



# General Conference Executive Committee Newsletter

An informative publication for members of the General Conference Executive Committee as a service through the office of the

SPRING MEETING  
2020 AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS  
SEE PAGE 12

APRIL 2020

*The last few weeks have* brought unprecedented change to institutions, nations, and the world as COVID-19 has swept across the globe, leaving disruption, isolation, illness, and death in its wake. Dire economic forecasts have rocked the financial world, and many wonder if life will ever return to “normal” again.

In the midst of chaos, God’s Word—the Bible, continues to stand as a beacon of light. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path,” wrote the Psalmist (Ps. 119:105). The Holy Scriptures are, as our Fundamental Belief #1 states, “the supreme, authoritative, and . . . infallible revelation of His [God’s] will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history.”

And yet, at times different interpretations are given to the same text, often leading to confusion and doubt. How can we know if the Bible is trustworthy? How can we know if we are reading the text correctly? Drs. Frank and Michael Hasel address these questions and more in this month’s ECN. I hope you will find their interview and other material to be a blessing as you dig deeply into the study of God’s Word.

ELIAS BRASIL DE SOUZA, PH.D.  
DIRECTOR, BIBLICAL  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE



EDITORIAL



COMMENTARY

## NO WAR HAS EVER DONE THIS

No natural disaster, no tsunami, no earthquake, no flooding, no hurricane or famine has had this global effect. No persecution ever forced us into this behavior.

While some are waiting for certain dreaded Sunday laws to bring it upon us, this microscopic thing called COVID-19 has caused such cataclysmic global chaos. It has accomplished a *coup d’etat* that no one thought possible. With sweeping speed and global dimensions of unprecedented proportions it has forced us into social distancing.

People were made to live in community, not to socially distance or isolate. It poses tremendous challenges. Being forced to distance ourselves socially for many days and weeks, and no one really knows for how long, will alter the way we live and interact. It also has profound consequences for the world economy in ways that can make the black Friday of the great depression look like a breeze.

The new experience of social distancing, that we are forced to endure, has brought amazing restrictions on our freedom. Restrictions of personal freedom,

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What we are called to practice is prudent *physical distancing* in order to avoid the spread of the virus, while at the same time finding new ways of *increased social care!*

the right of free assembly and to worship that raise important questions about the power of the state and religious freedom and our human responsibility in all this. All of a sudden, we cannot gather in groups of more than five or ten for prayer meetings, even in our homes. Social distancing has led us to the point where we can no longer enjoy the blessings that come from fellowshiping with believers who love to assemble for Sabbath worship in our churches. We are literally grounded in our houses. Instead of enjoying personal encounters with friends in worship services with real people we are, at best, forced to watch virtual worship services in front of our computer and TV screens. Socially we have sunk to our worst experience since World War II.

All of this has happened because of a tiny virus. A virus that just a few months ago no one knew. In fact, that did not even exist a few months ago! This little virus is so

very powerful that it has infected large numbers of people around the globe with a lethal disease. Perhaps even more powerful than spreading the infection is its ability to instill fear and a feeling of *angst* in many of us. Every slight cough and every little sneeze in what is spring allergy season in some parts of the world, leaves us wondering whether we might have caught the virus, or not. After all, you can't see it. You can't hear it. You can't smell it. You can't feel it. You may think you are healthy and yet you could be spreading the deadly disease. How vicious this virus is! It makes us realize how fragile this world is and that the things that are most precious to us can rapidly change and are ultimately beyond our human control.

It amazes me how quickly we have become accustomed to speaking about social distancing. Actually, this terminology is not really helpful, I think. What we are called to practice in these times of

global health crisis and pandemic is prudent *physical distancing* in order to avoid the spread of the virus, while at the same time finding new ways of *increased social care!* This calls for our creativity and determination as well as for our compassion and love. Especially those in need and those who are vulnerable, lonely and scared need our attention and support.

Here we Seventh-day Adventists have a unique opportunity to show the world the very best we have learned from our Savior and Friend, Jesus. That perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18 ESV).

