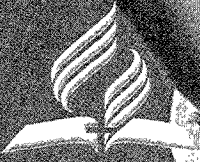
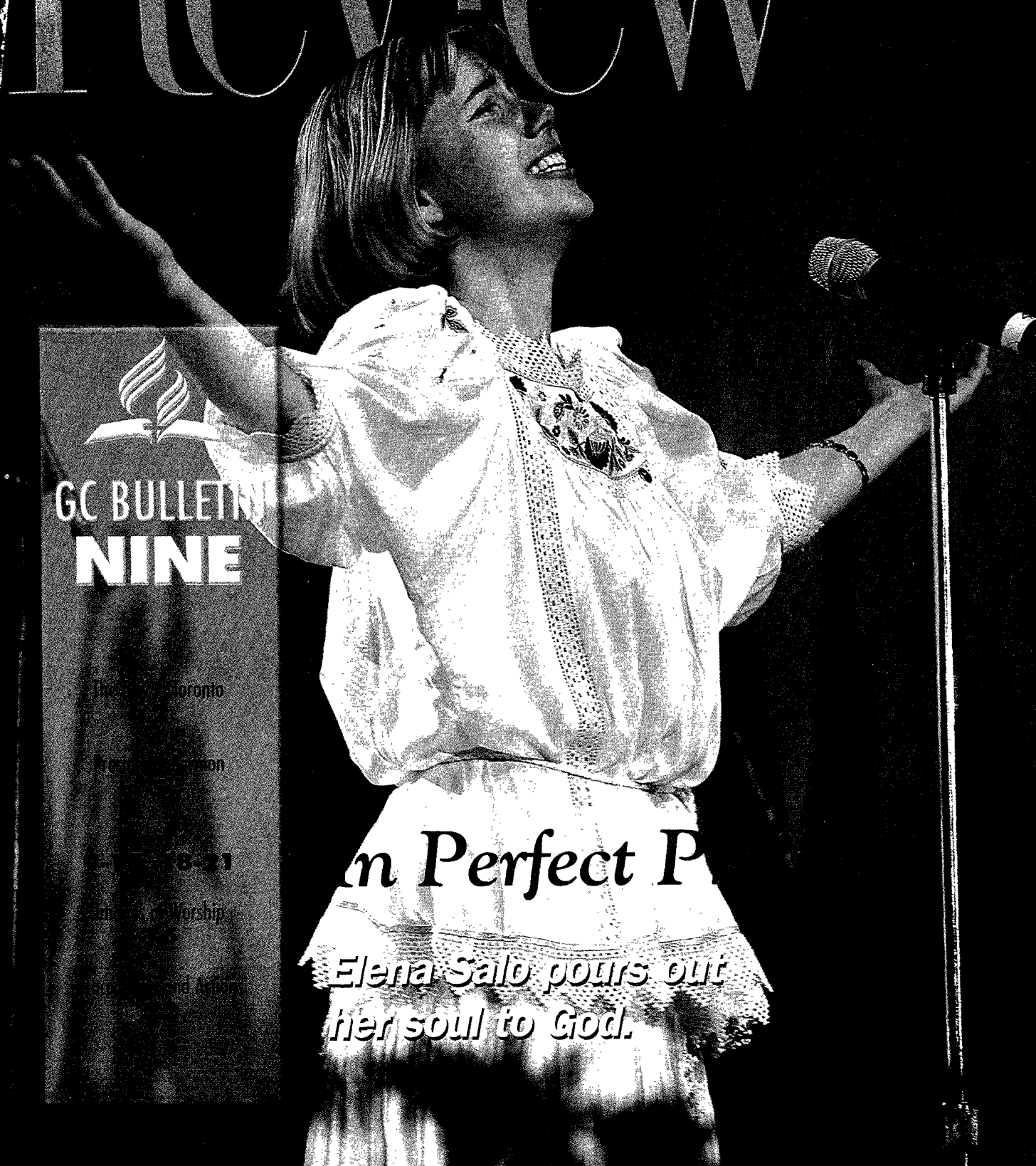


ADVENTIST REVIEW

July 13, 2000

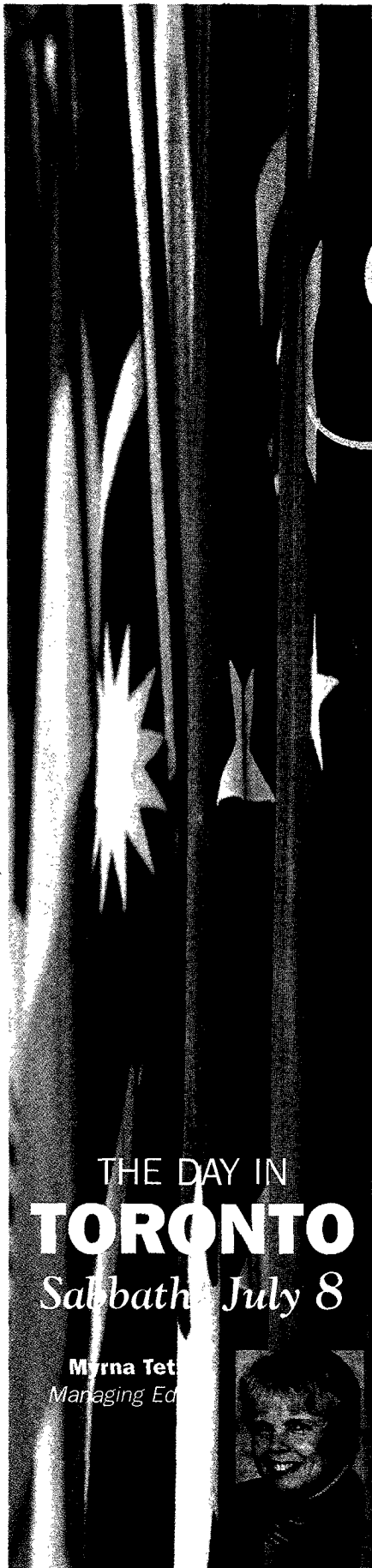


GC BULLETIN
NINE

The Church in Toronto
From the Commission
July 18-31
Sunday of Worship
Prayer and Action

in Perfect P

*Elena Salo pours out
her soul to God.*



THE DAY IN TORONTO Sabbath July 8

Myrna Tet
Managing Ed



Grand Finale

Beginnings and endings encase every aspect of our lives. And as we gathered in the Dome for the last Friday evening vesper service of the 57th General Conference, the first day and the last day of the session were on the minds of many.

The business sessions were now behind us. And so also were the many hugs of greeting and the tears of good-byes, embodying the trauma of earthly separations. The music too was done—and the messages, inspiring immediate resolutions with hopes of a new beginning.

For some church leaders new assignments would mean new challenges. For others there were unplanned endings that brought disappointment and probably a reevaluation of the rest of their lives.

For session general manager Linda de León the last day was, undoubtedly, a great relief. The complete focus of her work, particularly the past few months, was illustrated in a conversation we had a few days earlier. "This big black dog had a grip on my arm and would not let me go," I said, describing a nightmare that I attributed to the long hours and intermittent meals during the session.

"Well, let me tell you my dream," responded Linda. "I dreamed that 11,000 chairs had been put down in

the Dome, but the workers had forgotten the turf." We laughed, but I read in that comment how encompassing her work had become.

De León was publicly honored with a tribute by the undertreasurer of the General Conference, Bob Lemon. "Planning and organizing a General Conference like this involves hundreds of people over a period of 10 years," said Lemon. "Linda is the one who carried the major responsibility for keeping the functions going smoothly and all the details cared for."

Describing De León, Lemon said she exemplified Christian patience and was skillful in working with people. "I doubt that as we leave Toronto, there will be a longer-lasting or more positive influence on people than the Christian witness on those with whom she works."

John Nixon, the speaker for the Friday evening meeting, presented a message so full of challenges that every one of his 30,000 listeners must have

left with at least one in their thoughts. If applause is any indication of enthusiastic reception, this pastor from Oakwood College, in Alabama, seemed to have resonated with the thousands of listeners every few minutes of his sermon.

Rejection of Christ by the church at Christ's first advent raises questions about His church today, observed Nixon in a not-so-comforting declaration. "Why is

there not more weeping and silence and broken hearts over our sins?" "How is it, then, that God's people in the last days are so conscious for our status if the record of Israel's failure is



ALL SMILES: Besides a flag and a sign, Czech Republic representatives carried edible delicacies.

JOEL D. SPRINGER

recorded for our admonition?"

Continuing his comparison of the first and second coming of our Lord, Nixon said, "We know that Jesus is coming, but do we know the Jesus who is coming?" "Without Jesus, even right doctrine isn't right." "While watching the signs and watching the beast, we must not forget to watch the cross."

"He presented a soul-searching message," responded Vivian Barron, from Bermuda, when I asked how the message affected her. "It brought you to think about things you hadn't thought about in a while."

"Nixon took you to your roots and brought you forward," said Vivian's husband, Richard, himself a pastor.

With a great deal of spirit and movement, The Ambassadors, seven men from the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, sang about Ezekiel's "Dry Bones," bringing a fitting climax to the evening's comparison of the connection between the first coming of Christ and the second.

The next morning thousands and thousands entered the Dome to find places for the four hours of Sabbath school and worship. Music quickly brought our thoughts from the outside world to a concentration on Jesus and His gift to us. The Magomeni Heralds, from the Eastern Africa Division, presented their music, using a variety of vocal sound effects. But try as I may to identify the person whose voice gave a drum beat or the one whose vocal accompaniment sounded like "tush, tush," I was never successful.

The Indonesian Chorale rendition of "And the Glory of the Lord" was accompanied by the reading of the Scripture in French, English, German, Spanish, and Korean, followed by the announcement by Don Jacobsen that the long-awaited permit for the building of the Adventist World Radio transmitter in Italy had been issued with such inspiring preliminaries, the worshipers were ready for the proclamation of the Word by General Conference president Jan Paulsen.

"If the definition of church does not include saving people," Paulsen asserted in his message, "then we may have saved the structure, but we are no longer useful to God. . . . We must carry each other if need be." (See his sermon on page 5 of this *Bulletin*.)

In the afternoon the 300 young people who had ministered in the Impact 2000 program marched onto the stage. Reporting on what had happened in the city during the General Conference session week, two young people conversed. "How can I put this delicately?" asked one. "Everyone here is so old." The second one turned to the audience and said, "While you older people were doing the business of the church, we were in the city of Toronto with 22 ministry groups (street artists, mime, drama, kids' club, games, puppets, crafts, etc.). The response from the city was so astounding."

In the hour devoted to reports from the youth of the church we learned about the program in the Euro-Africa Division where young people meet for 10 days, then go out on the street to tell others about God. We heard that in 1999 there have been 26,480 Adventist young people in North America involved in evangelism, that Pathfinders celebrated a 50-year birthday, and that a 10-year-old Pathfinder is an elder in a church in one of the world divisions.

President Paulsen gave the final challenge. "I say to you who are young: Be true to Him. He has given you a unique strength and a role. Jesus needs you."

Sabbath evening two distinguished guests were presented to the congregation. The first was Dr. Alberto de la Hara, the minister of religious affairs for the government of Spain, and identified as a strong supporter of religious freedom. The other was His Worship Mel Lastman, mayor of Toronto.

Reminiscing about the first meeting of the session, Lastman said, "Ten days ago I attended the opening of the session and I presented the keys of the city to church president Jan Paulsen

and Orville Parchment [president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada]. I told them the keys represented the highest honor. You have also bestowed your highest honor on our great city. I want to congratulate everyone involved in organizing this huge convention—the largest in the history of the city of Toronto. You brought us the perfect convention despite your size. There were no problems of any kind! You amazed the city! You were perfect guests! We want to host all your conventions and all your meetings. Yours is also a drug-free, tobacco-free lifestyle; and your family values are above and beyond anything I have ever seen. Your young people uphold the Adventist sense of values. You set a great example everywhere you go. Please come back soon!"

The Parade of Nations was, of course, the highlight of the evening. Hundreds of representatives, dressed in the style of their countries, walked across the stage and through the Dome. The security people employed by the SkyDome had some challenges as they attempted to keep the hundreds of amateur photographers from storming the aisles and blocking the parade.

And so, the 10-day session ended—with a challenge from the world president—just as it had begun. "May we go forward in His strength and with the assurance that our destiny is secure in Jesus Christ."

How could this 10-day period have extended itself, seemingly, longer than any other we have ever experienced? Or how could it have gone so fast that before we knew it, it had ended? Or has it? Would not—could not—the commitment we made, the inspiration we absorbed, the examples of amazing soul winning we have heard about, be just the beginning?

Human birth is a beginning. Death is an ending. Eternity is a beginning with no end. Praise God!

The Next Best Thing to Being There

BY STEPHEN CHAVEZ

The paper you are holding in your hand may soon be an obsolete relic of the Twentieth Century. As much as we hate to admit it, by the time you read the reports of the General Conference session here in the pages of the *Adventist Review*, the news will already be several days (weeks?) old.

The truth is that twenty-first-century technology enables thousands of individuals and groups of Adventist believers around the world to know what has happened at the session within moments of its happening—even as it is happening.

Those who have Internet access could view the *Adventist Review's* daily *Bulletins* even before they were printed and distributed to the delegates in Toronto. The Web site was updated daily by news and online editor Carlos Medley. The Web site (www.adventistreview.org) also had links to real audio and real video updates from the Adventist Radio Network (ARN) and the Adventist Communication Network (ACN).

The *Adventist Review* Web site also featured a *Bulletin* archive of all the devotionals, departmental reports, proceedings, actions, and Nominating Committee reports presented during the session.

Another communication avenue was provided by Adventist World

Radio (AWR). Programs produced in Toronto were uplinked every day and translated into nearly 60 languages for broadcast around the world. Although AWR broadcasts cover an estimated 70 percent of the world, its broadcasts are primarily focused on areas of the world where Christianity is not allowed to be practiced openly.

According to Don Jacobsen, president of Adventist World Radio, the primary focus of AWR is Jesus, forgiveness, and hope. But the broadcasts are also designed to improve its listeners' quality of life with programming about the importance of health, proper diet, raising children/youth, and nurturing family relationships.

Most of AWR's programming is broadcast over shortwave radio bands. Jacobsen estimates that there are a billion shortwave radio receivers in the world, making the message of the fifty-seventh General Conference session—"Almost Home"—a welcome message.

Video and audio signals that travel 45,000 miles in less than a second were the means used by the Adventist Communication Network (ACN) and the Adventist Global Communication Network (AGCN) to send satellite signals to thousands of downlink sites around the world in more than 21 languages. Three hours of prerecorded and live programming were broadcast each evening of the Toronto session, beginning at 6:00 p.m. (EDT).

According to Glenn Aufderhar, general manager of ACN, the evening broadcasts help to unify Adventists around the world. "They feel part of the family," he says. "They don't feel excluded by distance." ACN provided six and a half hours of satellite programming each

Sabbath of the session (two hours for the worship service and four and a half hours during the afternoon and evening).

Overseeing the production and transmission of these satellite feeds was Warren Judd, chief executive officer of Adventist Media Productions (AMP). In addition to pulling together all the technical and production staff for the ACN broadcasts, Judd's staff of more than 40 church employees, freelancers, and volunteers guaranteed that each committee room was provided with whatever audiovisual equipment was needed during the session (projectors, screens, microphones, tape players, etc.).

"We do our best to capture the event for the people in the Dome as well as the greater audience that is watching in their homes and churches," says Judd.

The total cost for the seven satellite systems used throughout the session is between eight to nine thousand dollars an hour, roughly \$30,000 per evening. Judd points out that though it sounds expensive, an estimated 1,100 downlink sites makes the cost less than \$30 per site.

