



General Conference Executive Committee Newsletter

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

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It had been a long day.

As evening approached, the disciples suggested that Jesus send the crowd to the nearby villages to buy food. But Jesus responded, “You give them something to eat.” They saw their obvious need when all they could round up were five loaves and two fish!

Jesus’ response to *their* dilemma, “Bring them here to Me,” contains an important lesson for us as Christians and as Church leaders.

We know the rest of the story. When they put what they had into His hands, Jesus blessed the meager gift, resulting in the feeding of 5,000 men plus women and children. But why were there twelve baskets of leftovers? Surely, the One who performed the miracle could have also provided the exact amount of food that was necessary for the crowd, right? Of course, it was to show the *abundance* of God’s provision for His people.

Ultimately, the situation was only a crisis in the eyes of the disciples—not in the eyes of Jesus!

May we always heed His command to “bring them here to Me” regardless of the crisis.

RAY WAHLEN
GC UNDERTREASURER

EDITORIAL



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THE END OF GIVING AND MISSION: CHURCH FINANCES AT THE END OF TIME¹

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*T*he study of the final events of this world is not new to Seventh-day Adventists. End-time Bible verses and quotations from the inspired pen of Ellen G. White have been studied, analyzed, debated, and for the most part, forgotten or ignored.

In this reflection, my thoughts gravitated to passages of Scripture and Ellen G. White quotations on the time of the end, and the conclusion of stewardship, church finances, administration, governance, and leadership. In essence, the fulfillment of our presence as stewards and messengers is a sacred part of God’s mission on earth.

Jesus, in expressing the urgency of being ready for the final events, said: “But know this, that if the Master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, He would have watched and not allowed His house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt. 24:43,44).

Ellen White echoed this urgency when she stated, “We are now standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. A crisis is before us, such as the world has never witnessed. And sweetly to us, as to the first disciples, comes the assurance that God’s kingdom



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Giving in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is considered an act of individual worship.

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ruleth overall. The program of coming events is in the hands of our Maker. The Majesty of Heaven has the destiny of nations, as well as the concerns of His church in His charge.”²

In addition to Scripture and the writings of Ellen White, my thinking on these issues has also been informed by the works of Dr. Fernando Chajj and Dr. Marvin Moore.³ However, these lines reflect my view of the dynamic connection between mission and church finances even through final events, and of the solemn stewardship resting today on the men and women entrusted with the financing, operation, and guidance of the mission the Seventh-day Adventist Church in these times.

The reader should know that my motive is not to issue a new version of what is already revealed, or to make people fearful, nor to present myself as other than a student of God’s Word. Whether my understanding is correct or lacking, I only wish to remain a seeker of Truth. The counsel of the Apostle Paul remains relevant to

me, especially when he cautioned, “Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now, our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand” (Rom. 13:11, 12a, NKJV). I pray the urgency of the topic never leaves me.

MISSION AND GIVING ARE DYNAMICALLY LINKED

Giving in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is considered an act of individual worship. Whether one is returning tithes, weekly offerings, and/or contributing through long-term giving instruments such as wills and trusts, personal giving is a constant flow that feeds multiple areas of mission, systematically impacting the mission of the Church worldwide. In 2019, weekly funds flowing through the hands of mostly volunteer church treasurers averaged 68.5 million US dollars.⁴ This amount did not include money contributed by members and non-members directly to education, community services,

or hospitals, nor funds extended personally to missionaries and/or others in need.

The purpose of giving through the channel of the Seventh-day Adventist Church organizational structure is to affirm and advance the mission of the Church beyond the borders of the local congregation. This is possible because the Church maintains a comprehensive worldwide financial system. Members rely on the integrity and diligence of those who serve the Church as volunteers and employees, and they likewise trust the effectiveness of the system.

Giving is the lifeblood of mission. Without the flow of funds, it would be impossible to sustain mission work in many parts of the world or to effectively enter new territories, establish schools, and erect institutional building facilities. Without this worldwide financial system, it would be practically impossible to manage, administer, govern, and lead the church as it is operated today, and the sharing of resources

from one part of the world to another would be much more difficult. Finances are important to the church, and even if they may not be the sole determinant in decision-making today, they tend to guide much of what happens, or not. As it is, mission and giving are dynamically linked.

The Adventist Church embodies a comprehensive worldwide mission effort. This mission effort is largely invested in fixed assets, as mission growth requires investing in land, buildings, and equipment for congregations and institutions. If church operations are to be halted or terminated, it would represent a significant impact on mission as we currently know it. Nevertheless, it would not be a challenge for the “Lord of Mission” who has other ways to accomplish His plan. Mission would not come to a screeching halt because the Omnipotent is always ready to implement plans B, C, or Z.⁵ God never runs out of options. After all,

- 1) He is the Lord of mission (Matt. 10:16; John 17:18; Rev. 1:12-18).
- 2) The Holy Spirit guides God’s servants as they give of their resources and engage in the fulfillment of God’s mission (2 Cor. 8:1-5).⁶
- 3) God will guide mission to a conclusion when He considers it appropriate (Is. 19:23-25).

Let us now look at the final events and see how they provide guidance and orientation to the honest searcher of truth at this crucial time.