For there is one thing that this virus can never do and will never ever achieve: it can never separate us from the tender love of God! The apostle Paul has stated it in these beautiful words:

*“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor*

# INSPIRED COUNSEL FOR LEADERS

## IN TIMES OF CRISIS

*things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 8:38-39 ESV).

- This love compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14) to show kindness to others.
- This love teaches us to be patient as we wait for relief and deliverance.
- This love motivates us to share what we have with those who have less.
- This love propels us to get active in support of those who can't help themselves.
- This love encourages those who are fearful.
- This love finds ways to reach out to those who are lonely.
- This love will listen to those who need an attentive ear.
- This love brings forth a gentle smile on the face of those who are scared.
- This love has courage in the face of danger.
- This love endures in times of adversity.
- This love triumphs over fear.
- This love makes us agents of hope in times of suffering.
- This love will go the extra mile.

Let us share the good news and live the gospel of God's love that becomes visible in a lifestyle of compassion and care in times of physical distancing - for the good of all of our health.

*Dr. Frank Hasel is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute in Silver Spring, MD, USA.*

**W**e need to stay our faith upon God; for there is just before us a time that will try men's souls. Christ upon the Mount of Olives rehearsed the fearful judgments that were to precede His second coming: "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: . . . Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew. 24:6-8). While these prophecies received a partial fulfillment at the destruction of Jerusalem, they have a more direct application in the last days. . . .

Already the restraining Spirit of God is being withdrawn from the world. Hurricanes, storms, tempests, fire and flood, disasters by sea and land, follow each other in quick succession. Science seeks to explain all these. The signs thickening around us, telling of the near approach of the Son of God, are attributed to any other than the true cause. Men cannot discern the sentinel angels restraining the four winds, that they shall not blow until the servants of God are sealed; but when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture. . . .

But God's servants are not to trust to themselves in this great emergency. The program of coming events is in the hands of the Lord. The world is not without a ruler; the Majesty of heaven has the destiny of

nations, as well as the concerns of His church, in His own hands.

Brethren, it is no time now for mourning and despair, no time to yield to doubt and unbelief. We have a risen Saviour. He is the King, the Lord of Hosts; He sitteth between the cherubim, and amid the strife and tumult of nations, He guards His people still. He who rules in the heavens is our Saviour. . . . His

people have the assurance that they are safe in His hands. In patience they are to possess their souls. . . .

In the time of trial just before us, God's pledge of security will be placed upon those who have kept the word of His patience. If you have complied with the conditions of God's Word, Christ will be to you a refuge from the storm. He will

say to His faithful ones, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment until the indignation be overpast" (Isaiah 26:20). . . .

Brethren, you to whom the truths of God's Word have been opened, what part will you act in this momentous time of the closing scenes of earth's history? Are you awake to these solemn realities?

Do you realize the grand work of preparation that is going on in heaven and [on] earth? Let all who have received the light, who have had the opportunity of reading and hearing the prophecy, take heed to those things that are written therein, "for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3).

—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 100*, 1893

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**But God's  
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# HERMENEUTICS: UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE TODAY

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK M. HASEL, PH.D, AND  
MICHAEL G. HASEL, PH.D.



PC: DANIEL HASEL

*Editor's Note: When this interview originally took place, COVID-19 was almost unheard of. Since then, many rapid changes have taken place around the world as countries and organizations have been battling this global pandemic. Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church some adjustments have needed to be made, including the postponement of the General Conference Session from June 2020 to May 2021. Nevertheless, the work of the Church goes forward as we look at new and creative ways to carry out our God-given mission. The topic of hermeneutics continues to be of vital importance as it addresses the way we approach Scripture—the foundation of our faith.*

**ECN: What is “hermeneutics,” and why do you think there is so much interest in it at this time?**

**Frank Hasel (FH):** Hermeneutics is the art and process of interpreting. It explores how we read, understand and interpret biblical texts, that were written in a different time, culture or context of our own. The origin of the word comes from the Greek *hermeneuein*: to interpret. The root is apparently derived from Hermes, the messenger of the gods who made intelligent to human beings what otherwise could not be grasped (cf. Acts 14:12, where Paul at Lystra is called Hermes because he was the chief speaker). In Luke 24:27 the risen Christ at Emmaus interpreted to the disciples that “beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained (*diermeneusen*) to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (NASB).