Communication in the twenty-first century is more diverse than at any other time in human history. And although the *Adventist Review* may not be your first source of news about General Conference sessions, it will still be one of your best. It will certainly be the most portable.

Session Snapshot



SMOOTH SOUNDS: Canadian University College's Into the Light music group performs during the Sabbath afternoon Youth on Parade.

ALDEN J. HO

Steady as You Go!

Devotional message presented Sabbath morning, July 8, 2000

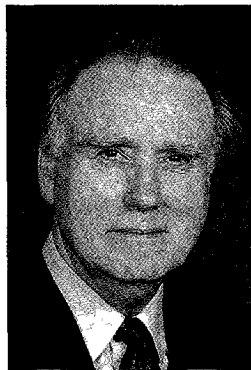
The choice of our theme for this session, "Almost Home," presses in on us images of a journey—a journey that we confess we are soon coming to the end of. The biblical images of the Exodus from Egypt and Abraham's call out of Ur are images of God leading His people to their final destiny—to the home He has prepared for them. That will be the end of the journey. We shall then be where we were always meant to be. The goal of Creation itself will then be realized.

The imagery is reinforced by Jesus when He says: "I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3).^{*} We are not there yet, but we are "almost home." And there is an acute sense of urgency today that characterizes the church to which you and I belong. Yes, we long for the day of "arrival," but the urgency has also to do with what is happening to us, and how we spend our resources and energies on the way. And it is about this that I want to share some thoughts with you today. I have some concerns—and maybe some wishes—about what is happening, or should happen, to us as *individuals*; and some for what is happening to us as a people, as a *community*. My thoughts come in two clusters of three:

A. AS INDIVIDUALS

We are—most of us—certain of the Lord as individuals. We know that He is strong, and we trust His promises. Yet at the same time we are so fragile.

And we are fragile, quite simply, because that is our humanity. And because we are fragile we break easily, and we are hurt; and we don't know how to put together that which is damaged. Our fragility is to be seen in the *relationships* we establish—or fail to establish; in our *choices of val-*



Jan Paulsen
President of the
General Conference
of Seventh-day
Adventists

ues; and in our human tendency to *keep looking back* over our shoulders—sometimes wistfully, because the past beckons and invites us to return; sometimes mournfully, because there is so much pain associated with the past and it does not want to let go. It is so hard for most of us to be finished with the past.

In taking up the three points emphasized above, I'm very much conscious of the fact that our journey is nearing its end and that there is so much to be done that requires focused energy. I see ahead of us a whole new world—a new and wonderful future with Christ.

1. Relationships

Most of us choose our friends on a very exclusive basis. "Birds of a feather flock together," they say. We feel best when surrounded by people who look like us, think like us, and speak like us. And yet the very idea of a closed circle of "friendship among peers" was broken by Jesus. And in that He condemns everything that separates people driven by the doctrine of success, elitism, racism, nationalism, and the sense of exclusiveness that comes with any of that. Relationships with people are meant to be open and free, and mutually enriching, without creating dependencies on one another. So if you are a thought leader, do not gather disciples unto yourself. If you are "attractive," do not market yourself too aggressively. Attracting personal followers is fraught with perils for both you and them. Respect their freedom, and keep yours.

Whether we shall establish relationships with people or not, is not so much a choice we make. It happens simply because we are meant to relate to each other. That is the only way to live life. Loners are condemned to oblivion. So for all practical purposes, we are all involved in relationships. It is the exclusiveness of such relationships, particularly

within the church, that troubles me.

So, I ask, as we are nearing the end of our journey, what is it that drives our relationships? There is obviously a sense of family among believers that brings us close to each other and holds us together. Faith in Jesus is a powerful bonding element, as is our common spiritual heritage. However, there is no place for racism, elitism, and nationalism within the family of faith. They don't belong in the church. Before Christ they stand condemned without qualification. And yet, sadly, these divisions are there. They may arise from feelings of exclusiveness, or anger, or retaliation—sentiments that do not flow in just one direction.

What do we, as members of God's family, plan to do about it? This is a matter that has to be resolved by the time we get to the end of the journey. For these sentiments, these distorted values, cannot be carried over the threshold into the Promised Land. Alien to the heart of Christ, they don't belong in His future.

2. Choices of Values

We are all faced with choices of values every single day. And most of them are choices offered by the environment that surrounds us. What is the acceptable thing in my environment? The choices we make profoundly shape our lives. And they become, like it or not, value statements, for they disclose what we think is important and what we want to live for. So what should I study in college, or should I just drop out of school completely? Whom should I marry; or am I not the marrying kind? Shall I sell my house and move up-market? Should I work for God where I am, or should I immigrate to America? Should I go for the job I was offered? The pay is a lot better and the hours more humane. A "Global Mission volunteer"? Lord, You cannot be serious!

It's late in the day, and we are "almost home." And the choices we make now become very important for us personally, because they form the basis for our reasons for being here as God's instruments of mission.

Sometimes we make stupid choices of a very personal nature and we pay for our foolishness for the rest of our lives. Sometimes—particularly when we are young—we are reluctant to stand up and take charge of our lives and make our own choices. Peer pressure is hard to handle, and we delay or vacillate or try to stay anonymous. And in the vacuum that occurs someone else steps in and makes the choice for us and hands it to us; and it becomes so hard to say no. And therein lies the demise of many a youth to addictions of one kind or another. Sometimes we make choices in the heat of the moment—not so much a considered choice as one that just happens. And we hurt ourselves and others, and we are scarred by it. We wish we could undo history, but we can't. The good news is that there is indeed a "balm in Gilead" that is still good at healing!

The question I ask is this: In making our choices—any choice—how conscious are we of the fact that we are here on a God-sent mission? It is late in the day, and we are here to finish God's mission. How large do these facts loom in our consciousness as we make our choices? Says the Lord: "I, the Lord, have called you: . . . I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and make you . . . a light for the Gentiles" (Isa. 42:6).*

"You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he" (Isa. 43:10). Clearly we are here for a reason other than to eat, drink, and die. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not just one more sociological phenomenon. God is the cause of this church. He is in the process of completing His salvation activities, and we have been chosen by Him for an important role in that connection. All of our choices must be instructed by that fact.

3. The Inclination to Look Back

We all have a tendency to look back—a quick backward glance, like Lot's wife wondering if it wasn't a bit hasty to leave it all behind; or like the

Israelites remembering the meat pots in Egypt. It says of the heroes of faith: "If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return" (Heb. 11:15). We observe that many who used to be with us on this journey have, regrettably, lost their way for one reason or another. Maybe they allowed themselves to be drawn into doubts about the Christian commitment they once made. Maybe the longing for the "better country" waned. We are not as a church doing enough to look lovingly, caringly, and deliberately after the needs of those who have become weary of the journey and whom we sadly do not see any more. "Apostasy" becomes a bad word, almost like spiritual AIDS. It is as though we say: "Shame on them" or "That's *their* problem." No, the church must accept it as *our* problem; and healing must be found. The cost of broken hearts in this life and loss for eternity is too high.

And then there are those who keep looking back because they cannot let bygones be bygones. We've all got things, events, or moments from the past that we wish were not there. But they are, and we cannot change that fact. The Lord has dealt with it and forgiven us; other people have forgiven; but somehow we find it so hard to forgive ourselves. It becomes a plaguing memory that denies us the joy and sense of security we should have as we finish the journey. It is a failure of faith.

It is not the flawlessness or perfection of our lives that is the critical factor, but the role of Christ in our lives, and the unqualified decisions we make for Him. There is then no need to look back. Individually and as a people our eyes are to be fixed on: (1) the goal of our journey, (2) the One who is taking us there; and (3) that which must engage and occupy us until we are there.

B. AS A COMMUNITY

I have here also three main concerns—maybe "ideals" is a better word—that I feel strongly about. Some

of you have heard me touch on them before, but allow me to bring them into focus here again, for I must tell you that each of them will loom large in my vision and preferred values for the time I have the privilege to take part in the leadership of this church. They fall into three categories: *mission*; *quality of life in the church*; and *unity*.

1. Mission

The comprehensive message of the Bible is that humanity's lostness and hopelessness can be resolved only by God, and God has chosen to do that through Jesus Christ—the only way it can be done. The Bible does make it clear that the church is God's selected instrument to carry that good news to people. The Bible spends very little time on speculating on the success or failure of individual mission activities; it just says: "Do it!" Or, in the parting words of Jesus: "You will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). That means simply everywhere! We have no other reason for being! That is why we are.

As we all know well, we human beings establish organizations, societies, clubs, fraternities, lodges, and what not, in order to care for the interests of those who are members, who have paid their dues and are in regular standing. The church is different. It was established by God primarily in the interest of those who are not members. It is important for the church to remember that and not become too preoccupied with itself or feel too special on its own. It is the world of fallen, sinful people that God loves, and He needs the church to communicate that truth by words and deeds. "The burning, consuming love of Christ for perishing souls is the life of the whole system of Christianity" (Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 134).

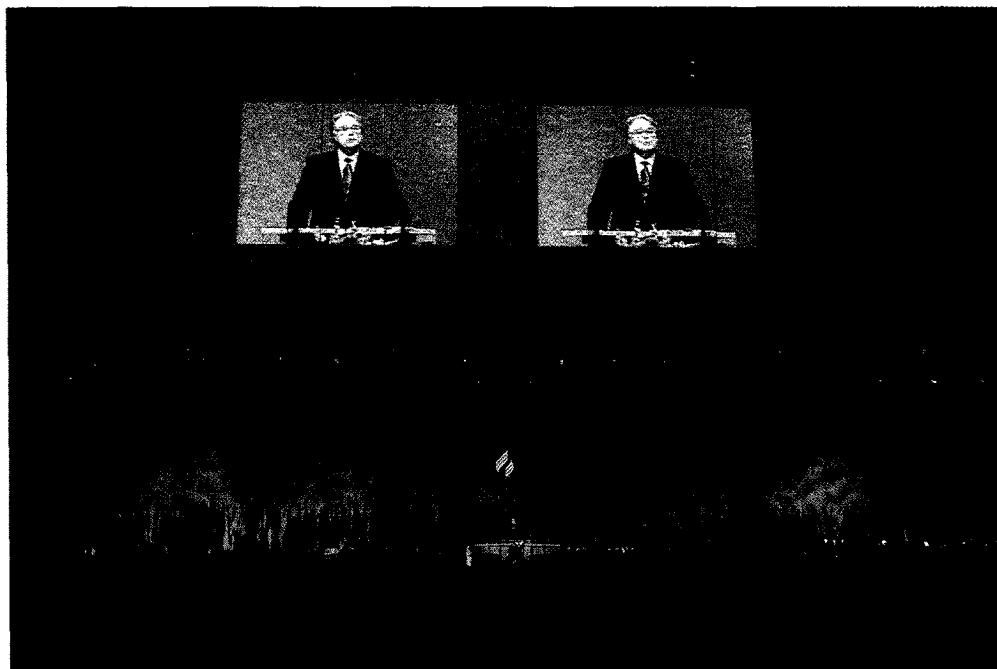
The very simple message that comes from a quick look at Israel of old is that God's choice for them was for

mission and witness. When that service was withheld, Israel's status lost its meaning. When God caused this Advent movement of ours to come on the scene of history some 150 years ago, it was for us to be the carriers of a particular focus on Scripture that God wanted men and women to know

must ask: Why do we do it? Should we not be doing something else? For it is late in the day, and we are "almost home," and we must not now become distracted.

2. The Quality of Life in the Church

The truly wonderful thing about



The huge Jumbotron brought the speakers up close to the large audiences.

about at this end-time in history. And much of that is contained in our understanding of eschatology: the teaching concerning the last events, particularly those applicable to the final stage of earth's history. And that is where we are in time today.

God's love for humanity is broad and comprehensive, and it includes you and me. But we are particularly useful to God as the carriers of His mission. So, as stated in my opening report at the beginning of this session, all that we are and have as a church finds its meaning in mission. I will, therefore, ask that all initiatives we as a church engage ourselves in be identified and defined in terms of mission. So I say to my colleagues in leadership and planning: "Make a note of that." Our strategic planning is for mission. Our use of resources is for mission. And if we don't see the linkage between what we do and "mission," we

Jesus Christ is His immeasurable love for people—individuals who are disfigured, scarred from the battles of life, "smelly," ill-tempered, and cantankerous. But they're wonderfully loved by our Lord! Just by belonging to humanity we are highly valued by Him. We don't have to become anything or achieve anything to be loved by Him. And being highly valued by Him is not something that comes at an advanced stage of life when we have and can display a good track record that testifies to the fine "stuff" of which we are made. Each of us has that intrinsic value simply by being a human being. And as such we are deeply loved by God. Is your local congregation—is my local congregation—able to communicate that? Is this the aura that comes from our churches? Can someone walk off the street into your local church and feel the atmosphere of openness and warmth and loving acceptance? Can they?

ALDEN J. HO

"The people of the world are looking to us to see what our faith is doing for our characters and lives. They are watching to see if it is having a sanctifying effect on our hearts, if we are becoming changed into the likeness of Christ. . . . It is not the opposition of the world that will most endanger us; it is the evil cherished right in our midst that works our most grievous disaster. . . . There is no surer way of weakening ourselves in spiritual things than to be envious, suspicious of one another, full of faultfinding and evil surmising" (Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 153).

Memory takes me back to a local church in which I used to worship years ago. Among those who came was a young teenager. He came reluctantly, he came late, and he would walk in after the others—those were his choices. And he sometimes came in jeans—that was also his choice. He carried anger against the church and the Lord; and there were things happening around him that he found so difficult to understand and accept. He was a hurting and unhappy young man. His appearance irritated one of the local church elders; maybe he dressed so as to make sure he would irritate him. One day the elder said to him: "Go home and change before you come back." He went away, and to this day, many years later, he has not come back.

Just like our Lord, the church must be in the business of saving people. That is where our whole existence is summed up.

So when you define your church, your local congregation, culturally and all, just be sure that it remains good at saving people. For if not, we may have saved a structure and an organization—even a reputation—but we are no longer useful to God.

3. Unity

While our rapid growth is a wonderful thing and a tribute to the God we serve, our very size—internationally, culturally, and politically—and our ethnic diversity pose a formidable challenge in terms of unity. As a world

family we are different from every other church. We are not a fraternity of similar national churches. *We are one!* There are a number of elements of unity that are unique to us:

We have one set of fundamental beliefs.

We have one common *Church Manual*.

We have a common constitutional structure and similar policies.

We are financially "intermarried," and we share our resources around the world.

We have one shared sacred gift in the inspired writings of Ellen White.

These are God's gifts to us. So it is not just "by our love that they shall see that we are one." There are a number of tangible elements of unity that uniquely bind this family around the world together as one. Unity, however, does not look after itself. Hence the injunction: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit" in the one body (Eph. 4:3).

And some of us don't!

I recognize that as this church grows around the world, the local needs of the church will also grow. The local needs will be financial, and there will be needs in terms of how the church should function and express

itself. I understand that we should examine how these local needs can be met. I understand that in the process of doing so we will ask ourselves: What changes can we safely make? Changes with regard to how we share and use our moneys? Changes with regard to how ministry functions? Changes with regard to the structures of administration in our church? I understand the need for these questions to be asked and explored. In our answering them, however, it is important that leadership does not sacrifice that which binds us together worldwide. There is something profoundly biblical about being willing to forgo one's local exercise of freedom in the interest of what is good for the whole international Adventist family. We owe it to Christ, whose idea it was that has brought us to where we are today, to be very deliberate and careful in holding the

family together.

It is late in the day, and we are "almost home." We cannot now become reckless and careless. We owe it to the church, which is His body, to shore up and strengthen the whole body—the international family. In this context, congregationalism does not belong; it is an alien concept that is irreconcilable with what God has given to this church. It is critical that elected leadership accept this and discharge its leadership in harmony with what God has given to us.