FOUR MOMENTS IN THE FINAL EVENTS

As I read Ellen White’s statements on the end times, it became clear that four moments are of critical importance. They are *Today*, the upcoming *Time of Trouble*, the *Close or End of Probation*, and the ultimate event of the ages, the *Second Coming of Jesus*. Let me offer a few comments on each, starting sequentially from the last.



The **Second Coming of Jesus** is the supreme hope for humans born and enslaved by sin on planet Earth. It represents the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus to be with His people for eternity (John 14:1-3).

The **Time of Probation** is a term used to identify the period in which the evil one persecutes and hurts

the children of God. Its ending marks the conclusion of the pre-advent judgment, which indicates the conclusion of the intercessory work of Jesus in heaven (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 22:11).

The **Time of Trouble** is a period that extends from the moment the evil one incites persecution on the people obedient to the commandments of God until the Second Coming of Jesus takes place. It is identified in three different forms and purposes:

- 1) the Early Time of Trouble, (also called the “Little” Time of Trouble)
- 2) the Main Time of Trouble (also called the “Great” Time of Trouble)
- 3) the Time of Jacob’s Trouble.

Finally, **Today** identifies the present moment in which we are living. To the keen searcher of truth, this present moment could be the most critical decision time for us. Only the Father knows when He will allow the Early Time of Trouble to develop, and when these final events will begin to take place.

Other manifestations and events showing divine intervention mentioned by Dr. Fernando Chaij as part of the end times include the reform movement within the Church;⁷ the shaking;⁸ the Sunday Law;⁹ the latter rain of the Holy Spirit;¹⁰ the sealing of the saints;¹¹ and the loud cry.¹²

As the last message preached to a perishing world is sounded, the righteous will leave the large cities,¹³ the four angels will release the four winds,¹⁴ the righteous will leave the small towns as the death decree is given,¹⁵ and will find places of refuge before probation ends for those who have not repented.¹⁶ The falling of the seven last plagues¹⁷ will take place at the end of probation,¹⁸ after the investigative judgment has ended,¹⁹ and before the second coming of Jesus.²⁰ Understanding the time of trouble in detail helps us understand much about the end of mission and church finances.

UNDERSTANDING THE TIME OF TROUBLE

The time of trouble is identified in three different moments, or forms, representing three different purposes, as described above.

The *Early Time of Trouble* is a period in which the

people of God, filled with the Holy Spirit, begin to proclaim the message of salvation to the world, and in particular the Sabbath.²¹ During this period the nations will be held in check to allow the proclamation of the Third Angel's Message to go forward.²²

At the commencement of the Early Time of Trouble, the faithful believers will be filled with the Holy Spirit just before the plagues are poured out, while Christ is still in the heavenly sanctuary.²³ During this time the people of God will be attacked by pen and voice and subject to ridicule, threats, haughtiness, and arrogance.²⁴ Organized Church structures will operate intensively, but with difficulties and limitations. Many believers will decide to sell their properties to donate the proceeds to the Church and giving will increase as the Sabbath question agitates the whole world. The United States will declare Sunday as Sabbath, and its observance will involve imposing imprisonment, torture, and death on dissidents who refuse to comply. Religious liberty in the United States will come to an end,²⁵ and other countries will institute laws to restrict religious liberty as well.²⁶

The purpose of the Early Time of Trouble is to allow Satan to reveal his character as a liar, accuser, and murderer.²⁷ The Lord will begin to purify the church,²⁸ and God will intervene when the defiance to His Law is universal.²⁹ Many believers will be guided by the Holy Spirit to sell their properties and bring the funds to the church in the last major funding for mission.³⁰ This will become the greatest giving ever witnessed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Latter Rain

of the Holy Spirit will begin to fall. The organizational structure of the Church may still operate and be active in processing funds, but ISEs (International Service Employees) may need to be recalled. Other personnel considered non-essential—and perhaps even those considered essential—may be released in recognition of the imminence of the moment. The structure of the Church and its local congregations will operate with limitations.

Every Earthly Support Cut Off

The *Main Time of Trouble* is identifiable by the progressive worsening of opposition and persecution of believers. Because business transactions will be severely limited, the Church will not be able to sell property at any price unless some mark or clear identification aligns it with the opposing evil power. While this is happening, the angels of God will be bidden to let go the winds of strife,³¹ and every earthly support will be cut off to the obedient children of God.³² Some will be imprisoned, and many will flee³³ as the restraining work of the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from all who are disobedient to God.³⁴ The people who claim fidelity to the true God will be treated as traitors and enemies of law and order.³⁵ It is during this time, as persecution intensifies and events move closer to the end of probation—and concurrently to the end of the pre-advent judgment in heaven—that God will make His final effort to save the lost.

It is during this time of tribulation that the fulfilment of Matthew 24:14 will reach its climax. The Holy Spirit will seal the righteous, the loud cry

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The **Early Time of Trouble** is a period in which the people of God, filled with the Holy Spirit, begin to **proclaim the message of salvation** to the world, and in particular the Sabbath. During this period the nations will be held in check to allow the **proclamation of the Third Angel's Message** to go forward.

will take place, and the last call to those still in Babylon will occur. At this time, many will be searching with great haste and desperation for the righteous that they might teach them the truth they had not known or understood before.³⁶

As the intensity of persecution varies geographically, people will be either looking for the truth or abandoning the truth and light they have received.³⁷

Congregations, church structural levels, and institutions will be of no help to the obedient. Properties will be left abandoned, church bank accounts will be closed, remaining assets will be abandoned and stewardship, finances, administration, governance, and leadership in the Church will be officially ended as the Lord of Mission remains totally in charge of the concluding scenes of the work, and of His faithful remnant.