In a sense the issue of biblical interpretation is like a water shed in theology. When you visit central Europe and you travel on the famous German Autobahn just south of Munich towards Lindau at Lake Constance, you cross into lovely areas of rolling hills in southern Bavaria. Not far from the city of Wangen (where incidentally the Hasels originally came from) you will see a sign at



the roadside that says: “European watershed.” What it means is that in this area it is decided where the water of all the creeks and rivers in central Europe will flow. They will merge with one of two major rivers. Either the waters will flow into the river Danube – and from there eventually will end in the Black Sea, or the waters will flow into the river Rhine, and from there eventually will end in the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean. The fascinating thing is that in this area you don’t have the majestic and

gorgeous high towering mountains of the Alps. All you have are gentle rolling hills. But it is here that the direction of the flow of the water in central Europe is determined. No matter how tall some mountains might stand in the way later on, the water still flows in only two very different directions: either into the Black Sea in the east or into the North Sea. In a similar way the issue of biblical interpretation will significantly shape the outcome of our theology, and through that impacts our message and mission. The history of the Christian church is the history of the interpretation of Scripture. In other words, as biblical hermeneutics goes, so goes the church.

The reason that there is so much interest at this time is that there are many issues that are confronting the church and many people use the Bible to further their own agendas. If we want to follow the Bible, we need to know what the Bible actually says.

**Some have suggested that there should be a diversity of hermeneutics in the church. What would be the consequence if we had multiple competing hermeneutical approaches?**

**Michael Hasel (MH):** If you have different competing hermeneutical methods promoted in different parts of the church, you will have theological fragmentation and doctrinal pluralism. We have witnessed this repeatedly in the history of other denominations. So, this is not a theoretical scenario. Jesus said, “a house divided will not stand.” With competing hermeneutical methods

that are at variance with biblical presuppositions, church unity in faith and practice will be made virtually impossible.

**At GCS 2015 a request was made from the floor to study what the hermeneutics of the church really is because we look at Scripture and come to very different interpretations. How does this request to study hermeneutics differ from the assignment given to the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), which also originated from a request made at a GC Session?**

**FH:** It differs because this was not a request to bring together a study group like TOSC made up of more than 100 representatives from the world church, but the Steering Committee specifically requested

that the Biblical Research Institute address the issue and publish its findings in the form of a book.

**So how has the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) taken on this task?**

**FH:** Building on previous publications on hermeneutics, the BRI has initiated a process of studying some hermeneutical issues in greater depth. The BRI has gone beyond the immediate BRI members by selecting a variety of scholars to write articles on a number of relevant hermeneutical topics that are faced by the church today, and to bring these to the Biblical Research Committee (BRICOM) for feedback and input. BRICOM consists of more than 40 representative scholars and administrators specializing in a variety of theologically related disciplines. The project was introduced and approved by BRICOM in 2017. The volume

## 2015 General Conference Minutes

15-1094  
July 9, 2015, a.m.  
General Conference Session

### HERMENEUTICS

VOTED, To refer to Steering Committee the idea of developing a specific hermeneutic for the world Church.

15-1132  
July 10, 2015, p.m.  
General Conference Session

### HERMENEUTICS—REQUEST TO STEERING COMMITTEE

Myron A Iseminger, Undersecretary, addressed the request to the Steering Committee to look at the Seventh-day Adventist Church's methods of hermeneutics. He announced that the Biblical Research Institute is already studying the issue and has plans to publish their findings in the form of a revised second edition of a book on biblical interpretation.

consists of some 14 chapters and we plan to have it published before mid-summer of 2020.

