offering.”  
—**Michael L. Ryan**, retiring general vice president, General Conference

**5** (TIE) “I’d like to refer this back to committee.” —Multiple delegates speaking to the chair during business sessions

**5** (TIE) “Point of order.” —Multiple delegates speaking to the chair during business sessions

**4** “Put down your measuring tape and lift up Jesus.”  
—**Raewyn Hankins**, Impact San Antonio speaker and pastor of the Victorville Adventist Church in California

**3** “Arise, Shine, Jesus is Coming—I believe soon.”  
—**Ted N.C. Wilson**, General Conference president

**2** “The world is dying of hunger and we are sitting on bread, talking about who can distribute it.”  
—**Artur A. Steele**, general vice president, General Conference

**1** “It is possible to be a strict vegetarian and act like a pig!”  
—**Gary Krause**, director, Adventist Mission



Ryan McCoy reads the Declaration of Independence at the Alamo. “Ryan was so excited to be part of this,” said Kelly, his wife and ministry/business partner. “He took this opportunity seriously.” With a smile she added, “He even grew his sideburns out to look the part.” DOMINIK ZEH AR/ANN

## DAVY CROCKETT'S ADVENTIST DESCENDANT TAKES STAND AT ALAMO

HE SHARES HIS LOVE FOR GOD AT THE ALAMO AND AT GC SESSION.

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN, ADVENTIST REVIEW/ANN

A direct descendant of the “King of the Wild Frontier” took a stand for the King of the universe at the Alamo.

Ryan McCoy, the great-great-great-great-great-grandson of American folk hero Davy Crockett, came to the General Conference session to participate in a historical reenactment at the Alamo, the frontier mission where his well-known ancestor was slain in 1836, and to operate a booth for his Adventist media ministry in the session’s convention center.

McCoy, 41, a third-generation Seventh-day Adventist, read a portion of the United States

(U.S.) Declaration of Independence at the Alamo last Sabbath, July 4, as a crowd including his wife, Kelly, and 7-year-old daughter looked on.

“It is not only a great honor to participate in this event, but at this critical point in history, any time we can read about our Creator, we should take the opportunity,” McCoy told the *Adventist Review*.

The Declaration of Independence includes the statement, “All Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

“It’s meaningful being the fifth great-grandson and being on this site, and being at one of the most important sites representing independence and freedom and fighting against oppression and tyranny,” McCoy said in the interview at the Alamo.

McCoy said he understands his forebears’ struggles.

He drifted out of the Adventist Church in his 20s. He celebrated his 30th birthday alone in a Michigan forest, finishing the book *The Desire of Ages* by Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White. As he closed the book, he felt that the Lord spoke to him.

“He said, ‘Ryan, it’s your 30th birthday; my Son started His ministry on His 30th birthday. What are you doing for Me?’ ” McCoy said.

McCoy said he felt troubled and inadequate for the rest of that day.

For about a year he prayed for the Lord to put him on the front lines of evangelism.

Now McCoy is speaker and director of Sealing Time Ministries, an Adventist media production company he started with his wife in 2002.

His famous relative, David “Davy” Stern Crockett, was a Presbyterian whose larger-than-life exploits during his lifetime made him a household name. Crockett, commonly referred to in popular culture as the “King of the Wild Frontier,” served as a federal lawmaker from Tennessee in the U.S. House of Representatives. He fought in a revolution in Texas, which was a Mexican state at the time, and was killed by Mexican soldiers in the Battle of the Alamo at the age of 49.

Crockett’s descendants learned about the Seventh-day Adventist Church a half century ago when a church member told McCoy’s grandfather, Alonzo McCoy, Jr., about evangelistic meetings that were taking place in the area.

The grandfather, who was a Nazarene pastor, became concerned for his church mem-



For the Crockett-McCoy family tree and video of reading, visit [AdventistReview.org/crockett-mccoy](http://AdventistReview.org/crockett-mccoy)



**“It doesn’t take a whole lot of people to make a whole lot of difference in this world.”**

ber and decided to attend the Adventist meeting, McCoy said.

He kept going to the meetings. After the meetings finished, he studied more, and in 1961, he was baptized.

McCoy’s father, Patrick, joined the church when he was 11 and recently retired from work at Pacific Press Publishing Association in Nampa, Idaho.

The convergence of the Alamo reading and the General Conference session was no accident.

McCoy volunteered to participate in the

reenactment after calling and confirming with the operators of the Alamo in January that he was a verified Crockett family descendent. The Alamo operators asked him to read the Declaration of Independence. During the two scheduled readings at the Alamo, McCoy and two other participants dressed in authentic period attire and read the document.

McCoy said he saw parallels between Adventist believers and the troops who made a stand at the Alamo.

“It doesn’t take a whole lot of people to make a whole lot of difference in this world,”

he said. “On these grounds there was a line drawn in the sand. The men made a decision where they would stand. They had the opportunity to leave; all but one chose to stay and fight no matter the cost.

“As a Seventh-day Adventist, and as the fifth great-grandson of David Crockett, I understand uniquely what that means,” he said. “At the end of time we need to know where we stand—and the lines are being drawn.”

*Ryan and Kelly McCoy can be found at their Sealing Time Ministries booth at GC Session (C1572).*

# GC SESSION: ONE STORY AT A TIME

BY HEATHER QUINTANA, ADVENTIST REVIEW/ANN

**A**ll eyes are on the stage of the Alamodome for the big stories of the General Conference Session. But those aren't the only stories here. There are 65,000 other ones all around us.

Everyone has a story—life experiences, struggles and victories, ideas about God and the church.

Take a moment to listen in on some of the stories of our diverse and fascinating church.





**JAE MAN PARK, PH.D.**  
**SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA**

**A**s a doctor of public health and editor in chief at Korean Publishing House, Park combines his interests in health and publishing through a number of projects, including the Korean magazine *Home and Health*. When asked one of the health concerns in his country, he explains:

“High blood pressure is a major concern. The Korean people eat kimchi—fermented vegetables—every day, and lots of salty food, a probable cause for this problem. A friend of mine taught a class, and many Koreans were there. After lunch, he asked the students how many students of them had kimchi for lunch. Everyone raised their hands. My friend was shocked and thought it was unbelievable. But every meal, every Korean eats kimchi.”



**PEARL LEWIS  
 ANDREW GRIFFITH  
 SIMONE GRIFFITH  
 EULYN PHILLIPS  
 MICHAEL PHILLIPS**  
**ARIMA, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**Y**ou can’t miss this group of 70 Trinidadians: they packed three sets of matching shirts—orange, teal, and blue. The only thing louder than their shirts is their laughter. Their joy is contagious, and they weave humor and reverence into their conversations.

**Andrew:** “This is a big country. Wow! It’s a ‘wow’ country. You can fit about 100 Trinidads in Texas.”

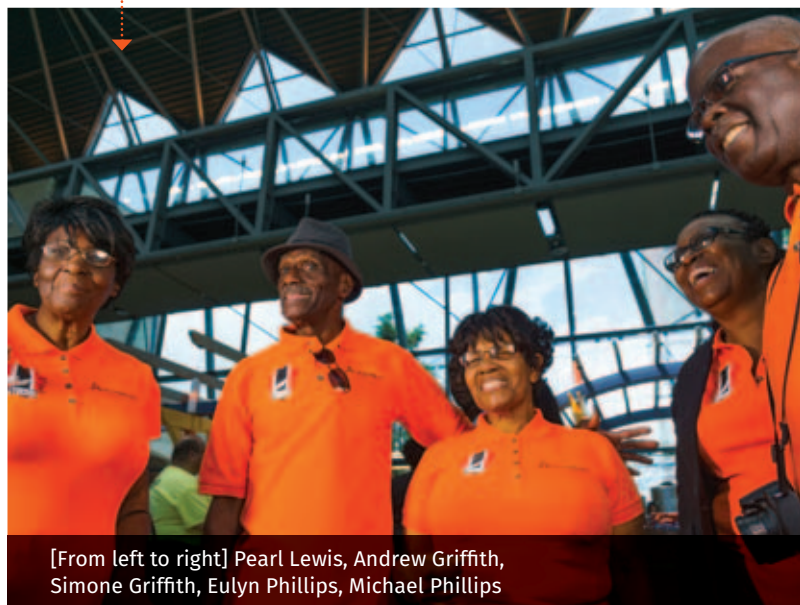
**ZLATA GRINCHENKO, 9  
 VOLODYMYR GRINCHENKO  
 NIKITA GRINCHENKO, 10**  
**HAGERSTOWN,  
 MARYLAND, U.S.A.**

**O**riginally from Ukraine, Volodymyr Grinchenko is a pastor in Maryland, United States. He and his wife are enjoying seeing General Conference Session through the wide eyes of their children.

**Volodymyr:** “The kids like to go treasure hunting in the exhibit hall. All the ministries—what they do and how they present—it mesmerizes them. They can spend hours there walking around without complaining. It’s amazing to see them in action. They go to every booth.”

**Zlata:** “We’re going to get a few things for our cousins in the Ukraine. We want to send them some presents because they weren’t here.”

**Nikita:** “The exhibit hall feels like a miniature heaven, because of all of the presents!”



[From left to right]  
 Zlata Grinchenko, 9  
 Volodymyr Grinchenko  
 Nikita Grinchenko, 10

[From left to right] Pearl Lewis, Andrew Griffith,  
 Simone Griffith, Eulyn Phillips, Michael Phillips







**W**ant to know what Gamboa is excited about? Just ask. He'll pull out maps, stories, and statistics. The young adults in the church in Belize, for example, are on fire, according to Gamboa.

"We have a total of 40,000 church members in Belize, and the population is 350,000. We are the second largest denomination in the country, after Roman Catholics. Actually I was a Catholic, but then the Lord took me to a home that belonged to a Seventh-day Adventist, and they began to share their faith with me. And, to God be the glory, I then accepted the message. That was about 25 years ago."

**GELDER GAMBOA**  
**ORANGE WALK, BELIZE**

**ORIANE SALMON**  
**PAPEETE, TAHITI**

**I**n Tahitian tradition, if a woman wears a flower in her hair on the right side, she is single; but once she moves it to the left—the side of her heart—it indicates that she is engaged. With a quiet confidence, Salmon pointed out that she now wears her flower on the left. She's attending the session with her mother, an elder in one of the main churches in French Polynesia.

"I think older people in our church should pay more attention to the young people. There is a generation gap, so we don't understand each other. When we have ideas, they do not accept our ideas."



[From left to right] Mary Sunder, Sushila Karunakaran, Ruby (White) Johnson

**MARY SUNDER,**  
**SUSHILA KARUNAKARAN,**  
**RUBY (WHITE) JOHNSON**  
**CHENNAI, INDIA**

**T**hese friends have a lot in common, including a touch of jet lag and a love of ministry. (Mary helps create children's programming for Hope Channel India, and Ruby's husband is the director of the channel.)

**Mary:** "We just came this morning from India. It took 24 hours in flight, and we changed at least three different flights to reach here. We haven't slept yet, but we find it wonderful to see all the people from different places. It feels like heaven."

**N**orally and her sister love to travel together, so they were excited to make the trip to Texas. They're volunteering to represent the Dutch Caribbean in the exhibit hall.

"Today we—the Dutch Caribbean—were voted a union. Just this morning. I'm so happy, so happy! I was converted to the Adventist Church 17 years ago. My brother became an Adventist first, and he took me to a campaign. It was seven long weeks under a tent, but God is good. I loved God all my life, but I was feeling there was something more I had to get—and now I have it."



**NORALLY**  
**BEVERHOUD**  
**CURAÇAO,**  
**A DUTCH**  
**CARIBBEAN**  
**ISLAND**

**CAMDEN POSSINGER, 14  
MASON POSSINGER, 12  
LOMA LINDA,  
CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.**

**T**hese California boys love to boogie board and even made time for a stop at the ocean on their way to San Antonio. The biggest surprise for them about the session? The amount of people—and activity.

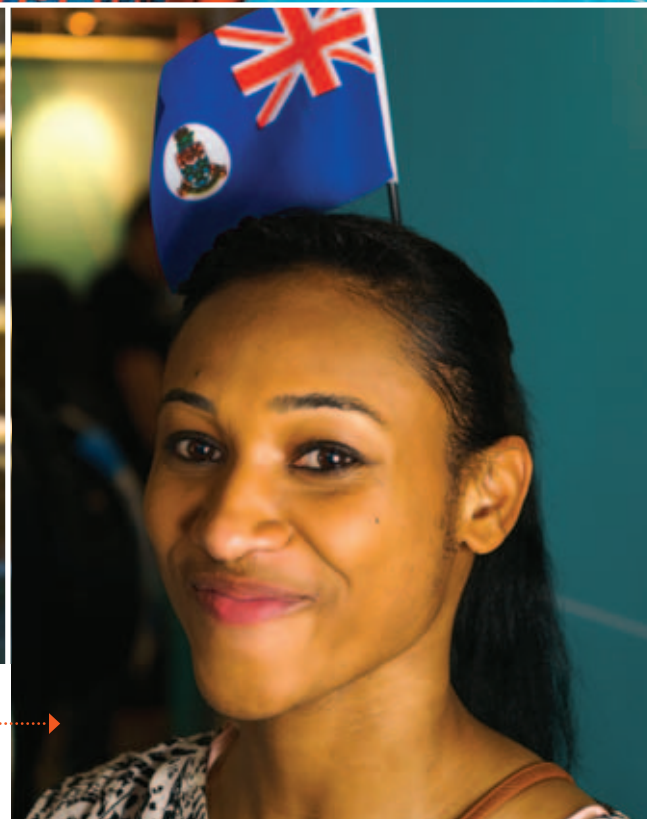
**Camden:** “Youth and adults, I feel we should all be equal in the church.”



**CHARLIE WHITEHORSE  
MONUMENT VALLEY,  
UTAH, U.S.A.**

**C**harlie is the assistant to the president for Native American Ministries for both the Arizona and Nevada-Utah conferences. He strives to preserve Navajo tradition in his household, for example, by speaking the language with his children and wearing native costumes to camp meeting.

“Native Americans want you to stay longer if you’re working with them; and getting to know people is important to them. You don’t want to just be there for a year or less. The more time you spend there, they’ll get to know you, and the trust will be established. If you do a quick meeting, they’ll make a decision for Christ, but then they’ll fall back and go back to the church of their initial belief. You have to be there to support them.”



**ANISSA OWEN  
BODDEN TOWN, GRAND CAYMAN**

**T**hree generations of Anissa’s family are attending the session together. Though their pride in Grand Cayman comes through immediately, they’re quick to note how much they’re enjoying the American history sites in San Antonio.

**HQ/AR:** “I love the flag in your hair. Are you going to wear it all week?”

**Anissa:** “Maybe. It depends on the outfit.”



But aren't we all God's children?  
**It's beautiful.**

**CHERECA WEAVER**  
**SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS,**  
**CARIBBEAN ISLANDS**

**T**he question, "What do you do?" is a complicated one for Weaver, because she does a lot. She is a psychologist and an entrepreneur, and works for the Ministry of Youth Empowerment. She's currently expanding her business to include wedding rentals so that brides who can't afford to buy the major items—such as a wedding dress—can rent them instead.

"We were playing a game a few moments ago, guessing where people are from, based not only on their attire but from their interactions and their body movements. I've guessed a whole bunch wrong, but I got some right. My cousin's husband runs them down after we give our final guess to find out where they're from, and they respond. But aren't we all God's children? It's beautiful."



**VANIA KASPER**  
**AMARILLO, TEXAS, U.S.A.**

I like it, but  
the **hardest part**  
of being a pastor's wife  
is moving around.

**O**ver the years, Vania and her family have lived in several places, including Alaska. With long hours of summer daylight and long hours of winter darkness, Alaska taught her to live by the clock, rather than the sun. Every place they live teaches them something new.

"I'm originally from Portugal, but Texas is home now, because my husband is a pastor here. I just always knew I was going to be a pastor's wife. All the time, I just knew it. I like it, but the hardest part of being a pastor's wife is moving around."

## SOUTHERN ASIA DIVISION REPORT



More than 300 delegates attended the Southern Asia Division's first Women's Congress held this past quinquennium.

## Trusting God to Lead the Way

It is my immense joy to witness the fruit of the labor of those who have served in the cause of God and His church in the end-time. The Southern Asia Division has become what it is today because of the men and women and their families who have toiled against all odds throughout the past century to fulfill the vision that God has given them. Their mission continues to be our mission: to reach every person in every home in the Southern Asia Division with the gospel message.

The church in the Southern Asia Division is growing steadily; it now has more than 1.5 million members. However, there's still much more to be done. Let's look at some achievements of this past quinquennium:

### BHUTAN

The Kingdom of Bhutan is a landlocked country in South Asia bordered by China and India. About 75 percent of its 770,000 people practice Buddhism. The current legal framework, in principle, guarantees freedom of religion. Any attempt to convert people to another belief, however, is forbidden by the government and by judicial interpretation of its constitution.

### ENTRY INTO AN ISLAND NATION

Islam is the official religion of the Indian Ocean–Arabian Sea islands; any other religion is forbidden, and violators are subject to prosecution. Non-Muslim foreigners are allowed to practice their religion only in private; public worship is prohibited.

For the first time, however, in spite of such severity, we have organized a Tamil Adventist congregation. We pray that God will continue to open doors and new avenues in these islands to the gospel message.

### CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Centenary celebrations held in various parts of India included meetings with chief ministers, ministers of state, members of the Legislative Assembly, and police officials. General Conference president Ted Wilson, chief guest at the celebrations, urged the church to put aside all differences and work together for the glory of God. When the work started here 100 years ago, one could hardly imagine how far it would reach. Today, being able





to meet state dignitaries was the opportunity we needed to present them with the Word of God.

The Journeying With Jesus program in Andhra Pradesh, which began more than a century ago with two foreign missionaries from the United States, has today resulted in more than 900,000 church members. It is our prayer that God will continue to lead and open doors for us.

The South India Training School, established in 1915, was the drawing board of two premier institutions: Lowry Memorial College and Spicer Memorial College. The latter has endured the changes of time to evolve into the division's first and only university, now named Spicer Adventist University. In its one hundredth year, this institution has opened the doors to multiple opportunities. It can now offer a great variety of degree courses, thereby strengthening church growth.