When the Third Angel's Message closes, mercy will no longer plead for the guilty inhabitants of the earth. The people of God will have accomplished their work. They will have received the latter rain that prepared them for the trying hour before them, and as Jesus ceases His intercession in the heavenly sanctuary, the world will have rejected His mercy and the wicked will pass the boundary of their probation.³⁸ Satan will assume complete control of the impenitent.³⁹ It is at this juncture that mission and giving cease. There is no more



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world to save, and there is no more giving needed. As in the sacrificial offering system of Israel where the animal sacrificed as a burnt offering became incinerated completely, the individual who is a part of the people of God at this point will have given everything to Him. They will have nothing left. The believer will now live entirely under the care of the Omnipotent.⁴⁰

The *Time of Jacob's Trouble* will begin after the pre-Advent judgment in heaven has finished, and as the angels of God completely release the fierce winds of human passion. The death decree will then be issued, and people will be authorized, after a certain time, to kill the obedient children of God. The sign to the children of God that this critical period has begun will be the outpouring of the seven last plagues on the earth.⁴¹ These plagues will enrage the wicked against the righteous. The saints will have been sealed for salvation by the Holy Spirit, as men and women feverishly seek their death

for causing the widespread pain and suffering brought about by the plagues. This is the context of the Time of Jacob's Trouble when the saints will cry out in anguish to God—not in fear for their lives, but with a deep desire to be right with God and cleansed of all sin and attachment to the world.⁴²

While the Holy Spirit will remove His influence from human beings who have rejected God's invitation, He will remain close to the faithful believers, guiding them into a unique experience prior to the Second Coming of Jesus. This will mirror His closeness to Jacob before meeting his brother Esau again (Gen. 32). It will be a time of self-examination and soul searching like none before, that will culminate in the return of Jesus, but not before this soul-searching guides the faithful to an even deeper desire to stay away from sin, sinful ways, and any association with the wiles of the evil one. The believers will long for nothing else but the Second Coming of their beloved Savior and Lord!

The End of Probation, the end of Judgment in Heaven, and the Holy Spirit

The moment that probation ends—when salvation is no longer available to non-believers—and Jesus completes His intercessory work for humanity in the heavenly sanctuary, is when the judgment in heaven will cease.⁴³

During the Early and Main Times of Trouble, the enemy will unfold his last attempts to disrupt the efforts of God and His messengers to reach a dying world, but all such evil doing will end with the conclusion of the judgment in heaven.⁴⁴ This will be the end of the salvific work of the Holy Spirit for the impenitent world, and the Holy Spirit will concentrate His efforts in the protection and the preparation of the saved for the return of Jesus. The activities of buying and selling, financial transactions,

church governance, administration, leadership, institutional life, and even personal financial transactions and property ownership, will have ended sometime during the Main Time of Trouble. By this time, the structure of the Church and its institutions will be inoperable or disbanded. Our properties, both denominational and personal will be taken from us, our institutions will no longer be under our care, and the people of God will be in hiding. Access to earthly possessions will end, and we will all depend on the intervention of the Lord and His powerful angels to protect us against the attacks of the Adversary.

The Time of Jacob’s Trouble will begin at the end of the Judgment as the Holy Spirit no longer invites sinners to repentance,⁴⁵ and the Holy Spirit will concentrate His efforts in the affirmation, protection, and

guidance of the people of God. Death will not come to any of them because there will no longer be a need for more martyrs to offer their lives in sacrifice. Grace will no longer be available to save the unsaved. It will be a time when grace no longer encircles the earth as it did before.⁴⁶ Evil will run rampant on the earth, but the children of God will remain firmly under the care of the Omnipotent.

During the very final events of earth’s history, the Holy Spirit will remain close to God’s people. As they persevere through the Time of Jacob’s Trouble, they will have the opportunity to hear the “voice of God declare the day and hour of Jesus’ coming,”⁴⁷ and they will remain guided, motivated, obedient, and affirmed.

The tribulation will bring moments of challenge, uncertainty, and

This figure shows the issues involved in the four moments in the Final Events discussed in this article and their potential impact on mission operations. These represent the opinion of the author and are not intended to be a prediction. We must remember that “The program of coming events is in the hands of our Maker.”⁴⁸

THE END OF GIVING AND MISSION		End of Judgment in Heaven	
Personal Reflections			
TODAY	TIME OF TROUBLE	END OF PROBATION	SECOND COMING
GREATEST GIVING EVER AS PERSECUTION BEGINS		PERSECUTION INTENSIFIES	PERSECUTION IN EARNEST
HOLY SPIRIT LATTER RAIN		HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES THE BELIEVERS	
Organizational structure still operating	ISEs recalled Personnel released	Church bank accounts closed Leaving properties and remaining assets	INTENSE PERSONAL SOUL SEARCHING
Giving and processing of funds in place	Operating with limitations Publishing & Media still at work Health work still functioning	Minimal or no operations: Leadership continuing informally Congregations minimally open or closed People either leaving or looking for the truth Persecution intensity will vary geographically	
SALE OF PROPERTIES: LAST FUNDING EFFORT	GOD’S LAST EFFORT TO SAVE THE LOST	MIGHTY ANGELS PROTECT THE BELIEVERS	

financial limitation⁴⁹ to the faithful followers of Christ, but their hearts will be at peace. The diligent perseverance of the faithful—treasuring the truths of the word of God,⁵⁰ confessing their sins, and prayerfully surrendering themselves to the God of all grace—will have a settling, affirming effect on them.⁵¹

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this limited review of the final events of earth's history is to provide a perspective on the end of individual stewardship, church finances, administration, governance, and leadership. The closing of these functions also means the conclusion of mission, and the end of the operation and the finances of the Church as the dynamic of both are linked.

