

FOURTH BUSINESS MEETING

Sixty-first General Conference session, June 7, 2022, 9:15 a.m.

THOMAS L LEMON: So, good morning, fellow believers, fellow delegates. Were you blessed with the worship this morning? I was back behind the stage, and I was very blessed to hear my friend, Dwain Esmond, bring the Word to us. Dwain and I, when we get together at the office, which is not very often the last couple of years, we kind of just come together and immediately begin to pray for each other. It's a wonderful, wonderful experience that we have. As we begin today, I would just call your attention to, we know how the church is organized around the world, but sometimes I think we forget some of our institutions. It is my privilege not to forget Loma Linda University Health as an institution, as a facility, as a ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, because I get to chair their board. It's a great privilege and a great honor to do that. Loma Linda University Health is eight schools on the university side, six hospitals on the health care side, and I've asked Dr. Ron Carter, our provost on the university side, to come to the microphone and begin our business session this morning with prayer. Dr. Carter, microphone number 3.

[Prayer by Ron Carter]

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you Dr. Carter, and you may be seated. We are ready to move on to our agenda for the morning. Thank you for being here. Thank you for being here bright-eyed and eager to go to work. This morning we will be hearing a couple of major reports that I know you're going to be very interested to hear. We begin this morning with our Secretary's Report, and our Executive Secretary at the General Conference is Elder Erton C Kohler, and Elder Kohler, we're grateful for you and your team for being here this morning.

[A video was shown]

ERTON C KOHLER: Mission is what Secretariat is all about. We manage strategic information for mission. We coordinate processes for mission. We research how to improve the mission, and we recruit, prepare, send and care for people in mission. Our heart really beats for mission. Always understanding that we can't bring the whole world to Jesus, but together we can be used to bring Jesus to the whole world.

Our commitment to mission was greatly affected, challenged in 2020 and 2021. Due to the pandemic, many families suffered the loss of their loved ones. Isolation created all kinds of problems. The Church looked for new ways to take care of people, but despite all these challenges, our mission remained alive. We helped people in need. We used creativity and technology to share Bible studies. Our pastors took risks to baptize new believers. You can see on the screen an example of this commitment. I received this photo some months ago from the Amazon region. It shows the courage of our pastors and church members who see in every challenge an opportunity for mission.

In today's report, we will emphasize three main areas—data, that usually is a very important part of Secretariat; mission; and people. The strategic data we will look at is from the last six years, including 2020 and 2021, the most challenging years of the pandemic. We will also report how data was used in practical ways to impact the lives of people that God placed in our hands. But I need to say to each one of you delegates that our main priority is to connect data and people to mission.

As the remnant Church, we were called in this time so close to the end to fulfill an urgent mission. Ellen White reminds us that every day the probation of some is closing. Every hour some are passing beyond the reach of mercy. And where are the voices of warning and entreaty to bid the sinner flee from this fearful doom? Where are the hands stretched out to draw him back from death? Where are those who, with humility and persevering faith, are pleading with God for him? We can't afford to waste time. Opportunities do not come back either.

The inspired call is clear: Where are the voices? Where are the hands? Where are the advocates? As Secretariat, we commit ourselves to use all the resources in our hands to support the mission with the sense of urgency and efficiency, sharing our hope with boldness. As Paul indicates in II Corinthians, Chapter 3 and verse 12. "Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech." For this reason, we refer to the integration of all the organizations under the General Conference Secretariat as the Mission Family. That's our name, and this name shows our real priority.

Under this Mission Family, we have first, Secretariat. Secretariat is the area that takes care of all the technical aspects of the mission work. But we also have Adventist Mission. Adventist Mission is in charge of Global Mission and mission awareness. We also have the Institute of World Mission. This area of the Church trains the new missionaries as they go to their field and helps them reintegrate when they come back to their countries. We also have the Adventist Volunteer Service that coordinates the process of sending our volunteers to the world. We have IPRS. It may be very strange for you, but IPRS is our International Personnel Resources and Services. This area under the Mission Family takes care of the recruitment, sending, and care of our missionaries. We also have ASTR. This area is responsible for our archives to obtain statistics and to conduct research in the Church. We also have VividFaith, it's our new online system to advertise opportunities for mission. And we have, the last one, AMS. Adventist Membership Systems which coordinates ACMS, our global membership system.

Before the beginning of our integrated presentation involving all our mission family, I would like to express my appreciation to all my colleagues who are here on the stage today. Before I mention some of them, I would like to highlight to each one of you that we are here upon the shoulders of giants that led GC Secretariat before us. My first expression of gratitude is for someone that is together with us here on this stage, and I'd like to introduce him. Before him, I need to make special mention for Pastor G Ralph Thompson. Pastor G Ralph Thompson was GC Secretary for 20 years, from 1980 to 2000. He's not

able to be present today, but together with Linda, his daughter, he's watching this report in Maryland.

Thank you, Pastor Thompson for your great contribution for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

[Applause]

Thank you for your recognition for Pastor Thompson. It's my pleasure to also thank you, Pastor Matthew Bediako. He's together with us on the stage, and he's participating as a delegate in this Session. Pastor Bediako served as the General Conference Secretary for ten years from 2000 to 2010. My gratitude, Pastor Bediako, for your leadership.

But my special expression of gratitude is to Dr. G T Ng who was the Secretary of the General Conference for 11 years. Please, you can recognize him and he's together with us here on this stage. A major part of this report covers what happened under his leadership. He's very, very appreciated by all our Secretariat team, not only because he's a dynamic and cheerful speaker but also because he's a serious and focused leader. Thank you, Pastor G T for your great and strategic contribution for this Church.

And I'd also like to mention John Thomas. He's here on the stage with us. Until his retirement in 2020 he was a General Conference Associate Secretary. He had the responsibility of the Adventist Volunteer Service and then the African Desk, given his rich background on the African continent, and to him also my word of gratitude. But let me add my word of gratitude also to my colleagues from GC Secretariat and Mission Family and their staff. They are the ones that really produce the data. They are the ones that care for our people, and they are the ones that invest in mission. I am very thankful for their unlimited dedication for Secretariat and also for this Church. And finally, my gratitude is to the division executive secretaries who are also here on this stage together with us this morning and to their colleagues from unions and from the local fields.

In our report today we will share the brave work of all these individuals who work with data, with people, and live out the mission in the front line. Well, let us begin our journey now, our journey

through the GC Secretariat Report. You will hear much specific information today. But I'd like to invite you later to go to the *Adventist Review*, today's edition. Here you can find our written report. And we have here much additional information that we'll not present to you today, but we believe that both reports, what we will share with you today, and what you can see in this magazine, can be very important for you to create a very comprehensive view about what Secretariat did and is doing for this Church.

The first presenter today will be Dr. David Trim. He's the director of the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research, the organization that provides the strategic information to strengthen our mission. Welcome, Dr. Trim.

DAVID TRIM: Thank you, Pastor Kohler. As you heard, the Secretariat report is structured around the three themes of data, mission, and people. Now, my part of the report is, of course, entirely data. But it's also about mission and people because ASTR is also a place where the heart of mission beats. If we conceived of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's mission simply as outreach, then statistics show us that it would be flourishing.

This chart shows 18 years of data on accessions. That is the total of all the baptisms and professions of faith. 2004 was the first of 16 years in a row of one million plus accessions globally. But then came the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2019 to 2020, accessions declined by more than half a million, going down from 1.32 million to 800,000, which was the lowest global total of accession since 1997. In 2021, however, despite the ongoing effects of the pandemic, accessions increased by more than 200,000 so that they once again topped one million. This included 230,970 rebaptisms of people who had been members, had left the church, but have been restored. Some divisions have dedicated programs in place for reclaiming former members, and we hope that all divisions will emulate their example. In all, a total of 1,069,234 people were added to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2021.

We praise God for this rebound in Adventist outreach and acknowledge the role of our pastors and members in achieving it. If, however, we conceived of the Church's mission as keeping as well as adding members, then the Adventist Church faces a challenge, for we experience significant, heavy losses, and we know that there will be more to come as membership audits, which we are now calling membership reviews, are implemented around the world. This chart shows annual membership changes over the last five years, the changes of different types each year for 2017 through 2021. The lines of green dots show the net accessions for each year. And despite the last two years of pandemic, in the five years represented by this chart, 5.9 million people were added to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The black dots represent the number of deaths. The lines of purple dots represent living losses. That is the net total of persons dropped from membership, missing members, and what are called negative adjustments, which is a category often used for the results of membership reviews.

As you can see, the downward purple line in 2019 is particularly steep. This was the first ever year in which there were more than one million living losses. Accessions, deaths, and losses together affect church growth. As a result of their interplay, the Church's reported membership at the end of last year was some 21.91 million. Yet even though during the five years illustrated by the chart on the screen 3.6 million people left the church, even this has positive implications for mission. For in certain parts of the world Church leaders now have an accurate sense of their membership, and that means they can plan better both for outreach and for nurture and retention. And that means in turn that both outreach and inreach can be done more effectively and impactfully.

Church growth is one sign of successful mission, but we often think of church growth only in terms of congregations or church members, whereas, as the Adventist Church grows; so, too, do its numbers of organizations and institutions. Now, by organizations, I mean local conferences and missions and the different kinds of unions.

The slide on the screen shows the growth in these organizations over the last 50 years, and I show 50 years because it provides valuable perspective. You will see that from 75 union conferences and union missions in 1970, unions have grown adding two more kinds of unions to a total of 138 unions in 2020, an increase of 54 percent. When it comes to the local conference or mission, growth has been rather more dramatic, rising from 379 in 1970 to 731 missions and conferences at the end of 2020, a growth rate of 93 percent. Since 2015, conferences and missions have increased by 76, or 11 percent, while three new unions have been added.

Now, there are some church members who see the increase in the number of organizations and view it as evidence of the church becoming more bureaucratic and thus as being a bad thing for the Church's mission. But in many parts of the world, new conferences and missions empower growth. These organizations provide leadership that is close to the local church and therefore responsive to both challenges and opportunities. And they also provide training, resourcing, and equipping of local church members. Unions train and equip conference and mission leaders and provide regional direction. The growth of organizations in Latin America and Africa in particular is associated with dramatic growth rates in congregations and membership in those regions. An increase in the number of organizations can thus be a good thing for mission. Furthermore, as the church grows numerically and expands into regions where once it had no or minimal presence, the number of organizations is bound to grow, serving the increasing and spreading population of Seventh-day Adventists.