So I say to elected leadership: "Don't undo the elements that bind us together—the agreements we have arrived at as a spiritual family!" And I say to the rest of the church: "Hold your leaders accountable."

This is my vision of the church: *I see the Seventh-day Adventist Church as God's redemptive community in these last days; I see it as an open and seeking community. I believe we bring to the world a very particular focus on the Word of God; I see Christ as our Saviour, Friend, and soon-coming Lord; I see the Seventh-day Adventist community as one united family in which the blend of all cultures and races enriches our quality of the life we share; I see this community as a mission instrument for God.*

Can each of us look at this description and say: "Yes, that's my community; this is my people; that's where I belong; this is my spiritual home"?

If you can say yes, I want you to feel safe and loved and at home in this church. I pledge to do what I can to make our church a loving community in which we support each other, carry each other (if need be), lift up our Lord, and seek to live our lives in obedience to Him; and arrange our lives, values, choices—personally and corporately—accordingly.

Now, let us embrace and hold hands firmly. Let us "press together" as we move forward to finish the journey.

* Bible texts in this article are from the New International Version.

[†] At this point Pastor Paulsen related a personal experience from his boyhood. *The Adventist Review* will carry this story in a future issue.

Geoscience Research Institute

Is there really a Creator-God, and if so, why does His existence matter to us in this Age of Science? This question may seem strange to many Seventh-day Adventists, but it is being asked by millions who need to understand the gospel. Answers are needed that will appeal to those who are thoughtfully seeking for meaning in life. Is Genesis still relevant in a world dominated by the secularizing influence of science? We believe it is and that the story of Creation is an important part of the gospel as presented in the three angels' messages of Revelation 14, which includes a call to worship Him who created heaven and earth.

Some four decades ago the General Conference leadership acted to meet the challenge to Scripture increasingly posed by scientific discoveries and theories. The Geoscience Research Institute (GRI) was established for the purpose of studying the relationship of science and Scripture—seeking to develop an interpretation of nature that was in harmony with the teachings of Scripture.

First located on the campus of Andrews University, the institute was moved to Loma Linda University. After 20 years of renting space in buildings owned by the university, the institute moved into a new building of its own in the spring of 2000.

The Staff

Four scientists and three support persons are currently employed in the home office. Clyde Webster, a geochemist, analyzes the proportions of

various elements in volcanic deposits in order to identify their source areas. Elaine Kennedy is a geologist specializing in sedimentology (determining the conditions under which sediments were deposited). Ben Clausen is a nuclear physicist. Jim Gibson is director of the institute. His studies focus on geographical distribution patterns of terrestrial vertebrates, and how they might be interpreted in the context of the biblical flood. Other staff include Katherine Ching, Jan Williams, Ed Collins, and David Rhys, who volunteers his time and efforts to publish *Ciencia de los*



L. James Gibson
Director

Origenes.

The institute operates a branch office in Europe and one in South America. The European branch office is located at Collonges-sous-Saleve, France, and is directed by Jacques Sauvagnat, an invertebrate paleontologist. The South American branch office, on the campus of the River Plate University in Argentina, is directed by Carlos F. Steger, whose research interests are in paleontology.

The Work

Field conferences for church administrators and educators are conducted during the summer. These are designed to include visits to geological sites that have significant implications for understanding earth history, along with numerous lectures to help church leaders keep up with recent developments in creationist thinking. During the past quinquennium two field conferences were conducted in Europe and two in the United States. In addition,

a field school for teachers was held in the state of Washington.

Another GRI activity is BRISCO (Biblical Research Institute Science Council), jointly sponsored with the Biblical Research Institute (BRI). Members of GRI and BRI meet with college teachers of science and religion classes, church administrators, and others to discuss current issues in creationism. Many papers presented at BRISCO have led to published articles in various journals.

The institute publishes three journals. *Origins* is a semitechnical journal published twice a year. *Geoscience Reports* contains material of interest to teachers of Earth sciences in grades 6-10. *Ciencia de los Origenes* is a Spanish-language publication intended for university students in Spanish-speaking countries. Our Web site (www.grisda.org) contains the articles published in *Origins*, material of interest to teachers, and other material of general interest. It also includes links to a wide variety of other organizations, with a diversity of views.

GRI also supports a modest research grant program. During the past quinquennium this program involved 13 research projects addressing various issues of significance in understanding Earth history.

The Future

The institute looks forward to continuing to serve the church in the coming quinquennium. We anticipate that science will continue to bring challenges to the teachings of Scripture, for we have been counseled to expect this (*Evangelism*, p. 593). In this we depend not upon our own efforts, but upon the power of the Creator, who is the author of nature and the inspirer of Scripture.

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies

BY DAVID BIRKENSTOCK, *president*

The Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS) is the youngest General Conference graduate institution. At the 1996 Annual Council, held in Costa Rica, the church voted to take over AIIAS when the Asia-Pacific Division was divided into two divisions, namely, the Northern Asia-Pacific Division and the Southern Asia-Pacific Division.

In 1991 AIIAS was started on a new campus 45 kilometers south of Manila, in the Philippines. A presidential decree from President Marcos in 1987 gave AIIAS permission to operate an international graduate institution in the Philippines with emphasis on the international character of its education. Currently AIIAS has students from 29 different countries and faculty from 16 different countries. The five officers of the institu-

tion come from India, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa, and Spain—a truly international administration.

The institution has two schools, a graduate school and a theological seminary. The graduate school offers master's degrees in the areas of business, health, and education. In the Education Department master's and doctoral degrees are offered in the areas of educational administration, supervision and curriculum, and religious education. The seminary offers the following degrees for pastors: Master of Divinity, Master of Ministry, and Doctor of Ministry. It also offers academic degrees in religion, with a Master of Religion degree and Doctor of Philosophy degree.

English is the medium of instruction, and AIIAS operates an English Language Center to prepare non-English-speaking students to fully benefit from the instruction given.

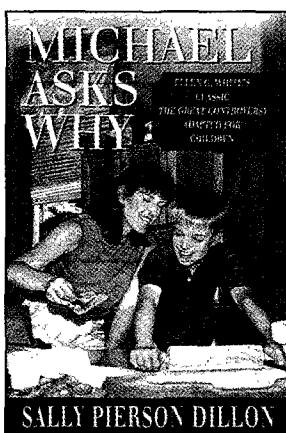
AIIAS is currently serving the higher

education needs of more than 650 students on the master's and doctoral levels, with 137 students on campus in the two schools and an additional 60 students in the English Language Center. It is serving the needs of more than 500 students in Distance Learning Centers situated in the countries of Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Taiwan, Central and South Philippines, and Japan.

The increased enrollment has led to the appointment of more qualified faculty. The library is being automated, and with Internet and e-mail connections it is serving the research needs of the students. Plans for a new administration building have been approved and will be built in the next 12 months, making room for further expansion in the library—the heart of the institution. AIIAS, a colorful mix of many nationalities, is an ideal place for students from all parts of the world to study at an affordable cost.

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LIGHT FOR A
NEW MILLENNIUM

Global Mission

Abednego was embarrassed to ask the question. "Would Global Mission be willing to buy four new spokes for my bicycle?"

I was face-to-face with one of Global Mission's 20,000 frontline volunteer workers in Sudan. As a Global Mission pioneer he rode 287 miles by bike to his target area. He broke down prejudice by praying for a sick girl who was healed, and became known as the man who talked to the Creator of the world.

Abednego started a new group of believers that was eventually broken up by the civil war. He survived bombing and the strafing of bullets and then came back to establish a second church 140 miles away. While he was traveling to meetings a sniper shot him off his bike, and he slept the night in a ditch. Now he stood before me, in his worn-out sandals, wondering if Global Mission could possibly replace the spokes on his bicycle.

Abednego symbolizes the dedication and commitment that have fired Global Mission since it began in 1990 and led to more than 16,000 churches and thousands more congregations being established, increasing Seventh-day Adventist Church membership from 6 million to 11 million.

Reaching the Unreached With Hope

Global Mission is a special initiative, voted at the 1990 General Conference session, to reach the unreached with hope and to establish new groups of believers in unentered areas. The church identified 2,300 groups of 1 mil-

lion people in which there were no Seventh-day Adventists, and it was hoped Global Mission would reach each group by 2000.



Mike Ryan
Director

Since 1990 world population growth has added another 600 groups, making the total 2,900. We rejoice that today more than 2,000 have an Adventist presence, but some 900 remain a challenge. We can look back at the past decade and see tremendous advances in some areas:

- In 1990 no churches or members existed in Cambodia. Today there are nearly 4,000 church members and 65 churches.

- Every conference in the former Soviet Union has at least quadrupled its number of members in the past seven years.

- In 1990 there were 11 church members in the state of Haryana, north India. Today there are more than 400, and more than 5,000 regularly attend worship services in more than 100 congregations.

- China has had the largest growth of anywhere in the 10/40 window. Since 1990 China has had 40,000 more baptisms than the Euro-Asia Division, which includes Russia and the former Soviet Union.

- An average of 4.5 churches have been established every day since Global Mission began.

Global Mission Pioneers

Global Mission pioneers are lay members—usually young people—who volunteer for at least a year to establish a congregation in an unentered area among people of their own culture.

These pioneers share through a wholistic ministry. They understand the culture and language, and literally live, eat, and work with the people.

According to estimates, pioneers have established more than 11,000 new Adventist churches and thousands more congregations since 1990.

Global Mission Study Centers

One of the architects of Global Mission once visited Egypt and was overwhelmed by the relative handful of believers after 100 years of Adventist work. In response to this kind of need, Global Mission has set up study centers around the world to help find better ways of sharing the good news. These study centers are specializing in the areas of Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, secularism, and Islam.

New Initiatives for the Secular West

At least 2,600 people attended the debut "One Night of Your Life" program in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in February. A new Global Mission initiative, "One Night of Your Life," aims to reach people in secular urban areas who don't attend church. Future programs are planned for North America, Europe, and Australia.

Global Mission is also partnering with Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI) in the Total Employment program, which challenges every Adventist graduate from a tertiary institution to consider finding a job in an area where there's no Adventist church or an "at risk" church.

This short report has emphasized statistics. Just remember, however, that each statistic represents individual children of God who have come home to their loving Father through the commitment of dedicated people such as Abednego.

Women's Ministries Department

Her world had crashed. Her husband had been murdered. She had children to support. She had no skills.

Then someone told her that she was smart and suggested she apply for a women's ministries scholarship (supported by funds from the sale of women's devotional books) and go to college. She could learn skills and have a career, enabling her to support her children. This woman has now received the scholarship and is enrolled in college.

The mother and daughter-in-law hated each other. There was no talking, no understanding. But they belonged to women's ministries, and their church decided to hold a Secret Prayer Friend Month.

Unknown to each other but guided by the Holy Spirit, these two women drew each other's name. Could they pray for each other? They did. When the month ended and partners were revealed, each realized she had been prayed for by the one she hated. Touched with emotion, they embraced and forgave.

The five women had been Christians for four years. But because they could not read, Sabbath school, church, and worship were boring. Then women's ministries in their country began a major literacy project. These women were part of the first class. After they had studied for six months, the pastor invited the women up front one Sabbath, and each read two verses from the Bible. It was the first time any of them had been up front, and they said they felt their eyes had been blind from birth but now they were healed.

In one division women's ministries

dedicated a month to evangelism. The women from all the unions planned the meetings, prepared the sermons, and preached the gospel. When the results were tallied, more than 15,000 persons had given their hearts to the Lord in baptism.



Ardis Stenbakken
Director

In another part of the world, teenage girls gather for a special weekend. They laugh and they cry, and they learn that they are loved by their church. Those in women's ministries minister, mentor, and guide them along the difficult path of becoming a Christian woman.

Parts of the Whole

In other parts of this network, women have special projects for wells in Africa, for small-enterprise development in the Philippines, for literacy in Cambodia, and for health, cooking, and literacy classes among the Masai in Kenya. Around the world women bring their non-Adventist friends to retreats and congresses, where these women can meet Jesus and be filled with love. One such attendee exclaimed, "I never thought that Adventist women had so much love for each other and for their Saviour. I'm starting to believe in what they believe!"

Women's ministries in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire marched to create awareness of the advance of AIDS and held seminars to educate the public about its spread; women in South Africa collected hundreds of blankets for AIDS babies. In Russia a woman evangelist sponsored by the division and women's ministries holds meetings in city after city, attracting a wide cross section of

the citizenry. In Sri Lanka women help refugee children, and in Sudan women's ministries began a bridal rental shop to provide employment. Women in this ministry are making a difference in their churches and in their world.

Women's Ministries Defined

Although no exact statistics are available, the best estimate is that 70 percent of the church is female—that's more than 7 million women! Women's Ministries is the department that encourages, trains, supports, and represents this majority of the church. During the past quinquennium women have been fulfilling the prophecies of Joel 2:28, 29 (and repeated by Peter in Acts 2) in diversified ways. Women's Ministries is not just a single program, but a department that helps women become involved in the entire mission of the church. It is women who discover the gifts God has given them, assess the needs in their own churches and communities, and design ministries to meet those needs. The General Conference department supplies resources; networking, training, and support.

Outreach and Training Go Hand in Hand

One of the most exciting aspects of this involvement by women has been the outreach and evangelism that have resulted in more than 180,000 baptisms since 1992.

During the first four years of this quinquennium, women held more than 42,000 retreats, to which more than 2 million women came—189,312 of those were invited nonchurch members. (Because the Women's Ministries Department is new, these figures are only partial totals.) And

through the efforts of women's ministries, 41,666 women have been reclaimed to the church.

Training women in leadership is an important part of the mission of women's ministries—during these four years more than 37,000 training events were conducted. Another 184,000 meetings have been held for the benefit of women, their families, churches, and communities.

Early Start

Women's ministries actually began in 1898 under the direction of Sarepta Myrenda Irish Henry with the encouragement of Ellen G. White. It folded about two years later with the untimely death of Henry.

In the late 1970s and 1980s the church began looking for ways to encourage and include women in its mission. At the Annual Council of 1990 Rose Otis was elected to direct the Office of Women's Ministries. At the 1995 General Conference session, Women's Ministries became a full department. Within a year of that time, all divisions had selected directors.

In January 1997 Otis accepted a position with the North American Division and was replaced by Dorothy Eaton Watts. When Watts moved to India 10 months later, Ardis Stenbakken was elected. Lynnetta Siagian Hamstra was elected associate director in 1998. In spite of the changes in leadership, the goals, aims, and ministries of the department have continued unchanged.

Days and Devotionals

One of the most exciting departmental ministries is the devotional book project. To date, nine books have been published. Men and women are enjoying these and finding that they are excellent gifts as well as outreach opportunities for those who are not church members. Baptisms and recommitments have resulted. These devotional books have now been translated into Portuguese and Chinese, and discussion is under way for several more languages.

Equally important is the fact that all profits from the devotional books go

to fund college scholarships for women. Thus far 453 scholarships have been given. This has made a tremendous difference to women in every division of the world.

Two special days on the church calendar are dedicated to women's ministries: the International Women's Day of Prayer in March and Women's Ministries Emphasis Day in June. Women use programs prepared by the General Conference or develop their own.

Project: Mentoring

Mentoring is an important aspect of Women's Ministries. Every woman has expertise she can share with someone younger. In this age of fractured families and urbanization there is tremendous need in the church for someone to mentor and guide our young girls, career women, and mothers. As women, old or young, move into new areas of leadership, mentoring is even more important.

Empowering Resources

The General Conference office also maintains a database of names of women available as speakers, writers, or for leadership positions.

To help women in their various ministries, a number of resources have been developed. Among these are the new *Evangelism Manual*, *Easy Programs for Women's Ministries Events*, *Bible Studies for Busy Women*, *Prayer and Love Saves* (for small groups praying for loved ones who have left the church), and *So You Want to Begin a Literacy Project*.