In the final phases of the mission of the Church, it will be made evident who the Lord of Mission is. The role of the Church, as well as the role of the individual member, will be determined by the Holy Spirit. Angelic forces will guide and protect the righteous. Michael the Prince, the Holy Spirit, and an army of angels will protect the faithful under the fullness of persecution and danger of Armageddon. The end of mission will be nothing short of miraculous. God will show the opposing forces of the enemy that He is the God above all gods, just as He did when He liberated

His people from Egyptian bondage (Ex. 12:31,32), and when He proved He is the living God during Elijah's confrontation with false prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:19-40).



In the final phases of the mission of the Church, it will be made evident who the Lord of Mission is.

Through miraculous interventions, the Lord will join His servants, and money will not be a deciding factor in accomplishing His mission. There will be enough resources for the mission to be completed, despite the limitations imposed on the faithful. Funds will be received in the amounts needed. Doors will be opened, miracles will occur, and the mission will be accomplished, even under the most difficult of circumstances. The needs of the saints will be provided supernaturally. The Lord will empower and guide His people to accomplish every one of His purposes, and His mission will be completed by faithful servants who are fully guided, totally empowered by the Holy Spirit, and fully protected by powerful heavenly angels.

Finally, the trumpet will sound, and the crowning event of the ages will take place. The Lord Jesus will appear in the clouds in all His glory and seeing His face will make all troubles pale. The living will be given immortality, the dead will be resurrected with sinless bodies.^{52[55]} God will have accomplished His purpose, and the grand objective of giving and mission will have been fulfilled.

¹ This article was first published by Adventist News Network (ANN) on Dec. 27, 2021. Used by permission. <https://adventist.news/news/the-end-of-giving-and-mission-church-finances-at-the-end-of-time>

² Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1999), pp. 120, 121.

³ Fernando Chaij, *Preparation for the Final Crisis*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1966), p.16; Marvin Moore, *The 144,000 and the Nearness of Christ's Return*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2020).

⁴ 2020 *Annual Statistical Report*, vol. 2. Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2019 Statistics, p. 9; Table 7. Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, David Trim, Director.

⁵ White, *The Ministry of Healing*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2003), p. 281.5.

⁶ White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2009), p. 40.

⁷ Chaij wrote about the need for a Reform Movement as “church members must be awakened by a voice of alarm; they must seek a profound and genuine conversion—one of all the heart.” *Preparation for the Final Crisis*, p. 27. He quoted Joel 2:1,2, 12-17. E.G. White expresses the need for reform in *Selected Messages*, vol.1, p.121; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 285; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 469; *Messages to Young People*, p. 317; *Christian Service*, p. 42; *Testimony Treasures*, vol. 3, p.441; *The Great Controversy*, p.464, among other quotations.

⁸ On the Shaking, E.G. White wrote, “Prosperity multiplies a mass of professors. Adversity purges them out of the church,” *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p.89. She further affirmed, “In the absence of the persecution

there have drifted into our ranks men who appear sound and their Christianity unquestionable, but who, if persecution should arise, would go out from us,” *Evangelism*, p. 360.

⁹ On the Sunday Laws the reader is encouraged to read Ellen G. White, “Last Day Events” pp. 123-142, Also, see Moore, *The 144,000 and the Nearness of Christ Return*, pp. 108-115, and V. Norskov Olsen, *Papal Supremacy and American Democracy*, Loma Linda University Press, 1987.

¹⁰ On the Latter Rain, Chaij writes “To hasten the completion of the gospel commission, God desires to pour out on His people the latter rain of the Holy Spirit... This outpouring of divine power will enable the people of God today to complete the unfinished work and to reach every nation, tribe, tongue, and people with the last evangelic message.” Chaij, *Preparation for the Final Crisis*, p. 17. Also, see Moore, *The 144,000 and the Nearness of Christ Return*, pp. 108-115.

¹¹ The sealing of the saints is referred to in 2 Cor. 1:22,23, Eph. 1:13; 4:30, 1 Peter 5:10, and Rev. 7:1-4. Fernando Chaij describes the sealing in the second chapter of his book as “a spiritual process invisible to human eyes, [that] is now under way and will be finished soon, at the close of probation,” *Preparation for the Final Crisis*, p. 49. Marvin Moore writes “The forehead is a symbol of the mind, which means that the Holy Spirit will do something to the minds of God's end-time people,” *The 144,000 and the Nearness of Christ's Return*, p. 43. E.G. White describes the sealing in *Early Writings*, p.279; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol.5, pp. 451, 452, 475, 476; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 444-446; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p.307; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol.8, p.117.