Another way in which the Adventist Church has grown in the last 50 years is in numbers of institutions. And the slide on the screen now shows the growth since 1970 in the numbers of educational institutions, broken down into the three categories of primary or elementary schools shown in blue, secondary schools shown in green, and colleges or universities shown in gold. While tertiary institutions have only increased a fraction over the last half century, primary schools have increased by

64 percent, and high schools by 570 percent. Schools are a vital engine for church growth in many parts of the world; so, this is an important positive trend.

What of medical institutions? And this slide shows all kinds of medical institutions which have grown since 1970 from 329 to 1,976. While the spike you see in 2020 is artificial because it's simply that we had greatly improved reporting from the fields in that year, the overall increase in the last 50 years is profound, representing growth of exactly 500 percent. This chart compares the overall growth in both educational and medical institutions over the last 50 years.

How has the Church's workforce grown? This next slide shows the increase in the Church's core group of workers, its pastors. In 1970, the Church had 13,870 pastors worldwide. At the end of 2020 there were 33,530 pastors, an increase of 142 percent. As we think in the Secretariat report about people, these pastoral people fulfilling their divinely called vocation to ministry are crucial to the mission of the Church.

In contrast to pastors, the total of all other employees increased by 159 percent in the last half century. This is more than the growth rate in the number of pastors, and it highlights that as the Church grows, it faces the danger of institutionalization, which tends to be harmful to mission. Yet the difference in the two growth rates is relatively small across a period of 50 years, which suggests that institutionalization is not currently as much of a challenge as some members and leaders may fear, though it is something we need to be on guard against. And it must be remembered, too, that our 75,000 teachers in schools and colleges are almost like pastors, for in many places, schools drive dynamic church growth. Also, important to note is that as this next slide shows, the total number of pastors and the number of members have increased in step with each other. More pastors would always be welcome, but the total pastoral workforce appears to be increasing appropriately.

In conclusion, as we look back over the last quinquennium in perspective of the last half century, the fundamental impression is of a growing church. This is grounds neither for self-congratulation nor

for complacency. There are trends we need to be aware of, and there are areas in which we can and need to do better. But the data shows us how God has led and prospered the efforts of his people in mission. The data I have shared is crucial for strategic planning, and next you will hear from GC Undersecretary Hensley Mooroooven about Secretariat's strategic plan.

[Applause]

HENSLEY M MOOROOVEN: Thank you very much, Brother David. This was for you, Brother David, not for me. Esteemed delegates, I am here to tell you that by God's grace, Secretariat is not flying blind. By God's grace, we have a clear North Star. Due to this constantly shifting environment, Secretariat has adopted an agile strategic planning approach. This helps us to be proactive. This helps us to be forward thinking in what we do.

The General Conference Secretariat office has intentionally taken the "I Will Go" strategic plan of the world Church and, customizing it to what we do in Secretariat, focusing mainly on the objective of leadership. Based on input that we have received from the world Secretariats, we have come up with seven key strategic issues with their corresponding KPIs that we are focusing on. I would like to share with you these seven key strategic issues that we have identified.

Key strategic issue number one. It's about Mission Strategies. Secretariat does not want to be bogged down in the minutia of bureaucracy, therefore relegating mission to a secondary level. We don't want that. You have heard and you will hear. Secretariat is where the heart of mission beats.

Someone said that a missionary is someone who leaves their family for a short time so that others may be with their family for eternity. Isn't it a good definition of who a missionary is? Because of the importance of a missionary, we have identified the number two, which is Improving the Call Process, and number three, Caring for Missionaries who are in the field.

Nurture and Retention is number four. We don't want to baptize only. We want them to remain in the Church and to become disciples. Number five. Membership Audit. This may sound clinical. But as

you have heard and you will hear, we want to adopt here a redemptive approach to reviewing membership.

Number six. Training and Evaluation. Someone said that if the only tool you have is a hammer, you will be tempted to see everything and everyone as a nail. Therefore, we are intentional in equipping and training our Secretariat officers worldwide. And finally, number seven, Working Policy. You have heard and you will hear that policy is here to serve the mission. In this report we will focus on two of these key strategic issues. And I will invite my colleague, Claude Richli, who is an Associate Secretary at the General Conference, to emphasize one of them. Thank you.

[Applause]

CLAUDE RICHLI: One of the key strategic components and issues is that of enhancing the transparency, accountability, and credibility of our denominational entities throughout the world field. This includes an evaluation instrument and an onsite visit conducted together with our division counterparts in the local unions. We call this Secretariat Nurture and Evaluation. The nurture component gives the opportunity for executive secretaries from adjoining fields to join in the evaluation component so that they can observe and learn all the facets of their responsibility.

The evaluation component happens through an anonymous questionnaire to give feedback as well as interviews with the office personnel and the officers of the entity. And this is followed by a review of the files and records and processes. We also ensure that there is adequate protection for our documents in the archives to prevent loss.

Beginning in 2017 we conducted 67 onsite visits until the pandemic shut us down. Many more were conducted throughout the local field by our division counterparts. This program has contributed over the years to a great improvement of our standards. Listen to Stella Drah from the West-Central Africa Division.

[A video was shown.]

I am deeply impressed by the level of professionalism that we have observed throughout the world field. Whether you are in Europe, in South, Inter-America, or North America, in Africa, or in Asia, you can rest assured that your Secretariat office operates at the highest level of professionalism and dedication. And I want to take this opportunity on behalf of General Conference Secretariat to thank the approximately 1,500 executive secretaries, their associates, their assistants, and their administrative assistants for their commitment to mission, for their heart truly beats for mission. We will now come to another key component of the work of Secretariat, and this will be presented to you by Gerson Santos from our office.

[Applause]

GERSON SANTOS: The Church's strategic plan, "I will go," reflects several issues related to the need to strengthen pastoral care, spiritual growth, and discipleship. Many local churches lack robust mechanisms for member care, especially for those at risk of leaving the Church. Secretariat is committed to providing data to support the people. Achieving higher effectiveness in mission requires formulating new methodologies. The South Pacific Division is one example of aligned structure and finances, to the vision of creating a disciple-making, church-planting movement, a commitment to following Jesus' method to make disciples in relational groups focusing on self-discovery.

In April of 2019 the Nurture and Retention Committee of the General Conference organized a summit to present practical suggestions for developing a simple discipleship program to promote pastoral care and prevent membership loss. After the event, the committee published a book to preserve the summit content and share best practices. In Luke 15 Jesus emphasized the need to care for people. When one percent is lost, the Good Shepherd searches tirelessly until the lost sheep is found. So, if there had been but one lost soul, Christ would have died for that one.

The Inter-American Division provides a good example of intentionality, seeking those members who left the Church and reclaiming them back to the fold. Data provided by membership review can

identify shortcomings in the discipleship process and assess current reality and performance. The South American Division has a fascinating approach to membership care. Church clerks help in the process of cataloging all the members and developing a reclaiming strategy and pastoral care in conjunction with elders, pastors, and church members. The three parables of Luke 15 have a common thread— the imperative and urgent searching for the lost. In the parable of the Lost Sheep, the shepherd, who discovered that one of his sheep is missing, counts and recounts the flock. He leaves the 99 within the fold and goes and searches for the straying sheep. He makes every effort to find that one lost sheep.

We should have in mind that numbers do matter. Counting is essential. It helps to see people behind the numbers. Accurate data provides excellent performance indicators for mission efficiency and pastoral care, and people caring for people. Now, the question for us would be, do you have, in your local church, do you have a disciple-making process to reach out, to assimilate, to equip, and to send disciples in your community? If you do, I have a second question for you. Is it working? And if you tell me yes, I would ask, how do you know it? Tell me your story.

Following this approach, we can expect that multitudes will receive the faith and join the armies of the Lord. Many who have strayed from the fold will come back to follow the Great Shepherd. Our task is to announce salvation through Jesus Christ because there is no other name by which we must be saved. That's where the heart of mission the beats. Next, you will hear from Karen Porter how to refocus mission resources and support our missionary families.

[Applause]

KAREN J PORTER: Friends, every beating heart is a soul that needs Jesus. Did you hear that? Every beating heart is a soul that needs Jesus. Missionaries still hear God's call to take the message of salvation to every corner of the world. Since last General Conference Session, 528 missionaries left their homeland to serve abroad. During the pandemic, we saw God working miracles to facilitate visas, work permits, and travel arrangements, in spite of the lockdowns.

There are presently 367 families serving around the globe. These families come from 66 countries and from every division of our Church. The top three sending divisions are the North American Division, the South American Division, and the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. The 360 families are serving in 82 different countries of the world.

Mission Reset. The General Conference Mission Board recently voted to use six criteria to allocate budgets funded by the General Conference so that in five years, 35 percent of budgets would meet these criteria and in ten years, 70 percent. These criteria are, direct contact mission with the goal of creating new worshiping groups, 10/40 Window countries and people groups of non-Christian religions, urban areas of more than one million in population, post-modern/post-Christian countries and regions, low Adventist-to-population ratio in countries, regions, or people groups, and lastly, high impact equipping for direct-contact mission.

In closing, listen to this short video. It reminds us of the sacrifices of our early missionaries and calls us to refocus our resources and revive our hearts so they will beat with God's heart for the mission. Directly following the video, Oscar Osindo, Director of the Institute of World Mission, will share how the Church trains its missionaries to better serve cross culturally.

[Applause]

[A video was shown.]

OSCAR OSINDO: Thank you, Sister Karen Porter, for the excellent care of our missionaries. The Institute of World Mission is also where the heart of mission beats. My dear delegates, we prepared a video that details how the Institute of World Mission helps the world Church to orient, nurture, and debrief missionaries upon their return.

[A video was shown.]

I wish to invite pastor Elbert Kuhn, an Associate Secretary of the General Conference, and also in charge of the Adventist Volunteer Service, to come and share more about preparation and training of missionaries.

[Applause]

ELBERT KUHN: Thank you, Dr. Oscar. The "I Will Go" theme now used by the Church was born in the heart of a couple of volunteers. Sharing Jesus with people is what the Adventist Volunteer program is all about. Let me share with you a story that represents it all.

[A video was shown.]

FYLVIA KLINE: The heart of our Church beats with mission stories, stories that inspire others to also go and serve, but we know that being a missionary is not limited to getting on a plane or serving in a foreign land. Service happens in all sorts of places, a family overseas, a student taking a break, a journalist in a secular setting, or friends cleaning a city park. No matter how big or small the job, we need one place to advertise all our needs. The place is VividFaith. No matter what the vacancy is, we need a process that empowers personnel and increases productivity. That process is VividFaith. And sometimes we need innovative methods during times such as the pandemic. For that, there's VividFaith. Here is one such story.

[A video was shown.]

As in Uzbekistan, many have yet to witness our faith. To tell us more is Gary Krause, Director of Adventist Mission.