**The two of you have also authored the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, 2020, *Adult Bible Study Guide* (ABSG) on hermeneutics. Was this also in response to the request a delegate made at GCS 2015? If not, how and when did this come about?**

**MH:** The topic of hermeneutics for an ABSG was already voted in 2011. We were asked to collaborate on the topic *How to Interpret Scripture* during the summer of 2014. This was a year before the GCS in 2015. So, it was not related to the delegate request at all. By 2016 we had completed the manuscript. We see this as God’s providential leading as He only knew the issues the church would face in the years ahead. We think that this is a tremendous opportunity for the World Church to study the very issues that we were asked to address as we corporately engage in this task in understanding better how to interpret Scripture appropriately.

**Why is this topic important now?**

**MH:** We have people in the church who come to conclusions about certain issues like the trinity, or keeping the feasts, or some prophetic interpretation of Daniel 11, or the role of Israel in prophecy, or on the days of creation, to mention but a few controversial subjects. And they come to very different conclusions sometimes because they misread what the Bible actually says. They do not realize how their presuppositions influence even their reading of Scripture. So we need to be aware of these influences that shape our interpretation of Scripture. If we do not acknowledge that we will be in danger of misreading the Bible even with the best of intentions.

**How do presuppositions affect hermeneutics? Can you give some examples?**

**FH:** No one approaches the biblical text with a blank mind. We all are influenced by our education, our upbringing and the culture in which we grew up in. This causes us to read Scripture through

## HOW TO INTERPRET SCRIPTURE ADULT BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

BY CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN, EDITOR

**A**s Seventh-day Adventists, we are not unique among Protestants in claiming “the Bible and the Bible alone” as the foundation of our faith, even though many who make that claim believe in things like Sunday as the New Testament replacement for the seventh-day Sabbath; the immortality of the soul; eternal torment in hell for the lost; and even a secret rapture.

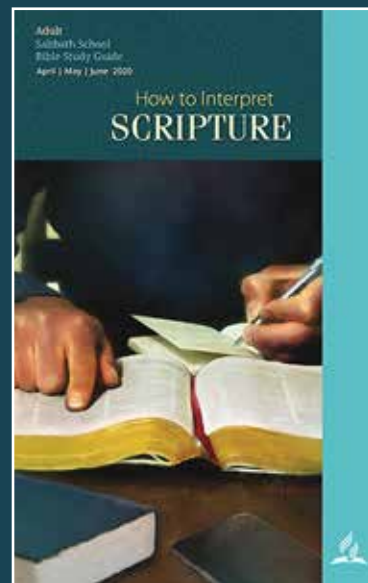
In other words, just having the Bible, and claiming to believe it, is one thing, as important as that is. But, as the proliferation of false doctrines (all supposedly derived from Scripture) reveals, we need to know how to interpret the Bible correctly as well.

Hence, the subject of the *Adult Bible Study Guide* for this quarter, “How to Interpret Scripture.” In it, we begin with the assumption that Scripture, as the Word of God, is “the infallible revelation of His will” and “the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history.”\*

From this starting point, then, we will examine how the Bible teaches us to interpret itself. For instance, how did Paul or the other gospel writers interpret the Old Testament? If what they wrote was inspired by God, then certainly how they read and interpreted the Scriptures could be central to helping us learn to do the same. And how did Jesus Himself use and interpret Scripture? We won’t find a better example on how to read the Bible than from Jesus.

All these questions and more will be explored this quarter because, as doctrines like eternal torment in hell or Sunday sacredness show, believing in the Bible itself isn’t enough. We must learn how to interpret it, as well.

\**Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, Fundamental Belief #1, “The Holy Scriptures.”





various lenses. We are often not even aware of these influences. We take them for granted. The Bible invites us to have our minds transformed by its assumptions and presuppositions. In the western world people are trained to think critically and many, therefore, doubt the miracles and God's direct intervention in our lives. Thomas Jefferson, one of the founders of the United States, cut out all references to miracles in the New Testament and created a Bible that suited his rational mind. But Jesus used miracles for the very purpose of affirming His divinity and authority as the Son of God! Our presuppositions also influence how we deal with biblical prophecy that affirms God's purpose and plan in history and the future. The Bible should be allowed to determine the methods we use and the assumptions behind those methods.