The *Women's Ministries Manual* and other resource materials have also been revised and updated.

Daughters of God: Messages Especially for Women, a compilation bringing together significant portions of Ellen White's counsel to women, was released by the White Estate in 1998.

The General Conference Women's Ministries Department publishes a monthly newsletter. The South Pacific Division publishes a subscription magazine for all women, *Going Places With Women's Ministries*. In North America women's ministries uses *Women of Spirit* (published by the Review and Herald) in a Heart Call program to reach out to women who have left the church. It is proving to be very successful.

Challenges

We face a diverse world in which both men and women must be able to reach others for Christ. One of the

challenges facing the church is the 10/40 window. In this vast area are millions of women who can be reached successfully only by women. And in our own Adventist churches many are hurting—it is the women who can best reach out to these individuals. As the church becomes more inclusive, valuing the perspective and talents of the majority of its



MINISTRY OUTREACH: Meibel Guedes, director of women's ministries for Central Brazil, talks to a homeless woman who just received supper at an outreach in São Paulo, Brazil.

members, it will become stronger. Women want to be involved in helping the church be a place of hope and healing, and they thank God for the opportunities that women's ministries affords them.

Ministerial Association

Suman is a pastor's wife—simple, little educated, but with a commitment to stand by her husband. When she accompanied her husband to the World Ministers' Council in Pune, India, in 1997, a new world opened before her. At the council she learned that being a pastor's wife is more than standing by her husband. It is also being an active participant in pastoral ministry. She went home to Jalna, a teeming sugarcane city, and decided to work for one class of women—prostitutes, the downtrodden castaways of society. Within a few months, through giving Bible studies, she had more than 40 climb out of the gutters of human greed and accept the true love of One who never forsakes.

When they were baptized, all these women found themselves unemployed and unemployable. What should Suman do? She wrote to Shepherdess International for counsel. Suman is a good seamstress. Why not, suggested Shepherdess International, start a tailoring center? Soon one was in operation. And soon the jobless new members of God's family were learning a trade of their own. Through their witness, nearly 100 others were brought into the church in two years. Empowering one person enlarged God's family in that distant city.

Empowering and affirming has been the task of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference ever since it was founded by action of the 1922 General Conference session. At that time the church had about 2,500 ministers, and the association's founder-

secretary, A. G. Daniells, with 21 years of experience as General Conference president, was determined to make the Seventh-day Adventist pastor well

trained, suitably equipped and affirmed, spiritually nurtured, pastorally and evangelistically challenged. The task of the association 78 years later remains the same, but with a much wider purview. The pastor and the pastoral spouse form the focus of its ministry; evangelism and congregational nurture constitute its unrelenting pursuit.

These tasks are done through the several entities of the association.

Ministry magazine is at the forefront of providing support to pastors around the world—providing a theological anchor to what we believe; extending practical support and strategies to the pastor's personal, professional, and family life; and building a global ministerial family that will be aware of the cross-cultural currents of Adventism without losing the unifying factor of the Adventist family. In addition, the magazine goes to nearly 50,000 clergy of other denominations under the PREACH (Project Reaching Every Active Clergy Home) program, building bridges of understanding with these pastors and winning scores of them to a new appreciation of the Adventist message. The PREACH program took new wings recently when satellite presentations, with some 500 downlink centers in the Western Hemisphere, reached nearly 15,000 pastors from other churches.

Affirming the professional and pastoral life of the pastor is effectively

done through the resources the association provides. Since the last General Conference session, the association has produced 75 books, 11 of them in Spanish, and 37 videos on a wide range of subjects to help pastors in their work. They cover theology, preaching, evangelism, interpersonal relations, counseling, marriage and family, training laity, and conflict resolution, to name a few. One unique feature of these resources: many of these books sell for \$1, a special outreach to help pastors in economically challenged parts of the world field. In addition, the association has made it possible with special arrangements with Review and Herald Publishing Association to provide pastors in these areas with *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* for US\$57. Because of these resources, pastors in all parts of the world now have access to pastoral books and sermon resources that they did not formerly have.

Then there is the Seminar in a Box—a unique attempt to provide professional seminars on 32 how to topics to pastors and church leaders through videos. Each seminar is complete in itself and when used with a study guide can provide excellent professional training to pastors and laity in local churches. Academic-level training at home is within the pastor's reach!

In addition, *Elder's Digest*, published each quarter, provides practical help for local church elders as they prepare sermons, conduct Bible studies, and care for various church services. In many parts of the world elders are increasingly taking on the responsibility of caring for the local churches, freeing the pastor for church planting and evangelistic activities.

Training of pastors and elders cannot be done by resources alone. Since



James A. Cress
Secretary

the Utrecht General Conference session did not hold a World Ministers' Council, the General Conference mandated that the council go to the ministers. As a result during 1995-2000, the Ministerial Association conducted 60-plus councils in all the world divisions. Some 16,000 pastoral workers—nearly 85 percent of the ministerial task force—and hundreds of spouses interfaced with world ministerial leaders, including experienced theologians, evangelists, pastoral leaders, and shepherdess coordinators.

Efficient pastoral training is a task that begins before the individual enters the ministry. During this quinquennium, in cooperation with the Education Department, the Ministerial Association has taken an active part in developing the profile of an Adventist

tionally capable, focused on the practical, oriented to pastoral realities, and culturally diverse. It is involved in direct evangelism, and also seeks to motivate and train evangelists and pastors around the world. From large metropolitan centers to simple villages, the "how" of evangelism is transmitted through training materials and seminars, and by the direct involvement of pastors and the Ministerial Association staff at every level. As a result, new dynamics have come to play in evangelism.

Recently, one such evangelistic effort in India providentially brought a pastor from a charismatic group to appreciate the uniqueness of our message. He invited our leaders to study with him and his fellow, independent pastors. Intensive studies led to the baptism of 60 pastors, and they in turn

became instruments in bringing their congregations to an understanding of the three angels' messages. What does the church do with 60 new pastors and congregations? The offering at the Toronto World Ministers' Council will go toward training and establishing these pastors.

With such bold, altogether-unexpected happenings around the world, evangelism is spreading by leaps and bounds. The

work of pastors, evangelists, teachers, lay witnesses, and Global Mission volunteers has added more than 800,000 members in 1998 alone. But how shall all these be cared for? The church cannot afford to have one pastor for one congregation; nor is it desirable, if we take into account the New Testament model of nurture. Intentional training and equipping of elders to care for local churches has been carried out by the Ministerial Association at every

level from the General Conference to the local church. Such training includes empowering pastoral spouses as well.

Shepherdess International seeks to assist pastoral spouses to complement their spouses' ministry. Shepherdess has come to be recognized around the world as an important part of the Ministerial Association. Every division has a program to equip and empower the pastoral spouse. Suman is just one small example. In the past few years pastoral spouses in the Philippines have undertaken evangelistic meetings, resulting in hundreds of baptisms. In India, pastoral spouses have carried on successful programs to bring healing to abused women and to present God's Word to women in prisons. Evangelism by pastoral spouses in that country has led to 1,084 baptisms during the past five years. Pastoral spouses in Bangladesh are studying the Bible with women, while those in Czechoslovakia are teaching healthful cooking. These and other projects in other areas of the world are supported by the proceeds from several books published by the Ministerial Association: *Seasoned With Love*, part 1 and part 2, two cookbooks, and *Seasoned With Laughter*, a book recounting humorous happenings in pastoral life. To keep the shepherdesses together as a family, the organization publishes the *Shepherdess International* journal in English, Spanish, Russian, and French.

What of the future? For every trained pastor there are many more in need of training, motivation, and empowering. For every Suman there are scores of pastoral spouses who need to be challenged and enlisted in the pastoral work. For every church cared for by an elder there are hundreds who are in need of trained and committed laypersons to function as stewards of the gospel. So the work of the Ministerial Association is never complete. It is always part of a process of training, motivating, and empowering, as the entire church moves into the twenty-first century, almost home on its way to the eternal kingdom.

Session Snapshot



JOEL D. SPRINGER

TOGETHERNESS: Emily Nili Endehipa, Naomi Mose, Neroly Daboyan, and Eunice Kapo, from Papua New Guinea, enjoy the lovely Canadian weather.

pastor and in encouraging colleges and seminaries around the world to offer theological and pastoral education that fulfills the completion of that profile. The program to be coordinated and fostered by the International Board of Ministerial Training will ensure a more practical and responsive ministerial core.

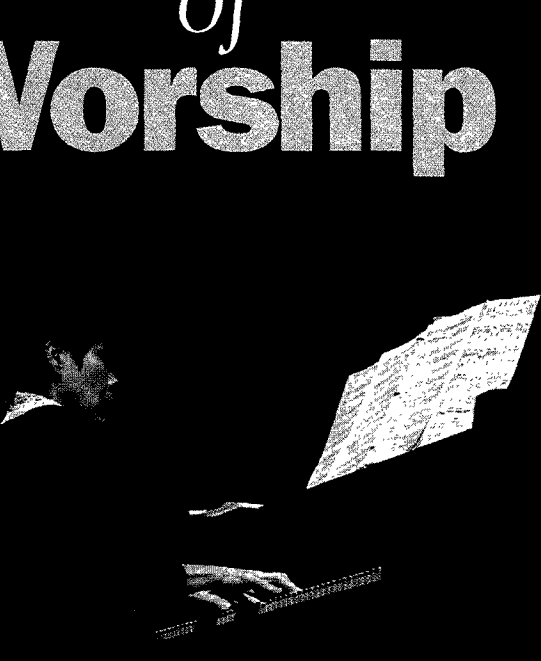
Evangelism continues to remain the watchword of the association. The Ministerial Association staff is profes-



Mass choir from Toronto churches

Images of Worship

Kindergarten
Sabbath
School



Pianist Lily Pan Diehl, from California



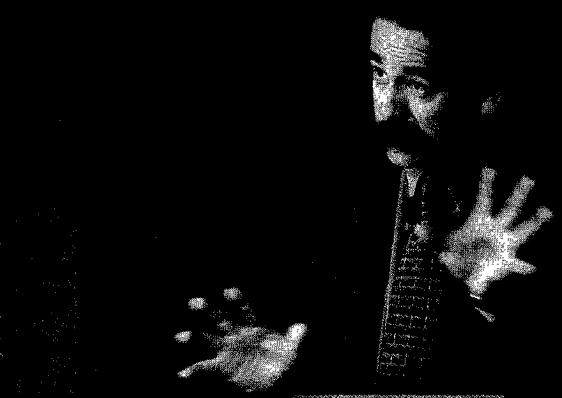
A tiger by the tail

London Choir, from the Trans-European Division



A host of musicians shared their talents at the keyboard during the session.

Youth leader José Rojas, North American Division



Joni D. Spangler



Joni D. Spangler

ALON J. H.

John Nixon, from Oakwood College



Joni D. Spangler

Elkin Mosquera, from the Inter-American Division

Christian Record Services

By the grace of God, Christian Record Services (CRS) has been a light to blind individuals—changing and saving lives for Jesus—for 100 years. At first this light was feeble—a tiny ministry for the blind people located in Michigan. That light grew into Christian Record Services International, with offices in Lincoln, Nebraska, and Oshawa, Ontario. In 1999, 36,548 blind persons in 75 countries benefit from Christian Record Services International publications and ministries.



Larry Pitcher
Director

The birth of CRS was remarkable because of the severe difficulties Austin Wilson faced. Wilson was blind. He had no money, no donor list, no building or braille press. He was a new Adventist who had just arrived in Battle Creek, Michigan. But Wilson had hope born of his love for God's truth. He wanted blind people to know Jesus as he knew Jesus and began to lobby church leaders with this message: "We need a work specifically for the blind!"

Church leaders responded by giving Wilson a little room in the Review and Herald Publishing Association building. In January 1900 Austin and his wife, Johanna, began printing the *Christian Record* on a homemade braille printing press. Very soon after, blind people all over the world were learning about Wilson's faith in the return of Jesus. The work of Christian Record Publishing became our church's first organized effort to reach blind people.

For the next 100 years various crises confronted Christian Record. First the Review and Herald building burned

down, destroying all of Wilson's work. Then, after he moved the Christian Record office to Lincoln, Nebraska, his health failed, causing him to retire prematurely. Next a decade of poor management almost ended Christian Record's work. Then came the Great Depression, World War II, the rapid growth of the Canadian and Spanish work, and the terrible debt crisis of the 1990s. Still, through it all, God always enabled Christian Record Services to keep its focus—bringing the light of Jesus to blind people.

Light in Real Life

The testimony of Margaret and Jake Harris provides an example of how God used CRS as a light to the visually impaired. During the 1980s Dick Bramham, a Christian Record Services representative, contacted Margaret. Bramham arranged for her to receive several publications for blind people. When he retired from Christian Record Services, Joyce Shobe, Bramham's replacement, took up his work.

Shobe interested Margaret in taking Bible studies that Christian Record produces for the visually impaired. Soon she had completed both the "Life and Teachings of Christ" and "Come Alive With Jesus" courses in extra-large print. Margaret wanted more, so Shobe contacted Pastor Ken Lockwood of the Arroyo Grande Seventh-day Adventist Church in California to ask for help. Soon Art and Marilyn Warner paid a visit to Margaret and her husband, Jake. Every week for the next year and a half the Warners stud-

ied the Bible with the Harris family.

In a short time the love of Christ bonded these two couples, and when Art and Marilyn invited Jake and Margaret to attend the NET '98 NeXt Millennium Seminar, with Dwight Nelson, they accepted. After the meetings ended, Lockwood led Jake and Margaret into membership into the Arroyo Grande church. Later Margaret said, "We praise the



A LIFE-CHANGING CREATION: Austin Wilson demonstrates his braille press, fashioned from a hand-operated clothes wringer. Wilson converted the wringer into a press and mounted the device on a table, circa 1900.

Lord for guiding us to His true church. We could not ask for a greater church family."

Worldwide Impact

Blind people from around the world have shared similar testimony about the ministry of Christian Record Services. Pastor Daniel Mbwe, from Chisombezi, Malawi, wrote, "We are very thankful indeed to see that many of the blind people in villages and

nearby areas are enjoying listening to the tapes.”

A blind braille subscriber from Hong Kong, China, Yiu Tak-Hing, finds great help in the Christian Record Services braille publications, exclaiming: “I have to thank you for sending me the *Christian Record* and *The Student*. Both

of them are good for me. . . . Let God bless you, your workers, and your family members.”

Kimberly, of Atlanta, Texas, wrote, “Your tapes that you send have gotten me through the most difficult times in my life. In the

depths of depression, I would sit in my room for hours in the dark, listening to those tapes. One set of those tapes gave a message about why we suffer. After my father died I couldn’t

understand why. Those tapes gave me examples in the story that I could understand, and in that, I found comfort.”

And Fred, a blind camper from Canada, said this when asked how he enjoyed the first winter camp: “I’m at a loss for words. I’m so content! I love everyone. I just love this camp. I’m coming back next year. Thanks to everyone who donates to Christian Record [Services]. I love you guys.”

Brighter, Still Brighter

The light for those who are blind needs to shine even brighter. Blind people and pastors from Central and

South America have requested that CRS increase its Spanish-language publications. Therefore, Christian Record Services International plans to double its Spanish materials.