The Adventist Media Center has started an FM radio project that covers more than 170 towns surrounding 10 megacities, with a total of some 11.6 million daily listeners to programs in five languages, apart from shortwave programs. It encourages its listeners to become involved in ministry, and helped establish the J. N. Andrews Missionary School.

#### HOPE TV INDIA

Television is the most penetrative media in India today. More than 75 percent of the 1.2 billion population watch television. Hope TV India has been able to produce about 7,100 programs in six major and two minor languages. It successfully conducted the first NET Evangelism Series in Ongole, Andhra Pradesh. As production began, we experienced the hand of God opening doors that we previously could not enter. With more than 100 meetings conducted and 300,000 copies of *The Great Hope* distributed, lives are being changed.

#### SPECIAL PROGRAMS

**Revived by His Word**—Digital technology and a fast-paced lifestyle are what complex cities today are all about. This program is an attempt to encourage people to read the Bible.

**Revived Through Prayer**—This program has helped people to take time out of their busy schedules to pray and spend quality time with God. People who routinely pray have found it to be spiritually rejuvenating and helpful with all they do in their respective environments.

**The Great Hope**—The book titled *The Great Hope* has been freely and widely distributed and has impacted countless lives throughout India. This book has opened the eyes of many people who were blind to the truth.

#### CITY EVANGELISM

Above 35 percent of India's huge population live in cities and urban areas. The division chose the city of Mumbai as the focus of the General Conference City Evangelism initiative. Only about 10,000 Seventh-day Adventists live in Mumbai, with its population of more than 22 million. Crossing language boundaries is the biggest challenge to reaching people for Jesus.

In this city dominated by fundamentalists of various religions, where conversion to Christianity is prohibited, health expos and medical camps were conducted, and about 50 meetings in different languages in various parts of the city were organized. As a result more than 1,000 people joined the church.

City evangelism in Southern Asia, however, is not limited to Mumbai. The seven unions within the division have chosen their own cities, which has also resulted in many people joining the church.

The division is blessed with a vast resource of youth, which constitutes more than 60 percent of church membership. The One Year in Mission project enabled

young people to give their time and talent in God's service.

Mission Andaman and Global Youth Day enabled youth to interact with people from all walks of life. By becoming a catalyst of change, they taught those in their communities that even though the world can at times be a cruel place, in the face of adversity there lives kindness.

Throughout the past decade, barriers of race, color, and disability were quickly forgotten as Gary James, director of Renewed Hearts ministry in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, inspired more than 1,500 youth to be connected by a common love for God. General Conference Youth Ministries director Gilbert Cangy encouraged youth not only to be a part of nation building but, even more important, to put forth their best efforts to be a part of kingdom building.

#### WOMEN'S CONGRESS

More than 300 delegates attended the Southern Asia Division's first women's congress, titled Women of Worth in Action, and were motivated by speaker Diana Jaworski and her dynamic presentations. Jaworski emphasized the worth of every individual and that each one is special in God's sight.

#### LAY CONGRESS

It had been 30 years since a division-wide lay congress was organized before the one held in 2014 at Falakata in West Bengal, India. During the conference, division and union leaders and lay members were encouraged to extend God's work and develop churches. More than 1,500 people attended. It was a blessing to see many lay members commit their lives to service and to building churches across the nation.

#### 1000 MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

The 1000 Missionary Movement began in 2007. Today 135 trained young people

from throughout the division are involved, and many are still joining.

The 1000 Missionary Movement is about providing strong training spiritually, mentally, physically, and socially, and molding young people to be strong soldiers for God. Such things as e-library projects, sponsorship programs, and cattle bank projects have been used to open doors in unreached areas.

## EDUCATION, MEDICAL, AND WELFARE WORK

As of 2014 the Southern Asia Division had 293 schools, eight colleges, and one university, comprising a total of 9,896 teachers, and an enrollment of 205,891 students.

The onset of Adventist education in the country more than a century ago has produced a positive development in spiritual, mental, physical, and social well-being for



**Thousands of people throughout the Southern Asia Division are accepting Jesus as their Savior.**

every student. Many former students worldwide owe their careers and many of their accomplishments to Spicer Adventist University, METAS educational institutions, Roorkee Adventist College, Flaiz Adventist College, and the Northeast Adventist College.

## HEALTH

Health-care professionals in the Southern Asia Division strive to be kind, as was Jesus. They believe that “the doctor treats, but God heals.”

Two managing trusts in India operate 12 hospitals, some of which are affiliated with such world-class institutions as



**Celebrating its one-hundredth-year anniversary, Spicer Adventist University has evolved into the division's first and only university.**

Loma Linda University Medical Center. Four of them have started nursing schools.

The Ruby Nelson Memorial Hospital, which provides community ophthalmic services, has performed more than 200,000 eye surgeries, conducted 700 free surgical eye camps and 1,800 peripheral eye clinics, and enjoys distinction in the community for its high quality and high volume of eye surgeries. Medical teams perform a cataract surgery in less than 2.5 minutes, 35 surgeries in an hour, and 350 to 400 surgeries in a day.

In conjunction with Adventist education, welfare efforts are greatly expanding. Special schools that cater to differently abled students exist. The Seventh-day Adventist school for those who are visually challenged, Bobbili, and the Seventh-day Adventist school for those who are speech and hearing-impaired, Kollegal,

empower students to be “agents of change” in their local communities and are undoing the stigmas often related to them. Many students are able to build a better tomorrow because of the training they receive. Some have finished first at state-level competitions, and others have represented India internationally in cricket for the visually challenged.

## FUTURE PLANS:

- Leadership training center
- Reaching all states of India
- Home for the aged
- Indigenous channel for northern India
- Every unit to involve 12 evangelistic meetings each year
- Opening a medical institution
- Establishing three FM stations

## MEETING THE CHALLENGES

India is challenging because of its massive population of more than 1.2 billion people, who speak hundreds of various dialects and languages—some of which have no script. Vastly diverse cultures and traditions are present throughout the country.

In order to succeed in its mission and meet these challenges, the church must work together, utilizing its resources and the experience and skills of its members. And most important, we must trust in God to lead the way and to reach hearts. 🌱



**Church members march through the street during centennial celebrations in Andhra Pradesh.**





# BIBLE ENRICHMENT TOUR OF ISRAEL 2015

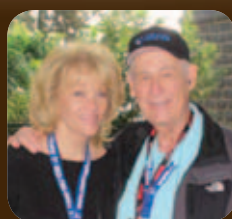
*Join Danny Shelton, Pastor Jim Gilley, the 3ABN Team,  
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Danny Shelton



Jim and Camille Gilley



J.D. and Shelley Quinn



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# Into All the World

*The proclamation of the gospel and Christ's return*



BY TAJ PACLEB

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE  
PRESENTED THURSDAY  
MORNING, JULY 9, 2015

Shackled in Rome's infamous prison, isolated from friends and followers except for Luke, awaiting Nero's final verdict, the aged apostle looked at his chains, lifted his soul in unceasing prayer, glanced at his travel companion who would be the chronicler of the tumultuous march of his missions for the gospel, and wondered what should be his last words bequeathed to millions of men and women who will follow him as a missionary all around the globe, from then till the end of time when Jesus would descend from heaven to "judge the living and the dead at His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:1).<sup>1</sup>

The apostle Paul did not have to think twice. The voice of the Spirit was as clear now as it was on that remarkable moment on the Damascus road. Ever since that moment, Paul's life turned on a singular pivot: "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). The path that vision chartered for him was about to draw to its close.

With his mind ever so sharp, with the Spirit moving his spirit, the apostle decided to write his last letter to Timothy his "beloved son," begotten of God's grace (2 Tim. 1:2). He wrote of many concerns that were close to his heart: Christian faith and courage, being loyal to faith and being strong in grace, being God's approved workers, being aware of the perilous times to come, and being faithful to God's Word. All these were important in a Christian's life, particularly in the life of a person who longs to be "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17).

Having said all this, the great apostle zeroed in on the primary responsibility of pastors. He commanded Timothy: "Preach the word!" (2 Tim. 4:2). There's

no hint of hesitation or compromise. Nothing is more urgent or more important than the bold and convicting presentation of our message, founded upon the Word, centered in Christ, and blessed by the Spirit. Paul elevates the task of preaching the Word to the highest possible importance.

He names "God and the Lord Jesus Christ" as the originators of the ministry of preaching (verse 1), so that both Timothy and preachers of generations to come will stand in awe that the task of proclaiming the Word is a "charge" that comes in the name of the Father and the Son. The apostle places this preaching within the context of the Second Coming, at which time God "will judge the living and the dead" (verse 1).

For a disciple of Jesus, there is no escape from preaching the Word. The assurance of salvation in the name of Jesus, the joy of tasting the forgiveness of sin through Jesus, the reward that awaits the saints at the second coming of Jesus, and the certainty of the judgment to come place an awful responsibility on those who have taken upon themselves the name of Christ. That responsibility is to proclaim the Word to those far and near; proclaim it with certainty but without compromise; with assurance but without watering down the essentials of the Word; with focus on the coming King but without minimizing the coming judgment. Hence the nonnegotiable command, "Preach the Word."

## PREACH THE WORD!

Paul knew the sociological trends of his times, something that afflicts every age and every culture. People do not want to hear that sin is serious, that it is a personal rebellion against God, that its for-



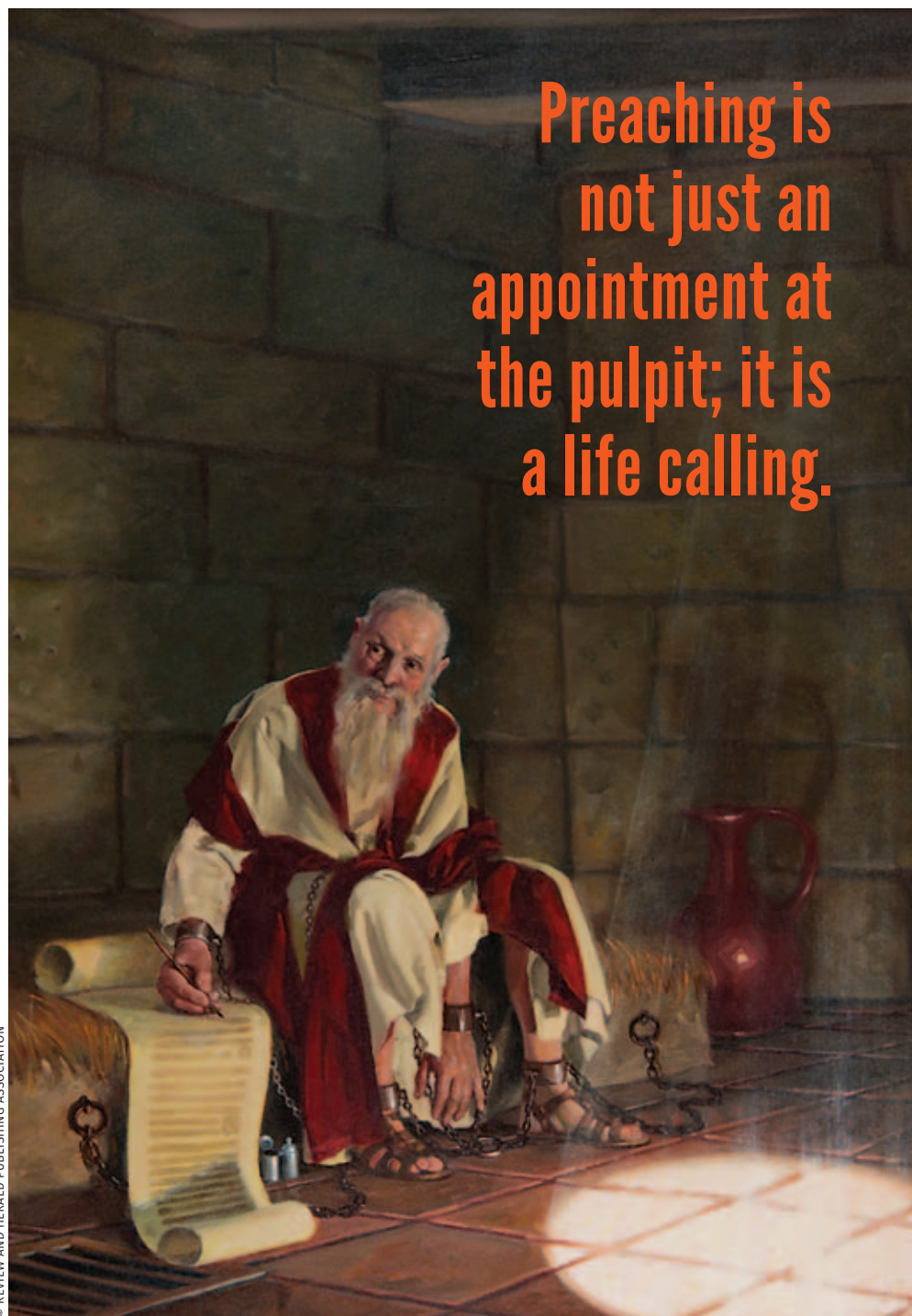
bidden fruit may be pleasing for the moment, but ultimately leads to death, eternal death. People do not want to hear the certainty of judgment: that for every act of omission or commission, for every rejection of the wooing of the Holy Spirit to repent, there comes a reckoning time, reckoning in front of the judge of “the living and the dead.” Paul describes those individuals as those who “will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables” (verses 3, 4, ASV).<sup>2</sup>

Such is the spiritual status and moral collapse of the preacher’s audience in the eschatological age. People will not welcome sound doctrine, but rather soothing beliefs. Their own desires will define their theology. Sin will put on the cloak of innocence. Immorality will come under the flag of individual freedom and collective amnesia. The forbidden zone in human relationships will yield to a community’s right to decide its own center and circumference of relationships and living: my life is my own, and I am master of my destiny. Nothing more. And nothing else matters. In that sad and suffocating environment the preacher is called to preach.

Itching ears, turning a blind eye, searching after fables even while rejecting the truth, living for today with no thought of tomorrow. That’s what preachers face. The apostle, therefore, counsels the pastor, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (verse 2).

But the task is not easy. “Be watchful in all things” (verse 5), warns the apostle.

**Preaching is  
not just an  
appointment at  
the pulpit; it is  
a life calling.**



© REVIEW AND HERALD PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

Preaching is not just an appointment at the pulpit. It is a life calling, alert at all times to share the Word, committed to its urgency, transmitting its power to transform lives, to change the course of a community, to provide life where there is death, to endure afflictions, to sow righteousness where there is moral decay, to proclaim at all times, "The King is coming, even at the door."

## BE AN EVANGELIST

Hence the apostle's plea: "Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (verse 5).

It has become a fashion in some circles to dichotomize ministry into the work of a pastor and that of an evangelist. Paul's counsel, "Be an evangelist," was given to Timothy at a time he was the pastor in Ephesus. While pastors must care, feed, shelter, and protect the sheep of their pasture, every pastor must affirm, in the words of John Wesley, "The world is my parish." So long as there is a soul near or far who has wandered away from God or who does not know God or His Son, so long as there is a soul who is unaware of the gospel of Jesus Christ, so long as there is a soul who does not know that judgment is coming and the King is on the way, every pastor is an evangelist, and every evangelist is a pastor. Both pastors and evangelists fulfill their ministry in the preaching of the Word.

## PREACH TO RESTORE

Preaching must aim at bringing restoration to a broken world. Our world is broken beyond repair. No matter how much we stand up against social injustice, there will still be injustice in the world. No matter how often we feed the poor, starvation will not vanish. No matter how many people we heal, disease and death will continue to take their toll.

So while we must continue to extend the healing ministry of Christ, we must never forget that the only lasting and permanent solution to the problems of our broken and bleeding world is the second coming of Jesus, which will wipe away every tear and do away with all injustices,

poverty, diseases, and disharmony that characterize our world today. So be an evangelist, Paul says, to proclaim the good news of the coming King.

Ours is a message of restoration. While we continue to meet the needs of our communities and minister to the suffering, that is not an end in itself. It is just a means to connect suffering humanity to Christ, who relieves all suffering. He is the eternal restorer, the mender of every broken heart.

I know what I am saying. I grew up in a broken home. I was conceived out of wedlock, almost aborted in the womb, and brought up in a dysfunctional family. As a child I never went to church. I knew nothing about the Bible, or prayer, or the songs of Jesus that children love so much. I grew up spiritually empty, mentally without focus, socially without any purpose. With no proper foundation, with no parental example or guidance, I began making terrible decisions at a very young age.

When I was 10, smoking became my constant friend, and that led to other things one cannot be proud of. I became a compulsive liar and thief. In high school things got worse. Drugs became my master, burning up my brain cells. My life was a never-ending pursuit of stimulation. Failure in school didn't mean much. I did not know God and didn't care about anyone but myself. My mother, a single parent by then, didn't know what to do with her troubled teen. I was a slave to sinful stimulation, and heading the wrong way on life's highway.

Then one day my mom and I were watching TV, and an ad caught our attention. A Bible prophecy seminar was coming to town. We ended up attending those meetings. We heard of Jesus and gave our lives to Him. He changed our lives forever. He filled our emptiness. We became new persons in Jesus. My mother and I were baptized into Christ and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church family. Life hasn't been the same since!

I started conducting Bible studies in my public school. The place where everyone knew me as druggie became my Bible study center. I wasn't trained to give Bible studies. I simply shared what I knew. I

didn't know much. But I knew Jesus, and that was enough.

God blessed those feeble attempts, and as a result, six of my friends and their family members accepted Christ and were baptized! God was confirming a call that He placed on my life to "preach the word" and "do the work of an evangelist."

But I was slow of speech, slow of thought, introverted, socially awkward, and extremely shy. How could God use someone like me? God, however, is not dependent upon our wisdom, talents, resources, or abilities. He is dependent upon only our humility and our willingness to be used by Him.

After two years of intensive training in a Bible college, I was called to be an evangelist. God has fixed my brokenness, filled my emptiness, and restored me along the path of what He wants me to be. After conducting more than 60 evangelistic series from Santa Cruz to San Francisco to Hawaii over the past eight years, we've seen more than 1,200 precious souls come to Jesus in baptism and countless others experience personal revival and reformation.