[Applause]

GARY KRAUSE: Thank you, Fylvia, my next-door neighbor in the GC office. The Office of Adventist Mission is privileged to be able to work with every entity in the Mission Family to keep that heartbeat on mission going. The Office of Adventist Mission has two key functions, Global Mission and mission awareness. Let's look at Global Mission first.

Global Mission's task is simple, but it's challenging, and that is to start new groups of believers in unentered areas and unentered people groups. And the front-line church planters of Global Mission are Global Mission Pioneers. They just receive a small living stipend and as much as possible they work among their own people and cultural group, and they have one task, to follow Christ's incarnational method of ministry to plant new groups of believers. They follow Jesus' method of ministry.

[A video was shown.]

Since the last GC Session these unsung heroes have planted thousands of new churches in new areas. One of the major challenges we face, of course, is the 10/40 Window which stretches from northwest Africa through the Middle East and into Asia, and that's where the majority of the world's population live and the fewest Christians. In fact, we have one Adventist for every 136 people outside the window, but inside the window we have one Adventist for nearly 2,000 people. So, you can see the challenge that we're facing.

Another challenge we face are the growing cities of the world. They are our new mission field. And it's through church planting and urban centers of influence that our mission in the cities will go forward.

[A video was shown.]

Another major mission challenge that we face is sharing the good news of Jesus with people who adhere to the great world religions, the big, different belief systems and nonbelief systems. And leading the way are our six Global Mission centers. And since the last GC Session, our centers have been helping divisions in planting new groups of believers and developing new methods and methodologies. We also have the Global Mission Total Employment/Tent Maker program. The Tent Maker program is where we recruit, train, and support church members who find their own jobs in territories where missionaries cannot go, and their task is not just to earn a salary, but to share the good news.

And then finally we have our new Global Mission Priority System, which is helping to revolutionize the way that we conduct our mission.

[A video was shown.]

So that's a quick look at Global Mission. And now the second aspect of Adventist Mission, mission awareness, will be shown in this next video as we look at how mission offerings are supporting mission around the world.

[A video was shown.]

[Applause]

ERTON C KOHLER: Missionaries are needed locally and globally. At Secretariat, we are working hard to send more missionaries to the non-entered areas of this world, and especially to transform regions that are consumers of mission resources into contributors to the global mission. We are investing our best efforts in focusing on a mission reset because we believe that the Lord's work is to widen and broaden until it encircles the world. Our great heart strongly beats for our renewed missionary movement.

Dear delegates and everybody that's connected with us right now, this is our Secretariat report, brought to you in a unified way because we believe that united we are always stronger, united we arrive faster, and united we go further, or like a well-known African saying goes, a united flock makes the lion sleep hungry. We rely on the inspired recommendation of Ellen White who says that together, together, together they are to carry the work forward to completion. For this reason, representing the leadership of the Secretariat and the Mission Family at all levels, and highlighting our unity, I have here with me Kyoshin Ahn, the Executive Secretary of the North American Division, Emmanuel Mwewa, Executive Secretary of the North Zambia Union of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, Neven Klacmer, the Executive Secretary of the Croatian Conference in the Trans-European Division. And representing our front-line missionaries I have here Jocelyn Gayares. She is serving as a physician in Nepal, in the

Southern Asia Division; Nikhil Roy, one of our Global Mission Pioneers serving right now in Mauritius, in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, and Rachel Kiona Costello, who serves as a volunteer in Timor Leste, in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. With all our hearts beating together for mission, Pastor Chair, I would like to move the acceptance of this Secretariat integrated report.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you, Elder Kohler. It has been supported and the motion is before us. I'm looking for people who may wish to speak. Maybe you are so inspired that you can't speak. Frankly, I want to say, Elder Kohler, from my heart, as one of the members of this great movement around the world, thank you for your report, and thank you for the work of our missionaries. You know, in our travels we do get to interface with people who are engaged doing this kind of work, and it is always, always thrilling. Okay, at microphone number 5, Dennis Matekenya. Please, Brother Matekenya.

DENNIS MATEKENYA: Thank you for the data based report that we received. I have a few questions that I wish to put forward. First, we have been given the accessions and the losses, but what we have not been given are the key drivers of those accessions and losses. It will be important for this forum to know what it is that is causing that.

Number two, we have been shown the growth of the learning institutions from tertiary, secondary, and primary schools. What we have not been shown is whether we have any losses. Do we have any closures of Adventist institutions of education, and what are the statistics like?

We have also been given the exponential growth of Africa and Latin America. I would love to hear if there are any reasons for this kind of growth. Hopefully other regions of the world can learn and replicate those drivers. And we have also seen, in the last five years, a 500 percent increase in the institutions of health. What we have not been told is what has caused this 500 percent increase in the institutions of health. And finally, we have seen a kind of correlation between numbers of pastors and numbers of church members. What I would love to know is which one is a predictor, and which one is a

responder? Is it the pastors that increase membership or the membership that is creating more pastors?

Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you, Brother Matekenya. Did you want to speak to that, Brother Kohler?

ERTON C KOHLER: Thank you, brother. Thank you for your comments and your questions. I'm not sure that we'd be able to cover all the questions because there were many. But as all those questions are related to data in the report presented by Dr. Trim, I would like him to respond to as many questions as possible that were raised by the delegate. Please, Dr. Trim.

DAVID TRIM: Brother Chairman, thank you Pastor Kohler, and thank you to my brother for his good questions, which show that he was paying avid attention, so that's gratifying. I had ten minutes, so all I could really do was sketch out some broad trends. To answer the five questions, it would take longer than my original report. I think, when it comes to why the accessions are increasing, it's a good question. It would require research. I think on the face of it, a good explanation would be that we are doing our mission effectively. That's going to be different in different parts of the world. In some places, it's going to be heavily based on public evangelism and other places it's going to be based on small group ministry and personal ministry, and centers of influence. The question about education is a good one. Unquestionably, there have been closures of schools, but again, I am sketching out a 50-year trend, and what we can see is the number of closures of schools, of primary and secondary schools, has been greatly exceeded by the number of new schools opening and by the numbers of pupils. I didn't have time to go into that, but the number of pupils at Adventist schools has also increased. I think, Brother Chairman, that's probably as much as I can do justice to in the time available.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Going to microphone number 8, Mahase Ragoonath. I'm sorry I don't say it any better. Microphone number 8, please.

MAHASE RAGOONATH: Mr. Chairman, it's pronounced Mahase. It means more speed, Mr. Chairman. Thank you so much. Mr. Chairman, the education statistic shows that there's a growth. The growth of the secondary and primary schools has increased significantly. However, Mr. Chairman, your strategic issue over the next couple years is in regard to policy, Mr. Chairman. The challenge that we face in the Caribbean Union, Mr. Chair, is that we have more schools, and the policy only advocates for us to use a certain amount of the tithe funds for education, Mr. Chair. We have tried, Mr. Chairman, to go church—sorry—the church being in the Adventist Church—and state to help us with the education. We also considered closing some of our schools. Is there a possibility, Mr. Chairman, that the General Conference could look at this particular policy, either some level of adjustment, Mr. Chairman, to compensate for us to spend more money in our schools? Or else we would have a decrease, Mr. Chairman, because we cannot fund the schools from non-tithe funds.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman. I have 44 seconds. I may not be able to go to the second question. While I listened to all the data that you have presented, coming from an individual, Mr. Chairman, I noticed the Church is not doing anything in the environment, Mr. Chairman. While we are great in missionary, and while we are great in everything else, we must stand out, Mr. Chairman, with regard to the environment. In 22 seconds, while the Church has placed a statement, there is nothing in the Fundamental Beliefs, Mr. Chairman, there is nothing I saw in ADRA, there is nothing I saw in Stewardship, in regard to the environment, in which we should have some data. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you very much, Brother Mahase. I'll try to get that name right. Good questions, interesting questions, I don't want if you want to respond, Brother Kohler.

ERTON C KOHLER: Pastor Chair, I think that both questions are not related to Secretariat. Both of them are very important, demonstrate the interests of the Church in that region, to grow in education, a

little bit more in environment, and I think that we can receive it as a suggestion, but we can't report anything, we can't add any other information to the comments that we received right now.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Move to microphone number 5. Tafadzwa Gondo. I might say, please stay close to your microphones. We are running behind on our schedule, and we need to have, really what we call in the business, no dead air.

TAFADZWA GONDO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the report from Secretariat. I just want to focus on the Institute of World Missionaries. My concern is it seems this only focus is on ISEs, yet we've got two types of missionaries, ISEs and IUEs. I was in a situation where I served as an IUE, and I went into the mission field without being prepared. I had to retreat backwards. So, I'm kindly asking if Secretariat can ensure that the program for IWM is also promoted in divisions and unions. Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you very much. I appreciate the suggestion. We move then to the English Zoom, Asher Illyas Khan, Pakistan Union Section.

ASHER ILLYAS KHAN: Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I just want to compliment on this report, which is presented by the Secretariat team. It was an excellent report. Even though they have tried to cover all the areas and they have given us a statistical report in a very beautiful way, the best thing which I would like to compliment, the three things are transparency, accountability, and credibility. So, thank you so much for reminding us that we, as a Secretariat, working in different unions, different sections, and different countries, we need to be really transparent, we need to be accountable, and then we need to have what you call accountability as well. So, after seeing all the statistical data, even though there were so many questions related to education, Adventist Mission; even though Secretariat work is only to collect the statistical report, but still this department has done a marvelous job to gather all the information from different departments, put it on a graphical form, so that we all can know what GC Secretariat team is doing all over the world. So, Mr. Chair, I want to commend Elder Kohler and his team. That they have done a very marvelous job, and we are looking forward to getting

more trainings from these leaders from GC, leaders from other divisions as well, so that we can also have this type of training and we can prepare reports like this as well. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you so very much. We go to microphone number 2, and Martin Altink from the North German Union Conference, Inter-European Division.

MATIN ALTINK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We just heard a nice report from Dr. David Trim. Thank you very much for that, and you showed us, or one of the things you showed us was a chart on the growth of members and pastors, and you commented on this, that this was in line with each other on a worldwide basis. My question here would be if this can be broken down into the divisions, and if there would be a remarkable difference in this area.

DAVID TRIM: Brother Chairman, thank you to Martin for his good question. If we were to look at the number of pastors per member, it would be very different in different divisions. But we're looking at the trend in terms of the increase of members and pastors. In there, there would be some difference in divisions, but the difference would not be so great. I realize incidentally coming back to the first question that this chart that I showed begs itself a number of questions. Perhaps I can come back to that in a future Annual Council report, but I do think it was interesting data, and that was why I wanted to share it. I hope that answers the good question.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you very much. We'll move to Kayle De Waal, Trans-European Division, please.