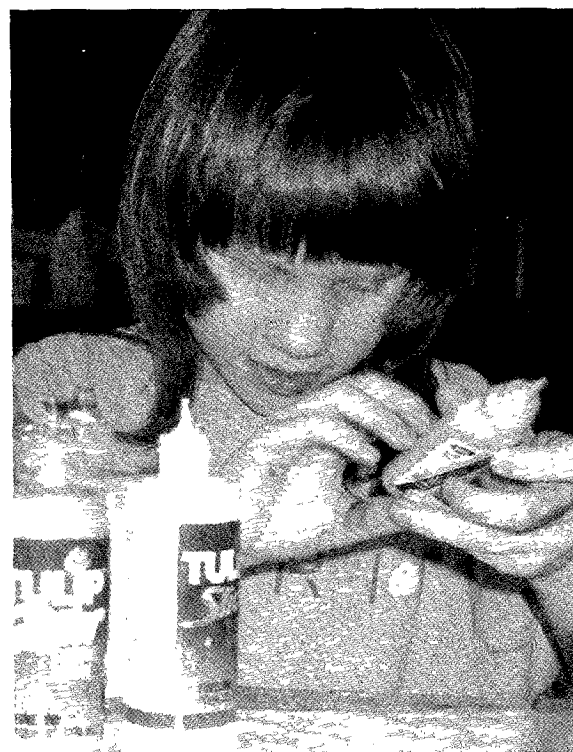
This means twice as many Spanish magazines and tapes, as well as camps to provide light for blind individuals.

Through the “DoubleIT” Challenge, Christian Record Services plans to double all CRS publications by 2005. This goal can be accomplished only by God’s grace and power, since 98 percent of the Christian Record Services annual budget must be raised from many loyal Adventist and Christian supporters.

Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt. 5:14, NIV). During the next quinquennium Christian Record plans to be the city of light to those who are blind, shining God’s truth around the world. We have this vision. Because of God’s grace and blessings, Christian Record Services International is committed to contacting every blind person we can find and offering free Christian publications and services so that they may know that Jesus is the Light of their world.



SMILES ABOARD: A summer counselor takes a break with a blind female camper.



CRAFTY COMPOSITIONS: A young camper, Natalie, works on crafts during a summer camp art session.

CRS Points of Light for 1999

Blind persons contacted	34,555
Subscribers to publications	38,217
Publications (braille and large print)	82,040
NCBC (National Camps for Blind Children)	26
Blind campers	1,102
Library users	15,561
Bible School subscribers	995
Income (U.S.A. and Canada)	\$6,720,403

Children's Ministries Department

The mission of the Children's Ministries Department is to facilitate and coordinate a broadening and deepening of the church's spiritual nurture of children, our entrusted source of church growth, in order to draw them into a lifelong redemptive friendship with Christ and a commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Five years and a few days ago no one could have predicted that children's ministries would become a separate department. Before Utrecht, as plans were made to separate the Church Ministries Department into specific departments, it was decided that the Youth Department would include the work for children. At the General Conference session youth directors from around the world foresaw that their workload would double with no extra help provided. Their reluctance sent the issue back to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee with the suggestion that children's ministries should become a separate department.

On July 4, 1995, children's ministries became the newest department of the church, the only department in history to be suggested from the floor at a session and then voted into place during that same session. Within a year all but one division of the world field, as well as many unions and conferences, had elected children's ministries directors. From this abrupt and miraculous beginning, children's ministries has sought to broaden and deepen the ministry to children, thus ensuring the future of the church.

Focus Areas

Virginia Smith and her secretary, LuWana Kumalae, have worked with division leaders and contract writers, editors, translators, and illustrators to establish a strong foundation for the new department, whose work encompasses the following three emphases:



Virginia S. Smith
President

1. *Ministry to Adventist Children.* Children today are bombarded with secular influences from media, cyberspace, music, friends, and public school. Each of these also competes with Bible study. The church needs to do more to help parents fill children's

hearts and minds with thoughts of God and His Word. Every local church should provide at least four hours each week of spiritual nurture and religious education for children aged 5 to 14.

The Children's Ministries Department offers both training courses and inexpensive materials with no royalties or other prohibitive costs. Thousands of seminars are held worldwide for those who work with children. Up-to-date methods of instruction lead to an effective use of the new materials for studying the Bible, denominational history, health, the Spirit of Prophecy, and a variety of other religious education topics. These resources continue to be developed. As they become available they are translated into the languages that are spoken in more than one world division.

2. *Involving Adventist Children in Ministry to Others.* The best way to learn is to teach. Furthermore, spiritual growth is greatest in the process of sharing. For this reason it is only logical to involve children in the mission

of the church.

Around the world children are making significant contributions to the church's ministry. Since data collection began in 1996, several thousand baptisms a year have resulted from children's witness. In addition, they play a significant part in other functions of the church aside from evangelism. Their simple tasks give them a sense of inclusion, that they are necessary and valuable to the life of the church. As a result they are bonded to the adults they work with, and by extension to the church and the Lord.

3. *Ministry to Children Outside the Church.* In any country of the world the largest unreached group is the children. Currently very little spiritual nurture is offered for children unless someone brings them to the church (for example, to Vacation Bible School once a year). This is beginning to change. At least two divisions now have Bible resources for children on the Internet. The Children's Ministries Department has prepared radio programs and three sets of basic lessons to be used in any situation in which children have little knowledge of the Bible. In addition, a new branch Sabbath school set will soon be ready. It is a one-year curriculum entitled "My God Is So Great."

What we do for children is never lost. Not only do Christian love and attention have a profound and lasting impact on their lives, but ripples of influence continually affect their families as well. Many parents who would never respond to advertising for evangelistic meetings will send their children to church programs or allow them to study Bible lessons. Indirectly the parents also receive the Word of God.

Publications

Many divisions of the world struggle with access and cost in order to provide religious educational material for children. To support their efforts, the Department of Children's Ministries is continually preparing inexpensive resources that can easily be adapted to the local situation. In addition to fortifying the minds of the children themselves, one of the objectives of the department is to interest and educate the adults who work with children. It is rewarding to see this objective being met. For example, *Making the Bible a Delight*, which introduces Bible study by means of a picture time line, is at least as meaningful and memorable for adults as it is for children. Many people who were intimidated by the nearly

700 pages in *The Great Controversy* are now learning its message through the book *Michael Asks Why*.

International Service, 1996-2000

During the past quinquennium the General Conference director has supported the work of each division's children's ministries personnel by visits, seminars, and conferences in more than 35 countries.

Serving the Church

The Department of Children's Ministries is happy to collaborate with other ministries in their activities for children. During the past quinquennium joint projects have been completed with Adventist World Radio, the Ministerial Association, the Ellen

G. White Estate, as well as the Communication, Family, and Publishing departments. Other joint projects are in progress.

Children's ministries in every part of the globe is fulfilling the divine imperative of Malachi 4:5, 6 to make adult-child bonding a major feature of the final message before Christ's second coming. The ongoing result is that children know they are the church of today. They know God's grace is theirs. As they grow in wisdom and stature, learning more of God's Word by knowledge and personal experience, they are equipped to make thoughtful, Spirit-guided decisions now and in years to come, ensuring the future of the church.



A BURDEN FOR KIDS: General Conference and division leaders gather in 1996 for the first Children's Ministries World Advisory.

Tenth Business Meeting

57th General Conference Session, July 5, 2000, 9:30 a.m.

ALFRED C. MC CLURE: I want to welcome you this morning; I'm glad to see that so many are involved in the business sessions as well as the devotional periods.

As we begin this morning I would like to take time to remind you that there are some very important days that we have been celebrating. Sabbath, July 1, was Canada Day, a special day for the nation in which we find ourselves, the great nation of Canada.

Yesterday was United States Independence Day, July 4, and a lot is made of that in that nation.

Today is another very special day. You may not be aware of that. I am not sure that it is a national holiday anywhere that is of particular importance this morning, but it is a special day to a very important figure in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Today is the birthday of Elder Neal Wilson, and it is a very special birthday, his eightieth. Elder, would you please stand?

[Delegates sang "Happy Birthday" to Elder Wilson.]

A remarkable man, one whom we all love and who has served this church for most of those 80 years. His father was a leader in the church; Elder and Mrs. Wilson have served the church in many capacities internationally, as well as being our General Conference president. So, Elder, we want to wish you the very best of birthdays and many, many more.

There is another item of business that we need to care for before we return to our agenda. The Nominating Committee has another report.

NIELS-ERIK ANDREASEN: Yesterday, you remember, we brought a recommendation to you and you voted it. The recommendation was to refer the election of general field secretaries to Annual Council. Several people have asked us what this means for these persons between now and Annual Council time. The General Conference policy manual has made provision for just such a thing. These field secretaries do remain in General Conference office until the time of the Annual Council. And now the secretary of the committee will read the new names.

DELBERT BAKER: For the position of treasurer of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division I move we accept the name of R. Martin Moores. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of secretary of the Euro-Asia Division I move the name of Michael F. Kaminsky. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of treasurer of the Euro-Asia Division I move the name of

Guillelmo Baiggi. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of director of the General Conference Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries Department I move the name of Richard Stenbakken. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of director of the General Conference Children's Ministries Department I move the name of Virginia L. Smith. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of director of the General Conference Communication Department I move the name of Rajmund Dabrowski. [Motion was seconded and voted.]

For the position of director of the General Conference Education Department I move the name of Humberto M. Rasi. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of director of the General Conference Health Ministries Department I move the name of Allan R. Handysides. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association I move the name of James A. Cress. [Motion was seconded and voted.]

ALFRED C. MC CLURE: We are back to the agenda. We are in the midst of a discussion of item 487, beginning on page 231 of the agenda book. Before we resume our discussion of this item, the chair needs to remind you that there is a motion before us to adopt this proposal. That motion has been seconded. So we are in the discussion phase of this action. The chair should also remind you that yesterday we voted a two-minute time limit on those who go to the microphone. Also, please remember that while it is important that we have opportunity to have open and free discussion, we should do our best to avoid repetition. Again, before we go to the microphone, I have asked Lowell Cooper, the chair of the *Church Manual* Committee, who brought this proposal before us, to make a statement about where we are and how we need to proceed.

LOWELL C. COOPER: If I transgress the two-minute limit, I beg your forgiveness. I would begin by saying that while Dr. Veloso and I have had the privilege of working with the *Church Manual* Committee, the document that is before us is not a *Church Manual* Committee document. It is here as a document of the General Conference Executive Committee. The *Church Manual* Committee has been the servant of the General Conference Executive Committee and is continuing in that capacity here at this session.

We would like to make a couple observations and then hopefully draw us back to the large picture. I noticed yesterday that there were some concerns on theology that were referred to in the document before us. I fear that we are heading into some difficult waters if we attempt to import all theological positions into this document. I would appeal to the body to let the document speak to the issue at hand. When a musician plays the piano, he or she does not play all the keys on the piano, even though they are there. And so I am rather concerned that we avoid trying to do theology here in this document, particularly theology that relates to other positions expressed or unexpressed by the church.

Second, I want to cover a point that has been implied in a number of the speeches, and that is the matter of legislation in the church. I understand and accept the statements that have been made that the Holy Spirit is able to speak to a local church concerning some delicate issues. But I am wondering if the Holy Spirit speaks only in small groups. Is it possible that there are times that the Holy Spirit speaks to the collective body and that the body also has a right to speak? The issues that we are dealing with here are often extremely divisive in a local church. They can threaten the existence of the local church. Is there not then a place for church order? Is there not an opportunity for a local church, in the throes of these highly polarized and intense and volatile issues, to receive counsel from the world church? I would appeal to the body to think of the Holy Spirit's role in the responsibility that we have in being a world church. Discipline is always hard. And I think that part of our difficulty in dealing with the topic is that of discipline. It is never pleasant. And even when administered in love, it is always distasteful, it is always dangerous, it is always delicate, and yet it is also defensible.

And so I would like to draw us back to the broad picture of what is before us in this chapter, to see again what were the broad objectives of both the commission and the *Church Manual* Committee and the General Conference Committee in sending this document to this session. First of all, it was the intention to bring together a statement of biblical teaching and not just disciplinary procedures, as is the case in the chapter that currently exists in the *Church Manual*. There is something that the church needs to affirm about marriage. But there are also times when, having made affirmation, the church cannot be silent.

We have intended and attempted to use less judgmental language in this chapter. The existing chapter almost implies that in a situation of marital tension and divorce, one party is guilty and the other is innocent. But that is not always the case.

We have attempted in this chapter to acknowledge that there are situations in which divorce may be the only practical option for a couple.

We have tried in this chapter to indicate that the basis for divorce is not always the basis for remarriage. There is a difference.

We have tried to indicate in this chapter that the administration of discipline is always inadequate and incomplete without a redemptive intent. Discipline is not only to express our inability to live with a certain situation, but to reclaim, and to restore, and to bring back a situation that is in harmony with the Word of God and with human relationships.

And finally, we have attempted in this chapter to speak about ministry to families—to those preparing for marriage and to those who are in a marriage.

At the end of our discussion, at the end of our General Conference session, we need to take something home that will be of value to the church. We feel that the item that is before us represents, in several dimensions, a significant improvement over what we already have in the *Church Manual*.

Our appeal today would be that we look at the document in the context of these overarching objectives. If there is a need for editing, I would suggest that the matter should be referred back to the *Church Manual* Committee during this session. I would hope that we are not going to descend to the point of dealing with all the threads of theology that can possibly be attached to some of these statements. I would hope that by the end of the morning we can have some indication of the will of the body as to how to treat this document, and whether or not it can be helpful to the church.

ALFRED C. MC CLURE: Thank you very much, Elder Cooper, for that extremely helpful statement. I believe that's good counsel you have given us. And I too trust that by the end of the morning we will have voted something that will help us as a church understand and deal with this very difficult issue of divorce and remarriage.

Unfortunately, at this point the chair must do something most unusual. I'm going to interrupt this discussion briefly to bring back the chair of the Nominating Committee, to correct an error that occurred in the earlier presentation.

NIELS-ERIK ANDREASEN: I would like to apologize for the mistake that was made earlier today. A wrong name was read. And now I'll ask our secretary to present the correction.

DELBERT BAKER: By mistake we presented a name for Ministerial Association

secretary earlier today. The name for that position is still to come. We now wish to present the name that should have been presented earlier. For the position of director of the General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department I move the name of John Graz. [Motion was seconded and voted.]

ALFRED C. MC CLURE: Now the chair would like to suggest that as was mentioned by Elder Cooper, and in keeping with what was agreed to as we opened this General Conference session, we deal with matters of substance by referring them back to the committee, rather than making amendments of substance on the floor.

So please keep that in mind. The chair would also like to suggest that rather than referring the matter back to committee before the entire document has been discussed, it would be best to discuss the document in its entirety, and then if there is a motion to refer, we consider that possibility at that time. With that understanding, we are going to begin the discussion at the microphones.

HENRIK INGO: I believe I have a point of order. I was waiting here all day yesterday to make a motion that relates to wording that is still three pages away from where we are now. Since you will not accept my motion at this time, please acknowledge when it will be appropriate.

ALFRED C. MC CLURE: It is appropriate to deal with moving the previous question by section. And since there has been discussion on the first section, the chair is open to the possibility of a motion to close debate, which means moving the previous question on the first section. Is that what you are doing?

HENRIK INGO: Yes, that is what I want. [Motion was seconded.]

ALFRED C. MC CLURE: This motion, to close debate, does require a two-thirds vote. So we will attempt to discern whether or not there is a two-thirds vote. If we cannot determine that, we will take a count. [Motion was voted.]

We now move to the second section, beginning on page 233, dealing with the subject of biblical teachings on divorce.

ELLIOTT OSBORNE: Since we are in the second section, there is a point I want to deal with.

LOWELL C. COOPER: We have heard the discussion; the point, I think, can have some validity. If the whole document is referred back and the *Church Manual* Committee wants to take this into account, we could do so. Again, it is an editorial problem that may assume a larger dimension than some of the issues we should be addressing.

MARIO VELOSO: In biblical studies it is very common to quote someone who dealt with the same issue. You quote from the Bible and then make references to other sources, and in this case it is Ellen G. White.