Preach the Word, be an evangelist, commands the apostle in the name and the urgency of the soon-coming Lord. Some may argue that Adventist evangelism is outdated, archaic, irrelevant, that we need to change our message to appeal to modern times. Some have said that we need to downplay our doctrines and just focus on the gospel. *But our message is the gospel.* The three angels' message is "the everlasting gospel" (Rev. 14:6).

To preach it, to live it, to await its impending conclusion, is our call today. 🌱

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts are the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> Texts credited to ASV are from *The Holy Bible*, edited by the American Revision Committee, Standard Edition, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1901.

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**Taj Pacleb** serves as evangelist/revivalist for the Central California Conference and is speaker and codirector of the Revelation of Hope ministries. He and his wife, Wati, live in Fresno, California, United States.





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6



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8



9



# SAN ANTONIO 360°

**1. WATCH YOUR STEPS:** One of the many friendly guides and security personnel of the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center serving with a smile.

PHOTO: TOR TJERANSEN AR/ANN

**2. CATCHING THE NEWS:** Attendees of the GC Session at the convention center gather around a large-screen TV to listen to the official proceedings in the Alamodome.

PHOTO: DOMINIK ZEH AR/ANN

**3. TRANQUILITY:** Catching a quiet moment along the famous San Antonio River Walk.

PHOTO: PIETER DAMSTEEGT AR/ANN

**4. WATCH FOR THE RIGHT CUE:** The conductor of the Montemorelos University orchestra directing his musicians during the Wednesday afternoon music accompanying the business session.

PHOTO: MARK FROELICH AR/ANN

**5. CAN YOU HEAR THE HARMONIES?** Spectators at the daily Festival of Faith and Freedom Concert enjoy great harmonies at the Arneson River Theatre at the River Walk. PHOTO: SETH SHAFFER AR/ANN

**6. WHAT'S YOUR TAKE?** An interview recorded by a camera team following the announcement of the vote about the ordination of women.

PHOTO: TOR TJERANSEN AR/ANN

**7. READY TO DIVE IN:** Three-year old Abigail Porter enjoys a dip in the Grand Hyatt hotel pool.

PHOTO: ELSIE TJERANSEN AR/ANN

**8. LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE:** Participants of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division report on Wednesday night in the Alamodome.

PHOTO: JOSEF KISSINGER AR/ANN

**9. THUMBS UP!** A member of the Andrews University booth in the exhibit hall of the convention center.

PHOTO: PIETER DAMSTEEGT AR/ANN

## TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION REPORT



## Lighting the Way to Salvation

The Sabbath Sofa initiative in London brings the concept of Sabbath rest to the masses.

*"Thank the Lord! Praise his name! Tell the world about his wondrous love. How mighty he is!" (Isa. 12:4, TLB).\**

The Trans-European Division (TED) thanks God for His leading in our mission to cities, towns, neighbors, friends, and families over the past five years.

Although by membership the smallest division in the world church, the TED has a rich diversity of culture and languages, and is comprised of 22 countries. Early in the quinquennium a realignment of territory resulted in 38 percent of our institutions, 40 percent of our students, and 32,736 members being transferred to MENA (Middle East and North Africa Union) and other divisions.

### OUTREACH AND NURTURE

Following Jesus' command to "go and make disciples" the members of our 1,162 churches and 176 companies, together with their 529 pastors and leaders, are actively sharing the love of God with their communities. We are experiencing God's blessings in many ways, not least in numerical growth: our 6.6 percent overall growth is a reflection of a 16.97 percent gain in baptisms and those joining through profession of faith.

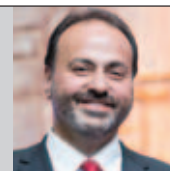
Reaching in is as important as reaching out, and "Kids in Discipleship" (KID) is a biblical model that strongly nurtures the family ethos, encouraging parents to disciple their children effectively. It is complemented by "Messy Church," which is

extremely popular within the European setting. This program of crafts, singing, and Bible stories, combined with a fellowship meal, is usually run on a Sabbath afternoon, and offers families in the local community the opportunity to get to know church families. It is proving an effective outreach/bridge-building tool for many churches. The enthusiasm for "Messy Church" is infectious, and many more churches are preparing to get involved in the program.

### EDUCATION

Education is important both for personal growth and outreach, and in this quinquennium TED invested almost US\$2 million (in addition to other appropriations) in sponsorships and scholar-





ships. In one country our educational institution found a niche in the educational market by incorporating a course on Bible knowledge and Christian values, creating an impressive 8 percent increase in enrollment.

TED schools reported 912 baptisms between 2009 and 2013, and while we give God the glory for this harvest of young people, we also acknowledge a debt of gratitude to our 808 teachers who inspire their students in our schools. Adventist schools are igniting the spiritual interests and aspirations of their students and pointing them toward eternal realities. TED has 5,314 students enrolled in 68 schools within the division.

The division college, Newbold College of Higher Education (NCHE), has increased its student numbers by 33 percent this year, following a challenging recession. Through its new Centre for Christian Leadership, NCHE provides short courses to enable lay members and pastors to update or acquire skills in mission, evangelism, ministry, and spiritual leadership. Young people can take a pre- or post-university gap year at NCHE. During this time they learn more about themselves, the purpose of life, and how to share their faith and get

involved in mission activities, mission trips, and evangelistic outreach. The Certificate in Health and Wellness (equal to an Andrews University minor in health) prepares those with an interest in dietetics, nutrition, wellness, and fitness for service in their local church and wider community.

#### **YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS**

Within the Division the Church of Refuge (CORE) program is an ongoing resource project for retaining and reclaiming our youth. Another avenue for retaining young people is the TED Relay Institute of Youth Evangelism, which has run 25 intensive training courses in eight unions with 570 participants. Following these courses, TED helped sponsor 65 follow-up evangelistic projects run by these young people in their local churches. Involvement is crucial to retention, and youth are the most effective ambassadors for outreach has been reflected in activities reported via two uplink sites in connection with Global Youth Day.

A youth leadership convention, organized during the Year of Youth Discipleship, produced a resource statement for

the division affirming the biblical concept of discipleship for young people. Our first-ever public campus ministries symposium was held in April 2015 with the aim of inspiring Seventh-day Adventist students to be disciples of Jesus and to empower them to share the everlasting gospel on campus.

In London the CRAVE University outreach provided help for all new students registering at university, and created positive connections with local churches. A Youth Congress and two Pathfinder Camporees underpinned these activities.

#### **EVANGELISM**

TED has supported 511 innovative evangelistic projects. For example, "Sweet Gospel and Honey" evangelism trains people in the art of beekeeping as a means to financially support their families.

The "Sabbath Sofa" has been taken onto the streets as a method of sharing the gift of Sabbath rest. It has reached more than 50,000 people.

Health expos are run in the workplace, and "Conspiracy of Kindness" surprises people with unexpected acts of kindness that serve their needs.

"Bible 3D" was a pilot evangelistic ini-



**Strategic focus meetings bring TED and world church leaders together.**



**The Messy Church program in Slovenia provides a meaningful experience for children.**

tative run in Iceland. It guided visitors through an exhibition of the Bible story from Creation to Restoration and followed up with evening programs. Tapping into culture, tradition, and historical Christian roots, it opened doors for dialogue relating to needs in the twenty-first century.

Bible correspondence schools have been providing resources for secular and postmodern people. In 2012 a special emphasis project called “Pass it On” involved the production of a promotional video for a new 12-lesson course “The Story of Paul,” and the production of a book (also entitled “Pass It On”) of inspirational stories gathered from the Bible correspondence schools within TED.

More than 60,000 people were reached in Hungary through “Jesus 7,” a pilot evangelistic series for nominal Christians. Run at Easter, it focused on the life of Jesus.

Mission to the Cities (MTTC) has swept the world by storm, and not least in the TED, which ran its Field School of Evangelism in London in 2013. With its 9.5 million in habitants, London is the largest city within the division. Following the NY13 model, local churches used different initiatives.

Heroes and the Bible Academy was one very successful innovative approach, where members canvassed neighborhoods for local heroes. At a service to honor these people, there is also a presen-

tation of a Bible hero. This is followed by an invitation to register for a Bible academy, where the story of redemption is told in interactive and experiential ways. This combined with the “Sabbath Sofa,” health expos, and other more traditional methods have resulted in more than 800 baptisms to date, with more to come. This has been replicated in the unions as they run their own MTTC programs.

Since its launch in 2010, 7 million people have visited LIFEconnect, the social media platform for evangelism, which has been developed in 19 languages. This has expanded to LCTV, which streams local outreach programs and enables viewers to watch life-changing messages.

Church planting is a high-priority outreach strategy, with approximately 200 new church plants. Couple that with 1,600 small groups and house churches, and the church becomes an irresistible Adventist community.

## REVIVAL AND REFORMATION

Unions in TED embraced the Revival and Reformation initiative, with many local church members becoming excited and supportive of prayer initiatives in their congregations. Some churches started online prayer groups and many have become inspired to reach out in ministry to the needy in their communities.

Thanks to an effective training program

over the past five years, many of the 15 members of the TED section of the European emergency response team have been deployed to disaster zones in the Philippines and Balkan regions. Time and financial resources were also provided to smaller ADRA offices to strengthen their public relations, fund-raising, and marketing efforts, while approximately US\$12 million in Ingathering funds have been collected, which have been used to support global ADRA projects.

The first European health summit undertaken by the three European divisions was held in 2013 with the theme of healing. Of the 550 participants, approximately 150 came from the Trans-European Division.

New health courses and programs include but are not limited to a Certificate in Health and Wellness. They continue to be produced in partnership with NCHE and various health entities. During the first-ever division-wide women’s ministries conference in 2014, part of the program included a health expo outreach in a nearby town, and in just two hours 120 people were contacted.

In connection with the Great Controversy initiative, 3 million copies of books and magazines relating to *The Great Controversy* have been printed and distributed.

We give glory to God and thank Him for His abundant blessings and for the opportunity to be a light, sharing the good news of salvation and introducing people to our Savior, Jesus. 🌿

\*Verses marked TLB are taken from *The Living Bible*, copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Ill. Used by permission.

## TED Web Resources

[www.ted-adventist.org](http://www.ted-adventist.org)  
[www.ministrytopostmoderns.com](http://www.ministrytopostmoderns.com)  
[www.lifedevelopment.info](http://www.lifedevelopment.info)  
[www.lifeconnect.info](http://www.lifeconnect.info)  
[www.lctv.today](http://www.lctv.today)  
[www.tedmedia.org](http://www.tedmedia.org)  
[www.youtube.com/tedmedia](http://www.youtube.com/tedmedia)  
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# Friendships for Hope

Booth B544

*An innovative ministry reaches immigrants with a practical demonstration of the gospel.*



**Tawfick Abdalla (left), Ephraim Bendantunguka, Peter Thomas, and Will James represent some of the multilingual ministries provided by the Paradise Valley Church near San Diego, California, at the exhibit area of the General Conference Session in San Antonio.**

**BY STEPHEN CHAVEZ,  
ADVENTIST REVIEW/ANN**

Imagine a church where services are translated into seven languages, including Arabic, Bhutanese, French, Laotian, Spanish, and Swahili. No, it's not heaven, but it is Paradise.

For several years the Paradise Valley Church, near San Diego, California, has been serving immigrant populations in several ways. The ministries include a food pantry, classes in English as a second language, a thrift store, and a community garden. It's no wonder that in the last five years more than 250 people have been baptized, and that without a single evangelistic meeting.

The latest innovation, started under the leadership of Will James, senior pastor, is a ministry to Muslim immigrants. Tawfik

Abdalla, a native of Egypt, and Butros Jaberu (who goes by the name Peter Thomas), born in Iraq, are Arabic Ministry coordinators for the Paradise Valley Church, specializing in ministry to about 35 Muslim families. They practice a ministry of presence to people uprooted by political instability and sectarian warfare in various parts of the world.

Abdalla and Thomas have developed relationships with a handful of mosques in the area and are often present when families observe milestone events such as births, weddings, and deaths.

## A CASE STUDY

Life changed dramatically for Abbas Alazzawi and his family when the Iraq War



# Stories From Our Past

James Nix, director of the Ellen G. White Estate, brings Adventist history to life during the evening devotionals.

began in 2003. He and his Sunni Muslim family had lived peacefully in a Shiite area of Baghdad until hostile militia appeared. After Alazzawi's nephew was shot and killed only a few meters from home, Alazzawi and his wife, Zinah, fled to a safer section of Baghdad, then to Turkey.

In December 2011, the United Nations flew Alazzawi's family to San Diego, where a local relief agency settled them into an apartment on Delta Street, a few blocks from Paradise Valley (PV) Church.

Abbas and Zina learned about Paradise Valley Church's food distribution and English classes from their Delta Street neighbors. Soon Peter Thomas, the church's Arabic-speaking Arabic Ministries director, took food to their home and invited Alazzawi to attend its language school. Zinah remained at home, taking care of their sons, Diyar and Aslan.

Alazzawi, with a degree from a technical school in Baghdad, had been self-employed as a welder and electrician. But his fluency in English was limited. "I knew that I could get a good job if I knew English," he said, so he attended advanced English classes provided by PV Church's Refugee Assimilation Project. Then he transferred to Southwestern College, where he is studying toward a degree that will enable him to do what he loves: working with his hands. Meanwhile, in addition to studying, he works full-time for the Alamo car rental agency at the San Diego airport.

Abbas is thankful for what PV Church has done for his family, which now includes a baby daughter. "First is food," he said, "then education. You gave us a good foundation. If we have a strong foundation, we can have a great house."

Jocelyn Fay contributed to this article. More information about the Paradise Valley Church's Refugee Assimilation Project, Friendships for Hope, is available at [FriendshipsForHope.org](http://FriendshipsForHope.org).



**Abbas Alazzawi (inset) and his family had to flee Iraq in the aftermath of the war that created chaos in his country. He and his family have since enjoyed services provided by the Paradise Valley Church.**



## From Sailor to Sabbathkeeper

BY MARCOS PASEGGI,  
ADVENTIST REVIEW/ANN

After being in love with the sea for 35 years, first as a sailor and then as a captain, Joseph Bates retired only to fall in love with God and His saving truth. His newfound love led him to embrace several reforms, including temperance and antislavery. Soon he discovered the Advent movement and invested a small fortune he made as a seaman in spreading the newfound truth of the imminence of the second coming of Christ.

Bates's faith in God, His Word, and the Advent movement survived the 1844 disappointment. The following year he became convinced, through a tract he read, that the seventh day was the Sabbath and eagerly shared this newfound truth with a tract of his own in 1846. James and Ellen White eventually read Bates's tract, which, after careful comparison with the Bible evidence, prompted them to accept the seventh-day Sabbath.

Together with the Whites, the former sea captain turned health reformer turned preacher became a cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as Jim Nix reminded us during the General Conference Session's Thursday evening meeting.

# Adventist World Radio

Booth C1001

## *Curiosity Goes 360 at Adventist World Radio*

The interplay of cutting edge technologies is fully on display in the exhibit hall at this year's General Conference (GC) Session. Visitors to the Adventist World Radio (AWR) booth will be able to experience striking 360-degree videos about AWR radio stations and content producers, as well as footage of recipients of AWR programs in locations ranging from Myanmar and Guam to the Middle East.

The AWR 360 experience utilizes a Rift, a virtual reality headset developed by Oculus VR, a gaming firm that was purchased by Facebook in 2014 for US\$2 billion. The Rift, which is currently available only to developers, features specialized software that allows users to feel like they're in another location by tracking their head movements.

"What we're trying to communicate is the impact of the stories," says Shelley Freesland, communication director for AWR. "We're letting people experience the whole cycle of AWR—from program production to transmission to the end users, the listeners."

Producer and developer of AWR 360 Daryl Gungadoo believes that 360-degree video offers many advantages for storytelling.

"Trying to convey the emotion of a story is actually easier in 360 because people are completely immersed in the environment," reports Gungadoo.

While there have been numerous 360-degree animated games and experiences created for Rift and similar devices, creating 360-degree video is still largely unexplored. This posed major challenges for AWR to capture the video for this experience. In order to get 360-degree footage,

the AWR 360 team stitched together footage from seven GoPro cameras, which are on display at the AWR exhibit.

Gungadoo explains the difficulties of 360 recording. "It's a whole new ball game because you can't control the camera angles—you can't even hide the camera-person," he says. "Instead of simply telling a story, this is really reinventing the way stories are told in that it gives the user the possibility of exploring. The only thing missing is smell!"

Gungadoo reports that while attempting to capture footage by attaching the seven GoPro cameras to a drone, two of the cameras were destroyed when the drone crashed. He was initially concerned because the GoPro cameras are expensive, but when he wrote to GoPro explaining that he was attempting to capture 360-degree footage from a drone, they replaced his cameras for free.

Readers not attending the GC Session in San Antonio can also experience AWR 360 via their Internet browser or smartphone. By visiting [360.awr.org](http://360.awr.org), anyone can read the instructions to access the same 360-degree video content being shown at the San Antonio convention center, from anywhere in the world.

Gungadoo believes that the 360-degree video virtual reality technology on display at the AWR exhibit has great potential for Adventist ministry. He believes that interactive learning through virtual reality can be an extremely effective method of learning.

"I'm a strong believer in the concept of curiosity education," says Gungadoo. "Instead of being forced to learn something, if I am made to be curious about something and given the opportunity to explore, it is much easier for my learning experience than if I just look at something."

Adventist World Radio broadcasts the Adventist message in 101 languages to people all over the world, bypassing barriers of government restrictions, cultural opposition, and geography to reach people in countries where missionaries cannot travel. 🌱



**AWR global resource engineer, Daryl Gungadoo helps a young visitor experience the AWR 360 video on the Oculus Rift headset at the AWR booth.**

TOR TJERHANSEN AR/ANN

**BY EVAN KNOTT,  
ADVENTIST REVIEW/ANN**



Booth C1653

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W. MILTON ADAMS  
Published in the *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies*



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## WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION REPORT



**Church members distribute  
*The Great Hope*.**

### Reorganization of Entities

The West-Central Africa Division started the quinquennium with six unions (only one of which was a union conference), and 39 fields. Over a period of less than four years, the division has experienced dramatic growth in terms of reorganization of entities. To date, the division runs 10 unions, of which four are union conferences, and 66 fields.