KAYLE DE WAAL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to Elder Kohler for that very good presentation. It's my conviction, I think with many others, that structure ought to be subservient to mission. That structure is there to enhance, enrich, and expand mission. And as we've listened to the presentation today, we've looked from 1970 to the present, I wonder what the church is doing in terms of thinking strategically into the next five, the next ten. We want Jesus to come back, yes we do. The next 15 years, the next 20 years. Will our current structure maintain the growth of the church?

Secondly, the financial resources that we put into maintaining the structure, versus the financial resources we put into mission. What's the correlation between those two? If indeed, structure should be subservient to mission, because I believe if we structure correctly, we can actually enhance our mission capability. Mission disruption should be something we need to consider as a church. Disruption, of course, is evident in every sphere of our current milieu. And one of the ways in which mission can be disrupted, in my perspective at least, is to look at what we are doing in terms of our structure. And so, it's a fair question, I guess, a philosophical question now. I just want a response, in terms of where are we heading in the future, in terms of structure and mission, and the financial contribution we make to both of those? I'd be interested in your response. Thank you.

ERTON C KOHLER: Thank you. Thank you very much. I don't know if I can respond to everything that you asked because it does not depend on Secretariat exclusively. But we are part of this discussion. I'd like to repeat for many people when we have training sessions and others, that we are not the leaders of an organization. We are the leaders of the mission, and the organization is something that God gave us to serve the mission, to be used to fulfill the mission. And in some places, or sometimes, people are focusing on the structure and not on the mission. It's wrong. It's not the way that God indicated to us. We are leaders of the mission. Everything that we need to do needs to focus on mission— priorities, resources, material, human resources, and everything—mission, mission, mission. And the structure, we need to evaluate from time to time, to check if the structure is serving the mission or if the structure is killing the mission. And I think that's a task that's in the hands of the leadership of the Church. Secretariat is part of this discussion.

We are discussing, as General Conference leaders, what we can do to reorganize our structure at the General Conference level, at the division levels, and in other levels of the Church, to keep the structure. It's part of our philosophy, our identity. We need to keep the structure, but we need to evaluate what we can do to be more efficient. We recognize that in every area of the world, the

structure has a different impact. In some areas of the world, a small structure can be very effective. In other areas of the world, we need a strong structure to help to coordinate the work of the Church. For this reason, we can't find a medicine that can be good for everybody at the same time. But I would like to repeat, I believe that we are called to be leaders of a mission, and the structure need to be at the service of this mission. And it could be reevaluated and respecting the limits that we have in our philosophy, in the message, in the identity of this Church. It is all that I can share with you now. And I think that as leaders of the Church, we can get your comments as a suggestion to spend a little bit more time discussing these subjects, to find the best ways to manage the structure at the service of the mission.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. I need to share with you we have nine speakers in queue, and I would really like to urge if your speech has been made by someone else, as much as we want to hear your voice, we really need the time. Secondly, we would like to limit the number of people speaking to those in the queue if at all possible. Okay, so, we'll move to Lynn Lukwaro in the Gulf Field on English Zoom.

LYNN LUKWARO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a simple request. We heard from the Secretariat's report, that the South American Division and the Inter-American Division have a good strategy for reclaiming lost members. Is that something that can be shared for the rest of the divisions and areas? That's all the question I have. Thank you.

ERTON C KOHLER: Yes. We can share. We can share with all the division secretaries, and they can use the Church channels to share with the front-line workers.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Move to microphone number 5, Daniel Jennah, the Central Malagasy Conference, Southern-Africa Indian Ocean Conference.

DANIEL JENNAH: Thank you, Brother Chairman. I think there's an error, I'm not from Malagasy but from the Reunion Conference, but in the same union. I guess it is difficult for the Secretariat to be

exhaustive on all actions in every field of the 13 divisions, but we are on the report of the Secretariat, and I want to appreciate the mission focus of this report and the work of the Secretariat. I considered it to be one of the two faces of Elder Moorrooven's special coin he presented yesterday. It was quite innovative, and I think it's the first time that we listened to, or we have seen a report in that frame. My suggestion, Mr. Chair, is that we put it in the phrasing of the motion. Just to show the specificity of this new way of making a focused, a mission-focused report. And as I have a few seconds, second suggestion in the same report, our brother Kohler has presented a number of people who have been serving, long term services. Going to Elder Ralph Thompson and to the new ones who are here, I suggest that we take a special vote of thanks in this session to express our gratitude for all these brothers and sisters who have been serving on a very long term for this worldwide Church. Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you very much. We'll move on to microphone number 7 and Jesse Zwiker of the General Conference.

JESSE ZWIKER: Thank you Mr. Chair. I appreciate hearing the report very much, and seeing how many missionaries are going out, and working for God fulltime. I have a big burden for getting more young people working for God full-time. I'm a little bit, you know, saddened sometimes because it's just a few hundred that we have. Being personally from Switzerland, I moved to the United States, but my big experience was when I went from Switzerland to Honduras to work as a fulltime missionary, and that transformed my life. I'm here to ask, how can we help increase the number of full-time missionaries working in the field? I'm an entrepreneur, actually, a missional entrepreneur, to be specific. I represent a movement called Hive where we have a couple thousand missional entrepreneurs trying to share the gospel in a fulltime manner. I realize that we do a lot of what we do, encouraging our lay people to simply do mission work in their free time, and free-time evangelism to me will only go so far. You know, I believe we need to move from free time to full-time, and we need to facilitate that development. I'm hoping that we can work something, so that from the second, from General Conference, from all of the

supporting ministries and all these other entities that are working, that we can work together to really get more people, especially the laypeople which is 99 percent of our church membership, to get full-time involved in the work of the Church. Amen. Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Your time is done.

ERTON C KOHLER: Amen. Thank you. Thank you for your very dynamic comments. I need to say to you that we are on the same page. When you have heard about VividFaith, VividFaith is a digital system that we prepared to facilitate the way for the young people to be volunteers and missionaries. Everybody in every place can access VividFaith, can find opportunities, can apply, and can be sent to the missionary field. This is one way that we are working to facilitate. The second one is a challenge for us. Our numbers indicate that we have more volunteers, more young people interested than opportunities for mission. We need more organizations, more institutions, more local churches opening opportunities, posting it in VividFaith, working through the local conference, local union, the local division, post it in VividFaith, and open doors for all the army of young people that are interested to go to be volunteers and to be missionaries. We are ready to send, the young people are ready to go, but we need to open more opportunities to welcome them as part of our mission.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. We'll move to microphone number 5, Ellsworth Baxen from the Mauritius Conference, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division. Please.

ELLSWORTH BAXEN: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My comments revolve around our membership accessions and our membership losses. We do know that this has been a challenge for a long time within the world Church. We put a lot of resources, a lot of finances into evangelism, which is a good thing, and I commend that. However, I don't see that enough focus and attention has been placed on discipleship, on member retention, and I believe that relates directly to discipleship. I know that there are items coming up that address the issues and the challenges that we are facing with regards to discipleship. My question is, is enough being done? Because if we continue to do what we've

always done, we will continue to get what we've always got. We've got to make sure that for our members we put more folks into discipleship. So, my question is, Mr. Chair, based on the good Secretary's Report, have we analyzed the reason why our membership losses are as high as they are currently, particularly in the year 2019? Thank you very much.

ERTON C KOHLER: May I, Mr. Chair?

THOMAS L LEMON: Please.

ERTON C KOHLER: Well, we have a wide number of reasons why people leave the Church, and we cannot discuss each one of them here, but we are evaluating. Pastor Santos presented here some report about it. We have a committee working on that. When our delegates ask if we are doing our maximum, our best, I really can say, we can do more. At the General Conference level, we can do more. In every division, we can do more. And especially in every local church where everything happens, we can do more to disciple people. And my third and last comment is that I believe that we can't decrease the emphasis on the mission to increase the emphasis on discipleship because mission is discipleship. We need to strengthen our emphasis and our motivation and our investment on mission, but without forgetting our need to care for the people that we are welcoming in our Church.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. We'll move again. I would like to say, we do not need to add more people to our lines. We'll go to microphone number 4 with Kimutai Tanui, Greater Rift Valley Conference.

KIMUTAI TANUI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My contribution is on the side of what I saw in the report. Adventist Church Management System, a very new and conventional way of taking care of membership in our Church. Actually, when it came to West Kenya Union and our conferences, it has done wonders. I was expecting to hear more about it to know how many countries have used it, and where it has not been used, so that we can encourage all our territories to use ACMS through the same

forum. Because it is so conventional, I can have all my membership on my desk, as an executive secretary. Thank you so much.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Thank you so much.

ERTON C KOHLER: Really, ACMS is a wonderful technological tool that the Church has. We have a coordinator for this project, for this system, that is Sherri Ingram. She's part of our team. She's not here with us, but we didn't present a report related to this topic, because it is a very sensitive topic. It's something the Church protects, as a result of a lot of different local laws related to data protection, and for this reason we have ACMS. We are increasing our presence. We have more than 50 percent of our membership inside of ACMS, but we don't discuss it publicly respecting the laws that we have in different countries, but the church is improving the work in this area.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Move to mic number 5, Edison Samraj, Southern Asia Division, and if you don't need your two minutes, please don't take it.

EDISON SAMRAJ: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is my privilege to listen to this report presented by the General Conference Secretary. I am thankful to him for the focus on missions, and for the comprehensiveness of the Secretariat to present this very important report. My question is to Elder Kohler and to Dr. David Trim. The first question is regarding the structure and function that Elder Kohler had mentioned. And he was right in saying that, as long as the Church function is promoted, then the structure survives. And he also mentioned that the structure must perform its function, otherwise it becomes obsolete.

You will probably well know that the Russian state used the two words of perestroika and glasnost for restructuring Russia. Is the Church having perestroika and glasnost as its guiding principles for restructuring the function and the structure of the Church? That's my first question. To Elder Trim, my question is, how is data validated at the General Conference level? What is the process? What is the protocol? and what is the procedure? How do you end up with a validation process? Thank you.

ERTON C KOHLER: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you for the suggestion about these two words. We usually don't use these kinds of words and these kinds of international suggestions as guidelines for our work as a church. We have other principles that we follow based on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, and some secular tools that can be very helpful for us, too. But the Church is always reevaluating our structure to be at the service of the mission. We don't do revolutions in the structure because the Church is a giant that moves slowly but remains on its feet. We need to remember it. We cannot change everything from today to tomorrow, because we have principles. We need to follow process, we have committees. It sometimes is boring for many people, but it guarantees that we can be in the right way. I can't guarantee to you only that we are evaluating, we are taking care of all the suggestions, and we are looking for the best ways to use the structure at the service of the mission.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. I'm looking to the body for a little help here. We are way out of time. If I take three more speeches, will that be sufficient? We have many more than that in line. Okay. I'm not hearing a lot of negative response in that, so we'll move to Seth Osei-Afriyie from South Central Ghana Conference, West Africa Division. This is English Zoom.