But this is not new material being added.

ALFRED C. MC CLURE: It is being suggested that we need to go back to something that we voted earlier that was brought in from the Nominating Committee. It is the recommendation for the position of Ministerial Association secretary of the General Conference. It was voted on the floor, but not voted in the Nominating Committee before coming here. It is being suggested that that item be referred back to the Nominating Committee. The chair would request a motion to that effect. [Motion was seconded and voted.]

LESLIE POLLARD: In the document there is a conspicuous absence of the historic Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the qualifications for marriage. The notion of spiritual compatibility is absent from the document, and yet as Seventh-day Adventists we have taught incessantly throughout our history that marriage should occur between believers and other believers, and we mean within our own denomination. [He then read a prepared statement that he asked the *Church Manual* Committee to consider.]

MANUEL TORNILLA, JR.: I am speaking to page 234, lines 4 and 5, "Grounds for Divorce." The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are very clear that adultery is the only cause or ground given by God for divorce. First Corinthians 7:10-15 relates to relationships between believers and unbelievers. Spouses are going to either stay together or be separated. It does not say that the one who is left, the believer, is now given the right to divorce the unbeliever. Therefore I would make a strong recommendation to change lines 4 and 5 on page 234 so that they will be based on Scripture. Abandonment is not grounds for divorce.

HECTOR E. HERNANDEZ: I am not going to speak against or in favor of the motion, only to suggest that the whole matter be returned to the committee with instructions that the material be sent back to the field with instructions that within a specific time they discuss and return a draft of their suggestions. After working with this document for two or three years, the church would be in a better position to act on it formally.

SILVANUS CHIOMA: I want to react to the issue of abandonment. What constitutes abandonment? Some us have to leave our wives and families behind when we go for further education. I did that for four and a half years; I went to Newbold College and Andrews University. If this policy had been in force then, would the church have allowed my wife to divorce me?

LOWELL C. COOPER: I would say that these scriptural references and the assertions in the document have not been put here without consideration and without scrutiny by theologians of the church who are much more competent than I am. And this partic-

ular text did occasion a lot of discussion, but through the processes that we used, it survived in this form as contributing to this particular meaning. If the body sees otherwise, we can have it removed.

HEATHER TREDoux: I would like to make a comment regarding the document as a whole. The impression was given yesterday that this document has to do with women's ordination. I would like to say that it really does not have to do with women's ordination, but purely to do with basic human rights.

LUPITA A. ARAGON: I am wondering why the *Church Manual* Committee did not include the fact that sexual immorality includes a range of improper sexual behavior, such as rape and sexual violence.

MARIO VELOSO: That item is properly called attention to in another part of this document. We need to emphasize that lines 4 and 5 on page 234 are talking about the biblical teachings about divorce or separation, and are not saying anything about remarriage yet. That section comes later. This quotation talks specifically about "abandonment by an unbelieving partner." This is exactly the item that Paul is talking about in the text. Therefore, there is really no need to make any change in that particular place, because we are not dealing with remarriage.

PASSMORE HACHALINGA: I also just want to make a comment on page 234, lines 4 and 5. This deals with only certain situations. Where I come from, we have many women who are married to believers who are polygamists. This complicates matters for the wives, for the church has no control over the husbands. So we probably need to have something about such divorces. Of course, it is not a ground for remarriage, but this is a situation we are living with.

THOMAS M. QUALLS, SR.: It seems to me that when we talk about grounds for divorce, we need to look at what marriage is all about. Marriage partners are instructed to love, respect, honor, and obey. When one partner does not do this, I don't think it's in the church's purview to force the other member to remain a part of that partnership. So we need to consider that when we talk about grounds for divorce.

THAINE CREITZ: I want to speak to lines 4 and 5 on page 234. Sin isn't about just what we do; it's also about what we don't do. I believe that our scriptural reference here is not complete, and I would ask the committee to include the earlier parts of 1 Corinthians 7 that talk about the fact that a husband's

body belongs to the wife, and the wife's body belongs to the husband. And that gives us some focus on what it really means to have abandonment. Abandonment may be that I refuse to provide the emotional and physical support that my spouse needs. The marriage relationship is such that no organization or person has the right to presuppose on its sanctity. It's some of the things we don't do that cause these problems.

RONALD BISSELL: I think part of the problem here is that while divorce is assumed to give the right for remarriage in most societies, in many countries one sometimes has to have a legal divorce in order to obtain a legal separation.

ROBERTO BADENAS: I have just a small suggestion on page 234, "Grounds for Divorce." I think it would be good to stress the biblical reason for divorce given by Jesus, which is "pornea." A small explanation of the broad meaning of this word would help very much and give biblical basis and clarifi-

cation for the grounds for divorce.

ALFRED C. MC CLURE: This concludes the discussion on this particular section. Now a very brief section on biblical teaching on remarriage. And since the chair sees no one at the microphone to address that section, we will then move on to the next section, which is the church's position on divorce and remarriage.

ROB FROHNE: I would like to address the brief section, entitled "Biblical Teachings on Marriage." This section reads that there is no direct teaching regarding remarriage after divorce. In Mark 10:11, 12, and Matthew 5:31, 32, and 19:9 Jesus seems to indicate that there is some direct teaching.

ALFRED C. MC CLURE: We are ready for the next section, "The Church's Position on Divorce and Remarriage."

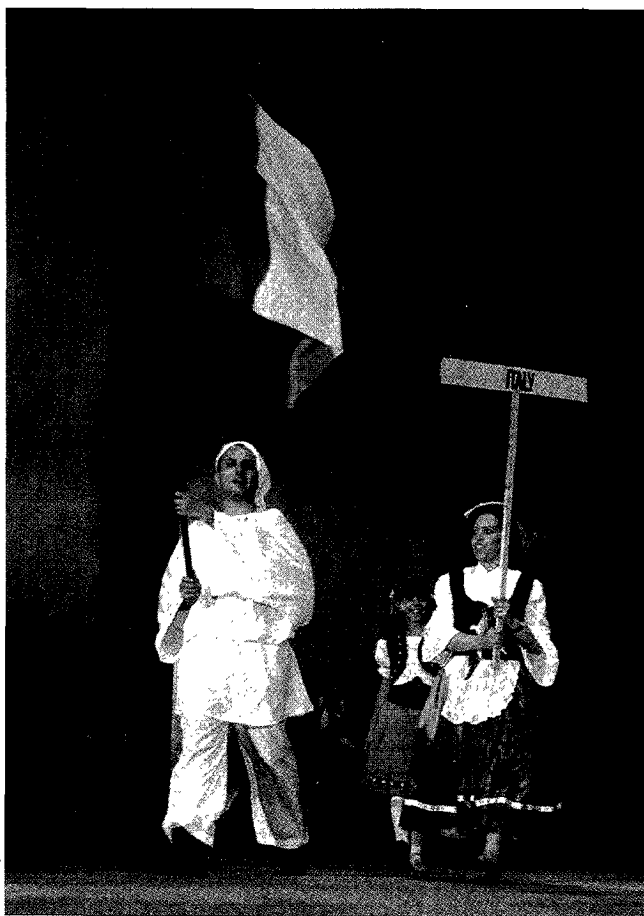
HENRIK INGO: I want to speak on the fourth section, on page 236. The section says basically that if there is repentance we

should forgive the sinner, and since this is also what Jesus does, the church should also try to act in the same way. I would now like to focus on the sentence that begins on line 22: "In case the violation has brought public reproach on the cause of God, the church, in order to maintain its high standards and good name, may remove the individual from church membership even though there is evidence of repentance." I understand that this sentence says that if we have a sinner who repents (and now in particular we are speaking of divorce), we should forgive him or her except when he or she has become the object of gossip and rumor in the secular press or media, in which case we just abandon the poor person and save ourselves. This doesn't sound like Christian behavior. In any case, I can't see any reason we should listen to the secular press in church membership issues, and I haven't found any biblical support for this sentence, so I would like it to be removed.

JIM PHIRI: I don't have problems with what we are debating now, except in what appears on page 237, lines 9 through 15. According to the Bible, the grounds for divorce are unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. I feel that the cases of physical violence shouldn't be treated like other cases of discipline in the church. These lines should be done away with.

JUDY ST. JOHN: I am speaking to page 235, line 38. I am

Session Snapshot



ALL NATIONS: Joining hundreds of individuals in the grand finale parade on Sabbath evening, representatives from Italy proudly carried their country's flag.

concerned with the word "child" in the phrase "child sexual abuse." I would like to see that word deleted. Abuse is abuse, regardless of the age or the gender of the individual who is involved. If you read the text that is cited there, you will note that all sorts of sexual perversions are included in those verses. The marital vow is to love and to honor. In Ephesians 5:25 husbands are exhorted to love their wives as Christ loves the church. Therefore, sexual abuse such as rape within the marital relationship should be included here. Christian wives should not be subjected to rape or forced to participate in degrading sexual practices.

ELLIOTT OSBORNE: I am referring to page 237, beginning at line 35. "Readmittance to membership of those who have been removed from church membership for reasons given in the foregoing sections shall normally be on the basis of rebaptism." If we used just the word "baptism," it would be fine. Rebaptism, unfortunately, takes on other kinds of meanings, because we use it in different ways. Individuals who are members sometimes request rebaptism. In such cases this doesn't alter the books or their standing; they just get wet again.

ANDREJ GODINA: I am referring to page 236, lines 20-25. How is general genuine repentance measured? Is it by the amount of crying done? Is that not judging? I think we all know what the Bible says about judgment.

HUDSON KIBUUKA: I am speaking to page 236, line 22. A previous speaker referred to the term "public reproach," referring to the media and the newspapers. Is there a definition for this term?

LOWELL C. COOPER: Brother Chairman, I don't think the manual has a particular definition for that term. This is not a new recommendation; it is something we have had in the manual for quite some time, and I am not quite sure when it originated. But I suppose that one of the aspects we need to keep in mind with this is that when a local church deals with the individuals involved in a marriage breakdown, particularly of the type described here, often it is not only one or two individuals who are involved.

There is a lot of collateral damage when families fall apart within the church or community. Public reproach happens not just in newspapers, but within the community of the church. I think that the intention here

is to allow local churches the facility to deal with the effect on the congregation and the collateral issues related to it. There may need to be a time of healing both in the community and in the individuals that have been dealt with specifically, and this is why that phraseology is used here. It is not

but even with God's best intentions to forgive and restore everyone, He never removes the consequences of the sin. In this case section 8 helps on the consequences, particularly when the new marriage involves children and the parties have been together for quite some time, and the new family seems well established.

ARTHUR RODD: I also regret that we do not have the opportunity of moving an amendment, and I hope that my comments on lines 12-15 on page 237 will be considered. I would say that after 38 years of wonderful marriage to one wife, I totally agree with our church's effort to safeguard the beauty and sanctity of marriage. And I deplore the current state of divorce and remarriage that we find within the church. However, we are living within a world in which marriage and remarriage does take place. All who get remarried for reasons other than adultery or other sexual sins are placed, by lines 12-15, under the same discipline of being removed from church membership without giving the local church or pastor any

chance of considering the circumstances.

PAUL ANANABA: I think the word "rebaptism" should be removed from line 37 on page 237. Also, sexual perversions, which I think would also include rape, should not be listed as grounds for divorce. They could be grounds for discipline in the church.

JESUS URIATE: As I read page 236, lines 22-25, I understand that some may feel the language there may sound harsh. As a legal practitioner I am faced with the fact that laws present consequences to our actions. As a Bible student I see that there are consequences to our actions. I would submit that the language here is correct language and should remain in our final draft of the document so that our church membership will understand that there are consequences to our actions and that we cannot go through life saying simply "I am sorry" and everything will remain the same. That is not what I see in the civil world; that is not what I see in the Bible. Therefore I would encourage the committee to maintain the language as it is.

EARLA SANZ: My problem is with page 237, lines 9 and 10. I have difficulty reconciling line 9 with line 10. In the minds of many women, unfaithfulness to the marriage vow includes physical violence.

MARTIN ANTHONY: I am troubled

Session Snapshot



ANY PLACE WILL DO: Amid the huge crowds on the final day, Delceta Manley, Richard Bland, and Shirlee Lobmiller found a quiet spot for a Sabbath picnic.

intended to be something that is pharisaical or a legalistic application of a procedure to two individuals. It is a recognition that we have to deal with a much larger situation.

KEITH ALBURY: I would like to seek clarification from the Church Manual Committee on section 7 of page 237, which says that a spouse who has violated the marriage vow and been divorced and removed from church membership and remarried, or a person who has been divorced on other grounds set forth in sections 1 and 2 and has remarried and been removed from church membership, shall be ineligible for membership except as hereinafter provided. I would like clarification on this section, as it relates to section 8, which talks about exceptions. And I am asking because it seems to me that this section is inconsistent with page 23, which speaks to God's acceptance of repentant individuals who commit the most destructive sins, even those that carry with them irreparable consequences. There seems to be some inconsistency here, or we seem to be circumscribing the framework in which God's grace is exercised.

MARIO VELOSO: There is really no inconsistency between the two sections, but I would like to highlight the word "consequences" in the first section, on page 232. There is forgiveness. There is restoration,

with the statement on page 237 regarding the items related to bringing back into fellowship through the conference committee rather than through the church board of the local church. It seems to me that this primarily should be a local church matter, as the local church knows the full situation involved.

GILBERT CANGY: I appreciate the need for procedures and rules to facilitate the business here. But what we have decided is now standing in the way of good business. We should have the option to review that. Therefore, I'm moving that we rescind this morning's motion not to take recommendations from the floor.

ALFRED C. MC CLURE: I've been consulting with the parliamentarian. And we are faced with the problem of whether we should take such a motion and vote on it, even though we have already discussed several of the sections, or whether it would be better to refer this to the committee and allow the committee to deal with it, and bring it back for discussion at a later time. However, the chair will take the motion, and we will vote on the motion that is before us, which is to rescind the ruling of the chair and the agreement that was made at the outset of this General Conference session that we not take such issues on the floor, but that rather they be referred to committee. And this does need a two-thirds vote, according to the parliamentarian. [Motion lost.]

JOAO FELIX MONTEIOR: If we keep the document as is, has the committee considered a member's rebaptism in another church?

RONALD BISSELL: I'd like to speak to page 236, lines 22 to 25. First Corinthians 5 suggests that there are three primary purposes for church discipline.

The order in which they are given is first, redemption or the preservation of the witness of the church; second, preservation of the purity of the church; and third, redemption and preservation of the individual.

One could wish that these could always be accomplished equally in each given situation, but that is not always possible. I think that decision can best be accomplished by the individual local church, which is as this reads now. It does not say that a church is required to remove a person from membership, but it may. So that decision is left to the individual church, and I think that is a very balanced position to take.

DAN JACKSON: Elder Cooper earlier informed us, and correctly so, that the paper that is before us today has been processed through Annual Council, which is a representative of the world church. So my comments are addressed to my church family. From the time I was a child, I was taught that the Seventh-day Adventist Church based its faith on the principle for *sola scriptura*. Mother never put it that way, but that

is the way it is. I was taught that in Sabbath School, I was taught that at the SDA Theological Seminary. Now we come here this morning with a document in which we say that there is no direct teaching in Scripture regarding remarriage after divorce. Yet on page 237 the statement between lines 9 and 15 disallows any potential for remarriage on the part of a woman who has been violated. My challenge to my church is that

if you believe in the principle of *sola scriptura*, put your money where your mouth is. Show me on the basis of the Scriptures that your position is biblical.

EMMANUEL MATIZA: I would like to express appreciation for the work of the committee on this paper. As a matter of fact, our church believes in committees, and this committee suggests that we need to trust one another in the work that we do.

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SAUSTIN MFUNE: I want to pose a question: What is the real purpose of this document?