¹² The Loud Cry is the completion of the preaching of the eternal gospel

of salvation to the world. Chaij affirms “The Bible gives us unqualified promises regarding the completion of the gospel commission.” He quotes Rom. 9:28, Matt. 24:14, and Rev. 10:7, *Preparation for the Final Crisis*, p.75

¹³ During the time of trouble, the saints leave the large cities due to the intensification of persecution. See White, *Last Day Events*, p.121.

¹⁴ The release of winds by the four angels as the judgment comes to an end, grace is no longer available to unrepentant sinners. See White, *Education*, pp.179-180; *Early Writings*, p. p. 36-38.

¹⁵ As the time of trouble reaches a climax, the saints’ leaving the small towns occurs as the intensity of the persecution increases. See White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol.5, pp. 464,465; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 626, 627; *Early Writings*, p. 282.

¹⁶ The death decree is an ultimate effort of the enemy to destroy the remnant of God. Dr. Chaij wrote, “Within the great time of trouble there is included a lesser time called “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” Jeremiah 30:7. It extends from the time of the death decree –and this after the plagues have already started to fall-to the liberation,” *Preparation for the Final Crisis* pp.127, 132-141. See White, *Early Writings* pp. 36, 37, 282, 283; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 604, 631; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 512.

¹⁷ The seven last plagues of Revelation 16 will be released on the earth after the conclusion of the judgment in heaven. See White, *Last Day Events*,

pp. 238-270; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 327, 629.

¹⁸ End of probation means the end of grace for the inhabitants of the earth. See White, *Last Day Events*, pp. 227-237; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 428, 429, 662.

¹⁹ End of the investigative judgment in heaven marks a critical moment within the time of trouble. The conclusion of the judgment (Dan. 7:25) is marked by the time of anguish and tribulation that comes on the earth (Dan. 12:1). White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 352,353, 422-429, 436, 479-491, 615, 618.

²⁰ The Second Coming of Jesus is the supreme hope of the saints. Matt. 24:29-31; John 19:37; Rev. 1:7.

²¹ White, *Last Day Events*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2001), p. 143.

²² *Ibid*, pp. 45, 46; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 19.

²³ White, *Early Writings*, p. 33.

²⁴ White, *Last Day Events*, pp. 45, 46.

²⁵ White, *Evangelism*, p. 236.

²⁶ White, Manuscript 78, 1876.

²⁷ White, *Last Day Events*, p. 153; *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 59, 60; *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p.414.

²⁸ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p.228.

²⁹ White, *Review and Herald*, June 15, 1897; *Last Day Events*, p.153.

³⁰ White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 59, 60.

³¹ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 152.

³² White, *The Desire of Ages*, p 121.

³³ White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p.397.

³⁴ White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 608.

³⁵ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p.394; *The Great Controversy*, p. 592.

³⁶ See Isaiah 4:1; Zechariah 8:23.

³⁷ White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp.188,189; *Selected Messages* vol. 2, p.16; *Early Writings*, p.279.

³⁸ See Genesis 6:3-7.

³⁹ White, *Maranatha*, p.265; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 613, 614.

⁴⁰ See Psalm 91:1-16.

⁴¹ See Revelation 16:1-21.

⁴² White, *Early Writings*, pp. 36, 37.

⁴³ See Dan. 12:1; Rev. 22:11.

⁴⁴ Moore explains probation “as a period during which people have opportunities to accept Christ, and the close of probation refers to the time when those opportunities have ended because Jesus’ ministry in the heavenly sanctuary will have closed.” Marvin Moore, *The 144,000 and the Nearness of Christ’s Return*, p. 219.

⁴⁵ See Gen. 6:3.

⁴⁶ “In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe,” White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 68.

⁴⁷ White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 640.

⁴⁸ White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 120, 121.

⁴⁹ See Rev. 13:16,17.

⁵⁰ See Heb. 4:14-16

⁵¹ See Dan. 12:1; 1 Peter 5:5-11.

⁵² See 1 Cor. 15:50-55.

“Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.” (Luke 12:33, NKJV)



Adventist Church Bounces Back Financially*



SPRING MEETING 2022

By MaryEllen Hacko



Paul Douglas

Paul Douglas, GC Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer, delivered his second Treasury Report during the 2022 Spring Meetings, held virtually from April 12-13.

Overall, the report revealed how the Church is bouncing back from financial uncertainty—largely thanks to members faithfully returning tithes and offerings. It also highlighted current and future challenges, including geopolitical conflict and currency volatility.

FINANCIAL RECOVERY FROM COVID-19

Financial activity for 2021 was measured compared to activity in 2019 and 2020. “Given the economic impact of COVID-19, we regard 2019 as the last ‘normal’ year and comparing to that gives us insight on how well our financial picture is recovering,” explained Douglas.

Regarding tithes and offerings—totaling 72% of the Church’s income for 2021—Douglas’ report showed that while tithes has remained stable since 2019, offerings for 2021 were 4.89% less than in 2019. Nevertheless, this number is a good result, considering how noticeably offerings decreased during the peak of COVID-19. In comparison, offerings were up 14.15% in 2021 compared to 2020.

Overall, the report showed that revenue for 2021 totaled \$223,336,214, and expenses were \$193,997,069. “For 2021, we have a gain of just over \$29M, for which we praise the Lord,” said Douglas. He emphasized the importance of placing this gain in context by understanding the key drivers that led to the favorable result.

“There are three key drivers toward this large, positive gain,” he said. “First, we have a large, unrestricted maturity of \$15.3 million. We’ve also made savings on office operation costs, and of course, positive increases in tithes and offerings have played a role too.”