### New Institutions

The West-Central Africa Division has seen growth, not only in structural organization, but also in educational institutions. In 2010 the division had three universities in three countries. In the past five years, three more were added, bringing the total number to six universities in the division: Babcock University, Nigeria; Valley View University, Ghana; Université Adventiste Cosendai, Cameroon; Adventist University of West Africa, Liberia; Adventist College of Education, Agona, Ghana; and Clifford University, Nigeria. The number of elementary and secondary schools is also growing. An ambitious plan is under way to build 200 additional schools for each country in the West-Central Africa Division. This project is being accomplished in partnership with Maranatha International.

### Public Relations (Reach Across)

The church has stepped forward in its relationship with the government of Côte d'Ivoire. In 2012 the regional headquarters of the West-Central Africa Division received recognition as a diplomatic entity. This has helped tremendously with the work of the church. As part of the conferred allowances, the division benefits from customs duty and tax exemption on

## A Time of Challenge and Growth

**T**he West-Central Africa Division (WAD), consisting of 22 countries, is an area of the world that is rich and full of dynamic energy. It is also, at times, turbulent. In spite of the challenges of religious fundamentalism, social and political unrest, and the Ebola epidemic, the division was able to achieve positive results in evangelism during the past quinquennium that started with the launching of the Revival and Reformation initiative.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

#### Leadership Retreat (Reach Up)

At the beginning of the quinquennium the West-Central Africa Division wrestled with spiritual lethargy. To combat that challenge, a leadership retreat for all pastors and their spouses was held at Babcock University in Nigeria January 5-11, 2011. A total of 2,201 attended. The divi-

sion's union officers and departmental directors were tasked with finding ways to help all church members in the army of God to spread the gospel. Church leaders were urged to organize spiritual retreats, conduct small group evangelism, and distribute copies of the inspirational book *The Great Hope*.

#### The Great Hope Project (Reach Out)

Several millions copies of *The Great Hope* were printed and distributed in the main four languages of our division (English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish), and many conversions throughout the division were reported. This gave encouragement and hope to the workers. Under the power of the Holy Spirit, this silent messenger reached people that could not have been won under normal circumstances, confirming the power of the printed page.





imported equipment, supplies, and materials meant to carry out the goals of the organization, and quick entry/exit procedures in line with the immigration for all WAD expatriate personnel and their families, and WAD consultants and visitors.

#### **All-Africa Religious Liberty Congress**

Religious extremism on the continent remains a challenge. To help counter it, the division organized the All-Africa Religious Liberty Congress, held August 6-13, 2013, in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon. For a few days, officials, scholars, religious liberty organization representatives, lawyers, religious leaders, and laypeople gathered to discuss the theme "Religious Tolerance and Peaceful Coexistence for the Sustainable Development of Africa."

Several renowned leaders from the African continent and other parts of the globe spoke to the participants on a variety of topics, emphasizing the importance and need of religious freedom for all. An important guest, the president of Cameroon, His Excellency Paul Biya, president of the congress, was represented by his prime minister.

#### **Anniversary Celebrations**

This quinquennium was highlighted with celebrations marking 125 years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's work in Ghana (2013), 100 years in Nigeria (2014), and 50 years in Togo (2014). The events provided opportunities to not only assess our presence in these countries but also to review our historic involvement in the life of these nations. These celebrations were also honored with the presence of government officials.

#### **Infrastructure**

In addition to expanding schools and church facilities, the West-Central Africa Division also expanded its housing facilities by building an eight-story apartment

building in Abidjan. The project is almost completed. In addition, an existing guest house, Dibetou, was also fully renovated, and is now able to house delegates and visitors to various meetings held at the division headquarters, providing more comfortable accommodations.

#### **New Equipment Acquisition**

The broadcast production facilities of the West-Central Africa Division have also been upgraded. The latest equipment installed, with help of media technicians coming from NAD and SAD, two sister divisions, now enables the division to produce television programs for Hope Channel Africa.

Additionally, the WAD offices are now also equipped with video conferencing equipment.

#### **Finances**

For quite a long time the West-Central Africa Division has been depending on additional financial support from the world church for its operations, but division leaders made a firm commitment to become financially self-sufficient. From

61 percent of self-support in the preceding quinquennium, the division moved to 98 percent, and then to 115 percent as of December 31, 2013. We praise God for achieving this goal!

#### **Evangelism (Reach Out)**

In spite of the sociopolitical and spiritual challenges, during these past five years the WAD made a noticeable increase in soul winning. The big city evangelistic effort "Lagos for Christ" was a tremendous spiritual experience for the church in terms of conversions and media coverage.

Throughout the division other evangelistic endeavors with a special emphasis on small group evangelism also took place, bringing thousands of new souls into the family of God. From 2010 to December 2014 a total of 218,162 baptisms were recorded as a result of a combined effort by pastors and church members to reach beyond the 195,483 baptisms of the previous quinquennium (2005 to December 2009). For the West-Central Africa Division this past quinquennium has certainly been a time of revival and reformation.



**Pastor and world church president Ted N. C. Wilson attends the centenary celebration of the Adventist Church's work in Nigeria.**

## Stop-Smoking Seminars

The Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking has not only helped people to experience a better quality of life as they do away with tobacco use, but has also proved to be an entering wedge, particularly in difficult areas where it is not easy to bring the gospel. This was experienced in Niamey, Niger, and Matamoulana and Nouakchott, Mauritania, two Islamic countries in the 10/40 window where these seminars were held successfully with good attendance.

In March 2015 Global Mission and the health department organized a stop-smoking program in Nouakchott, the capital city of Mauritania. The program so impressed Islamic religious leader Sheikh El Haj Misry that he invited the facilitators to his home city of Matamoulana to hold a similar program. An unprecedented number of more than 500 people gathered to follow the program and ask questions. On March 17, 2015, a special session was held to help people stop smoking. The end of the program was marked with a special dinner with Islamic leaders. They all agreed with our facilitators that in this fight against tobacco the spiritual dimension plays a key part. Beside the health aspect, this program has given the church opportunities to testify of our Christian faith in a purely Islamic setting.



**Participants learn about how to stop smoking during a WAD-led program in Mauritania.**

## CHALLENGES

### Imprisonment of an Adventist Gospel Worker

The various initiatives started and supported by the WAD called not only for patience but also for courage and determination. One pastor, Antonio Monteiro, a missionary in Togo, was falsely accused of murder. He was imprisoned for almost two years before being found innocent of the charges. His case was followed by mil-

lions of Seventh-day Adventists around the world.

## Civil Unrest

Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, and Nigeria were particularly troubled during the quinquennium. In Côte d'Ivoire war has caused people and church members to move, leaving behind goods and properties. Many assets were lost. Our main secondary school, located in Bouake, became the headquarters of rebel factions.

In the Central African Republic the headquarters of the new Central African Union Mission was temporarily moved to another country because of the war. In Nigeria, the surge of violence associated with Boko Haram continues to be a threat.

## The Ebola Crisis

The Ebola virus has been and still is a major challenge for the church in West Africa, particularly for the believers of the West African Union Mission, comprised of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. As a result of this epidemic, thousands of people have been affected, and many division-wide programs had to be canceled.

## Université Adventiste Cosendai Situation

The serious decrease of student enrollment prevented the school from getting financial resources for growth and development. The hope is that new leadership may turn things around for the next academic year, 2015-2016.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### The GC President in the West-Central Africa Division

During this quinquennium our division was favored with two visits of General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson. These visits rekindled the faith of our members, as they gathered in great numbers in various countries to welcome and listen to the counsel of their world leader. These huge gatherings also reinforced the church members' sense of belonging to a world Adventist family, and proved to be helpful in creating links with local government authorities. 🌱



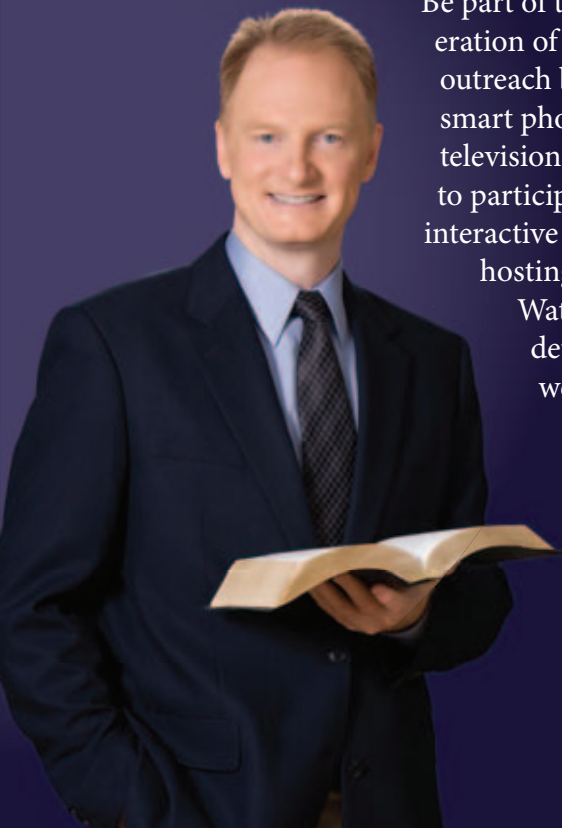
**A group of church leaders and spouses listen to a speaker during a presentation at a leadership retreat held at Babcock University in Nigeria in 2011.**



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## Ninth Business Meeting Session Actions

Sixtieth General Conference session July  
7, 2015, 9:30 a.m.

### CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY— FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENT- ISTS - AMENDMENT

VOTED, To call for the vote on Fundamental Belief #24, Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary.

### CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY— FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENT- ISTS - AMENDMENT

VOTED, To amend the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists #24, Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary, to read as follows:

#### 24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which that the Lord set up and not humans, man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. At His ascension, He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and He and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ministry, which was typified by the work of the high priest in the holy place of the earthly sanctuary. ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry, which was typified by the work of the high priest in the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. (Lev. 16; Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Heb. 1:3; 2:16, 17; 4:14-16; 8:1-5; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; Rev. 8:3-5; 11:19; 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:11, 12) (Heb. 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Lev. 16; Rev. 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:12.)

### THE GREAT CONTROVERSY—FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS - AMENDMENT

VOTED, To amend the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists #8, The Great Controversy, to read as follows:

#### 8. The Great Controversy

All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels.

He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the global flood, as presented in the historical account of Genesis 1-11, worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation. (Gen. 3; 6-8; Job 1:6-12; Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-18; Rom. 1:19-32; 3:4; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 3:6; Rev. 12:4-9) (Rev. 12:4-9; Isa. 14:12-14; Eze. 28:12-18; Gen. 3; Rom. 1:19-32; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; Gen. 6-8; 2 Peter 3:6; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14.)

### THE HOLY SCRIPTURES—FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS - AMENDMENT

VOTED, To not divide the motion on Fundamental Belief #1, The Holy Scriptures.

### THE HOLY SCRIPTURES—FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS - AMENDMENT

VOTED, To call for the vote on Fundamental Belief, #1, The Holy Scriptures.

### THE HOLY SCRIPTURES—FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS - AMENDMENT

VOTED, To amend the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists #1, The Holy Scriptures, to read as follows:

#### 1. The Holy Scriptures

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (Ps. 119:105; Prov 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21) (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)

### CREATION—FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS - AMENDMENT

VOTED, To call for the vote on Fundamental Belief #6, Creation.

### CREATION—FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS - AMENDMENT

VOTED, To amend the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists #6, Creation, to read as follows:

#### 6. Creation

God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic and historical account of His creative activity. In six days He created the universe, and in a recent, six-day creation, the Lord made "the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them" and rested on the seventh day, "the heaven and the earth" and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of the work He performed and completed during six literal days that together with the Sabbath con-

stituted the same unit of time that we call a week today. His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was "very good," declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1-2; 5; 11; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:16; 33:6, 9; 104; Isa. 45:12, 18; Acts 17:24; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; 11:3; Rev. 10:6; 14:7) (Gen. 1-2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:16; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)

### EXTENDING THE BUSINESS SESSION

VOTED To extend the business session to conclude at 12:05 p.m.

### STATEMENT OF CONFIDENCE IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G WHITE

VOTED, To call for the vote on an amendment to the Statement of Confidence in the Writings of Ellen G White.

### STATEMENT OF CONFIDENCE IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G WHITE

VOTED, To retain the language in the Statement of Confidence in the Writings of Ellen G White as it was presented.

### STATEMENT OF CONFIDENCE IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G WHITE

VOTED, To call for the vote on the Statement of Confidence in the Writings of Ellen G White.

### STATEMENT OF CONFIDENCE IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G WHITE

VOTED, To approve the Statement of Confidence in the Writings of Ellen G White, which reads as follows:

### STATEMENT OF CONFIDENCE IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G WHITE

As delegates to the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, we express our deep gratitude to God for the continuing presence of the various spiritual gifts among His people (1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 4:11-14), and particularly for the prophetic guidance we have received through the life and ministry of Ellen G White (1827-1915).

On the centennial of her death, we rejoice that her writings have been made available around the globe in many languages and in a variety of printed and electronic formats.

We reaffirm our conviction that her writings are divinely inspired, truly Christ-centered, and Bible-based. Rather than replacing the Bible, they uplift the normative character of Scripture and correct inaccurate interpretations of it derived from tradition, human reason, personal experience, and modern culture.

We commit ourselves to study the writings of Ellen G White prayerfully and with hearts willing to follow the counsels and instructions we find there. Whether individually, in the family, in small groups, in the classroom, or in the church, a combined study of the Bible and her writings provide a transforming and faith-uplifting experience.

We encourage the continued development of both worldwide and local strategies to foster the circulation of her writings inside and outside the church. The study of these writings is a powerful means to strengthen and prepare His people for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Ella S Simmons, Chair  
John H Thomas, Secretary  
Myron A Iseminger, Actions Editor  
Tamara K Boward, Recording Secretary



# Eleventh Business Meeting

*Sixtieth General Conference session, July 8, 2015, 9:29 a.m.*

MICHAEL RYAN: We would like to begin to call our session to order.

I have asked my good friend and a good friend of many here, Elder Calvin Rock, Dr. Calvin Rock, retired, who was a vice president of the world church, to come and have our opening prayer.

CALVIN ROCK: [Prayer.]

MICHAEL RYAN: Today we have come to take up the business of the theology of ordination item that was voted by the delegates as part of the official agenda.

I realize that as we look at the history of the church over the past 40+ years, this comes to us today as an item and a road that we have walked before. It is not a new item.

We want to take every opportunity to show respect to people who may be of a different opinion than we are. We want to have a sweet spirit fill this house. And there are things that mitigate against that. And I want to mention them briefly. And I will not only appeal to the delegates who are seated on the floor, but I am making this appeal to those who are also seated as observers. We are not encouraging an applause for any type of speech that is on the floor.

You should know that as comments would become personal, pointed at someone else, comments made about someone else's opinion, I will interrupt you and remind you that you need to address the chair and make your comments about your opinion, not the opinion of someone else.

We have come today to hear the voice of the world church, and it is so important that in every presentation that is made we show that respect to each other.

Today we are here to enter into this agenda item as a sequenced series of events. We voted that sequence. I will follow it. There will come a moment when we will open the floor for discussion, but that will be after we place several things before the body.

And so I think to position this properly before the body, we need to quickly go through a short process.

Now, you need to know that one of the major objectives of today is to have as many people as possible stand behind the microphone and give their opinion, and I will be making a few comments about that a little bit later. But right now I want to move into a sequence of events that places the item before the body and gives a little orientation to the group on this issue.

And so to begin this sequence of events, Elder Wilson is going to provide an introduction to this and provide a history that gives us some concept of where this item has traveled in the church.

Elder Wilson, please come and share with us those items.

TED N. C. WILSON: What a privilege it is to meet together at this sixtieth General Conference session to hear reports and to do business and to carry on these activities that are so essential.

That beautiful song that we heard just before the beginning of the proceedings, "I Give You Jesus": My dear friends, today in our activities and our discussion, may that song, "I Give You Jesus," ring in our minds and hearts, for may everything we do glorify Jesus.

There's a group here that I want to introduce before we get into an explanation about this particular topic. This group is presenting Jesus. This group is following

the beautiful lyrics of that song, "I Give You Jesus." And I thought that this morning it would be an appropriate time to introduce a group of young people, young people who are involved in frontline evangelism, young people from the Trans-European Division, from the Inter-European Division, from the South Pacific Division, and the Inter-American Division. And for the past two weeks this group, 200 young people, have been preaching God's Word in a two-week evangelistic series held in partnership with local congregations in the great country of Mexico.

These young people are now to return home with a renewed sense of our message and our mission and with a greater commitment to share Jesus, "I Give You Jesus." I know that their lives will never be the same again. And in our discussion today, which is part of our church activity, our ultimate goal for everything we do is the mission of giving Jesus to the world.

And so I would like this group, which is part of the Share Him group, to stand wherever you are. I think they're all seated over there. Let's give them a wonderful round of applause.

[Applause.]

Thank you, young people, on behalf of the world church. We are so excited you are going back home filled with the zeal of evangelism. God bless you in this work.

Brother Chair, I want to thank you for the opportunity to give an introduction to this agenda item relating to the theology of ordination. Our heartfelt desire is that the Holy Spirit will be in control of all that we do and say and the outcome of the discussion. People have been praying earnestly, and we need to be in a spirit of prayer today as we share and as we vote.

We also want a very open and fair discussion.

As with our discussion in the 2014 Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, we want a very open and fair discussion so that delegates will feel free to comment on any aspect of this subject and not feel limited.

When the motion is presented, you can comment on what is on your heart.

In our discussion I hope that all will respect the rights of individuals, as our chair has already indicated: the rights to express yourself and to allow for the entire time that has been allotted for discussion.

We have set aside this entire day for this subject. I am hoping—and I say this with all humility and with an earnestness; we cannot dictate, we cannot force, but I am appealing to you—that no one will use parliamentary process to cut off debate on this subject by moving the previous question. We can't force anyone not to do that. I am appealing to you. We have set aside this entire day and a majority or a good portion of the day for discussion. Please allow for discussion.

If no one is standing at the microphones, no one is there to speak, yes, then let's call the question. But please allow people to kindly discuss.