SETH OSEI-AFRIYIE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to appreciate what a team the Secretariat has done as a human job. But I want to ask a question on the group of healthcare facilities, and also our educational facilities. We can see that the group is [Undiscernible] but what we are not sure is in students and the percentage of Adventists attending our facilities. If where they build our schools whether even our Adventists are unable to attend. Same thing on health facilities. What is the percentage of Adventists, doctors, nurses, and health workers that are working in these facilities. This is my humble question.

DAVID TRIM: Brother Chairman, the answer about our schools is that the majority of our students are Adventists; it does vary somewhat by division. There are some divisions which have very high percentages of non-Adventist students, and there are some divisions where it varies according to

whether it's a primary school, secondary school, or university. On hospitals and the percentage of Adventist doctors and nurses, I think it's well known that that percentage is generally very low. There are some divisions where the percentages are higher, there are some where it's lower, but I think that's not a radical development. It's been known for some time.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Move to microphone number 8 and Kyle Allen.

KYLE ALLEN: Thank you, Brother Chair and thank you Elder Kohler for this report. I think there's no more important subject that we could consider as a church than what we've just been talking about. Ellen White says we must have a thousand missionaries where there is now one. And I resonate with what my brother Jesse Zwiker said just a few moments ago about the need for young people to be fully engaged in the mission of the Church. And I thank everything that the Secretariat is doing to make this possible. Thank you for VividFaith, which is engaging young people to be volunteers. But just a short question, comment, and that is on the subject of full-time missionaries. Missionaries that can go for long-term service. What can we do to engage more of our young adults who want to be in those positions?

I was just at Loma Linda last weekend for the graduation. Many of my friends there studying medicine, some of them would like to be missionaries. I know we have the Deferred Mission Appointee Program, for example, but what can we do to get more of our medical students serving as missionary doctors again? What can we do to get our consecrated lay people and our pastors who want to be fulltime missionaries? So, that's just a question that's burning on my heart, but I know that time is late, and I don't want to prolong the discussion. But I just had to mention that, because I think we all want to see a revival of more missionaries going to the world. And so that is my question, Brother Chair, but because I've been getting texts saying please move the previous question, I will move the previous question at the end of my comment. Thank you so much.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you, Kyle. We will go straight then to the vote. That's a nondebatable motion. It cuts off debate and must pass by two-thirds. And Todd if you would give us a little direction on that.

TODD MCFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We will be opening up that ballot momentarily and people will be able to vote on that. Of course, this is simply whether or not to continue debate or to go immediately to voting on the report. And Mr. Chairman, it will be open here momentarily. It's open now, Mr. Chairman.

THOMAS L LEMON: So, choose "yes" to close debate. Choose "no" to keep debate going on. And be sure when you have voted that you move to the next page and click submit.

TODD MCFARLAND: Mr. Chairman, I can tell you that we are doing well here on the balloting. 566 people have already voted.

THOMAS L LEMON: Good. Thank you. As you are completing the voting process, keep in mind that if this passes by the required two-thirds, we will then move immediately to the main motion, which is to receive and accept the Secretary's Report. So, you can be thinking about that as we wait for the results on this one.

How's our progress?

TODD MCFARLAND: Mr. Chairman, we are at 1,149 ballots so far. Almost at 1,200 now.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay. We will give it a little more time.

TODD MCFARLAND: Mr. Chairman, I can tell you we are now well over 1,200, at 1,278.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay. Good we're glad the system is working much better today with much more speed.

TODD MCFARLAND: I should say, Mr. Chairman, one of the challenges we had yesterday was a number of you were streaming the meeting on Facebook while in here, which is a dedication to the

content, getting it through two sources, but that was causing some of the problems. So, we're glad that's resolved now. And, Mr. Chairman, we are now over 1,400.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay. Let's give it ten more seconds, Todd, and then we'll call it and go from there.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Mr. Chairman, you just let me know and we will call it there. We are now at 1,458.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay, so the trend is slowing a little bit. So, I think we'll go ahead and call it. Is that okay?

TODD MCFARLAND: That's okay, Mr. Chairman. We are closing the ballot now and we will have it displayed here momentarily.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. The "yes" vote has 1,421 votes. That's 95%. The "no votes," 69 votes, 4.6%. It does pass the required two thirds. So, we will now proceed immediately to the main motion.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Mr. Chairman. We will open that up momentarily. This is on the main motion to accept the Secretary's Report.

THOMAS L LEMON: Very good. Thank you very much for helping the Chair on this. We do have much to cover and we have about four days less than we normally have to cover at the General Conference Session this year.

TODD MCFARLAND: It is open now, Mr. Chairman, for people to vote.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay, please vote now and submit. Thank you for doing that.

We thought about having the Vice Presidents sing during these three minutes, but I don't think you'd really want that.

How are we going, Todd?

TODD MCFARLAND: Mr. Chairman, we are making good progress. We are now 1,400— I'm sorry Mr. Chairman, that is the last vote. I apologize. Let me open it up here. Sorry, too many things going up here.

TODD MCFARLAND: Mr. Chairman over 1,500 people have voted so far.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay, let's give it to the one-minute mark and then we'll stop the vote. We're getting 1,500 votes; that is a strong representation of the body here and online.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Mr. Chairman, we are right at 1,550 now.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Mr. Chairman, the ballot is being closed now and it will display momentarily.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay, that passes with a 99.1% to 0.9% votes, and I want to thank Secretariat for the fine report, for the willingness to take the questions, and to carry forward the discussion.

ERTON C KOHLER: Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: I would ask you to keep Secretariat in your prayers. They have tremendous heart for their work of mission. They have tremendous heart for the missionaries performing mission. I know these people. I talk with them on a regular basis. They need your support, your prayers. We are all in the Lord's mission together. It's time now for our next report. We have a couple of things going on here. I'm going to let the Secretariat come off and we'll bring Treasury on.

While they're doing that, we will receive a partial report from the Nominating Committee. So, we'll look to them. And I'm told that I need to step out of the Chair for that report. So, I'm looking for Dr. Ella Simmons perhaps.

Okay, pardon the little confusion here but we will get this straightened out directly.

They're coming.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, Brother Chair, and good morning to the Session delegates. The Nominating Committee has a partial report to bring to you this morning. This involves the executive officers of the General Conference, that of Secretary and Treasurer. We will follow that with a report from the Nominating Committee concerning a slate of vice presidents. I'm going to ask our Nominating Committee Secretary, Magdiel Perez-Schulz, to present to us the first nomination and when we have cared for that we will do the second. And when we come to the slate of the vice president nominations, we will ask Sheryl Shavers, the Associate Secretary to bring in that information.

MAGDIEL PEREZ SCHULZ: Thank you, Pastor Lowell. We have the first part of Report Number 2, from the Nominating Committee. For the position of General Conference Secretary, the name of the incumbent, Pastor Erton Kohler.

[Applause]

I move it, Pastor Chair.

ELLA S SIMMONS: We have a motion on the floor to accept the name of Erton Kohler, as Secretary of the General Conference.

Do we have a second for that?

Are we voting these separately?

GERSON P SANTOS: Yes.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay. I thought I understood the signal.

The floor is open for questions or comments for clarity, if necessary. You've just received a wonderful report, so, there probably should not be need for great discussion this morning but we're watching. We see no one at the mics.

TODD MCFARLAND: Madam Chair, if I can, we're just going to take a second here to be ready to vote that separately. So, if we can have the body's indulgence just for a second.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay. We're making an adjustment. This is a technical adjustment to separate the two to vote them individually, but we are prepared to move forward with the question, I believe. We do not see anyone at the microphones.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay. Remember we are using ElectionBuddy as always, so gear up and be ready to move forward when it comes to us. And we're waiting for our ElectionBuddy engineer over here to get set.

TODD MCFARLAND: I apologize for the confusion. It's just with ElectionBuddy we have to create separate ballots, and as I hope you can appreciate, we don't do that ahead of time because we don't know the names, and so we are getting the ballots ready. And Madam Chair, I believe we do have a ballot for the position of Secretary, if you're ready to open that.

ELLA S SIMMONS: We're ready to open the vote.

TODD MCFARLAND: Okay. Alright, Madam Chair, it should be opened up here separately. Let's see here, Madam Chair. It is open now.

ELLA S SIMMONS: It is coming. Alright. We have before us the name of Erton Kohler as Secretary of the General Conference. Please cast your vote. And remember to submit. It's so easy to miss that.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright. It should be open. Madam Chair, you can tell 1,300 people have already voted so it's moving along nicely.

ELLA S SIMMONS: That's encouraging. We have about two-and-a-half minutes left. We do believe that those online on Zoom have access with no issues.

TODD MCFARLAND: Madam Chair, we are making some very good progress here. We're over 1,700.

ELLA S SIMMONS: This is sounding good. As I scan the body, I think we could get a few more. And we are down to one minute, 45 seconds.

TODD MCFARLAND: Madam Chair, we are right at 1,800.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Very good. One minute and a half. Elder Schultz is calling for GC Vice Presidents to come to the back, behind the stage here.

TODD MCFARLAND: Madam Chair, with just about a minute left, we're at 1,868.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay. We're getting close to closing this down. We will go with the allocated time allotment.

TODD MCFARLAND: Madam Chair with about 30 seconds left, we are at a little over 1,900. I do believe, other than calibration votes, this will be the highest total number of votes we have had.

ELLA S SIMMONS: I was thinking the same. We are doing well. We have done well this entire week, I believe, but this is good. We're stepping up for this. Okay. At zero we will close it.

TODD MCFARLAND: Very well, Madam Chair.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay. We're calling for the tally.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Madam Chair. They are closing it. It will take, of course, a second to display and it will be displayed here momentarily.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Here we are. It is carried with 96 percent, 1,863 votes. Elder Erton Kohler, please let us see you step forward. Come and there she is and him. Thank you.

A speech is not necessary at this time, but I believe we still have the wonderful report you just brought ringing in our ears. So, thank you very much. We will hear from you again later. Thank you both.
[Applause.]

ELLA S SIMMONS: Elder Cooper, your next item, please.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, Madam Chair. We will proceed with the Nominating Committee's recommendation for the General Conference Treasurer. And after that we will proceed on a separate vote for a slate of vice presidents that will be presented at that time.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Excellent.