MARIO VELOSO: This document is an improvement on the language and an attempt to deal with the issue in a more Christian manner. As you know, the Bible is much clearer on divorce than on remarriage after a divorce.

SAUSTIN MFUNE: So the bottom line of the document is a change of language and hopefully a change of attitudes. To assure a more Christian attitude toward the problem, but not to change the biblical principles.

LOWELL C. COOPER: The document does not rest on one reason alone. As I tried to indicate earlier today, we hope that the changes proposed set a new tone and a new posture for the church in addressing a very difficult and divisive issue. It is not just language that has changed on these pages. We trust that the attitude and the position from which we approach these issues will give us a clearer understanding of how to deal with a difficult reality.

ALFRED C. MC CLURE: I'm sorry, but we are going to have to conclude this discussion. This will have to be taken up again at the afternoon session.

WEI SAN LI: [Benediction.]

ALFRED C. MC CLURE, *Chair*

MARIO VELOSO, *Secretary*

FRED G. THOMAS and BILL BOTHE,
Proceedings Editors

Tenth Business Meeting Actions

57th General Conference
Session, July 5, 2000,
9:30 a.m.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT #7

Voted, To approve the following partial report of the Nominating Committee:

Divisions

R Martin Moores, Treasurer, Northern Asia-Pacific Division

Michael F Kaminsky, Secretary, Euro-Asia Division

Guillermo Biaggi, Treasurer, Euro-Asia Division

General Conference Departments

Richard O Stenbakken, Director, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries

Virginia L Smith, Director, Children's Ministries Department

Rajmund Dabrowski, Director, Communication Department

Humberto M Rasi, Director, Education Department

Allan R Handysides, Director, Health Ministries Department

James A Cress, Secretary, Ministerial Association (rescinded by action which follows)

John Graz, Director, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department

GRESS, JAMES A, SECRETARY MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION—REFERRED BACK TO NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Chairman and Secretary of the Nominating Committee returned to the platform and apologized for having brought a name to the session for voting that had not yet been approved by the Nominating Committee. Therefore, it was

Voted, To refer back to the Nominating Committee the election of James A Cress as Ministerial Association Secretary.

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE—CONTINUED DISCUSSION

There was continued discussion on the *Church Manual* chapter concerning divorce and remarriage.
Adjourned.

Alfred C McClure, *Chairman*

Vernon B Parmenter, *Secretary*

Athal H Tolhurst, *Actions Editor*

Carol E Rasmussen, *Recording Secretary*

Eleventh Business Meeting

57th General Conference
Session, July 5, 2000,
2:00 p.m.

CYNTHIA WALKE: [Opening prayer.]

CALVIN B. ROCK: We have some special items that we will now hear.

G. RALPH THOMPSON: For a number of years Elder Larry Colburn and I have had the privilege of being members of the National Advisory Council of the American Bible Society. We meet once a year in New York City. We have very important meetings, and we are always thrilled with the news of how the American Bible Society is working around the world. I am going to call on Larry Colburn now to introduce our special guest.

LARRY R. COLBURN: It is a very special honor this afternoon to introduce to you the president of the American Bible Society, Dr. Eugene Habecker. Dr. Habecker has served as the president of the American

Bible Society since 1991. We have come to know Dr. Habecker as a very personal friend, a supporter of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The American Bible Society has a mission we deeply respect and support. According to their mission statement they exist for the purpose of making the Bible available to every man, woman, and child in a language and form that each can readily understand and at a price that each can easily afford. A couple years ago Dr. Habecker visited the church headquarters office. He took time from his very busy program and came so that we might get better acquainted. He understands that the Seventh-day Adventist Church deeply values the sacred Word of God. There is a close working relationship between the American Bible Society and the United Bible Society, for in addition to being president of the American Bible Society, he is also chair of the United Bible Society global board, as well as a member of other United Bible Society committees. Before Dr. Habecker addresses the delegates, we have invited Elder Bob Rawson, treasurer for the General Conference, and Elder Juan Prestol, treasurer for the North American Division, to make a special presentation. Before they make this presentation I extend a very warm welcome to Dr. Habecker.

ROBERT L. RAWSON: Those of us who have traveled far and worked in lands across the seas have had opportunity to run into the work of the Bible Societies and the part that they have in providing Bibles in many languages to every part of the earth. We appreciate the work they have done, and there has been a close liaison between their work and that of the General Conference, North American Division, and other divisions in the world field. It has been a long tradition and one that we wish to continue this day by providing a donation check to the American Bible Society on behalf of the General Conference and the North American Division for the outstanding work they do in our behalf and the help they are to us as we work together to accommodate the need for Bibles. Dr. Habecker, we are delighted to have you with us today. Juan Prestol will present you a check for \$85,000 as a donation from the General Conference and the North American Division for this worthy cause.

EUGENE HABECKER: I bring you greetings this afternoon from the 135 Bible Society members who are all part of the United Bible Societies. These Bible Societies work in 200 countries around the world. I bring you special greetings this afternoon from both the Canadian Bible Society and American Bible Society. Last year, working together, we distributed more than 600 million Scriptures around the world. We distribute more Bibles than any Bible agency in the world. We like to say that we bring hope to people, not through our works, but

through the Word of God. Think about the Bible as a source of hope to people. Listen to these words from the Bible: "Thou art my hiding place and my shield. I hope in thy word" (Ps. 119:114). And the Scriptures "were written for our learning, that we . . . might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

The ABS, as do all Bible Societies, regularly launches new projects, and one that we have just launched, that hopefully you will hear more about later on, is the African-American Jubilee Bible—300 pages of supplemental material and artwork that tell the story of the African-American community in the United States. *Kingsley Meadow* is a video series for younger children that teaches them the Bible through stories and music. We often forget that the Bible is foundational for the work of the church. There is first the Word, then there are converts, then we have the church. Sometimes we make the Word a low priority; when we do, churches struggle. We also have to remember that Scripture is not merely the words of people, but the Word of God. As a result, God uses the Word in special ways to accomplish its purposes. Listen to these words from 2 Timothy 3: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (verse 16). And one of my favorite words from the Lord is Isaiah 55:11: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper on the thing whereto I send it."

Last year the Bible Societies were unable to provide more than 30 million Scriptures from around the world. And that is repeated every year. And this year we hope to launch a \$90 million campaign in addition to everything else that we are doing to help close this gap between those who seek the Scriptures and those who can provide them.

In addition to Scripture distribution, Bible Societies do Bible translation. We are the second-largest Bible translation agency in the world. Do you know that two thirds of the world's language groups still have no part of the Word of God in their heart language? That's a tragedy. It's a tragedy that all of us need to do more about, and it's my pleasure to work with groups like the Seventh-day Adventists, to help address this goal. It is my pleasure to help meet Scripture needs, especially in the United States and around the world. We encourage people to get into the Word for themselves. Have you ever thought about how daunting the Bible itself might be to the average reader? When was the last time you read a 1,500-page book for pleasure? And oftentimes people out there don't know how to read the Bible. "Do I start at the beginning?" You can imagine a person out there taking this 1,500-page book and starting in Genesis (yes, there are some cool stories there), then moving on to

Exodus (some cool stories there), and then getting into Leviticus, and Numbers, and before long simply putting it back on the shelf. The Bible Society has developed a five-minutes-a-day reading program to help the typical person read through just the New Testament. Think about it, a reading plan to have every person in your church and in your community read through the New Testament, spending only five minutes a day. Each day everyone would be reading the same thing. Some communities have had the Scripture read over radio stations; others have had the Scripture printed in the newspaper. The result is transformed lives, transformed families, and yes, transformed churches. When you get into the Word and the Word gets into you, it will change your life. I want to read one letter from a pastor. He said it this way: "Having the New Testament available this year with a daily reading guide in it prompts me to give these out in my church for people to use in their own devotions or to share with others. I have had numerous reports back that this has prompted people who have not read the Bible before to read it." And people are even doing devotionals at their workplace for their employees. The Word never comes back void. Thank you for your efforts to make this possible. Today I want to challenge each of you, if you are not already doing so, to get into the Scriptures daily for yourselves. The Bible Society stands ready to work with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, not only to provide help to do this, but in other ways as well. Thank you, my brothers and sisters, for the privilege of partnering with all of you, and thank you for the many ways you support Bible Societies all over the world. God bless you all.

CALVIN B. ROCK: Thank you, and now we have another presentation. We are honored by the presence of other guests. Dr. Beach and his associate in Public Affairs and Religious Liberty will make the presentations.

B. B. BEACH: Today we have two distinguished observers representing very important world bodies, and they are husband and wife. We are delighted to have in our midst this afternoon Bishop Terence Finlay, who is the bishop of the Anglican Church here in Toronto, which is the largest diocese of the Anglican Church in North America. He is the tenth bishop here in Toronto, and since he became bishop he has spent quite a bit of time fostering good relations with other churches. There is one thing about him that I like—he is the son of a minister, and I am a son of a minister. We are often told that sons of ministers are bad boys. Here we have a bishop, so not all of us turn out bad, and I am happy for that. We first met at the Lamberth Conference in Canterbury in 1998. I am delighted to have him here to give a few words of greetings to us. Please welcome the bishop of Toronto.

TERENCE FINLAY: Mr. Chairman, friends in Christ, on behalf of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, which covers some 10,000 square miles, I am grateful to have this privilege of welcoming you to our diocese and to this city. Our prayer is that your meetings are fruitful and that the Spirit of God is in your midst and is carrying you forward in the mighty work that you are doing. I bring you greetings from approximately 90,000 Anglicans who are on our parish roles. I hope your meetings have sensed the great Spirit moving in your midst. I bring greetings not only from our diocese but also on behalf of the worldwide Anglican Communion. And so I join with them in welcoming you and praying that the Spirit of Jesus Christ may move in the midst of all of us as we seek to be His servants in this world. Thank you, and I present on behalf of the Anglican Communion two small tokens of our appreciation to Dr. Beach and to his staff and to all of you, which we hope will be a symbol of our work together with Jesus Christ. God bless you.

B. B. BEACH: Thanks to Bishop Finlay for his kind words. Now we are happy to present to you, Mrs. Alice Jean Finlay, who is a member of the central committee of the World Council of Churches. She has come here representing the World Council, but also she is the world president of the World Day of Prayer. She has a letter to present to us from Dr. Conrad Riser, who is the general secretary of the World Council of Churches and has been an old friend with whom some of us have been associated for more than 30 years. So please, Mrs. Finlay, we are happy to listen to you.

ALICE JEAN FINLAY: May I first bring personal greetings to all of you and say how much I have enjoyed meeting Seventh-day Adventists on the subway system here in Toronto. I have had lovely conversations, and it has been a pleasure to get to know you, especially the women from Mexico and the Philippines. I promised them that I would wave today.

I now want to bring greetings to you on behalf of the World Council of Churches, in particular Dr. Conrad Riser, who is the general secretary. He greets you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he opens with a piece from Scripture: "Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God" (1 Peter 1:21, NIV). He goes on to say, "The meeting of the fifty-seventh General Conference session of your church on this young continent is taking place on the threshold of the third millennium of the birth of our Lord and Saviour. The timing implies that it will be a moment of renewed commitment to the teachings of Jesus Christ. We have been aware of the desire of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to promote Christian understanding. . . . We have heard . . . reports about the commit-

ments of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to bring the gospel to the world. We pray that this gathering of delegates, guests, visitors, staff, and volunteers from all around the world will be an occasion of thanksgiving for the redemptive gift of mercy and love that we receive through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We also pray that it will be an occasion to affirm what binds us as Christian brothers and sisters. More than ever we need to find together our common gifts as Christians to promote peace and justice in this divided world. We hope that this gathering will strengthen you in your faith, in your interchurch relations. Hope is the fuel of our Christian lives as we wait for the return of our Saviour. With our brotherly love, yours in Christ." God bless you all, and God bless your deliberation.

CALVIN B. ROCK: Thank you very much for gracing us with your presence and your words, and thank you, gentlemen, for the presentation of these our guests. God bless you. We appreciate your presence.

Now, delegates, we will resume the business that we have been treating for the past few days. I would like to ask your attention to the business at hand as we now turn our minds this way to some observations and hopefully gain your cooperation and understanding with regard to procedure.

Elder McClure and I have done some consulting, along with our parliamentarian, Attorney Carson, and others. And we have sought to analyze where we are and how we can get to where we hope to go. [The chair then outlined the procedural problems that had been encountered in the morning, apologizing for any misunderstandings that may have resulted. He further made suggestions as to how the afternoon session might be conducted in order to facilitate discussion and possible actions that might result. There were numerous suggestions from the floor based on the chair's observations; a lengthy discussion followed.] I just want you to be aware of where you are and ask you to make a decision as to how you want to get to some sort of logical conclusion. Now I am going to ask that we proceed with a motion.

HENRIK INGO: I move that we adopt what I believe was the first option suggested by the chair.

CALVIN B. ROCK: The motion is that this report from the *Church Manual* Committee be referred back to it, and that we continue our discussions, knowing that all observations will be relayed to them for their attention. And you have heard Dr. Veloso say that this may result in sending the recommendation to all the divisions, so that when we come together in 2005 every division will have had a chance to study it. Now, that's not a part of your motion. I'm just suggesting that that's probably one way the committee will proceed if you approve the motion. Did I get the essence of your motion?

HENRIK INGO: I had understood from the morning that we would still get something back during this session before we leave Toronto. If this is not the case, then I withdraw my motion.

BRIAN BULL: Now the motion, as I understand it, is to accept the document as proposed by the *Church Manual* Committee. I would like to amend the motion to state that any additional amendments, which I take it are now in order, would be limited to no more than 10 discussants. And at the end of those 10 discussions the chair will take a sense of the assembled delegates, and if two thirds are ready to vote, then the chair will call for a vote on that amendment. If the delegates are not yet ready, then another 10 be allowed to speak. [Amendment was seconded.]

GILBERT CANGY: I strongly support the amendment and letting the church now have a say in the process.

JOHN FOWLER: I speak against the motion. It's too cumbersome, and by the end of the discussion we still may not conclude the matter. There are weighty theological matters being raised by way of amendments, and these require serious study, as has been noted by many speakers before. So I would like to suggest that we defeat this amendment and refer the document back to the committee, along with our suggestions.

ROGER DUNDER: I would like to second what the speaker just prior to me has echoed. I feel that this is a very serious issue. The consequences are great, and at this stage, with the confusion that seems to be reigning here, I don't think that we are in a position to give it proper study. And I fear that we're going to come up with things in that document that may prove an embarrassment to us down the road. I really would urge us to vote down this amendment.

LASSEW RAELLY: I speak against the motion on the floor right now. Besides the many reasons that have been given by the two previous speakers, I would like to remind us that because of the nature of the activity this afternoon, quite a few of us are not present. I would support referral back to the *Church Manual* Committee, so I'm speaking against the motion.

CALVIN B. ROCK: The chair is going to ask that we vote. The motion is that we proceed amending the document as necessary as we prepare to vote it up or down at this session. [The chair called for the vote and ruled that the motion was defeated.]

PETER ROENNFELDT: I move that we refer this back to the *Church Manual* Committee. [Motion was seconded.]

CALVIN B. ROCK: Are there any questions about that motion now before we vote? [A number asked for clarification of the motion.]

We have a friend of mine and a friend of Adventism and a senator in the great country of Canada who is waiting to speak to us.

I don't want to rush you, but I want you to meet her. She is a very special person, and she is going to be brought on in just a moment.

Now, the motion is that we refer this document to the *Church Manual* Committee, anticipating that they will bring it back to the world church in 2005 and that between now and then they will do diligence in whatever is appropriate to see that the world church itself has had a chance to comment on this. [The motion was voted.]

That puts us back on track, at least to where we can proceed in an orderly way, knowing where we are headed. We will see how far we can get.