Please don't try to table the motion. Let's let discussion take place within the allotted time period that will continue until approximately 4:30 this afternoon, which was indicated in our agenda acceptance when Pastor Ng introduced our agenda on Thursday.

I'm hoping that if any attempt to limit discussion is

somehow placed on the floor, this body will turn that down and allow for full discussion. It's up to you. We can't control people, but let's have the appropriate amount of discussion.

We've come here to kindly, charitably, and respectfully discuss this item during the full time of discussion provided for until the voting.

Also, I say this with great respect, and it may be attempted, but I hope that no one will come with an amendment to the motion.

I can't control that. The chair can't control that. If you do that, that's your right. But I'm asking and appealing that you not try to amend the motion. And I'll explain that just a little bit later.

A very careful approach has been taken to place this motion before the body. And of course delegates have the right to do what they would like to do, but I ask and appeal to you that we will have full discussion on the motion.

We will be doing things by secret ballot and according to those who have badges. Badges are important today so that you can verify that you are a delegate.

But I want to make this statement: Every delegate is to vote his or her own conscience after studying the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and various materials, and listening to the impressions of the Holy Spirit. Others can certainly share their opinions with each other, and they can share comments. But your vote should be yours and yours alone, according to your conscience, guided by the Holy Spirit. That's why we'll have a secret ballot, and no one will know what you vote except for you and Heaven.

This is a sacred responsibility. It's a vote between you and God.

Let's pray for God's guidance today as we show a calm spirit, even as we share our deeply felt convictions.

Let's not direct our remarks against people, but rather, speak directly to the issue itself.

As delegates, church members, men and women of God, let's claim the promise of James 1:19, which says, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

The General Conference and various committees have studied this subject since the early seventies or even before. The historical documents and papers related to so much of this subject have been appropriately identified and posted on the Web site of the General Conference Secretariat's Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research at [Adventistarchives.org](http://Adventistarchives.org). That is where many of you have found the Final Theology of Ordination Study Committee materials and other related documents that have been produced over the past three years or so.

During the General Conference session on July 11, 1990, the session addressed the question as to the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, responding to a recommendation that came from the 1989 Annual Council that the church not move ahead with that process. The 1990 General Conference session delegates voted and agreed with that recommendation, and the current position that we have was maintained.

In 1995 the issue was again addressed at the General Conference session in Utrecht in the Netherlands. On July 5, 1995, the General Conference session received a request from the North American Division that was passed on to the session.

Now, here is a nuance that needs to be understood. There was no recommendation from the 1994 Annual Council to the General Conference session. It was sim-



ply to pass on a request from the North American Division that the General Conference invest in each division the right to authorize ordination of individuals without regard to gender. The 1995 General Conference session decided not to accept the request and to maintain the current position of the world church.

Then at the most recent General Conference session, in 2010 in Atlanta, a delegate raised the question about our lack of a theology of ordination. It was not a motion that was made. It was simply a question raised on the floor.

We never voted anything at the 2010 session of the General Conference, but we heard the plea of that delegate. We took that item to our Steering Committee, and then we indicated that we would take that request and would come back with a response.

After the Steering Committee had considered the request, we indicated the next day that there would be an attempt to bring about an understanding of what our theology of ordination was. Earlier in this quinquennium, the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, known as TOSC, was composed of individuals who have convictions on both sides of the question, most of whom were not administrators. There were a few administrators on TOSC who were nominated or suggested by their divisions, and the three executive officers of the General Conference were also members.

Many of the individuals on TOSC came from the North American Division. There were also two representatives from each of the divisions. In addition, there were biblical research committees of each division involved, and they entered their comments and thoughts into the process.

TOSC met two times in 2013 and two times in 2014, with many papers presented and discussions taking place. We thank the members of TOSC who took so much of their time to listen, to study, to present, and to pray. And we will spend time praying today, as you have seen in our agenda. We want to allow God to influence our minds as to what He wants us to do.

Prior to the 2014 Annual Council of the Executive Committee, reports from TOSC were well circulated so that every member of the Executive Committee and invitees would receive appropriate reports and information. It was not a hidden document, and we encouraged members all over the world to access this information and to study and pray about this subject.

Today we will be hearing brief synopses of each of the positions that are found in the TOSC report, just after Pastor Artur Stele, who was the chair of TOSC, shares a brief review of TOSC and other past studies.

After the reading of the three synopses by the business session secretary, we will hear the reading of the Consensus Statement of the Theology of Ordination, which came from TOSC and was voted and endorsed by the 2014 Annual Council. That statement, a "Consensus Statement on a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination," is not being brought here for any discussion or for a vote by the General Conference session, but simply as information. It was voted at the 2014 Annual Council, and it is terminal with that council.

Allow me to tell you how we came to the process conducted at the 2014 Annual Council.

Senior officers from the General Conference and the divisions prayerfully and carefully considered how to approach this item. There were differing opinions and still are. People were absolutely free to express their opinions. However, as we worked together, as we prayed together, we began to see how perhaps we

could address this particular question.

A recommendation was brought to the group we call the General Conference and division officers. The three officers of each division and the three officers of our attached union and a few others make up this group, including the General Conference officers.

That group considered a recommendation brought to them in a prayerful process. There was a sweet, Christlike spirit in our meeting. A recommendation without any dissenting person was voted in General Conference and division officers, to be brought to the 2014 Annual Council. The recommendation from the General Conference and division officers was discussed at the 2014 Annual Council and was overwhelmingly approved to be brought to the 2015 General Conference session to you.

It is important that you understand what Pastor Ng is going to be giving to you as the motion. The motion that was passed at the Annual Council coming here is a nonweighted, neutral question. The General Conference session owns this question, having considered it twice in the past. Pastor Ng will present that motion to you to then be discussed, a neutral question upon which you must decide "Yes" or "No."

I just wanted you to know the process that was taken and the beautiful spirit that we saw during the 2014 Annual Council process. We do not have, as the Israelites did, the Urim and the Thummim, in which God would either brighten or cloud a stone so that people could understand the response to a question. We do not have the hovering cloud over the tabernacle or the pillar of fire. We do not have the shekinah glory in the most holy place. We do not have a living prophet. What we do have is what the Spirit of Prophecy indicates.

When the General Conference is in session, it has authority, and in some cases it indicates highest authority. Whatever this body votes, after prayerful consideration and review, one way or the other, I pledge to uphold that decision.

I ask each of you to do the same. We need to be open to what God wants. That's why we have felt it important to place a question before the highest body of authority, which is you, the General Conference in session, since every one of us has a sacred responsibility when we come to this General Conference session.

So, Brother Chairman, thank you for the privilege to address this session. I also want to assure you that during this process we have attempted to be open and fair as much as possible. Although we have our own personal convictions, we need to be open to God's leading.

Let's have full respect for each other and speak with the kindest tones in Christlikeness and respect for each other. Let's not deride or denigrate anyone. Let those listening and watching, those who are not delegates, those who are watching through electronic means, those who will hear, let them say, "I am proud to belong to the Seventh-day Adventist Church that allows the Holy Spirit to lead us."

Brother Chairman, in closing, I want to reserve the right and opportunity to have our former General Conference president, Pastor Jan Paulsen, to speak sometime during the discussion at your discretion.

I also would request the opportunity to make a statement at your discretion. As we go into this process, I will be praying. And I ask each of you to pray.

Thank you for your kind, considerate, Christian courtesy and cooperation. May the Holy Spirit truly be in this place and lead us in this process.

Again, your discussion and your decision will be based upon your personal study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and related materials, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is an enormous mission and role ahead for God's remnant church. That role is now opening before us as we take our prophetic place in history, to proclaim Revelation 14 and Revelation 18, which I might indicate was one of the chapters for us to read today in Revived by His Word. We are to proclaim the loud cry of the third angel and accompanied by the fourth angel. Let us unite in Christ and His John 17 wish, that we may be one in Him to accomplish His final plans for the salvation of humanity. Through the Holy Spirit's power, He will use you and me as a united church.

Arise! Shine! Jesus is coming!

MICHAEL RYAN: I heard some of you applauding. I realize we were talking about things that we all solidly embrace, but I do want to make mention of that.

Now we are going to enter into a time that is the most important time we're going to spend on this item. Many times we have moments of prayer, and we invite the body to pray. But I hope that we can recognize the gravity of the issue before us and that it is only from a divine source that we are really going to receive true direction.

And I want us to take some time and pray today. We're going to do this a couple of times. And I would request that we certainly pray for direction. But I would request that we would pray for a sweet spirit in this house, the respect that we would show to fellow brothers and sisters.

And now I would like for us to form groups of two or three. We will take three or four or five minutes. That's going to be time well spent. Let's recognize that our call upon Heaven for direction is a real resource for this church. And so as we enter into this time, let's do so with the seriousness and appeal to Heaven to really guide and direct us.

Let's just take some time right now. At the end of that time we will have a prayer. I'm going to ask our secretary, Karen Porter, to pray. Let's just find two or three people and pray for that sweet spirit to discuss this in respect for each other. Let's separate now.

[Prayer.]

Thank you very much for taking that moment, and we'll do it again.

We believe, probably above many things in this church, in prayer. And what a joy. You can't imagine what peace it brings when I know that we're dealing with a group that has its anchor in prayer.

And we want to move on down through the sequence of events that we have on the agenda.

Elder Wilson, do you want to make any comment about the General Conference in session—you have made that statement—being the highest authority. I think it will help this brother concerning the conflict of two previous actions versus the one today.

TED N. C. WILSON: Simply from my understanding, the General Conference can take up items and review items. At our last General Conference session we heard, as I said, a request from the floor. We took that to our Steering Committee, which looks at the agenda items and the progress, and we came back with an assurance that we would look at a theology of ordination, which we did not have. We did not have a written document entitled Theology of Ordination. So that is what we have been working on over the past number of years—actually, during this past quinquennium. That brought us to the situation where a decision would need to be



made regarding requests from different divisions or sentiments.

You know, the church is a dynamic and changing church, and so we have to respond to things. I, Brother Chair, do not feel in any way that we are out of order in doing what we're doing, but, of course, we will leave that to you and to the body. Thank you.

MICHAEL RYAN: We're going to move into a brief synopsis or review of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee and the past studies that have been done.

Dr. Stele, please give us this review.

ARTUR STELE: I would like, before giving a brief synopsis, to remind ourselves that we are all about mission. In *The Acts of the Apostles*, I find the following quote: "The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men" [p. 9]. I hope you will not argue here that Ellen White meant here "humanity." "It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world" [p. 9].

So whatever we do, let it be done having mission in mind. I'm not aware of any other subject that has been studied for so long as the subject we are discussing today. In fact, the first small study committee was established in 1881. Since then, many more commissions have been requested to study the issue. What unites most of these commissions is that most of them finished its work with the same request: "We need to study the subject more."

However, the Theology of Ordination Study Committee established during this past quinquennium was not given this luxury to finish with the same request. Rather, we have been given the task to study the theology of ordination; then, based on this theology of ordination, study the implications, especially as it relates to the women's ordination. And if we are able to come up with a consensus, then to present that consensus to the Annual Council.

Then we were given the instruction by the body that organized us: if you are not able to come up with a consensus, you have to provide reports that present the views, but then concentrate on solutions, so that finally we can put an end to the discussion, stop all of the destruction, and return to the main task of our church: mission.

And so a worldwide study has been established. Every division has established a biblical research committee; and then the TOSC was established, a large committee; and the large committee was connected with bridges to every biblical research committee. From every biblical research committee, TOSC had two representatives, and so the information was going back and forth.

We started our study with the aim of achieving a consensus on the subject of theology of ordination.

And today I would like to give glory to God, I would like to praise His name, that in spite of all the differences in opinions, we were able to come up with a short document on the theology of ordination.

If one studies this document very carefully, it really provides the basis for how to move forward. I'm not going to go into the details, because it will be read. And please pay attention to the many details that are in this document. And I'm sure you have already read it.

Because this was the aim of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee: to be open, transparent. And we have decided to put all of the papers, everything that was going on in TOSC, online, to make it available to people; and so you could really participate with us, read it, discuss it, communicate with us.

And I'm sure you have read it, and you have received

the final report that was sent to you electronically and also in the hard copy.

This is why I will really make my statements very brief. Praise be to God, as I said, we were able to come up with a document, "Consensus Statement on a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination." Then we moved on, and we started to study the issue of women's ordination.

It was a challenging task. At times, no way out was envisioned. We were praying. We were studying. We were praying again and studying again.

And the result was that we couldn't come with a consensus understanding and statement on the issue of women's ordination. In fact, we had three groups in the Theology of Ordination Study Committee almost equal in size that had different views. The synopsis of their views will be presented today, so I will not go into it.

But one thing I would like to say: All three groups are sincere, faithful Seventh-day Adventists. All three groups treasure the Scriptures. All three groups have tried to base it on Scripture. But unfortunately, different groups have interpreted some passages differently. But I would like us to respect all three groups.

We saw the sincerity, we saw the struggle, we saw the prayers, we saw the fasting, and yet there was no consensus.

Brothers and sisters, in some of my sleepless nights I was thinking and I was praying, "Lord, why can't we come up with a consensus?" Our pioneers struggled with many theological issues, but they came together. They struggled, they studied, they prayed, and then they came up with a consensus. But we have not.

And I was wondering. And then I almost heard the following: Maybe you are asking the wrong question. Maybe, instead of asking who should be ordained, you should ask, "Lord, how can we recognize those that You have called so that we can ordain them?"

And then the Scriptures provided enough evidence

to discover the callings of God. As I said, we will hear the three different views. We have concentrated on the solutions. We have said, "We cannot come together on the understanding of the issue, but how now, with differences of opinion, can we come together and, as one family, move forward?"

We have tried it. We have tried it hard.

We have tested if we would all agree to move in one direction.

We have been a study committee and not a decision-making committee, and so we have not used the voting system. But how to discover if we have a consensus?

So we have to ask the people to take some kind of vote to discover it. Unfortunately, we have not discovered it, although groups 2 and 3, as you have seen in the card, have a similar solution. Because it was a study committee, we aimed at a consensus, which should be at least around 90 percent of support. We had more than 90 percent for the theology of ordination document, but the group committee couldn't achieve this goal for the solutions. And so we have three different documents, three understandings, and three ways forward.

MICHAEL RYAN: We plan to read a very short synopsis on each of those positions. We're going to request the secretary to read those short synopses right now.

Karen Porter, please share with us those statements.

KAREN PORTER: These position statements have been prepared by the groups representing these positions, and we will read them exactly as they were given to us.

MICHAEL RYAN: I turn to our secretary to read the "Consensus Statement on a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination" as it was endorsed by the 2014 Annual Council.

KAREN PORTER: This is an action of Annual Council, so it also requires no action by this body. It is not the business of this session to discuss or edit this document as well. It comes by way of information.

[Read the document.]

MICHAEL RYAN: We're about ready to have the introduction to the question to be placed before us.

Before we do that, we want to take time to pray again. I'm asking that we just take a moment and pray silently. We'll take just a minute or two to ask the Lord to be here and to fill this room with His Spirit.

[Prayer.]

I'm going to now turn to the secretary of the General Conference, Dr. G. T. Ng, to read an introductory statement and place the question before the body.

G. T. NG: The title of the statement is "Theology and Practice of Ministerial Ordination."

[Read the document.]

[For the full manuscript of those documents as read, go to [www.AdventistReview.org](http://www.AdventistReview.org).]

RAYMOND HARTWELL (yes): I respectfully ask all of us in God's world church how we should relate to the following questions. If, in 1911 in the Spirit of Prophecy, Ellen White, in the *Review and Herald*, May 18, wrote, "In the city of Portland the Lord ordained me as his messenger, and here my first labors were given to the cause of present truth"; and if in the *Testimonies*, volume 6, page 322, Ellen White wrote, "It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God"; and if in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 161 and 162, Ellen White wrote, "Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself, and the ceremony of the laying on of hands added no new grace



GC session attendees from the Southern-Asia Pacific Division pose together after participating in the International Festival of Mission.

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or virtual qualification,” it was an acknowledged form of designation to an appointive office and a recognition of one’s authority in that office, “by it the seal of the church was set upon the work of God” [p. 162]; and if in Joel 2:28 and 29 God’s Word states, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions, and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit”; then we must ask ourselves, Is it possible God would have us recognize He is working through the daughters of the Adventist Church?

If our Adventist daughters are being called by the Holy Spirit in these last days to serve the cause of God through the gospel ministry, is it possible we are not honoring God by refusing to recognize the calling of God to the daughters of the Adventist Church and permit divisions to ordain?

DELMAR NAVALLO CARO (no): I’m against it, because you didn’t respect my motion that we first have to deal with the disobedience of the ones that have ordained women before a decision is made at this GC session.

JOHN BRUNT (yes): Many years ago I had a unique opportunity to have a short stint teaching pastors from several countries in the southern part of Africa. Nearby was a beautiful beach. And on hot days that beach, was very inviting, but I never went to that beach, because I could not morally do it. It was a Whites-only beach at that time, and I could not go where my Black brothers and sisters could not go.

For the past 13 years I’ve pastored a church where I’m blessed to have a number of associate pastors; and I have worked with 19 associates: 14 men, five women. I have seen them work together. I’ve seen the Holy Spirit work through them in an equal way, although the five women have had more baptisms than the 14 men.

I know that these women are ordained by God for ministry. They aren’t pushing for ordination. They just want to minister; they don’t care what they’re called. But I care, because my ministry being recognized, affirmed by the world church, in a way that theirs is not makes me feel the same kind of discomfort and uncleanness that I would have felt if I had gone to that beach.

In the early church, when they had a conflict of convictions—and this is a deep moral conviction for me—they achieved unity of mission by allowing for diversity of practice.

They no longer required, but did not forbid, circumcision. If we are biblical, we will do the same and vote “Yes” for mission in unity.

CARLOS STEGER (no): We all are very interested in the unity of the church. Christ prayed for the unity of the church in John 17. But I also find in John 17:17 that Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” We cannot have unity if we are not united in truth.

The proposal that has been presented, if voted, would disunite the church, and we would not be united by the church. As I understand, the Bible is clear for me. To approve the ordination of women is not according to the Bible, and we will not abide to the truth as it is in God’s Word.