MAGDIEL PEREZ SCHULZ: Thank you, Pastor Cooper. The second part of Report Number 2, it's in regard to the position of General Conference Treasurer, and the Nominating Committee is recommending the name of the incumbent, Paul Douglas. So, I move it, Madam Chair.

ELLA S SIMMONS: We have the motion. A little celebration, a little bit early. We probably need some support for the motion first and then we will vote. We see the hands going up. There're seconds, several seconds. Alright, Brother Todd, are you ready to move forward?

TODD MCFARLAND: This time we are ready, Madam Chair. We can open up the ballot when you are ready.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Let us open up the ballot. Let us move right into this item.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Madam Chair. We will. This should be opened here momentarily. And Madam Chair, it is open for people to vote.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Alright. We are ready. You're seeing an image of Elder Douglas here. At least I can see that image. I believe you have that. How are we doing? We starting strong?

TODD MCFARLAND: Sorry, Madam Chair. We are doing well. We have now close to a thousand votes.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Excellent. I was trying to ask the photographer if we need the Kohlers to come back out. Are they to stand where they need to be?

TODD MCFARLAND: Madam Chair, we are over 1,500 now.

ELLA S SIMMONS: We're rolling along. It sounds good.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Madam Chair, we are still going here with about a minute 20 seconds left. We're at 1,700.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Excellent.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Madam Chair, we're doing well. We're at 1,800.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Very good. And about 54 seconds left. Now, you heard me call for the GC Vice Presidents to come to the back, and just prior to that you heard Elder Lemon indicate that the Vice Presidents might sing. Well, that is not going to happen. We will do without music rather than have that happen.

We're at 25 seconds and still counting. The votes are still coming in.

TODD MCFARLAND: And Madam Chair, we're at 25 seconds and 1,868 votes.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Excellent. Now, we topped 1,900 on the Secretary.

TODD MCFARLAND: We did.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay. We'd like at least the same people voting. How many do we have in the queue?

TODD MCFARLAND: 1,880 and we have about 60 people still in the process of voting.

ELLA S SIMMONS: We are close. Alright. We're down to zero. We're going to have to cut it off.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Madam Chair, it is closing now and will be displayed here momentarily. Alright, Madam Chair.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Excellent. Rounding off the team of the three General Conference officers is Elder Paul Douglas, as General Treasurer of the General Conference with about 97 plus percent of the vote. Welcome, welcome Elder Paul Douglas. There he is. Elder Douglas, please stand to the left of the podium for a moment.

And while we are enjoying this photo moment, I will indicate officially that both votes carried. And of course, it was clear to you.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm sorry to indicate that when Elder and Mrs. Kohler came to the podium, I think the leadership of the Nominating Committee obscured the ability of the photographers to take the appropriate picture. So, we've invited Elder and Mrs. Kohler to come

back. I'm not sure that they're here at the moment, but at an appropriate moment we'll have them come on, so that a picture can be taken. Are they here? Alright.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Oh, wonderful.

LOWELL COOPER: If we can do that right now with your permission.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Yes. While we are enjoying this moment with the Kohlers, let's all stand and stretch where we are. No one is to go toward the door. Just stand and stretch. Get those arms ready to vote again. Thank you.

LOWELL COOPER: Madam Chair, as we go to the next part of our report, perhaps a word of explanation is appropriate. We're going to present a report as a group of vice presidents. We would ask the session to accept the report, rather than voting on individual names to vote on the panel of names that is presented. The Nominating Committee has discussed the matter carefully, recognizes the challenge that comes in trying to balance depth of experience with breadth of representation. And the report that will be brought to you is an attempt by the Nominating Committee, in consultation with Elder Wilson, to address those kinds of questions. That's why we bring the report as a single group.

CHERYL CHAVERS: Madam Chair, the Nominating Committee brings to you Report Number 3 and recommends the following names for General Conference, General Vice Presidents: Abner de la Santos, Geoffrey Mbwana, Thomas Lemon, Artur Stele, Audrey Anderson, and Maurice Valentine. I so move the following names.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Thank you. We have a motion before us. You have seen the images, you have heard the motion. Is there support for this motion? It is one package. Yes? Okay, I'm seeing some support here. Excellent. Again, we will give just a moment, but seeing no one move to the microphones, we assume there's no need for discussion or question on any of these. I saw only one person moving, and it appears that it was not to a microphone.

CHERYL CHAVER: Madam Chair, I'd like to clarify one name that might have been left off, and that is the name of Guillermo Biaggi.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay. Thank you. There he is. Thank you very much. Billy Biaggi is included in this package. So, you are voting for the entire slate. We're ready. I do believe we have the motion before us with support. Okay, Brother Todd.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Madam Chair. We're opening. And it should be opened up here momentarily. Again, it takes just a while after they click the button there on the server but it should be open here momentarily.

LOWELL COOPER: Madam Chair, with your permission, I think the body can understand the immediacy of some of this information can be a challenge of getting people together. We understand that Elder Douglas is now here with his wife, and perhaps we could invite them back on the stage for the picture.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Please do. Please do. Yes.

TODD MCFARLAND: While we're doing that, Madam Chair, I can say the balloting is open and people are able to vote now.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay. We have the ballot open. Please use your ElectionBuddy. Now, at microphone eight, there is someone, Mahase Ragoonath from the Caribbean Union Conference in the Inter-American Division. While the beautiful couple is standing there. And microphone 8.

MAHASE RAGOONATH: Yes, Ma'am. I noticed you took the vote, sorry, not the vote, you presented the name and you asked if anybody has questions with the Secretary. And you did the same thing, Madam Chairperson, with regard to the Vice Presidents. But with regard to the Treasurer, I didn't hear that come across, Madam Chairperson. There was no statement from you if anybody has any questions. So, I was wondering if there was a difference, Madam Chairperson. Thank you very much.

ELLA S SIMMONS: There was no difference. Perhaps there was a slip of my tongue in rushing up here to take the chair.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Madam Chair, we're doing well with over a thousand names.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay. We have a thousand but that is far below our top number. Let's get those votes in. And you see the entire slate of names for General Conference General Vice Presidents. We have the motion, we had support, and we've called the question by calling for the ElectionBuddy, and we are in the process of casting the votes.

I believe someone at microphone 8 was probably in the queue, and I missed that person, but we've already begun the vote on the vice presidents. So, we're not taking discussion on questions at this point. If there is a question about ElectionBuddy, please go to one of the technical persons on the floor. You know where the Tech Services section is, and also, even if you have to go to those who are scanning. Thank you.

TODD MCFARLAND: Madam Chair, we are at 1,770 votes so far.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay. And we have about 25 seconds left.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Madam Chair, we're just over 1,800 now.

ELLA S SIMMONS: We're winding down ready to cut off at zero. How are we?

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Madam Chair, we're closing the balloting and it looks like we got 1868.

ELLA S SIMMONS: That's great.

TODD MCFARLAND: And, Madam Chair, the balloting has been closed, we will display the results here momentarily.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay. Alright. This item carries with 1,800 votes in favor, yes, just close to 97 percent.

[Applause]

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, Madam Chair. With your permission we could invite the vice presidents to the platform.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Yes. Please do. Thank you, Elder Cooper. We welcome this team of general vice presidents for the coming few years of General Conference service. And since I have served closely with most of these gentlemen, I'm going to say I feel comfortable that there is someone to keep you in order.

I see that Elder Cooper has vacated the podium. So, it is my understanding that this concludes the report from the Nominating Committee. And I will look to Secretariat to let me know if there is something. Now, as I recall, during the morning session we were to have the Treasurer's Report and the Auditor's Report. I don't know where we're going to go with that, but I'm going to let Elder Lemon have his chair back in just a second.

We're making a little bit of an adjustment in the agenda to accommodate the time that we have remaining.

We apologize for the brief pause here. But as you know, the time was expended earlier and so we're trying to make an appropriate adjustment, and probably will be able to go back to some Bylaws items. But right now, we have a point of order from Benjamin Chircan, Oltenia Conference in the Inter-European Division. Microphone number 5.

BENIAMIN LAURENTIU CHIRCAN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Now I see you.

BENIAMIN LAURENTIU CHIRCAN: I'm Brother Benjamin. I want to express a concern regarding the voting process. I have noticed since yesterday that even after technical issues have been taken care of, there are over 1,000 votes that are not expressed; by my calculation, around 35 and 45 percent of the delegates. And I wonder why this is not considered a problem. It can be theoretically possible that

such a large number of votes, if expressed, could change the results of a motion in course. It is my first time here and I don't know how percentages were in the previous Sessions, but I'm afraid that the current situation is not the best in terms of representativity. I would be interested to know how many delegates that don't vote are in this meeting, and how many are online, and if the reason they don't vote is they still have technical issues, or they are missing from the meeting, or there are other causes.

We are told that you know who is voting and who is not voting. And I would suggest that we be presented with a report, some kind of statistics, from those responsible for the voting process, to show us, if it is possible, where the missing votes are coming, or rather not coming from. I don't see why this would be a secret as long as the names are not disclosed. We speak about unity a lot and I think trying to increase the percentage of the expressed votes would help the unity. Although the votes expressed might be legal, I suggest that increasing the percentage would add to the credibility of the voting process and its results. I suggest that the unions could address the situation with their own delegates, if provided with the right information. And as I already said, I think that this information would add to the credibility of the voting process and its results.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Thank you. Your time is out but we understand what you are saying. Perhaps I will begin where you ended. I would appreciate it if division leadership and union leadership would indeed prepare delegates and then encourage the delegates to vote. No one can force the delegates to vote. And from my past experience, not only with this body, but in other such settings, it is so very difficult to get everyone to cast their ballot. As one who has experienced some, shall I say, negative challenges surrounding access to the right to vote, it just always surprises me when those of us who have not only the privilege, but we have the responsibility of voting, and we do not take the responsible position of following through with voting. I cannot explain that, of course.

One thing that I did this morning was to check on one of the divisions that had difficulty yesterday with the voting; that was the EUD. You will recall that the Treasurer of the EUD stepped to the

microphone more than once and expressed that there were technical difficulties with many people in that division being unable to vote. We addressed that yesterday, and I followed up by just personally checking on that this morning. And I was assured that that had been cleared up. The problem is not necessarily technology today. But we're always open to hearing if there are technical challenges, technical problems, that prevent delegates from casting their votes. And we've heard none of those this morning. But we will remain vigilant, and I appreciate your concern because you express the same concern that I have.