LOWEST EXPENSES IN 20 YEARS

Reporting on the Church’s operating expense cap, Douglas passed the presentation on to Ray Wahlen, GC undertreasurer. Wahlen reported that the General Conference operated at only 73.31% of their cap approved for its office expenses for 2021.

“This is the lowest level (as a percentage of the cap) that we’ve seen since the inception of this measure more than

twenty years ago,” he said. “We praise the Lord for this result!”

The positive result was largely due to the faithfulness of members returning tithes throughout 2021. “Gratefully, our Lord providentially increased the global tithes to more than \$2.6 billion at the time when we had projected the possibility of \$500 million or lower,” explained Wahlen. “This divergence led to the significant difference between the GC expenditures and the year-end operating cap calculation.”

Also contributing to the result were financial savings due to the continuation of COVID pandemic travel restrictions and the decision not to fill several personnel budgets that came open during the year.

NEW EMERGENCY RESPONSE POLICIES INTRODUCED

A key focus of Douglas’ report was how readily the global Church could respond to and survive another global disaster like COVID-19. He referred to the 2020 Annual Council decision to update the Working Capital and Liquidity policies of the church.

“The General Conference has chosen to adopt early a new policy that focuses on how readily an organization is able to respond to an emergency so that its mission activities won’t be disrupted,” he said. “A new calculation for working capital and liquid assets became effective January 1, 2022, with early adoption encouraged.”

According to the report, the recommendation to all Church bodies has a minimum of six months available for working capital and a minimum of three months for liquid assets. “This new measure is shown both in terms of an amount available and the length of time those resources would last should the stream of income be cut off,” he explained.

The Strategic Planning and Budgeting Committee recommended, and the GC Executive Committee accepted, that the General Conference adopt higher minimums of

twelve and nine months, respectively. “[This is] in light of the unique role filled by the GC in providing a steady source of appropriations to the world field and to maintain adequate liquidity for the church financial system,” Wahlen said.

US DOLLAR, GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICT, INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although there has been a rebound in the overall financial picture of the global Church, Douglas highlighted this has not been universal. While most divisions (approximately 75%) have bounced back to pre-COVID tithe levels, many are still struggling with offerings.

“We still have some divisions and attached fields showing positive increases in offerings compared to 2020 and 2019. However, the number of data points for these positive increases is slightly less than those related to tithe,” he said. “The rebounds being made are facing a new threat as the current geopolitical conflict has economic implications around the world.”

Douglas further highlighted that the Adventist Church, being an international organization, is susceptible to the behavior of global currencies.

“When local currencies become stronger versus the United States dollar, the result is a higher amount of tithe and offerings to the GC. But when those currencies are weaker, the result is a lower amount,” he explained.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

“The Church is not immune to the prevailing economic realities and the turbulence these realities create as we engage in the Great Commission to tell the world,” Douglas said, outlining five challenges the Adventist Church continues to face:

- Balancing growth and stability
- Ensuring sufficient working capital and liquidity
- Moving towards higher levels of self-support
- Dealing with uncertainties due to geopolitical conflict, currency volatility and changes in regulatory environments
- Understanding paradigm shifts brought about by crisis events, new technologies, and changes in generational thinking

He finished his presentation with encouragement from Peter F. Drucker’s book, *Managing in Turbulent Times*: “The greatest danger in turbulent times is not the turbulence. It is to act with yesterday’s logic. But a time of turbulence is also one of great opportunity for those who can understand, accept and exploit the new realities. It is above all a time of opportunity for leadership.”

Douglas highlighted the importance of looking to God’s continual leadership by quoting Seventh-day Adventist Church co-founder Ellen G. White “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”

He encouraged all members, saying, “I want to submit to us as a body of believers known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church, that the greatest of all dangers for us in turbulent times is to forget that the Master of the Sea is in the boat. We must not forget that this is His mission to which we have been commissioned.”

Douglas finished his report by reminding listeners of Philippians 1:6, “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

*Adapted from “Adventist Church Bounces Back Financially in 2021 Following Pandemic,” *Adventist News Network*, April 12, 2022. Used with permission.

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... the greatest of all dangers for us in turbulent times is to forget that the Master of the Sea is in the boat.



“Not the Time to Forget”

By Paul Douglas, GC Chief Financial Officer / Treasurer



SPRING MEETING 2022

The notable scholar Peter Drucker wrote in his book *Managing in Turbulent Times*, “The greatest danger in turbulent times is not the turbulence. It is to act with yesterday’s logic.”

Although Drucker described the greatest danger in turbulent times is for us to act with yesterday’s logic, I want to submit to us as a body of believers known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church:

The greatest of all dangers for us in turbulent times is to forget that the Master of the Sea is in the boat.

We must not forget that this is His mission to which we have been commissioned. This is His labor of love for which we are co-laborers! Turbulent economic times should not disturb our minds for we are in partnership with the Divine.

When we look back over our history, we have seen His Divine hand at work . . . now is not the time to forget.

When we look back over our history, we have seen resources come available to do His work . . . now is not the time to forget.

When we look back over our history and see the progress made possible in fields near and fields afar . . . now is not the time to forget.

When we look back over our history and see what has been accomplished by His power and not by our might . . . now is not the time to forget!