FRANK HASEL (no): In light of the far-reaching implications of the issue before us, I trust that the leadership of our church will deal with the issue of women’s ordination with prudence. And I strongly desire that all of us show the wisdom not to treat this issue as if it were

a pillar of our faith or a fundamental belief.

It never has been in the past, it is not now, and it should not be made into one in the future.

Having said this and with this in mind, I would like to address the following aspect. The discussions at the TOSC meetings, of which I was a member, have made it sufficiently clear that the supporters of women’s ordination to pastoral ministry and those who support that women should not serve in such a capacity both based their reasoning not on culture but on Scripture.

If this is the case, how do we effectively preserve the rights of those who, for conscientious reasons, do not support the ordination of women to ministry? If divisions are permitted to make provisions for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry as they deem it appropriate, what do we, for all practical purposes, do with those local churches and church members who, for conscientious reasons, cannot support such a decision? Will they be forced to transport their membership to another SDA church or conference? It seems that no one has a conscientious objection when a male pastor serves their church, but some among us do not feel free to have a female pastor. So how do we protect their freedom?

LARRY GERATY (yes): I belong to a missionary family. When I taught at the seminary at Andrews, I taught on all the continents except Antarctica, so I am familiar with the international church and see it as a real strength.

I’m thrilled that missionaries from the NAD are no longer needed in the same numbers as before. We have learned here that the so-called mission fields now comprise 90 percent of Adventist membership. Now, here in the U.S., we need you as missionaries to help us with church growth.

Those of you in the global south know, I’m sure, that if you have ordained men, you have already accommodated to modern custom without biblical authority, because there is no biblical basis for ordination as we practice it.

So for the sake of our evangelism and nurture in North America, Europe, and Australia, we appeal to you to allow us in our divisions to recognize by ordination our women too who have been called by God and are serving effectively in ministry.

We understand why many of you may not wish to do so in your divisions, and we have no burden to force you to do anything. In the global north the majority believe in inclusivity and see inclusion of women called by God as a matter of justice, as well as in harmony with fundamental belief 14, which says, “In Christ . . . distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us.”

And you know the Bible texts in Joel and Galatians about women. So we appeal to you not to force us against our consciences. There are many examples of

the global north being willing to accommodate customs of the global south in our worldwide church for the sake of mutuality, compassion, and unity. We now respectfully request the same graciousness on your part.

NWADIKE UCHECHUKWU (no): The Bible tells us that God does not change. The Bible tells us that God is omniscient. He knows the beginning from the end, and He knows the end from the beginning. He also knows that this church would come to this point at this time in our history, and God can never lead us away from the truth.

And so Jesus is the truth, the way, and the life. If Jesus is the truth, He practiced the truth, So if Jesus is the truth and did not ordain any woman to the gospel ministry and that is the truth, we should follow the truth, and it shall be well with the church.

MAXWELL MUVWIMI: I have a problem with the motion. It doesn’t seem to me to be very clear. It says: “Is it acceptable for division executive committees?”

Now, under the divisions we have unions and the conferences and missions. There is the possibility that someone at a lower level may say, “I am not a division, and so I can do what I feel is right for my conference,” and hence we may experience the same challenges that probably we may have experienced in the past. Because sessions have sat and they have made recommendations that were not honored in some parts of the world.

So I would love to seek a clarity if the motion would be a little more narrowed down to even lower entities so that when the vote is taken, it’s taken from a mission, conference, union, up to the division level.

MICHAEL RYAN: I realize the sensitivities that you have mentioned, but I think we’re going to have to deal with the question that’s on the floor.

G. T. NG: Can I make a word of clarification? We are one church, even though, as a division, you may have some unions that think or decide otherwise. But as a church, we have only one policy. We move in the same direction.

So if unions were to be divisive in their approach by not acting and thinking along with the division, then we have a problem. The problem is one of unity. So we are appealing to the world church to move in concert with each other and not act independently and unilaterally.

MICHAEL RYAN: I will make mention of appreciation to the body for the spirit that we’ve had this morning. Thank you very much. Keep a prayer in your heart that that sweet spirit will stay among us.

WILLIAM WINSTON: [Prayer.]

MICHAEL L. RYAN, *Chair*  
KAREN J. PORTER, *Secretary*  
R. J. KLOOSTERHUIS, GARY B. PATTERSON,  
and CLAUDE SABOT, *Proceedings Editors*

## Twelfth Business Meeting

*Sixtieth General Conference session, July 8, 2015, 1:59 p.m.*

MICHAEL RYAN: We would like to call the afternoon session to order. And to begin our afternoon session, I would like to request Elder Paul Ratsara from the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division to have our

opening prayer.

PAUL RATSARA: [Prayer.]

BRADFORD NEWTON (yes): Here is what is already the truth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church today:



Women as pastors are here to stay and are a blessing to the church wherever they serve. Second, our theology of ordination does not specify gender. Third, the GC TOSC concludes that there is no light from the Bible regarding women's ordination that our church agrees upon.

Therefore, to maintain the unity of the church, Mr. Chair, I would ask our delegates to please consider these three letters. And since I try to be a preacher, though I act as a memory aid, Y-E-S. Y is for youth. Our children and grandchildren are listening for us to embrace our mothers, sisters, and daughters as equal partners in the work of servant leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church mission.

"Yes" is for our youth.

E is for evangelism. Seven billion men and women on this planet call out for us to utilize every spiritual gift and every ministerial calling for mission. The Holy Spirit does not distinguish between women and men in the giving of the gifts and the call to ministry. Therefore, we cannot be a faithful church unless we are obedient to the Spirit's work in our midst. "Yes" is for evangelism.

And S is for submission to one another in love. This is the time for us to reach out across the aisles of this General Conference and ask the question "What will assist my brothers and sisters?"

"Yes" is the path forward, the key to unity, the way to a finished work.

MARIO VELOSO (no): I'm already an old guy, so since 1973 I've been a member of all the committees that dealt with this issue. I have been listening to all the arguments. There was not much change from the first time. The same texts from the Bible, the same paragraphs from the Spirit of Prophecy, always coming to the conclusion that we are all based on the Scriptures, always saying that we would abide by the Scriptures.

At this point somebody asked me, "What is the strongest argument against ordination of women?"

I said, "At this point I'm not looking for argument; I'm looking for attitudes."

And I find here in the text that was read. But the best evangelist that we have this morning, this sentence: "From whom the body join and knit together." This is my concern, to keep the body together.

So my plea to these delegates is to accept the same way of reading the Scriptures, not having two different ways of reading, one biblical and the other cultural. We need to stick with the Bible.

MARC WOODSON (yes): I fear we have placed way too much emphasis on this issue on not ordaining women pastors and have elevated to a level of a testing truth. It is not a testing truth. May I remind my brothers and sisters that this issue is nowhere found in our 28 Fundamental Beliefs, it is nowhere found in our *Church Manual*, it is nowhere found in the *GC Working Policy* or the GC constitution or bylaws. It is not even found in our official church statements. It can't be a moral

issue. Great Adventist Christian theologians and Bible students are on both sides of this issue.

We differ on this issue in good conscience.

There was no consensus from the Theology of Ordination Study Committee. That ought to tell us something.

Many have made this an issue of unity, not allowing each division to decide for itself. This is a false sense of unity. It is a false basis for our unity. Our unity should be based on our mission, founded through Christ's Great Commission and the remnant message of the three angels.

What some want is not unity; they want uniformity. But as a world church we are built on unity and diversity. That's why we have 13 divisions. By voting "Yes," we'll be standing in favor of refraining from dividing our church over a subject that does not constitute attesting truth. On this matter let us honor one another by applying the ancient Christian maximum: in essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, love.

DOUG BATCHELOR (no): I'm standing to speak in opposition of the motion.

About 40 years ago I never even heard of Seventh-day Adventists. And I was living up in the mountains in a cave, and I read the Bible and accepted Christ. And then I began to search for what I understood to be the true church. And after carefully studying, I decided the Seventh-day Adventist Church was the church the closest to the Bible.



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And since then, I've been involved in doing evangelism all over the world. Amazing Facts has evangelism training schools for young and old, men and women. Matter of fact, one of our largest classes in Manila this year had more women than men. And we sent them out preaching and teaching, and there were many baptisms, fulfilling Joel 2.

Ordination wasn't necessary.

Now, I think that our church having two different theologies on ordination is going to cause a lot of problems for our evangelists. It's going to be very difficult to explain to people that Seventh-day Adventists have the truth but that church across the street has a different theology than our church because they don't understand. It's going to send a message to other people that we really don't know what we believe. I think it's so important that we come together on this.

And I should add that there are people I love on both sides of this issue, but it's more important to me to really impress Jesus and be faithful to Him.

We're living in very interesting times, with same-sex marriage and transgender bathrooms. Our culture is awash in gender confusion. And I think this is no time for us to get fuzzy about what the differences are between men and women, which I think is very clearly defined in the Bible. I do believe it's a biblical issue.

When we look at the history of what has happened to other churches that went down this road, it devastated their mission. And I think we should consider that.

JEROEN TUINSTRA (yes): I'm the president of a small conference in the heart of Europe, Belgium. You've seen me on a number of issues at this microphone, issues

that many of you consider controversial. I'm just trying to keep the church real.

We may not be of this world, but we are still in this world. We may wish to be in heaven tomorrow, but we are standing with our feet in the dirt of the Lord's vineyard showing the love of Christ. I'm just trying to keep the church real.

And reality, in my part of the world, is that God is calling women to the full ministry and leadership. Maria is a young woman born in Colombia that grew up in Belgium who felt the call of God to nurture and pastor the church that she has grown up in. And she is a good pastor, open to her members, guiding them spiritually and being able to identify specifically with the children of the many immigrants from South America who are caught between two cultures. Appreciated by many members, she shows evidence of God's calling.

After one of our pastors' meetings we would discuss with all pastors the issue that is playing out in front of us. Standing in the elevator, she cried. She cried because when she listened to the call of God, she never wanted to be part of a controversy in the church. She only wanted to respond to the calling of God in her life. She cried because she had to hear that only because she was born a woman she was less than her male counterparts, that her church saw her as less capable or less called than if she would have been a man. She cried.

Dear delegates, please recognize that God is calling women to the full ordained ministry in our part of the world. I cannot and do not want to speak on behalf of your region, so I don't know whether God is calling women in your part of the world. But I know, see, and

recognize what is happening in Europe.

Please allow us to confirm the calling of women done by God in our part of the world by ordination. Answering yes to this question allows her to respond to the calling of God, and I ask us to do the same.

GUILLERMO BIAGGI (no): With humbleness I stand in front of the Lord to express my personal convictions and also a little bit on behalf of my dear delegates from the Euro-Asia Division who find it very difficult to stand and to speak to all the delegates because of some reason that I won't mention.

I have five reasons to stand for the word "No." First, as I read the Holy Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy, the Lord is indicating to me what is His will. I have decided not to challenge and not to question our Lord about what He has not revealed or what He has not prohibited.

Second, I consider that it would be better for our church to have one body of ordained pastors in all the world and not to have different bodies of ordained pastors by divisions.

Third, I think we need to learn of the experience of other Christian churches that have decided this question in a positive way and later have followed with undesirable and unethical decisions.

Fourth, I am convinced that with such important decisions, it would be better for us to retain the power of the decision at the level of the General Conference and not delegate in each division.

And fifth, because of mission reasons. From the place that we have been serving in the past years, I heard and were told that we are an American sect.

And we try to convince authorities to respect the Seventh-day Adventist Church, that our church is a traditional church based on the Bible, when the Orthodox Church, the main church in those regions, says that they do not ordain women because it's not biblically based.

CALEB JARA (yes): I stand in favor of the motion, because when I come to the Bible, I see that God holds both men and women to preach the gospel. I read in Joel 2:28 that in these last days He will pour out His Holy Spirit upon all flesh and He will give us the power to preach the everlasting gospel to everybody. The text says, "And your daughters shall prophesy"

In the New Testament I find that the Holy Spirit gives to both men and women without regard to gender, socioeconomic status, or race. And Revelation 1:6, 5:10, and 20:6 says that we already have been made a priesthood of all believers, again without regard to gender.

I stand in favor of the motion, because when I study the writings of Sister White, I find that she said in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 6, page 322: "The Holy Spirit of God . . . prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God." And she repeats the same thing in *Review and Herald*, May 18, 1911.

So the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy does not prohibit us from ordaining women as pastors.

KHANYISANI MALUFU (no): We have no biblical evidence of a woman on whom hands were laid upon in ordination. From the statement of consensus it reads, "Seventh-day Adventists understand ordination, in a biblical sense, as the action of the church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global church ministry." That means when someone is ordained into ministry, they are not only ordained to be gospel ministers in that division only; they are ordained for the world church.

Letting individual divisions decide on this matter



## SESSION SNAPSHOT



Newly reelected GC president Ted N. C. Wilson speaks to the thousands in attendance during the first Sabbath morning of session. SETH SHAFFER AR/ANN



will create individualism and regionalism. It is going to divide the church instead of uniting it.

I therefore am requesting that we need to be united as one church and stick to the wonderful counsels from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

We have wonderful examples from the Bible. And I say “No” to allowing divisions to decide on this issue affecting the world church. Women can still be very useful, and we are going to continue to use them in all other lines without necessarily having to ordain them.

LOWELL COOPER (yes): I wish to speak in support of a “Yes” response to the question before us, and I submit the following reasons.

1. A “Yes” response best aligns with our theology of ordination. A “No” response places our practice in conflict with our theology.

2. A “Yes” response best aligns with Bible teaching regarding spiritual gifts. A “No” response says to God that we will not permit certain people to fully use the spiritual gifts that He, in His sovereignty, gives to His children without regard to age, race, nationality, culture, position, or gender.

3. A “Yes” response is an expression of permission for the church to act in response to differing circumstances around the world. A “No” response is an imposition of authority that blocks opportunity to respect and respond to differing circumstances.

4. A “Yes” response indicates that we will trust our brothers and sisters in division committees to be faithful to God in the circumstances where they live. A “No” response says that we cannot trust our brothers and sisters in division committees to be faithful to God unless that faithfulness is expressed through behaviors that are acceptable to me.

5. A “Yes” response is entirely consistent with an earlier decision of the church to permit but not to require the ordination of women to the role of local church elder. This decision has not resulted in the fracturing of the church. A “No” response is inconsistent with previous decisions regarding the role of women in leadership.

6. A “Yes” response enables the world church to move forward, to get past the question that has been a diversionary agenda item for more than 50 years.

I urge the delegates for an overwhelming “Yes.”

MICHAEL RYAN: We’re going to take a couple more names, and then we are going to pause for a little prayer session. I really believe that we need to implore that the Spirit is among us as we discuss and make this decision.

COLLEEN ZIMBEVA (no): I want to thank God for the remnant church. Our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Times may change, but God doesn’t change. We are from Eden, and we are going back to Eden. As a very committed lay businesswoman with values and principles, I’ve been working in the Women’s Ministries Department. I’m talking from a lay perspective. We have been preaching, teaching, evangelizing, and in various other programs. They have been running smoothly with no hindrances.

Second, I would like to thank you for the Revived by His Word program, which actually assisted me on my research of women’s ordination. I also looked at the Spirit of Prophecy, which is very silent about it. There is no implicit writings or findings in the Bible. Better be conservative to maintain identity, message, mission, and unity of the worldwide church.

Therefore, based on my research, my opinion is “No” to the first motion and “No” to having divisions deciding.

JAMES STANDISH (yes): It’s great to see this stadium full and particularly the delegate section full. But I have a question. Why wasn’t it full when we talked about mission? Why wasn’t it full when we talked about the character and nature of God? Why wasn’t it full when we talked about youth ministry? This stadium this afternoon is evidence of how distracting this issue is to our church mission.

There are godly, Bible-believing, faithful Seventh-day Adventists who believe women should not be ordained. There are also Bible-believing, faithful, godly Adventists who believe they should. So the question for us is: What should we do when we have a difference of opinion among godly Adventists that is not a fundamental belief and is not a matter of salvation?

We must remember there’s no biblical distinction between ordination for pastors and elders. This is a man-made distinction that we’re arguing over. Is this the kind of issue we should tear our church apart over?

My perspective, after prayer and study, is this: This is not the kind of issue worth splitting our church. It is not the kind of issue in which one church member should impose their views on another. It is not the kind of issue in which uniformity is required for unity. Sometimes we just have to take a step back and let each other live in peace.

I therefore humbly and respectfully appeal to my fellow delegates, even the ones who weren’t here much during the week, to vote “Yes” and brothers and sisters, let’s get back to the mission of our church.

MICHAEL RYAN: I would like to request Elder Harald Wollan to come to the microphone and to just offer a short prayer that closes our prayer time. So let’s just turn to the person next to you, and let’s have it be reverently quiet as we enter into this communication with Heaven.

[Prayer.]

Just a reminder: Elder Wilson in his opening remarks commented that through your prayerful study of the Bible, your considerations of what might be best for the world church, you should think independently.

KEVIN NWAIGWE (no): The question before us is: Do we allow divisions to make decisions as it concerns women’s ordination? I recall that at the 2010 General Conference session a study committee was set up to find the position of the church. And the report we have from that committee today indicates that there are three positions. In other words, the church has not seen their way clear on the position as it relates to women’s ordination.

If we go back to the current experience, it means that the church is still open to further studies. If we take a decision today either way and we conclude in the future in a direction, how shall we defend ourselves? I foresee a situation where I go for an evangelism with a brother of mine and I’m asked, “Does your church support women’s ordination?” I say “Yes,” because I’m from division A, and he says “No,” because he’s from division B. Are we still in one mission?

ROGER ROBERTSEN (yes): This issue is not based in our fundamental beliefs, it’s not part of the pillars of faith that the early pioneers lifted up and preached. It’s something that’s coming to us from different areas of the world.

I want to follow the Lord. I need to follow Him the way I find Him presented in the Bible. Will you allow me to do it? In the church of God we must have that sort of freedom when it comes to beliefs that are not rooted and grounded in our Fundamental Beliefs. If not, it certainly is not democracy; it’s something else.