Now we have a very delightful presentation to be made, and we will call upon Dr. Bert Beach.

B. B. BEACH: Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to welcome into our midst a distinguished member of the Canadian Senate who was appointed by the governor-general back, I think, in 1984. She has something very much in common with our previous General Conference secretary. They both come from the beautiful island of Barbados.

By wonderful coincidence you are the chair today, and you were the speaker at the camp meeting in Alberta when you met Senator Cools and invited her to come here. She has responded to your invitation and is in our midst today.

Senator Cools has been a leader in the creation of social services here in Canada; in fact, she founded one of the very first Canadian shelters for battered women. She has been very active in trying to protect the rights of children of divorced parents, so that they have an ongoing and meaningful relationship with both parents.

Senator Cools, please speak to us; we are happy to welcome you into our midst.

ANNE COOLS: I thank you very much indeed, and I would just like to say that it is an honor and a privilege for me to join with you today. I would also like to say to Dr. Calvin Rock that it is a pleasure to see you again, and you can invite me to your event anytime.

I would like to say that it was a real pleasure for me today to participate in one of your panel discussions on the question of religious freedom and persecution. I think it is very important that we pay attention to the need that we have as human beings to develop our souls and to develop our spirits and to live at one with God.

I would just like to take the opportunity to welcome each of you to Toronto; to invite you to enjoy our fair and glorious city. It has many wonderful tourist attractions, and I understand that many of you are enjoying them.

In addition, I wish you a successful and meaningful meeting. Most important, I invite you to join me in your continued ser-

vice to your fellow human beings and to your God. We are joined together as members of this fine Christian community. Thank you.

G. RALPH THOMPSON: I want Senator Anne Cools to know that it gives me great pleasure to present a gift on behalf of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. As you already heard, she has fallen in love with Seventh-day Adventists. Senator, blessings on you. Thanks for coming.

CALVIN B. ROCK: We will hear from the speaker at the microphone.

PAMELA MAIZE HARRIS: I would like to move that a sufficient number of women be added to the *Church Manual* Committee to provide a geographical balance and a gender balance. [Motion was seconded. Following two suggested amendments that failed, the motion was voted.]

MACK TENNYSON: I move that the *Church Manual* Committee be comprised substantially of laypeople and pastors.

LOWELL C. COOPER: We can also tie the hands of the committee in doing its processing, because it is not always convenient for people who do not live near Washington, D.C. If people are unable to attend, the committee will have a difficult time functioning.

CALVIN B. ROCK: Let's vote on the motion before us. [Motion was voted.]

LOWELL C. COOPER: I've been asked today to deal with the fourth of the five windows on mission. The topic that has been assigned to us is "Growth and Training Toward Spiritual Maturity and Discipleship."

There are several observations we would like to bring to your attention. First of all, the church is growing rapidly. This is no secret; you've been hearing the reports each night. But what about these new members that come into the church? They come from many different backgrounds; they often come without roots in Seventh-day Adventist teachings, values, lifestyle, understanding of the organization. They don't have the biblical heritage that many of us who have grown up in the church have. Do you realize that 40 percent of our current membership has been in the church for less than five years? And another consideration that bears on this topic: during 1998 and 1999 our membership losses equaled 23 percent of membership additions. Is there something here for the church to look at? Does it raise questions about how we deal with spiritual maturity issues and discipleship? Our third observation is that the church has a vital role in membership development, in retention of members, in training and deployment. But it raises questions. What is spiritual maturity? What is discipleship? What do we expect from these 2,900 members who come to our church membership daily? What is church growth? How do we measure it? Is church growth membership

growth or growth in the members or both, or something altogether different? And how is growth accomplished? Whose responsibility is it? And what are the resources that we have available to do something about it? We would like to explore some of these issues with you today, and I have asked Elder Ben Maxson to take the next few moments to talk about objectives—what we expect when a person becomes a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and what kinds of issues and challenges and opportunities that opens to us.

BENJAMIN C. MAXSON: During the past five years I have visited the divisions around the world, and there seems to be a growing concern over the lack of spiritual depth and maturity in our members. Oftentimes we confuse disciples and converts. Are disciples simply those who have been baptized? They have gone through an evangelistic crusade and become Seventh-day Adventists. We baptize them; are they now disciples? Are we asking too much of our young members who really have not had an opportunity to grow in maturity and perhaps have not had an environment that has nurtured the spiritual maturity that they need to have? So we want to ask ourselves: What would disciples look like? What would spiritually mature members look like?

As we go back to Scripture we find that the first identifying mark of disciples seems to be that they have a compassionate connection with Jesus Christ.

The second descriptive point of disciples or mature Christians might be that they have a practical knowledge of Scripture and the experience of salvation. As I work with church members and pastors around the world, I find that a high percentage do not have the joy and assurance of salvation in Christ. Can we expect them to grow beyond that if they do not begin with that foundational element of assurance and hope and the joy of knowing salvation in Christ? The question comes: Do they have regular daily time in the Word so that their connection with Scripture and their assurance of salvation is growing and maturing? And do they have a growing understanding of the application to Scripture in their daily life?

The third description of disciples might well be that they are public followers of Jesus Christ. In other words, they have made a public commitment. Are disciples public followers? Are they applying or integrating the relationship with God into the daily life, how they live in the marketplace or in the classroom, on the job or at home?

The next point that will describe a disciple is a practiced commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. And what would that include? Could it include such things as regular church attendance, involvement in some form of ministry, consistent tithing, systematic offerings, and an honest yet realistic support of leadership?

The next point describing a disciple or a mature believer might be a personal involvement in witness and in mission. Each member biblically is called to ministry. As part of the priesthood of all believers each of us is a priest before God; in that aspect there's no distinction between a pastor and a member. The distinction is in scope of function, not whether or not they are ministers under the gospel. And as we think of a priest, we realize that there are four characteristics of ministry: A priest is involved in (1) worship of God; (2) intercession; (3) teaching others; (4) reconciliation. The next point would be a positive impact for Christ on family and community. Mature, spiritually growing believers would be experiencing transformed families where healing is beginning to take place. The believers would be salt in the community, beginning to change and influence the environment in which they live. How do we help people carry their religion into an everyday life?

So the question comes to us: If we are to develop mature disciples, what kinds of things do we need to do to help people bridge that gap between theory and practice? How do we move out of the mind-set of religion as simply a spectator sport? That's a rather significant concept when you think about where we are located here today. You understand what a spectator sport is, don't you? Sixty thousand people in the stands desperately needing exercise watching 22 people on the field desperately needing rest. And every one of those spectators knows how to play the game better, knows the rules better, and becomes a professional critic, criticizing the players and the referees. And too often religion has deteriorated into a spectator sport and not a participatory process. How do we create the process or the resources? Do we equip pastors for a training and equipping ministry that allows them to maintain a high level of spiritual leadership?

Then another challenging question: If we are going to move members to maturity, how are we going to measure growth? Are we going to measure it by more than just baptisms? If we are going to emphasize disciples and discipleship, should we not also expand our growth measurement criteria beyond mere numbers of people baptized? And if so, what criteria or factors should we use to evaluate spiritual maturity or discipleship in our churches?

The next key point: How do we expand evangelism to make disciples? Far too often we think of evangelism as an event. We are going to conduct an evangelistic crusade. We go for five weeks, and when it is over we sit back and stop the process. How do we move beyond a focus on converts and baptism to discipling? With Jesus it took three years to work with 12 before He was able to leave them to continue in their ministry as disciples.

The next question then that comes to us

is What about the issue of training leaders and assigning meaningful roles to these leaders—pastors and laity working together? How do we develop leaders in each area of our church so that they are functioning as leaders, not just managers?

And then how do we develop the spiritual leadership skills that will enable us to focus on developing mature disciples?

Pastors come to me after we've gone through a seminar and say, "Ben, I can't deal with the kind of ministry you're talking about. I don't have time for that. I have 12, 14 churches in my district. We have 15 other groups. We have a total of 2,500 members under my direction." But I know other pastors in similar situations who spend their entire time discipling and training leadership so that the churches are run by lay leadership. Can we return to a biblical concept of ministry—the gift of pastors being given for the equipping of the saints for their work of ministry? Can pastors someday be free from the expectations of church members and administrators and allowed to focus on training? How do we foster congregational life so that it is more than just a worship experience on Sabbath; so that it becomes something that pervades their everyday lives?

And finally, what kind of resources do we need to develop and share for discipling? What do we need to help members grow and mature spiritually? Can we develop materials to help members in their devotional lives by learning to practice spiritual disciplines and to integrate that discipling into how they live life every day? Although I've asked a lot of questions, I hope we can spark some dialogue. We're not going to solve the issue here today, but maybe we can get some ideas, and as this group of delegates goes back to their fields it can begin a process in which we begin to wrestle with these issues and face how the church can move to a greater and more intentional discipling and spiritual maturity process.

LOWELL C. COOPER: Thank you, Ben. By now you should have received a point-by-point outline of some of the things we've said so far. We're eager to hear from you. How does this issue touch your life and your church? How might the church improve its performance in the areas of training for spiritual maturity, training for discipling? How does it touch the area where you live? And how might your experience and expertise be shared with the world church?

BENJAMIN C. MAXSON: What are some of the challenges that you face? And what are the secrets that you have found that help you do this? What are the questions that you think we need to address organizationally? What kind of resources should departments begin to develop to help that ministry of discipling? [A number of individuals responded, making suggestions on how

the challenge of discipling members could be facilitated.]

The level of concern and the challenge we face in every part of the world church must be taken seriously. It seems to me that there's a place here for every one of us to be involved.

LOWELL C. COOPER: What I hear is that we should continue to rejoice over every person who comes to the church, but that a person is more valuable than a number.

CALVIN B. ROCK: We have another partial report from the Nominating Committee.

DELBERT BAKER: For the position of secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association I move the name of James A. Cress. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of director of the General Conference Auditing Service I move the name of Eric A. Korff. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of director of the General Conference Family Ministries Department I move the name of Ronald M. Flowers. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of director of the General Conference Stewardship Department I move the name of Benjamin C. Maxson. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of director of the General Conference Women's Ministries Department I move the name of Ardis D. Stenbakken. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of director of the General Conference Youth Department I move the name of Baraka G. Muganda. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of secretary of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division I move the name of Stanley Ng Wai Chun. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of associate secretary of the General Conference I move the name of Claude A. Sabot. [Motion was seconded and voted.] For the position of director of the General Conference Trust Services Department I move the name of Jeffrey K. Wilson. [Motion was seconded and voted.]

CALVIN B. ROCK: We will recess until tomorrow.

GARY B. SWANSON: [Benediction.]

CALVIN B. ROCK, *Chair*
DONALD R. SAHLY, *Secretary*
BILL BOTHE, LARRY R. COLBURN,
and FRED G. THOMAS, *Proceedings*
Editors

Eleventh Business Meeting Actions

57th General Conference
Session, July 5, 2000,
2:00 p.m.

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE— CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

Voted, To refer back to the *Church Manual Committee*, Chapter 15 of the *Church Manual*, Divorce and Remarriage, pages 181-184, for further study with the understanding that recommendations from that committee will be shared with the divisions for study and input.

CHURCH MANUAL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP—ADDITION OF WOMEN

Voted, To recommend to the General Conference that more women be appointed to the *Church Manual Committee*.

CHURCH MANUAL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP—REPRESENTATION OF LAYPERSONS AND PASTORS

Voted, To recommend to the General Conference that a substantial representation of laypersons and pastors be appointed to the *Church Manual Committee*.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT #8

Voted, To approve the following partial report of the Nominating Committee:

Northern Asia-Pacific Division

Secretary, Stanley Ng Wai Chun

General Conference

Auditing Service

Director, Eric A Korff

Family Ministries Department

Director, Ronald M Flowers

Ministerial Association

Secretary, James A Cress

Secretariat

Associate Secretary, Claude A Sabot

Stewardship Department

Director, Benjamin C Maxson

Trust Services Department

Director, Jeffrey K Wilson

Women's Ministries Department

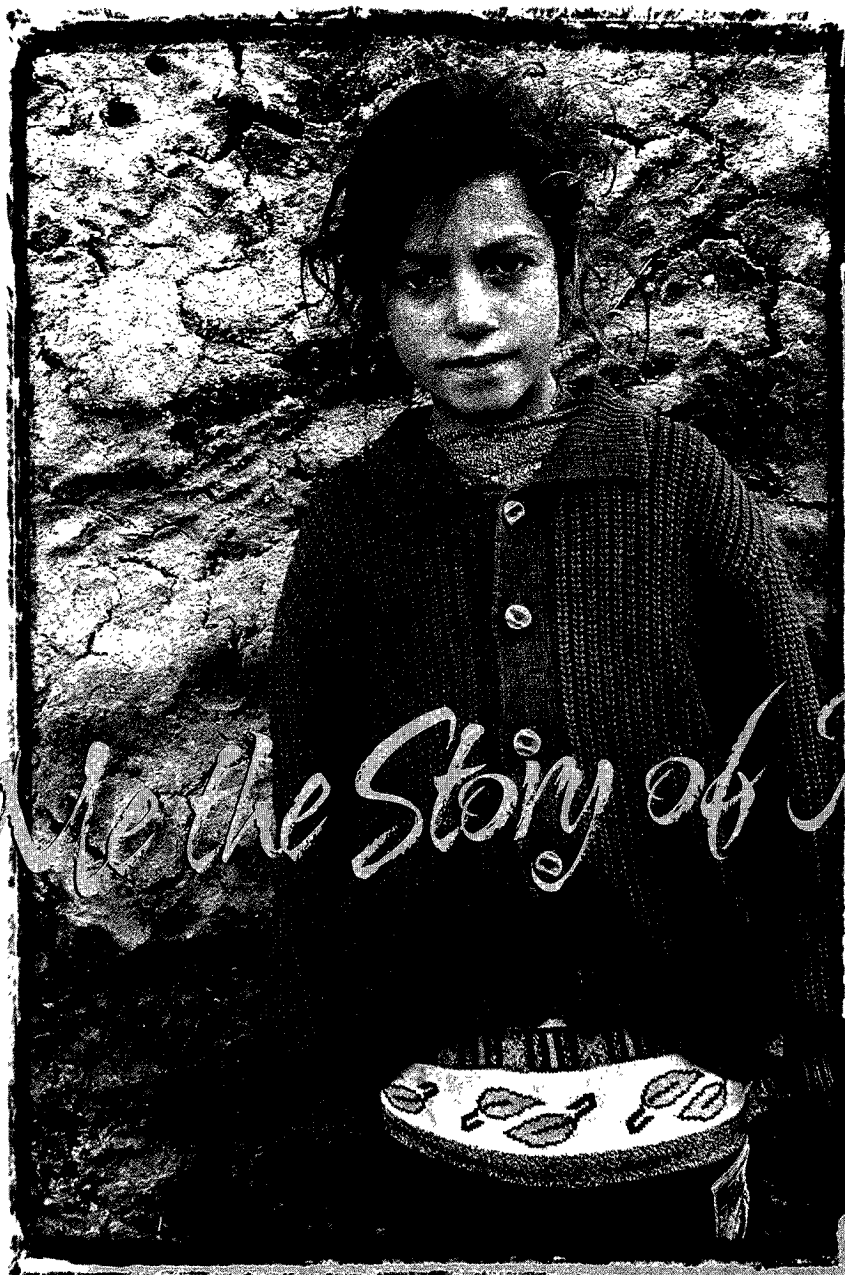
Director, Ardis D Stenbakken

Youth Department

Director, Baraka G Muganda

Adjourned.

Calvin B Rock, *Chairman*
Donald R Sahly, *Secretary*
Athal H Tollhurst, *Actions Editor*
Rowena J Moore, *Recording Secretary*



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