Ellen White in the book *Life Sketches*

penned these words that inspire even today: “In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as our leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history” (p. 196).

To this body and to our Church at large, I say to us today we have nothing to fear! We have nothing to fear for our finances and we have nothing to fear for our future! Since we have nothing to fear, let us then focus on the mission to which we have been

commissioned.

Let us focus on the mission with a singleness of mind and the strength of purpose.

Let us focus on the mission by spending more on the mission and less on the machinery.

Let us focus on the mission by leveraging technologies that allow us to go further and go faster.

Let us focus on the mission by aligning our systems and structures to best support our strategy.

Let us focus on the mission by allocating resources as strategic investments in the work of winning souls for the kingdom!

We have nothing to fear...Let us focus on the mission! Let us be confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in us will carry it on to its completion until the day of Christ Jesus! (Philippians 1:6)



SPRING MEETING INITIATIVES



SPRING MEETING 2022

During this year's virtually-held Spring Meeting, in addition to the usual focus on financial matters, a number of other items were presented, including two new major initiatives that will impact the world church. Following are partial reports on these two initiatives, with links to the full articles from [Adventist News Network](#). For all reports, videos, and more from the 2022 Spring Meeting, [visit the GC Executive Committee website here](#).

"BACK TO THE ALTAR: AN INSIDE-OUT REVOLUTION"

According to the most recent survey conducted by the General Conference's (GC) Office of Archives, Statistics and Research, only 37 percent of Seventh-day Adventist church members across the globe engage in morning and evening devotions with their families. Further, only 52 percent of Adventists engage in daily personal devotions of any kind.¹

Moved by these humbling statistics, Dwain Esmond, associate director of the Ellen G White Estate, shared a special presentation at this year's Spring Meeting where he challenged Church leaders and members to go "back to the altar" and develop their inner spiritual lives so they can be better equipped for mission.

"I just don't believe that a Church worshipping at that level will be effective in the times that we are facing, and in sharing the message we must promote," he said.

Entitled "Back to the Altar: An Inside-out Revolution," Esmond attributed this overall lack of personal spirituality to the increasing pervasiveness of technology and social media, and the effect that

social media platforms have on shaping Christian minds—particularly those of young people.

"But it's not only young people! All of us have been affected," he urged. "How does this mind worship God? It's difficult, it's hard."

Referencing multiple studies into the effects of social media and screen time on mental and physical wellbeing, Esmond shared how using these apps damage our ability to concentrate, increases feelings of loneliness and stress, and can lead to depression, anxiety, body image disorders, unhealthy sleep patterns, memory deficits and ultimately, general addiction.

"Our brains were not made to be bathed constantly in dopamine. It changes the circuitry of our minds," he warned.

According to research he



presented, the average person spends 2 hours and 27 minutes on social media apps every day, which constitutes on average 50.1 percent of an individual's overall phone usage. And while social media has opened opportunities for sharing the gospel across the world, Esmond believes this isn't enough to justify its current usage.

"I know what it is to lead ministry on social media. I've seen it done; I've done it. But I'm not sure 'doing ministry' and blessing people through the medium is enough. I think we owe them more than just connection and content," he said. "We owe them the correct use of technology. We

don't just owe them a call to come to Jesus, we owe them guidance on how to stay with Jesus and how to be with Him alone."

While social media apps can damage our minds and consume our time and attention Esmond highlighted how spending time with God can reverse this. "In worship,

I see an altar antidote. While social media may damage our ability to concentrate and focus, worship calms the mind and trains it to focus. While we may feel lonely although we have 1000-2000 friends online, worship decreases loneliness through communion with God and others. Thank God for neuroplasticity, we

can be recharged into the image of God. That general addiction pattern can be stemmed—in part—by our connection with God."

To learn more about this exciting new initiative to tackle social media addiction and increase personal and family devotions, [read more here](#).

NEW MATRIX TO REDISTRIBUTE MISSIONARY FUNDING



During a special report presented at the Spring Meeting a new plan was unveiled to reset the Church's global mission focus, placing priority on sending missionary families into areas where the gospel message is needed most.

Why do we need a new matrix?

"The largest allocation of our global budget—at 16.5%—is given to support the program administered by the International Personnel Resources and Services (IRPS). As faithful stewards of resources, we need to ask and answer questions that help us to maximize these resources used for mission," said GC Chief Financial Officer, Paul H. Douglas.

Douglas, alongside GC Executive Secretary and advisor to the Office of Adventist Mission and Institute of World Mission, Erton Köhler, and GC Associate Secretary, Karen Porter, justified the Church's new matrix by sharing the changing focus of Adventist mission over the past 150 years, as well as statistics on evangelism, past and present.

"In 1909, the Church's 100,000 members were already sending out an average of 100 new missionaries a year and supporting missionaries in 70 mission fields around the world. That's 1 per 1000 members every year," explained Douglas. "And almost all of them helped open work where the church was not yet established. By comparison today, the Church has less than three missionaries in service for every 10,000 members. And most of these missionaries have been sent into admin roles, rather than planting churches in unentered areas and reaching new people groups."

Explaining this change in focus, Köhler added, "The success of [early] missionary efforts began to require leaders and replacements to spend more time administering what already existed. There is nothing wrong with that—it had to be done. But little by little the number of missionaries being sent to open new work was decreasing. The increasing administrative load required more policies, oversight, and training of newly-elected leaders."