When Paul and the other apostles ran into problems, they had different ways of solving these issues. Remember Paul and Barnabas? At one point they had to separate because they disagreed. How did they handle that disunity? Well, my Bible says that Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

Please allow us to go in the direction we feel we need to, because we think it’s based on the Word of God. And we should all pray for each other, even when we have to detour, because we’re preaching the same gospel message. That which has been entrusted to us.

JAY GALLIMORE (no): I ask the delegates to vote “No,” not because our sisters are inferior. God loves His daughters as much as He loves His sons. We believe and need our sisters involved in ministry. We love to see them exercising their gifts in all kinds of gospel work. God created a divine order of function at creation with special roles for both. Sin did not change the fact of childbirth, agriculture, or Adam’s headship role. Sin injected pain into all three.

It is to that divine order that the apostle Paul appealed when he reserved the office of elder for a man. He was directing the church into the same order established at creation, the sanctuary, and Jesus’ 12 apostles.

The gifts of the Spirit, of which pastoring is one, are given to everyone, including children. Children may have the gift of the spiritual nurture, as well as men and women, but the office of overseeing the church and the family was reserved for men.

Voting “No” will be the best route to restore and preserve the unity of the church. As a church we are not held together by diversity, as much as we enjoy it, nor culture, as much as we like it. We are held together by the Bible. Allowing everyone to do their own thing on something as crucial as the ordaining of our ministers is to court division and pluralism.

Yes, some may leave, sadly, but let it not be because we compromised the teachings of God’s Word. Some will say this is not a biblical issue, but it is. Some will say it’s not part of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. Neither is the mark of the beast.

A large portion of North America will bless you.

ROSCOE HOWARD (yes): What a blessing it is to address this global delegation of multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural Seventh-day Adventists. We all see the world through different cultural lenses that inform how we think and act and live each day. In fact, we bring meaning to the page even when we study the Scriptures. Culture is so pervasive that we cannot get away from it: culture invades everything.

And as this church gets larger, we will be dealing with more and more difficult issues in a multimillion-membership church.

I was once—and I give you my own testimony—a right-wing, ultraconservative Seventh-day Adventist, Bible-quoting, Ellen G. White-quoting member going around crucifying every woman who was in ministry.

I had a literal hermeneutic that I used, and I’ve heard these arguments throughout today. Until I had an epiphany and I was studying one day, and God gave me a text. And He said, “Roscoe, have you considered your hermeneutic on this text?” And I’ll read it to you. Ephesians 6:5: “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ” (ESV).

For 200 years preachers and slave owners in this country used this text to enslave Africans in this country, years, a misappropriation and a misunderstanding



of the biblical text. And God told me, “Roscoe, you might want to change your hermeneutic.”

Someone has asked, why do we keep bringing this up? You remember the woman in Scripture who begged Christ over and over. She said, “Even the dogs get crumbs from the master’s table.”

DAVID POLOCHE (no): [translated] In the story of the judges there was a time when there were no judges and everyone did as they pleased. This is not going to happen in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have been united thus far until today. For more than 30 years specialists have sought Scripture to support women’s ordination, and the church has decided not to ordain women. We haven’t found a new manuscript of the Bible that says differently. And two years’ study for our theologians have proved the same as we believe today.

We need to be united. There can’t be divisions that accept one thing and other divisions that accept another thing. That is not unity.

So I firmly say no.

MARVIN WRAY (yes): I have enjoyed watching through the years the growth of the various world divisions. I’ve been privileged to serve as a missionary in what was the Far Eastern Division for six years. I served as a pastor for 42 years. This issue before us is a very volatile topic. It’s been related to women’s ordination, and while it is more directly about allowing divisions the opportunity to apply methods, not theology, that will enhance the furthering of the gospel within their territories.

Interestingly and wonderfully, North America has now become a minority in membership while still a majority financial supporter. And I would plead for minority understanding and compassion. As you—the global south, perhaps—were being formed and growing, we strove to give you the tools and understanding that you needed within your culture. We at times made concessions to delicate cultural issues that were not in harmony with our beliefs. Would you please allow us the same privilege with issues that are not acceptable within your culture?

We ordain women as elders, granting them all of the privileges of male elders. Even the TOSC committee could not come to consensus, except to say that divisions should be allowed to choose for their own territory. I would with other divisions recognize the differences in culture that do not diminish our unity and vote “Yes” on this question.

If, as Dr. Steele has suggested, that this is to be the decision to settle and cease debate, then we must allow for variance by division. To do otherwise will be both divisive and destructive. A “Yes” vote will impose nothing on anyone; a “No” vote will place a restraint on us that will impact our youth.

MICHAEL RYAN: While Elder Torres is coming to the microphone, I want to respond in a positive way to the request that Elder Wilson made. And I would request Elder Paulsen, Jan Paulsen, former president of the world church, to make his way to the microphone. And I’m going to reserve the right to him to make a comment immediately after Elder Torres. All right?

LOUIS TORRES (no): In my field, Micronesia, we are not in support of ordaining women. I surveyed my pastors, and none of my pastors support it. I know other conferences in the North American Division that do not support it, which tells me that we are divided even in the North American Division.

Now, my field has grown during the past five years, with more than 2,000 baptisms. We have trained men and women to preach. None of the women that have

preached have requested ordination. The Spirit of God has used them, which doesn’t mean that you have to be ordained in order to win souls or that that stops women from being able to do evangelism.

I thank God for the women and the men who are preaching. All my women’s ministries directors do not support women’s ordination. I’ve met with them, and none of the women in my field support it.

In reference to spiritual gifts, it is God who decides who gets the spiritual gifts. And just because you prophesy doesn’t mean you need to be ordained.

The silence in the Bible is not an argument for women’s ordination. It is an argument that Sunday keepers use to keep Sunday. If we use an argument of silence, then we have to say that it’s all right to keep Sunday. There are many other things that the Bible doesn’t say you have to do, but it means that you shouldn’t do it because God doesn’t.

I emphasize that this issue has caused division, and once it’s settled, I hope it will end division.

MICHAEL RYAN: Elder Jan Paulsen.

JAN PAULSEN (yes): I appeal to my brothers and sisters to vote “Yes” on the motion before us. A “No” vote will cause rupture and serious damage to our global church.

Let me say this: I have served our church in ministry for 55 years. Most of these years have been in senior leadership roles. I’ve lived and served the church from Africa, in Europe, and the global church for our world headquarters here in North America. And just for the record, let me say that the Spirit that guided me during the years I provided leadership for the church did not

leave me when I left office.

I believe that I know this church, this global church, well. I know what it is that holds us together. I know also many of the tension points when cultures meet that cause difficulties for us. But we as a church can overcome these things.

I’ll be clear about it. It has been stressed by several speakers what we are really voting on today. It is not the question of who has won the argument for ordination or not ordination. This is a question of trust.

We have leadership established around the world in every one of the 13 divisions. They work in counsel together. They work also in close counsel with the General Conference leadership. They pray, they search Scripture, they seek the Spirit’s guidance, and the Spirit is guiding them. Do we trust them enough, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to know what is good for the church in their particular part of the world?

Let me say to you, my brothers and sisters from Africa: Do you trust your leaders, elected leaders, from Africa to give the best leadership for the life and mission of the church in Africa? If you do, vote “Yes.”

I say to you, my brothers and sisters from South America: Do you trust your elected leaders to provide reliable, good, Spirit-driven, Spirit-inspired leadership to the life and witness of our church in South America? Then vote “Yes.”

The same applies to North America and to Europe. We need to trust each other to get together and to vote “Yes” on this motion.

Voting “No” will do damage to our church. I am fearful of what will happen if we do not allow the church



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to go forward on this. So I say to you, please do not let delegates from major segments of our church return to their fields bruised and bleeding and confused and disenfranchised because they are being driven by this community to live a life somehow judged by this community not to be worthy of the responsibility that they have.

It is important, I think, that we empower our delegates, allow them to go back home and to know that they have the right and the empowerment of this body to respond under the Spirit's guidance to God as to how they can best lead the church.

We are struggling in some parts of the world. We are struggling badly to try to hold the church together, to engage young and old, men and women, in the mission and ministry of the church. We need everyone's involvement.

We are bleeding in many ways. We've got to stop this. We are losing so many of our youth and young professionals. They have problems with the moral integrity of the church, and they say, "Why is the church having problems with this matter? The public does not. It's not a problem to the public. Why should it be to the church?"

And there is no biblical injunction that stops us. We have to fix this one.

Please, brothers and sisters, I believe that it is the will of God that we should enable the church in every part of the world to make the decisions that are best applicable in the part where they live without being a violation of the will of God. Thank you.

LISA BURROW: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can sense, as you can, that the tension has risen in the room. And I'm wondering if this would be an appropriate time to pause for prayer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you. And I think that is something that is very, very advisable.

I would like everybody to pray silently. And we will pause for a period of time.

[Prayer.]

MICHAEL RYAN: I think if the church for the past 40 years has been discussing this issue of the role of women in the church in various ways and we haven't come to a consensus, it's obviously not something that unites us. We don't need to be uniform in everything to be united.

What we need is the Spirit of God to guide us.

I remember the first time I went to the church, and they told me I had to take my shoes off and sit cross-legged. I felt extremely uncomfortable. But we don't dictate how people worship, so I believe that we shouldn't be dictating who leads when we cannot come to a consensus. Unity has not been affected when we've allowed women deacons and elders.

SAMUEL LARMIE (no): A person who was converted recently in the church said that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not one of the churches, it is the church of God.

And the devil is working against so many churches, trying to move churches from what the Scriptures have said. The devil is against the truth. What we are talking about is not about allowing or disallowing women to minister or to teach or to evangelize. That's not what we're talking about. We're not talking also about prophets. It has nothing to do with that. We are not talking about disallowing people to use their talents. No. It's not about that.

It is about ordination of women into the ministry. And if we want a source to guide us, the Holy Scriptures is the best source we must go to, nowhere else. It's the

infallible guide that we can have. Ellen G. White herself never was ordained by the church. Did the church make a mistake? Is that what we are saying today?

When you come to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, He selected 12 disciples. He selected all men. Did He make a mistake? No, He didn't.

We come to Paul, who talked about equality. He ordained only men. He never ordained a woman. The Bible is clearly disallowing this that we are talking about today.

The church is one church and a global church. The church must stand where the Bible stands and not elsewhere. If it is good for us to do it, then we must all do it together, not regionally. If it is not good for us to do it, then we must not do it across the world. We want to stay together.

CHARLES SANDEFUR (yes): Forty-three years ago Josephine Benton became my pastor and my colleague. The next year I was ordained, and she wasn't. She had better skills than I had, better gifts than I had, she was more organized than I was, but she waited 40 years to be ordained.

I understand how for many of us here it is a point of conscience that Josephine Benton not be ordained, but that for some of us it's a point of conscience that she be ordained.

How do we deal with differences of conscience in this church? Can we go back to Acts 15, where, in the issue of circumstance, there were differences of conscience?

By the way, at the first Jerusalem Council, there were no rules of procedure; there was no failed electronic voting; they met for one day; and they completed their business. And, astonishingly, the Holy Spirit led them to permit both circumcision and noncircumcision into a complicated unity, rather than an easy consensus. And the people who came with their conscience and voted their conscience were allowed to go home and exercise their conscience.

We can do that here. Let's go back to Acts 15. Let's bring our conscience, vote our conscience. What we need is not your permission; we need your blessing for us to act in ways that will fulfill the mission of our church.

TONYE EREKOSIMA: A small clarification. I have a problem with the motion on the floor here. My question is: Has there been any time the GC made reference to divisions to take actions on any policy issues or what have you? Have there been any time some decisions have been deferred to the various divisions?

I think I'm afraid we are trying to set a precedent in the light of some contemporary issues that will make divisions begin to make decisions by themselves. So we need to be very careful so that we don't polarize on these issues, because we may begin to have issues that we may not be able to have control over. Divisions will now come up to make decisions, contentious decisions, without regard to the GC.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you for that comment. I know you're making a point of inquiry, and there probably would be people better qualified to respond to that than I am. But I do know that even with the constitution and bylaws, we provide a model constitution and bylaws, and divisions have the flexibility to adopt them. It is true that there are certain points in that constitution that divisions are required to reflect, but there's quite a bit of leeway in it.

I also know that when you look from division to division, there's flexibility in certain financial policies and, as a matter of fact, different offering plans. And

these are division decisions. So it's not something that's unusual to have divisions make this decision.

I think the thing we need to keep in mind here is that we have brought this to this body because this issue is owned by the General Conference in session. And certainly this body can define how they want to have this administered or not administered. And that's why we're here today, to address that question.

ALEX OTTI: Let me start by apologizing to the GC Executive Committee, because I may not have very kind words for them. Look at the proposal and read it: "Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No?"

If you listen very well, you also hear what is not being said. And what is not being said is what is most important here: that the leadership has not taken the qualities of leadership into serious consideration. A leader has to be fair, courageous, and bold irrespective of where the pendulum is swinging.

I don't think we have come for a popularity contest here. I expected that if this was going to come, a decision has to be taken. There is no decision here. And what I sense is that the GC Executive Committee is outsourcing its function of making a decision to the delegates here. And I don't think it's right. I believe that this proposal should be for a consensus. If there's no consensus, they should continue working on it, even if it takes 30 years until we bring a proposal that says, "This is our position." We can vote "Yes" or "No," but this is like sitting on the fence and asking us to make a decision that should have been made by Executive Committee. I really don't think that a good job on this has been done.

JIM HOWARD (no): I would like to first address some of the comments made about Ellen White. She uses the words "pastor" and "pastoral laborer" to refer to anyone who exercises the spiritual gift of pastoring, nurturing the flock through visitation and personal ministry. She describes pastors' wives and even church members doing pastoral labor.

But when speaking of the office of minister, Ellen White writes, "The primary object of our college was to afford young men an opportunity to study for the ministry and to prepare young persons of both sexes to become workers in the various branches of the cause" [*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 60]. Young men she specifically identifies for the ministry and those of both sexes for the various branches of the cause.

*Testimony Treasures*, volume 2, page 239, says, "Those who enter the missionary field should be men and women who walk and talk with God. Those who stand as ministers in the sacred desk should be men of blameless reputation." Ellen White was making a distinction in both of those places.

Furthermore, the question before us, allowing each division to decide whether or not to ordain women in their region, assumes that there are differences between divisions but that there is unity within our divisions. It assumes North America believes one thing, West Africa something else, etc.

But this is simply not the case. In the North American Division there is a sharp divide over this issue, and voting "Yes" would be disastrous to our division. Rather than allowing us to focus on mission, it would simply pass the battle to divisions, unions, conferences, and local churches. In North America there is a large portion, if not a majority, of church members who are not in favor of ordaining women, even where conference



leadership is in favor of doing so. I believe that every church in the North American Division will be put in an awkward situation if this is passed.

**BRUNO VERTALLIER (yes):** Women, sisters, I love you. God does too. In the three angels' messages—and we speak a lot about that—we are called to give glory and worship the Creator, who has created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water. We love this declaration. We support it. This is good and mandatory. We want to glorify the Creator.

What about the respect of the creatures of the Creator? In society we continue to discriminate against the creatures of the Creator because of religions, of skin color, of strong nationalism, even because of gender. It seems that humankind always finds good reason to discriminate. We always try to control, dominate a group of people. It happens also in our church.

We continue to discriminate against many of the creatures of the Creator. Do you know that women have been created by God, the Creator? They are precious to God. They are precious to us. Women are creatures of God.

If we want to become consistent and glorify the Creator, we must recognize the women and respect them in their full dimension as human beings and creatures of the Creator and stop discriminating in any way. Let us be in the Asia church the champions in glorifying the Creator and respecting women as creatures of the Creator and stop discriminating. If you understand that, you will know how to vote. Let us glorify the Creator in respecting His creatures. Women, we love you.

**FREDERICK NYAGA (no):** This issue of women's ordination has always been there. And in all the other past General Conference sessions, it was not approved, not because anyone was against women's ordination, but because the church wanted to maintain unity. And I stand here to ask: Does it mean now that we don't need unity? I believe that if there was ever a time the church needed unity, it's today.

If we want to vote that every division does as it wishes, it will be just a question of time and the unions and local conferences will also start saying, "Can we be allowed to do the things that we want?" Eventually there will be the local churches. And I ask myself, Where will the unity of the church be?

We are not against women being ordained. We are not against women doing the work of the church. We are only saying, if we are going to say "No," let us say "No" as a church. Let us have one stand.

There are many things that we do not do, not because they are wrong in themselves, but because of the impact they are going to have either to the individual or to the church. And I believe this is one of them.

If we are going to say "Yes," what impact are we going to have? This issue is not a question of life and death. And therefore I would that we rather say "No" to maintain that unity that we have been having. The church has continued to today without women's ordination, and it will continue growing. God bless you.

**ANNA KRISZTINA ZARKANE TEREY (yes):** I appreciate how the Adventist thinking is reflected in the Sabbath School, as in lesson 6 of the quarterly *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*. A quote from that lesson: "In the time of Jesus, as in some cultures today, women were deemed of little worth. . . . Against such a backdrop . . . Jesus brought the good news that woman are 'children of God of equal worth with men in the sight of God' (May 2).

The message today for women of all nations

remains the same: We are all men and women, one in Christ Jesus.

This is what we studied in 215 countries in Sabbath school, which is supposed to unite our church. However, could it be that in this respect some of us are like those Christians who read "Sabbath" but understand "Sunday." From the same lesson, a quote from Ellen White, *Evangelism*, page 464: "The Lord has a work for women as well as for men. They may take their places in His work at this crisis, and He will work through them. . . . The Savior will reflect upon these self-sacrificing women the light of His countenance, and will give them a power that exceeds that of men."

One hundred years ago the church in Hungary, where I am from, was established, but many of the men were taken in World War I. At that time women stood up to carry on the work, becoming role models for later generations.

God gave the fruit of the Holy Spirit to those women, and also blessings. So what would Jesus do?

**NATASHA NEBBLETT (no):** I want to speak on behalf of thousands whose voices are not being heard in my division. Thousands of NAD members do not agree with women's ordination. The initiative to bring it to the front has served not to unify but to polarize our division.

As the president of GYC, which is the largest annual youth and young-adult conference in the Adventist Church, I hear from those within the NAD who feel their voices have not been heard or at least not been acknowledged. There are those in this division who believe that we should be considerate of the world church and what regional beliefs will mean for our unity, rather than feeling that the world church needs to be considerate of us.