### Is hermeneutics something that changes with time? If so, in what ways?

**MH:** Throughout history there have been different approaches that have been prominent. Some of these include the allegorical method, historical-critical methods, postmodern approaches where the reader rather than the text determines the meaning. Every era raises new hermeneutical questions. Some of the newer

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approaches have not been adequately addressed by our church yet, even though they have been in use by some for several decades. The historical-grammatical method takes the history of the Bible seriously and the context of the words, grammar, and larger units of the Bible into account. While there may be different questions that we might bring to the text, Scripture has not changed. The

question we must ask ourselves is whether we should interpret Scripture on its own terms or whether we should superimpose our ideas or methods on the biblical text.



Thomas Jefferson cut the references to the miracles of Jesus out of his Bible creating a Bible that suited him.

[Smithsonian Institute: [www.si.edu/object/holy-bible-new-testament:nmah\\_517833](http://www.si.edu/object/holy-bible-new-testament:nmah_517833)]

With ideas and influences constantly changing are we not better served by relying on the methods the Bible provides?

### Is there a “best way” or “best practice” in how to read the Bible? If so, how can that way be determined?

**MH:** The best way to approach Scripture is to take seriously the divine-human dimension that Scripture testifies to. Any appropriate method should be in harmony with what Scripture affirms and should not categorically put aside or question its divine revelation or inspiration. We should study how Jesus and the biblical writers used and interpreted Scripture. We should develop an approach that allows Scripture to interpret Scripture as they also did. By one count, there are 2,688 quotations of the Old Testament used by the New Testament writers. For example, every writer of Scripture affirms the creation account which forms the foundation for everything that follows. In this way, we can see the inner-biblical connections and high value placed by the biblical writers on historical events and prophecy.

### How can we know that the Bible is trustworthy?

**FH:** There are several ways in which this question can be answered. The trustworthiness of the Bible can be

seen in the fulfillment of prophecy. For instance, Daniel 2, 7, and 8 repeat and expand the succession of kingdoms through time and the details are confirmed in history. Because the Bible is constituted in history, history is the place where it can also be tested and understood. Beyond the strong reasons fulfilled prophecy gives for the reliability of the Bible, Scripture has the aroma of truth to it when it speaks of our human condition and our need for salvation and the love of God to save this world. When you read the Bible there is an immediate appeal to our hearts and minds that it can be trusted. The Holy Spirit confirms through the reading of the word that it is trustworthy and not fiction. There is no other book quite like the Bible. The Bible is without peers when it comes to its ability to change our character. It ennobles our thinking, provides ethical guidance, and points us to God alone who gives us strength to do good and be a blessing to others. In its power men and women have broken the chains of sinful habits and have renounced selfishness. It has instilled courage in human beings to be faithful to God to follow His example of love. It is a precious book and the sure foundation of our faith in God.

**How can a book written 2,000 or more years ago and in a different culture and time have relevancy for today?**

**MH:** While the Bible was written in a particular time and place in culture, it transcends any ancient or modern culture. Jesus was born into a certain culture in Palestine during the Roman Empire, but He is not only the Savior of the people of that time, but of all

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people throughout all of history. The totality and universality of the Gospel is found in the totality and universality of Scripture. The description of our sinful human nature, our universal need of salvation has not changed over time. The biblical teaching of forgiveness and of dealing with guilt and how to achieve reconciliation with God

and each other is a profound need for every generation. God sent His Son in the fullness of time, that is when everything was ready for that event, and Scripture relates that the purpose of all humanity is to prepare for His soon coming. In this way Scripture looks forward to the fulfillment of the Promise while looking back at the Promise-Giver.

**Does culture affect the way we read the Bible? If so, in what ways? And if that is the case, can the Bible mean one thing to a certain culture, and not be applicable to another?**

**MH:** Yes, culture does affect the ways we read the Bible. But this also raises an important question. Does culture determine the meaning of Scripture, or is the role of Scripture to transform our lives and thereby culture? Put in a different way, does the church have the authority



Frank Hasel, left, discusses biblical interpretation with his cousin, Michael Hasel. Together they have written a companion book to go with the second quarter Sabbath School lessons. [PC: Daniel Hasel]



to create and change Scripture or does Scripture create and change the church? The authority must remain in Scripture. The inherent problem with locating authority in our culture and not in Scripture is to beg the question, which culture and during which period of history should we turn to for that definition. There are 7,500 languages in the world. Which culture or language group should define what Scripture means? If culture becomes the norm to interpret Scripture this would lead to theological pluralism and fragmentation. But if each person from each culture, comes humbly to the Word of God, asking “How might I be changed by Jesus Christ, the Living Word?”, might not all people be drawn closer to one another as we are drawn closer to Him? Jesus promised the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture to His disciples saying, “when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). Thus, Scripture when interpreted on its terms, draws people together in humility as they seek His will.