And I'm going to turn to Todd McFarland here, who we call our technical ElectionBuddy expert, to see what he can share with us. And for whatever reason, we have no motion on the floor, but the queues are lighting up here. I see three people waiting to speak. I guess we just want to have a little chat, but in a few minutes, we will continue, we're going to bring some *Church Manual* items to finish out this session. And we're going to drop the Treasurer's meeting down into the afternoon section at two o'clock. So please have your lunch on time and be back here for the Treasurer's Report. I can assure you it's an exciting report and you're going to feel that it was well worth it to be here in the place when it is given. So, Brother Todd, help us out. What's going on?

TODD MCFARLAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. First, just a couple of bits of information. First of all, I think overall, I would disagree with the gentleman. I think the voting percentages and participation rate has been absolutely great. The numbers have been much higher than we had feared, I should say. I will give the last balloting the total number of eligible voters; the ballots cast were 70 percent. And, you know, there's a number of reasons why people may choose not to. We cannot force them. You know, the joke I made during our orientations which I don't think anyone other than South Pacific Division got was, we're not Australia. We don't fine you for not voting. That is a decision the Church makes. The people of Australia have gone a different direction, and that's their democratic process.

I also think we would want to be very careful about embarrassing even parts of the world in areas as far as disclosing data. That is something that would have to be processed with leadership. I certainly don't have the authority to do that. I would also say that that kind of analysis would take a lot of work to make sure it would be done correctly. So, Madam Chair, I just wanted to say I think there was a number here of 30 or 40 percent. One other thing I will say as well, just remember, this doesn't really work on the ballots for the Nominating Committee, but we have 268 people in Nominating Committee, and so when those individuals are in Nominating Committee that's going to reduce our number and of course last night people got tired, and they may have left a little early. So, Madam Chair I just wanted to give a little more context and data here. Thank you.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Yes. Thank you very much. Well, we have three people waiting in the queue, but overshadowing those, we have a point of order on microphone number 2, Reinhard Gallos, Northern Rhenish-Westfalian Conference, EUD.

REINHARD GALLOS: Thank you, Mrs. Chair. I just want to remind you that yesterday I made a point of order. It was not voted about. You treated that more gracefully to enlarge the time of voting. I made it clear yesterday that we need more time as the Wi-Fi is floated here in the room, and I wanted to come back to this point of order, and I want you to ask for the election, instead of having three minutes to extend this to five minutes. We have so many speeches, every speech is two minutes. It wouldn't cost us too much to just extend the voting time to five minutes and I'm quite confident by enlarging the time, that people randomly have more time, so more people can vote. Last night, we did not have so many people and the voting was no problem. In the morning the room is full, have more people here, and so we again faced the same problem. So, I am currently asking you to make this a point of order.

ELLA S SIMMONS: I'm going to separate your comments because overall it is not a point of order. You're expressing a concern, a valid concern and making a suggestion. Perhaps your point of

order to give you grace on that side, or something that could be considered a point of order, is that you feel that the technology is failing us and perhaps blocking some of the votes because of the number of individuals in the room. So, we will take all of this under advisement and will do our best to rectify what we can from where we are. Thank you very much.

So, we do need to go on to those who were in the queue, if I can get that back. I remember Tracie Mafileo. Tracie Mafileo, North New Zealand Conference in the South Pacific Division. I know who you are, and I cannot see you. So, there you are. Okay, I did not see you. I saw someone else at number 2. That's why I was concerned. Please speak to us.

TRACIE MAFILEO: Dr. Ella Simmons, Madam Chair, thank you for allowing us to have this chat, but just from the floor I want to acknowledge the historical moment that we are in and to affirm your leadership as the first woman Vice President of our church over this last period.

[Applause]

I want to affirm the grace, and the humility, and the love, and what you have meant toward many of us in leading our world Church in your role. Thank you. We love you.

ELLA S SIMMONS: I had no idea that you were a conspirator of that type, but I do love you, and each one. I appreciate your expression. This is a surprise. I'm not supposed to be in the chair you know, right? But let us move to the next microphone, number 4, Philip Maiyo, West Kenya Union Conference in the East-Central Africa Division. What can we do for you, what do you have for us?

PHILIP MAIYO: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a privilege to be here. And I'd like just to comment on the statements that were made earlier by the speaker about the time and the voting. To me, I find the voting system to be very transparent, and secondly, I'd like to mention that sometimes I find even the three minutes to be too much because even when I put off my phone, the moment you have opened the ElectionBuddy, I just even start my phone, and I will still vote. I really am surprised. I would like to thank the IT team for the good job. And I tell you, it is highly commendable. I have two phones.

Sometimes, I put off another one. I put on, and I will still vote. I've never had a problem of time. So, congratulations.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Thank you so much. They deserve the accolades. And you'll recall, if you listened to me yesterday afternoon many times, I said get your phones ready, get your equipment ready, because we're going to get to a vote on this one. So, we're trying our best. But thank you so much for affirming the IT team. Kevin Costello on microphone number 3, Southern Asia-Pacific Division.

KEVIN COSTELLO: Good morning, Madam Chair. Thank you so very much. When going forward, when the candidates come out to be introduced, or when the names are given, I think for the incumbents, most of us or many of us in the room probably know who many of the incumbents are. But for those who are not incumbents and are new to the positions, or just come from one particular field of the world Church, it would be helpful if we could just have two or three sentences about where they work, where they're from, that sort of thing. It doesn't need to be long or a big resume, but just if we could know a little bit about those who were new to the position. Thank you, Madam Chair.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Thank you very much. You know, when I came in now 17 years ago, I think they read even my birth certificate. They gave quite a long explanation of who I was and why I was here. So, thank you.

Microphone number 7, Tim Standish, General Conference.

TIM STANDISH: Thank you, Madam Chair. And, yes, I want to say you will be sorely missed, sorely missed indeed. My comment is about the concerns as a general category that are being expressed right now. These arise from our abandonment of the traditional way in which voting has been done in General Conference Sessions. Obviously in our *Rules of Order*, it calls for viva voce, or voice voting. I do understand that we have used other methods in the past. However, this more or less arbitrary, and sudden move to making everything a secret ballot, leaves many questions in the minds of delegates that were not there when voting was being done in an open and transparent way. This method is not

transparent, and there will be these questions, and they will persist. I would suggest that unless there is a compelling reason to do a secret ballot, that in future we go back to an open and transparent system that allows everyone to know that their ballot has been cast and that it has been counted. Thank you.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Thank you, Dr. Standish. I'm just going to speak to this briefly and we're going to move on. This is a decision that I think personally was a good one. If we were to go to the electronic process only periodically when a secret ballot is called, I would say a very small percentage of us would be skillfully prepared to cast a vote. By casting each vote on a ElectionBuddy, we're getting more and more practice, we're developing our skill and our ability, and just as the brother described, we're ready to grab the devices and move on that. Yes, it would be much easier for the chairpersons even, just ask for a show of hands or the old yellow cards or whatever, and we would declare that an item has passed. But we are trying to build a system. And perhaps it is awkward right now, but we will be fine. We do have a few items, but it appears we're going to use the time in our discussion. So, let's move very quickly, unless Brother Todd has a point on this particular item.

TODD MCFARLAND: I was just going to say, Madam Chair, I have a lot of respect for Dr. Standish and his brother who I worked with closely in the past and still do. I think the system is very transparent. It allows for there to be a fully audited system that GCAS is involved in. We have an outside vendor that we have a lot of confidence in. I assure you there is complete transparency on the exact numbers, and there is transparency and confidence, and should be as we discussed in the 13 training sessions we did, that votes are being recorded accurately. It is true that we have chosen not to tell how individuals have voted, which you were able to tell with the raising of the cards. However, I think that overall, that was viewed not as so much of a benefit as it was just a function of the way we worked. But, Madam Chair, I think the system is transparent and allows for a complete system. I would also point out just real quickly, in a hybrid system, this is the only real option. You can go to raising cards, but then you

disenfranchise the people online, and we don't want to do that, so this really is the only workable option for a hybrid meeting.

ELLA S SIMMONS: At this point. New technology is developed all the time. We'll wait to see. Going to microphone number 5, Patricia Langley, General Conference. Number 5. And we're going to go to microphone number 2, Jared Tunstra, following this one.

PATRICIA LANGLEY: Madam Chair Lady, distinguished delegates and world leaders and members, I am so grateful to be alive today, to stand at this microphone as I acknowledge the changes that are taking place. I think back of 1863, May 19th and 20th which we had our first General Conference. Now we have our 61st, and I am so happy that the General Conference has chosen Paul Douglas to be the first man of color to serve the world Church. Dr. Simmons, God has used you mightily as a Vice President. I am so proud of you.

And as I listen to the reports and meeting God's people, you notice I'm holding up a flag, as we have been praying for our people from the Ukraine. I'm also listening as it was stated that young people, more young people should be missionaries. I want to invite young people, especially Caucasians. I have a burden for the whites of the world in Adventism, in America, and I invite you to come and join me as we work together. May God's name be praised as we unite together as one, for Jesus is made of one blood, all nations of the earth, to work together. God bless you. I would have loved to have seen more than one vice president as a female that came forward this time.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Thank you. Thank you. That was a personal statement. And I need to know if, among the three remaining, there are specific questions about process, something that we need to hear concerning this session in order to do our business? Alright. We're going to go to Jeroen Tuinstra, Belgian-Luxembourg Conference in the Inter-European Division on microphone number 2. Thank you.

JEROEN TUINSTRA: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is a general comment about the report. I was really pleased we could have a discussion about the report of the Secretariat, but I'm very surprised that

we haven't had any discussion on the report from the President. Is this intentional not to have a discussion about this?

ELLA S SIMMONS: Of course, it was. Yes.

JEROEN TUINSTRA: It was intentional.

ELLA S SIMMONS: In that Elder Wilson was exercising appropriate modesty, appropriate behavior as in fact, yesterday someone called him outgoing president. I'm sure that individual did not intend the inference there, but as the president who was not yet determined to be the president going forward. He simply gave his report on what had been done in the past, and it was the intent to leave it at that, in terms of appropriate behavior, professional behavior on that. I'm sure there will be an opportunity for the body to engage with Elder Wilson in the future now that that decision has been made.

JEROEN TUINSTRA: This is a break from protocol in General Conference Sessions, right?

ELLA S SIMMONS: It does not break from policy. I'm not sure about protocol and practice. But you do notice that we have done many things differently this time because we have had to shorten the experience, the number of days, and so forth. So, there have been some adjustments, but we pray no violation of policy or protocol variance that would diminish the experience for the delegates and the participants.

JEROEN TUINSTRA: But all the changes have been voted through with the delegates and this decision has been unilateral by the General Conference president?