And if the division has not acknowledged all of the convictions within their own division, how can we anticipate that they will appreciate and consider the convictions of the world church on other issues when we have once set a precedent that each locality can decide for itself?

I am a young woman, a young adult, an ethnic minority, and a leader of one of largest youth movements in Adventism. And God has already called me to work for Him, and that is all the calling that I need. Not all young people, not all young women, and not all North Americans want our church to be divided for the sake of somebody putting their hands on us.

And while people recognize my work as president of the Young Adult Conference, they should give more recognition when I become a wife next February and a mother after that, since the Spirit of Prophecy says that position is higher than the ministry and the desk and the king on his throne. We should focus on giving that the dignity and honor that it deserves. I say "No" to the question and "No" to dividing the church.

**CHERYL DOSS (yes):** The church has followed a very careful process in coming to this day. As we have heard for two years, the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, a committee officially convened by the General Conference, met to study the issue of ordination. The duly appointed members from around the world, including many of our church's best biblical scholars, studied the Bible together, discussed and prayed and listened to each other. At the end of that process, two thirds of that committee agreed that the church should allow the practice of ordination to vary in different parts of the body. To have two thirds of those committee members, a majority, after much study, agree on the direction for the church to take on such a difficult

issue seems to me to be a strong indication of the church's leading, the Spirit's leading.

The Bible says that just as a body requires different parts, the unity of the church requires differences. The church's responsibility is to empower all the parts of the body from mission, not to reduce the body to sameness.

Our theology of ordination document clearly states that ordination in the Adventist Church is functional, not sacramental. If one part of the body will function better if women are ordained, then that is what they should do.

All parts do not have to function in the same way, nor do they need to be exactly alike in ordination practices to function well together.

We put shoes only on our feet, not our hands. We put food in our mouths, not in our ears. To fulfill our mission, we need to allow divisions to make decisions that will empower their mission and help their part of the body function well.

**PEDRO MENDEZ (no):** [translated] We've been reviewing the reports of the different divisions, the progress that has been seen in each of them, and we have seen men and women working together, and we have seen the church grow.

Viewing those present—and I know that in other countries there is expectation—I'm embarrassed to see that before, with such a beautiful program of revival and reformation, we have not seen a suspense and expectation as this, as if this were a point of life or death.

The enemy placed in David's heart the desire to count the people, and his victories went to the ground.

I believe women's ordination at this moment is a distracting and divisive influence. This church needs to keep united, as it has been for the progress of its mission.

The church should not depend on the pressure of its surroundings to make the right decision.

I believe we should take a "No" position.

**RICARDO GRAHAM (yes):** I would like to support a "Yes" on the motion, because this motion allows for accommodation on a local basis, which has a long history in the denomination.

Examples include but are not limited to the following: 1. Regional conferences were originally created because the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States of America yielded to the prevailing racial code of segregation and would not accept Black Americans as full equals in the mission of the church. They have proved a great blessing in every level of the organization.

2. There has been accommodation to polygamy in membership within the church, as spelled out in the working policy, C70, which reads, "Wives of a polygamist who have entered into the marriage in their heathen state and who, upon accepting Christianity, are still not permitted to leave their husbands because of tribal custom, may, upon approval of the local and union committees, become baptized members of the church." This has been a blessing to the growth of the church.

There has been an accommodation in doctrines. It was voted in 2005 at St. Louis, Missouri. General Conference delegates arrived with 27 Fundamental Beliefs. We left with 28. A new belief, number 11, "Growing in Christ," was added in response to the requests of Adventists in developing nations for a statement of spiritual warfare yielding to the current 28. This was an accommodation to the needs of members who believed this would enhance their



mission and ministry.

There are people in many parts of the world who believe that acknowledging the giftedness of God upon all people and recognizing that officially would be a boon to their mission and their ministry in the local area where they serve and function.

I urge a “Yes” vote.

TED N. C. WILSON: Brother Chair, if you could put up two minutes, I’d appreciate it.

With all humility and with respect, I speak to my brothers and sisters. Most of you know already where I stand on this issue, and I humbly submit that my views are rather well known and, I believe, very biblically based, plainly said. But I will not refer to them after this.

I don’t want anyone to misunderstand. I have heard the angst and the emotional deep feeling by so many. I think we all hold these views rather strongly. But let me give you a very strong pastoral appeal.

I believe we need to stay together as a church in making a united decision, not separately. We have had a fair and open process. Our real challenge for the future is to maintain a sweet spirit. After the vote is when we really will be tested, whichever way it goes. I want us to focus upon the mission and upon evangelism and not continue agitation on either side for this issue. The mission of the church is so precious to all of us. We have been entrusted with the proclamation of the three angels’ messages, and today we read in Revelation 18 the fourth angel.

I will be praying that we stay together.

MICHAEL RYAN: Thank you very much.

LESLIE GILLET (no): I must not support this motion, because when I read the Bible, I realize that at the foundation of what we believe as Seventh-day Adventists is the instruction that comes from God to His people. When I look at the sanctuary message, God told Moses that His people was to make for Him a sanctuary that and he was to follow the pattern that was seen in heaven.

It is clear to me, then, that what Moses did was what God showed him. When I look at the ministry of Jesus and of Paul, and, in fact, when I look throughout Scripture, I do not see Scripture disagreeing with itself. It is, therefore, clear to me that if it was God’s will, we would have had a clear “Thus saith the Lord” on this matter.

I believe, however, that if we study the prophecies and we look at what’s happening in the world, we would realize why this issue is coming up at this time, and therefore as a church we should stand firm on the Word of God, and we should say “No.”

MICHAEL RYAN: Again I would like to have the delegates pause for a moment of prayer. We’re starting into the voting process where the world church is going to make a decision. And I would again invite you to find someone next to you, and we are going to take just two or three minutes to ask the Lord to again bring a sweet spirit over this house and that we would have the guidance of Heaven as we make a decision, a very important decision on this issue. So let’s pause and find someone to pray with.

[Prayer.]

Rosa Banks will read for the last time the motion on which we will be voting.

ROSA BANKS: “After your prayerful study on ordination from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the reports of the study commissions, and after your careful consideration of what is best for the church and the fulfillment of its mission, is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it

appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No?”

MICHAEL RYAN: I want to make mention of the fact that we have the auditors of the General Conference involved in this process; they have been entrusted with a very important responsibility that requires the utmost integrity.

[The voting was done by secret ballot.]

I’m not seeing any more persons going to vote. I am declaring the end of voting.

[Singing of songs.]

All right. We have the ballot totals in. And just before I read the totals and the decision on the question, I want to remind the body that I responded to someone who said, “Are we going to close this session with prayer?” with “Yes, absolutely we are.” I just think it’s the most important time that we spend together.

And so immediately upon reading this and my declaring the motion, we are going to take a little time to turn to the person next to you and pray together. I don’t know what will be on your heart, but I do know that Jesus and the Holy Spirit will keep this church focused on mission.

There were a total of 2,363 ballots cast. And that includes those that abstained. There were 5 votes that abstained.

There were 977 delegates who voted “Yes” on the question; 1,381 delegates voted “No” on the question.

There’s nothing triumphal about this. There are not winners and losers. I would ask that you turn to the person next to you and just pray. Let’s pray together.

[Prayer.]

At this time Elder Wilson, the president of the world church, will make a concluding comment.

TED N. C. WILSON: Brothers and sisters, I want to thank the chair and others who have helped the secretary and others, but most of all I want to thank you. Thank you for the careful and prayerful manner in which you have conducted yourselves and addressed the subject today. I’m sorry that we did not have more time for those who wished to speak, but we have studied this item for decades, papers and materials have been available worldwide for a long time, and we have placed it in God’s hands.

I also want to thank the fine voting process that our Secretariat and GCAS conducted. We are very much in appreciation of that.

We’ve been here together to watch God’s work take place as an assembled group in this session. And I believe the Holy Spirit has worked on hearts.

I want to speak to your hearts for a moment. We have today a spiritual opportunity to refocus our attention on mission and turn our eyes away from this subject.

I appeal to all of us in this church to put away differences of opinion. You may guard an opinion, but let’s be careful how we express it, and move ahead. We need to humble ourselves before God as we recognize God’s instructions regarding a General Conference in session.

I share with you in humility *Testimonies*, volume 9, page 261: “God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth”—and that means every single one of you—“when assembled in



## FUN FACT

Mark Kislingbury, the official session recorder, holds the Guinness World Record for “fastest court reporter,” with a staggering 360 words per minute recorded. In the last 11 years, Mark has been champion of the National Court Reporters Association, and now is sharing his techniques with students all around the world.

DOMINIK ZEH AR/ANN





a General Conference, shall have authority." In this quotation we see the call to humility on the part of all of us in order to accomplish the prophetic mission that God has given to us.

My friends, my colleagues, my fellow church members in this great Advent movement, now is the time to unify under the bloodstained banner of Jesus Christ and His power, not our own power. Now is the time—and I'm very serious about this—to unify in the mission of God's church. As we move forward in unity, I appeal to your heart for calmness and peace.

How important it is for us to avoid controversy since the mission of the church is at stake.

Another beautiful quotation from *Testimonies*, volume 9, page 216: "Let every believer do his best to prepare the way for the gospel missionary work that is to be done. But let no one enter into controversy. It is Satan's object to keep Christians occupied in controversies among themselves. . . . God's workers are to be of one mind and one heart, praying for the impartation of the Spirit and believing that God will fulfill His word."

My dear brothers and sisters, here at the 2015 session, let us unite under Christ's leadership. Let us fulfill Christ's prayer in John 17. We are to plead with the Lord for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit, who will give us the needed unity and purpose of mission in proclaiming the messages of the three angels and the fourth angel of Revelation 18. Let's place ourselves in the hands of God as we grow in His grace and serve together.

Another quotation from *Testimonies*, volume 9: "We are not to seek to maintain a peculiar identity of our own, a personality, an individuality, which will separate us from our fellow laborers. We have a character to maintain, but it is the character of Christ. Having the character of Christ, we can carry on the work of God together. . . . Strive earnestly for unity. Pray for it, work for it" [pp. 187, 188].

In closing, my dear friends, I earnestly appeal to each of us to put away any animosity, any frustration, and unite in the Lord's entrusted mission for His church. Unity can come only as we lean completely on the Lord for His direct guidance in our lives and in connection with each other.

Now, at the end of this discussion and after this period of voting, may our hearts be softened through the Holy Spirit. May there not be anxious thoughts, independent action, agitation, but may we receive clear guidance from the Holy Spirit about how we can unite in the mission of the church.

May we earnestly ask that all concerned will seek the unity that Christ pleaded for in John 17.

Let's place ourselves in His hands.

I close with one of the most powerful messages in the Pauline epistles, Ephesians 4:1-6: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" [KJV].

We are one family. I plead with you. Let us, as we've been encouraged in the Spirit of Prophecy, press together, press together, press together. Let us unite. The mission of the church, entrusted to us by heaven itself.

Arise! Shine! Jesus is coming!

And I believe soon. I encourage you to unite by singing our theme song right now, "We Have This Hope."

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" [Jude 24, 25, KJV].

MICHAEL L. RYAN, *Chair*  
ROSA T. BANKS, *Secretary*  
R. J. KLOOSTERHUIS, NILTON D. AMORIM,  
and CLAUDE SABOT, *Proceedings Editors*

## Session Actions

*Sixtieth General Conference Session*  
*July 8, 2015, 2:00 p.m.*

### THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF MINISTERIAL ORDINATION

#### INTRODUCTION

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the gospel commission is addressed to all followers of Jesus Christ. As an expression of discipleship and engagement in the gospel commission, men and women have held important leadership roles in the life of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at all levels of denominational structure. Since the late 1960s, much attention has been focused on the role of women in leadership positions requiring ordination. Several General Conference-appointed commissions<sup>1</sup> as well as individual authors have studied this question from the standpoint of theology, ecclesiology and mission.

The General Conference Executive Committee voted in 1973 that continued study be given to the "theological soundness of the election of women to local church offices which require ordination . . . and that in areas receptive to such action, there be continued recognition of the appropriateness of appointing women to pastoral-evangelistic work . . ." <sup>2</sup> The 1974 Annual Council reaffirmed sections of the 1973 action and added its opinion that " . . . in the interest of world unity of the church, no move be made in the direction of ordaining women to the gospel ministry." <sup>3</sup>

General Conference Sessions have also expressed decisions regarding the role of women in church work. The 1985 Session urged that "'affirmative action' for the involvement of women in the work of the church be a priority . . . and to request leaders to use their executive influence to open to women all aspects of ministry in the church that do not require ordination." <sup>4</sup>

The 1990 Session, upon recommendation of the 1989 Annual Council, accepted a report and recommendations from the Role of Women Commission. In its report the Commission stated that it "does not have a consensus as to whether or not the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G. White explicitly advocate or deny the ordination of women to pastoral ministry . . . Further in view of the wide-spread lack of support for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry in the world church, and in view of the possible risk of disunity, dissension, and diversion from the mission of the church, we do not approve ordination of women to the gospel ministry." <sup>5</sup>

The 1995 Session denied a request from the North American Division that each division might be given "the right to authorize the ordination of individuals

within its territory in harmony with established policies. In addition, where circumstances do not render it inadvisable, a division may authorize the ordination of qualified individuals without regard to gender." <sup>6</sup>

During the 2010 General Conference Session a delegate requested an official Church study of ordination. In response to this request, General Conference administration informed the Session of its commitment "to establishing a process to review the subject of ordination and will report back to Annual Council during this quinquennium." <sup>7</sup>

Consequently the General Conference Administrative Committee suggested a process of study for the division Biblical Research Committees and appointed a Theology of Ordination Study Committee. Committee membership included more than 100 persons of both genders serving the Church as theologians, pastors, administrators and laypersons. As in previous commissions, the Theology of Ordination Study Committee did not arrive at a consensus regarding a biblical position or Ellen G. White's counsel on the matter of whether or not ministerial ordination should be gender inclusive. Diverse interpretations of Bible passages give rise to firm convictions in favor of or in opposition to the ordination of women to gospel ministry.

However, the commission did reach a high degree of accord concerning a biblical theology of ordination.<sup>8</sup> This statement summarizes several important aspects of ordination as practiced in the early Church and recorded in the New Testament. Two foundational concepts in this Statement are: 1) that "Seventh-day Adventists understand *ordination*, in a biblical sense, as the action of the Church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global Church ministry"; and 2) that "While ordination contributes to Church order, it neither conveys special qualities to the person nor introduces a kingly hierarchy within the faith community."

The proceedings of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee and division-appointed Biblical Research Committees provided opportunity for a global conversation in the Church regarding its understanding and practice of ordination. The Theology of Ordination Study Committee's report<sup>9</sup> was presented to the General Conference Executive Committee at the 2014 Annual Council. This report included theological and hermeneutical rationales for conclusions on both sides of the question. The Committee suggested three ways forward but did not make a consensus recommendation concerning the practice of ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Differing interpretations of the Bible on this matter and conscientious convictions based on those interpretations may be found in virtually all areas of the world. As a result, the question becomes one of how Church members will live in harmony and unity while acknowledging the presence of differing views on a variety of issues.

Recognizing the importance of this question with respect to understanding the Bible, the multinational and multicultural nature of the Church and its mission, and the biblical example<sup>10</sup> of addressing differences that do not directly involve fundamental beliefs, the General Conference Executive Committee chose to again call for guidance from the global Church. The decisions of the Church in a General Conference Session are recognized as the will of the Church. Ellen G. White affirmed this view as follows: "I have been shown that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any one man. But when the judgment of



the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered.”<sup>11</sup>

WHEREAS, The unity for which Jesus prayed is vitally important to the witness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and;

WHEREAS, The Seventh-day Adventist Church seeks to engage every member in its worldwide mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ among people from every nation, culture and ethnicity, and;

WHEREAS, Various groups appointed by the General Conference and its divisions have carefully studied the Bible and Ellen G White writings with respect to the ordination of women and have not arrived at consensus as to whether ministerial ordination for women is unilaterally affirmed or denied, and;

WHEREAS, The Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms that “God has ordained that the representatives of His Church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference Session, shall have authority”<sup>12</sup>,

THEREFORE, After prayerful study on ordination from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G White, and the reports of the study commissions, and;

After careful consideration of what is best for the Church and the fulfillment of its mission, it is

VOTED, To not allow division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry.

Yes: 977  
No: 1,381  
Abstain: 5

<sup>1</sup> Council on the Role of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Camp Mohaven, Danville, Ohio, September 16-19, 1973; Committee on Role of Women in the Church, Washington, DC, March 26-28, 1985; Commission on the Role of Women in the Church, Cohutta Springs, Georgia, July 12-18, 1989; Theology of Ordination Study Committee met four times in 2013-2014.

<sup>2</sup> 1973 Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee

<sup>3</sup> 1974 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee

<sup>4</sup> “Session Actions”, *Adventist Review*, July 11, 1985, p. 20

<sup>5</sup> “Session Actions”, *Adventist Review*, July 13, 1990, p. 15

<sup>6</sup> “Session Actions”, *Adventist Review*, July 11, 1995, p. 30

<sup>7</sup> In “Fourteenth Business Meeting” on July 2, 2010, *Adventist Review*, July 8-22, 2010 p. 34

<sup>8</sup> “Consensus Statement on the Theology of Ordination”, Theology of Ordination Study Committee Report, June 2014, p. 21-22

<sup>9</sup> The Theology of Ordination Study Committee report is available at: [www.adventistarchives.org/final-tosc-report.pdf](http://www.adventistarchives.org/final-tosc-report.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> See Acts chapter 15 on how the early church dealt with the tension regarding circumcision.

<sup>11</sup> Ellen G White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol 3, p. 492

<sup>12</sup> Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 18th edition, p. 18 quoting from Ellen G White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol 9, p. 261

Michael L Ryan, Chair  
Rosa T Banks, Secretary  
Myron A Iseminger, Actions Editor  
Wendy Trim, Recording Secretary

#### CORRECTION TO NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT #5

VOTED, To approve the following partial report of the Nominating Committee:

##### General Conference

Ministerial Association  
Associate Secretary:  
Jonas Arrais

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