The meaning of Scripture does not change, but the application of the meaning might look different in

various cultural settings. For example, honoring your parents remains applicable in every culture. But how one expresses and shows such honor may vary from culture to culture.

### How do Biblical hermeneutics affect the way we live our lives as Christians?

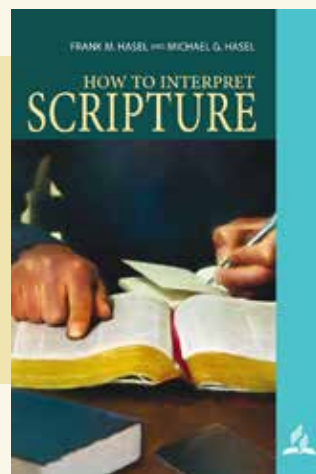
**FH:** If we take the Bible at face value, then we will treat the Bible with respect, and we will be moved to submit to its teachings. We will gladly trust the Word. As we study and learn the life-changing principles that will affect our character development and draw us closer to the image of God, we rejoice in the Word and we come to a deeper appreciation of God, who has given us His written Word. Since God achieves His purposes in and through and by His Word, the careful interpretation of His Word creates in us the desire to correctly understand the Bible and to faithfully live by every Word. Thus, the interpretation of Scripture shapes the way we practice our faith and follow Christ.

## SABBATH SCHOOL RESOURCES ON HERMENEUTICS

### COMPANION BOOK

#### HOW TO INTERPRET SCRIPTURE THROUGH SCRIPTURE

God reveals His plan of redemption, bringing joy, hope, and peace to those who claim His name by faith and accept His priceless gift. His ancient love letter, dispatched through the pens of more than 40 authors over 1,500 years, leads us into an obedient relationship with the living God of heaven Himself. **How to Interpret Scripture** examines the origin of the Bible, explores why it is the source of our theology, evaluates the influence of biblical languages, investigates prophecy, and more. The book is [available here](#), and the Kindle version is [available here](#).



### WEEKLY BROADCAST

#### WEEKLY SABBATH SCHOOL LESSON BROADCAST

Frank and Michael Hasel have teamed up with John Bradshaw to broadcast the 13 weeks of Bible study through [itiswritten.tv](http://itiswritten.tv). The program airs every weekend at the following times and is available to watch anytime on the website.

(Please note: All times are U.S. Eastern Daylight Time.)

Friday: 8:30 p.m.

Sabbath: 10:30 a.m.; 1:30 p.m.

Sunday: 10:30 a.m.



**D**uring the coronavirus outbreak, it is especially important to live as healthfully as possible, including practicing good nutrition to build up immunity. Here are two simple recipes you may want to try, from the Southern Asia-Pacific Division's Health Ministries department's **Health Advisory on Covid-19, 15th Edition.**



ROMAINE



CHICKPEAS



CORN



CUCUMBER



TOMATO



TURNIPS



TUMERIC



GINGER

GARLIC



LEMONS



### Simple Tossed Green Salad

#### Ingredients:

Romaine/iceberg lettuce  
chickpeas/garbanzos  
corn kernels (canned)  
cucumber  
tomatoes  
turnip  
avocado  
salt (small quantity)

#### Directions:

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients. Just before serving, add a moderate amount of your favorite dressing and toss to combine. Serve immediately after tossing with dressing.