ELLA S SIMMONS: No, the changes have been worked out through appropriate bodies and those bodies representing the delegates, the leadership in the divisions, for example, and others who have been present for Annual Council and Spring Meetings.

JEROEN TUINSTRA: Then I would like to express my grave disappointment that the president was not willing to answer any questions on his report.

ELLA S SIMMONS: I'm sure, as I said, that time will come. And I understand. I understand the need. There's no issue. There is no issue. There definitely was no intent to deny engagement, but we felt that it would be inappropriate for that to happen at that time, and yet we needed a report of what had happened in the past from the President. So, I'm sure there will be an opportunity for an engagement.

JEROEN TUINSTRAN: I hope so.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Okay? Thank you very much. And my favorite name again, ha, microphone number 6, Mandla Se-Bantwini Lupondwana from Southern Africa Union Conference in the SID.

MANDLA SE-BANTWINI LUPONDWANA: Thank you, Chair. Around 2010, the IT department of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, introduced a practice of electronic voting at our conference and union sessions. We had similar teething problems, but I can safely say over the past 12 years, we've acclimatized to it, and it has become second nature. I think going forward, we will get to a point where electronic voting at General Conference Sessions will also come as easily, like with anything else that is new, we are experiencing teething problems. Secondly, as someone who's been in the youth ministries department, for us, things that happen for the first time become important for church heritage purposes. And I'm wondering, Chair, what mechanism we could use to take a vote to officially acknowledge the fact that we've had our first woman vice president at the General Conference. It's the kind of stuff that ends up in our church heritage records. I'm not sure if we are able to make the motion now, or if it has to be put together elsewhere. And if it is to be put together elsewhere, how do we nudge the putting together of such a motion? Thank you, Chair.

ELLA S SIMMONS: I see the smiles, and I thank you for the heart that I'm hearing. I don't know when that should happen, but whenever it does, I should not be in the chair to guide it. Thank you.

Before we go to the microphone, let me call our undersecretary, at least for now, Hensley Mooroven.

HENSLEY M MOOROVEN: At least for now.

ELLA S SIMMONS: At least for now.

HENSLEY M MOOROOVEN: Madam Chair, it might not answer the question of our colleague from the Trans-European Division, I think he was—

ELLA S SIMMONS: EUD. EUD.

HENSLEY M MOOROOVEN: EUD. Pardon me. But we don't want you to leave here with ringing in the back of your mind, a statement that says that we have breached protocol and that we did not abide by processes. Let me share with you clearly what has happened. You know that this is a special GC Session, right? We had ten days, but because of everything that relates to COVID, we had to squeeze everything into four days of business sessions. If there is someone who can tell you how, I would not say a nightmare because this is the Lord's work, but how heavy this responsibility is, I think it is me and my team. So, this is what happened, Madam Chair. Traditionally, the report of the President is given on the first day evening. You remember? And then it will be followed by the reports of all divisions which would normally also take place in the evening. Do you all remember that time? Now, we have a reduced GC Session.

Oh, something else. When these reports were happening in the evening hours, they were outside of business sessions. And when you are outside of business sessions, you do not vote, you do not discuss, you do not ask any questions. That's how it has been traditionally. The report of the president is not within the business hours. It is in the evening. He's the one who begins. And all the other divisions follow. But because of this situation in which we find ourselves in, the president's report had to be put in the business session, and we are trying to find the best way of handling that. Thank you for giving me the possibility of explaining that to you, because we don't want you to go with this idea of the comment that was made. Again, thank you. This is exactly, friends, what happened. Because it so happens that I am the one who helps with the daily schedule. This is what I told you. This is what happened. And thank you for allowing me to explain it to you in a very transparent way. Thank you.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Thank you very much. We wanted to hear from Secretariat on that.

Alright. On microphone number 8, Nnamdi Onyenmuru.

NNAMDI ONYENMURU: Onyenmuru.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Oh, say that again.

NNAMDI ONYENMURU: Yeah, it's my pleasure—Onyenmuru.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Ebonyi Conference, WAD.

NNAMDI ONYENMURU: It's my pleasure to really commend the organizers of the General Conference Session. As presented [indiscernible] seeing here among our leaders gives us joy. And [indiscernible] to see joy [indiscernible] commend the ITC for the work that they've done. Comment of transparency, I think if you can [indiscernible] serving, or then there should be an improvement, which I have seen, that will make it more transparent, and value added. And that will be, possibly by next time, we will meet again by grace of God. I expect that as people are voting, the counting is seen on the screen. And that will give us more value added and more transparent in so doing. So going forward, I challenge our ITC personnel to see how that can be possible, and I know it is possible. Thank you, and God bless.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Thank you, sir. And our next speaker is on microphone number 8, Paul Ananaba, Lagos Mainland Conference, WAD. If you have a comment or question regarding our processes, we'll hear that now.

PAUL ANANABA: Madam Chair, beyond the point of the last speaker, which I think will improve the quality of the process, it should be considered with a lot of degree of seriousness, as our votes are going on, you will be seeing the figures, even though you will not know who voted where. It will improve the process. But I don't think that that permits a serving General Conference employee to come to the floor of the General Conference Session and say that the process is not transparent. So, I want to think

that going forward, the General Conference officers should look inwards and counsel those who are in General Conference badges to our sessions to watch what is said.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Thank you.

PAUL ANANABA: If the General Conference officer comes to the floor and says that the process is not transparent—

ELLA S SIMMONS: We don't want to focus on an individual.

PAUL ANANABA: No, ma'am, no, ma'am.

ELLA S SIMMONS: But if you can speak generally, that might be helpful.

PAUL ANANABA: But I am just saying, going forward we should do this housekeeping. It discourages some of us who are delegates. So that we don't get the wrong signal. Thank you.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Understand your sentiment, Brother. And yet, at the same time, we believe in freedom of speech, right? So, moving to microphone number 5, Boyce Mkhize, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division. And, actually you are the last one because it is time to break for lunch, but we have one person online, English Zoom number 101, Ken Mapp from Tobago Mission, Inter-American Division. We're going to cut it off there, because we are going to lunch on time. We need to get back on time to receive the Treasurer's Report, and all that goes with that, and I believe we're going to receive the Auditor's Report as well in the afternoon. So may I go back to microphone number 5.

BOYCE MKHIZE: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's a clarification on the process, and perhaps I should have raised this when Elder Cooper was still in the house. In San Antonio, I rose on the question of who has the authority to reduce the numbers of vice presidents. We're giving a submission to the fact that there was a need to reduce to five. We saw, however, that post the session, the numbers were increased, and we just do not have any knowledge as to how this came about. And also, the authority that relates to that reduction and a subsequent increase thereafter. And I see that in terms

of the numbers of the vice presidents that have been put forward in this Session, the number has reverted back to that which it was prior to the reduction in San Antonio. And so, it would help—

ELLA S SIMMONS: My brother, if you would, if you would pause a moment, I want to be sure that we can get an answer to your question, which you already expressed. I hope I'm not being rude and limiting something else you want to say, if that's the case, you can correct me, but if Elder Karnik Doukmetzian is close to microphone number 2, we want to get that response to our brother before we break for lunch.

KARNIK DOUKMETZIAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Constitution does not limit or set the number of vice presidents. That is certainly up to the president and budgetary restrictions. The number of vice presidents were reduced at the last session from nine to six. This time around we've gone from six to seven, so there has not been a major change, and as long as there are budgetary provisions, this body and on the advice of certain officers can certainly increase that number.

ELLA S SIMMONS: And it is actually this body that makes the decision through its vote, right? My brother, I hope that answered your question. I wanted to be sure to get the official response in. And then number 101 with English Zoom, Ken Mapp. In the meantime, I'm going to call Lincoln Edwards, COO, Loma Linda Health, please go to a microphone in preparation for the closing prayer. I believe Elder Lemon had already arranged that with you, on microphone 3. I know you, I see you, and we won't show the socks today. Okay. Okay.

On 101 Zoom, Ken Mapp, please speak to us.

KEN MAPP: Hi, everybody. Pleasant day. My commendations to all the organizers. I'm enjoying my first General Conference Session albeit virtually. It is a pleasure to be here, but the issue of process came up, so I thought it best to just share something quickly, from my observation about some disenfranchisement that I see taking place, from my understanding, of what is happening. Now, I do not go with the assumption that the Church's General Conference Session is a perfect place because 1888,

another Session, informs us that things don't always go right through General Conference Session even at some point Ellen G. White was made to feel bad, right? So, the Church that we exist in has a representative church government. This process that is taking place now is not necessarily the best because the delegates are losing power, as the power should be in the hands of the delegates. Now, the SDA belief system has two sides of a coin. One is doctrine, and on the other side is policy. One side doctrine, one side policy. I'll come back to that in the end. The first disenfranchisement is technology. If one member is not able to vote they are being disenfranchised, and Dr. Standish made issue of lack of transparency, it is a key issue. Agenda setting. Why are brethren not able to set the agenda and why is the agenda being almost forced on us. Something is wrong with that, if the brethren are not being able to set the agenda, that is disenfranchisement. It should change, right? Maybe time might be a factor but that is not right. Next to the issue of disenfranchisement is lack of accountability. Why is it being said that when members make a report—,

ELLA S SIMMONS: Thank you.

KEN MAPP: [Undiscernible] willing to respond to questions? That is what they're there for. They are there to answer to the Church in terms of what is happening—

ELLA S SIMMONS: It is just being polite, my brother, I'm going to thank you when you finish.

KEN MAPP: I respect, I respect that, I respect that, but it sends a message as language, language sends a message, right? The AdCom. We lost the opportunity to make the issue about vaccination to make AdCom account—

ELLA S SIMMONS: And your time is up.

KEN MAPP: May I just finish.

ELLA S SIMMONS: You may finish that one sentence, and I hope it's not a complex sentence.

KEN MAPP: Let make one point quickly.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Just one sentence, please. Thank you.

KEN MAPP: The voting process, when an agenda item is voted, the changes are being suggested but then there is no opportunity for the membership to come back to say what the exact change was made because this was being sent back.

ELLA S SIMMONS: Thank you. Thank you very much. This morning in the meeting I specifically inquired with the things that we sent back yesterday afternoon, and I have been assured that they will come back to us by Thursday morning; So, I hope that clears that up.

Let us stand and be pleased, be excited about what we have done so far this morning. Let us rejoice in the Lord as he leads us through these processes. Yes, it is difficult, but we're all in this together, and we're going to get through this and we're going to turn to microphone number 3. Brother Edwards, please take us to the throne of God.

[Closing Prayer by Lincoln Edwards]

[End of morning session]