### Wholesome, Caffeine-Free, Anti-inflammatory Herbal Tea

1. Wash 25 small or 13 large pieces of fresh organic turmeric root, and 3 inches ginger root
2. 1 bulb garlic, peeled and crushed
3. 25 pieces, calamansi, or two organic lemons, juiced.
4. Thinly slice or grate turmeric and ginger, unpeeled.
5. Boil 3 cups of distilled water. Add turmeric, ginger, and garlic.
6. Turn off heat and add the calamansi or lemon juice.
7. Cover and infuse/steep for 15 minutes, the cool.

Suggestion: Drink 1 cup, three times a day if possible. This drink is often used to relieve cough, cold, fever, sore throat and flu-like symptoms.\*

\*There is no known optimal "dosage," although all the ingredients are helpful in themselves. Even though you may be tempted to add a sweetener (honey, sugar, or artificial), that would be discouraged to avoid sugar overload.

AVOCADO



# NEW FRIENDS AND NEW BEGINNINGS

BY RICKY OLIVERAS, ADVENTIST MISSION

would be dead by now [if it weren't for this Life Hope Center] because I tried to kill myself multiple times. I couldn't think of the future. I just thought of the present and what was tormenting me and how I would kill myself."

Deeply depressed, Consuelo abandoned her belief in God. She tried to start over, wanting to do something different with her life, so she enrolled in nursing school. But her past weighed on her. After class one day, a professor noticed something was wrong and told her about the local Life Hope Center in the city of Talca, Chile.

Consuelo visited the center, where she met Michelly and Angie, Adventist volunteers with the One Year in Mission program. She enjoyed talking with them and decided to take a Portuguese course offered at the center. Over time, Consuelo became friends with the volunteers.

"I felt the presence of God in everyone at the center," Consuelo said. "In what I saw, how they acted, what they said, and everything they did."

Each time Consuelo returned to the center, she felt as if her deep wounds were being healed.

"They welcomed me with open arms," she added. "I found another family here, another home here."

The volunteers began talking to Consuelo about God, and it was the first time in a while Consuelo felt ready to talk about spiritual topics. She asked for a Bible study, in which



Consuelo lives in Talca, Chile.

she gradually developed a new understanding of and relationship with God.

"It helped me in every way to be here," Consuelo said. "I saw the love of God, the grace of God that I hadn't seen anywhere else. I found myself growing closer to God, believing in Him, and having more faith in Him."

As a result, Consuelo decided to be baptized and join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She now volunteers her time at the center, doing medical consultations for free.

Like Consuelo, there are many who are looking for community and love. But most people are too suspicious of religion to seek these things in a

traditional church.

"Some of the people who come here may be a little distrustful because they don't really know what we will ask for afterward," says Angie. "But when they see a different environment, where there is only empathy, love, and friendship, they completely change their vision. They are very grateful and bring more people to participate."

In order to understand the needs of the community, center staff conducted a survey. As a result, the center now runs various classes and activities including Portuguese and English lessons, healthy cooking demonstrations, crafts, and a variety of exercise classes.

"We've seen the effect of Christ's method on people's lives because we see a community today open to the Adventist Church that was not easy to reach in the past," says Michelly. "The centers are breaking down barriers."



Volunteers at Life Hope Center



# SPRING MEETING to be held on ZOOM

BY HENSLEY MOOROOVEN  
GENERAL CONFERENCE UNDERSECRETARY

**D**ue to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 Spring Meeting of the GC Executive Committee will take place over two morning sessions, **via Zoom**, from 6:00 am to 11:00 am (EDT) on April 14 and 15, 2020. The meeting times were chosen to accommodate the many time zones around the world, allowing as many Executive Committee members as possible to attend.

According to the *General Conference Working Policy* (BA 10 05), the purpose of the Spring Meeting is “receiving the audited financial reports of the General Conference and for transacting regular Executive Committee business,” and you will see this purpose reflected in several items to be considered during this unusual Spring Meeting.

Although these are unusual circumstances, we believe the Lord will bless as we meet together for the 2020 Spring Meeting on Zoom!



## HIGHLIGHTS

Relevant and timely devotional messages by **Pastor Mark Finley:**

**Tuesday, April 14:** “Soul Care: Staying Healthy in the Midst of a Pandemic”

**Wednesday, April 15:** “Maintaining the Mission: Staying Focused in the Midst of a Pandemic”

Treasurer’s Report: **Juan Prestol-Puesán**, GC treasurer

**Tim Aka**, associate treasurer, will present an item on “Market Performance in 2019/2020.”

**George Egwakhe**, associate treasurer and secretary to the GC Session Planning Committee, will give an update on the 2021 GC Session.

**The World Church Strategic Plan 2020-2025:** The World Church Strategic Plan 2020-2025, “I Will Go”—voted at the 2019 Annual Council, was expected to be launched at the 2020 GC Session. With the postponement of the GC Session, GC ADCOM has appointed an ad hoc committee to develop a comprehensive plan for launching the new strategic focus for 2020 to 2025, “I Will Go.” This new plan will include a multimedia presentation that will launch during the summer of 2020. A progress report will be presented during the 2020 Spring Meeting.

**The Missionary Book Project for 2021** will be presented.



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Adventists in the Southern Asia Division, the Division officers in **Hosur, India**, urged members to “obey the state/national laws for safety and health,” while “focusing on Jesus, the ‘Rock of Ages.’” They reminded members of God’s promises and the “sure word of prophecy,” urging members to “seek God more intensely [and] grow spiritually strong.”

In spite of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, the Seventh-day Adventist Church continues to move forward in mission. Here are a few of the ways the Church is reaching out during this crisis.

**1** ADRA International, in **Silver Spring, Maryland**, is providing daily inspirational stories and weekly online live prayer meetings each Monday at 12 p.m. (EDT).

**2** The Adventist Church in **Guatemala** is distributing food baskets with rice, beans, cornmeal, oil, salt, and sugar to thousands of its church members affected by the COVID-19 quarantine. Funding is split between the union, conferences, missions, and local churches.

**3** The **South American Division** is presenting, as it has for the past 50 years, a special “Holy Week” evangelism outreach program across the division. Usually, small groups meet in homes and churches, but due to the coronavirus, the division is offering the full program online. The theme is “Love Written with Blood,” and features

special programming for children, teens, and adults.

**4** A coronavirus video for the deaf has been produced by the West Africa Division in **Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire**, providing important information on COVID-19 through signing and subtitles.

**5** The Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division in **Johannesburg, South Africa**, produced a video featuring Pastor Solomon Maphosa, SID president: “This is the time when all of us strengthen our walk with God and pray that He intervenes in this terrible time that we are in.”

**6** A special day of prayer was held March 28 across the East-Central Africa Division in **Nairobi, Kenya**. “We know that as a church, we have nothing to fear,” noted Blasious Ruguri, Division president in a letter to members.

“We will be careful and do our part to protect ourselves and our communities from danger, but we must also . . . seek God’s mercy and blessings for our church and the world.”

**7** GAIN Europe, a joint initiative of the **Inter-European and Trans-European Divisions**, is producing a highly engaging video series, #dearcoronavirus reaching the world with encouragement and hope.

**8** The Youth Department of the Euro-Asia Division in **Moscow, Russia**, organized a division-wide prayer marathon for young people via Zoom. Participants connected from across the division, focusing on the power of God, His watchcare, and to pray together.

**9** In a letter sent to all Seventh-day

**10** In a published commentary, Richard Sabuin, Director of Education, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries departments for the division in **Goyang City, South Korea**, answers the question, “Can Churches Actually Close?” He explains that while church buildings serve an important function, they are not “the Church.” “Church is people,” he wrote. “The church should never be closed, because you are His church, and the head of the church is Christ.”

**11** The Health Ministries department of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division in **Silang, Cavite, Philippines**, is producing a near-daily “Health Advisory on Covid-19” newsletter with helpful content including COVID-19 statistics, trivia, preventive measures, recipes, and inspired words of hope.

**12** More than 1,000 people in **New Zealand** joined a two-hour youth event on Zoom culminating the Global Youth Week of Prayer on March 28. The theme for the week was “The Embrace: Forgiveness and Reconciliation,” showing ways it is possible to “embrace” even during the coronavirus crisis.