As a result of increasing administrative requirements, the presentation highlighted how the Church has lost its focus on entering unreached territories with the gospel. By introducing their new matrix, the GC aims to redistribute resources and heighten this focus once more.

What will the new matrix entail?

The new matrix will refocus resources to unreached and under-reached people groups, by recommending that divisions and Adventist institutions prioritize the use of primary Code 1 International Service Employee (ISE) budgets over the next 10 years based on the following criteria:

- Direct contact mission with the goal of creating new worshipping groups
- 10/40 window countries and people groups of non-Christian religions (as defined by the Church's Annual Statistical Report)
- Urban areas of more than 1 million population Postmodern/post Christian countries and religions

- Low Adventist-to-population ratio in countries/regions/people groups
- High impact equipping for direct contact mission

While budgets outside this new mission focus may continue where necessary, the goal is to have 35 percent of all primary Code 1 ISE budgets meet the new criteria by 2027, and 70 percent by 2032. In comparison, only 12-24 percent of all Code 1 budgets meet the proposed criteria currently. Based on this goal, there could be approximately 280 missionaries serving unreached people groups, territories, and regions in 10 years' time.

“The timeline is stretched over 10 years, to give plenty of time for this transition,” assured Porter. “Percentages are for the whole world field, not for every division or institution. Some territories have more areas of unreached people groups than others. But as the world church total, by 2032, we hope to meet our goal with God's help.” Read the full article about [the new matrix here](#).

The General Conference Session will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, June 6 - 11, 2022, and will be open to the public. All are welcome to attend the meetings. For those unable to attend in person, the Session will be livestreamed at GCSession.org/live. Please share this information with your constituents.

You are invited to attend the GC Session Virtual Exhibition Experience. Register now!

<https://exhibithall.gcsession.org/>



By Ellen G. White

TRUST GOD AND HE WILL DIRECT YOUR WAY

Many are unable to make definite plans for the future. Their life is unsettled. They cannot discern the outcome of affairs, and this often fills them with anxiety and unrest. Let us remember that the life of God's children in this world is a pilgrim life. We have not wisdom to plan our own lives. It is not for us to shape our future. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Hebrews 11:8.

Christ in His life on earth made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will. As we commit our ways to Him, He will direct our steps.

Too many, in planning for a

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As we commit our ways to Him, He will direct our steps.

brilliant future, make an utter failure. Let God plan for you. As a little child, trust to the guidance of Him who will "keep the feet of His saints." 1 Samuel 2:9. God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him.

If you have given yourself to God, to do His work, you have no need to be anxious for tomorrow. He whose

servant you are, knows the end from the beginning. The events of tomorrow, which are hidden from your view, are open to the eyes of Him who is omnipotent.

When we take into our hands the management of things with which we have to do, and depend upon our own wisdom for success, we are taking a burden which God has not given us, and are trying to bear it without His aid. We are taking upon ourselves the responsibility that belongs to God, and thus are really putting ourselves in His place. We may well have anxiety and anticipate danger and loss, for it is certain to befall us. But when we really believe that God loves us and means to do us good we shall cease to worry about the future. We shall trust God as a child trusts a loving parent. Then our troubles and torments will disappear, for our will is swallowed up in the will of God.—*Prayer*, pp. 226, 227

UKRANIAN ADVENTISTS HELP WORLD WAR II SURVIVOR AND 30 ORPHANS

By Andrew McChesney



Natalia traveling with 30 orphans and her own children after receiving assistance from a Seventh-day Adventist church in Ukraine. (Image is the best quality available. Courtesy of Ukrainian Union Conference)

A mother with 30 orphans. A 94-year-old woman who fled German troops in World War II. These are among the scores of displaced people who have found hope in Seventh-day Adventist churches across Ukraine.

Ukrainian Adventists, supported by an Adventist Mission emergency fund that has raised more than \$111,500 in recent weeks, have provided meals, lodging, trips to safety, and hope to thousands of people since armed conflict erupted on February 24.

Every donated dollar is being used to help the helpless, a Ukrainian church leader said.

“We are very grateful to the donors,” he said in an email that included an itemized list of how donations are being used. Adventist Mission is not fully identifying the church leader or other Ukrainians in this story for their personal safety.

Among the people who have sought assistance is Natalia, an orphanage worker who sheltered 30 orphans for more than two weeks in a basement amid heavy shelling.

“None of the orphanage staff except Natalia stayed with the children,” the Ukrainian church leader said. “The children begged her not to leave them alone for the night, not to go home. So she moved to the basement with her own children. She cooked food for everyone and took care of the kids.”

The building was hit by shells twice, but no one was injured, he said. After 17 nights, Natalia managed to move the 30 orphans and her own children to an Adventist church. It was not immediately clear how many children Natalia has. After receiving assistance

at the church, the group boarded a train and left for an Ukrainian region away from the conflict.

“The children sleep peacefully now, but they dream of returning home,” the church leader said.

Another person who received assistance from church members is 94-year-old Yevhenia. She fled shelling in Ukraine’s capital, Kyiv, in a desperate escape that reminded her of a similar journey during World War II.

“She said the attacks were reminiscent of the violence that she saw during World War II,” the church leader said. “She would have preferred to stay at home and die but, as the shelling intensified, her daughter convinced her to leave the house where she had spent most of her life.”

Yevhenia and her 73-year-old daughter, Raisa, eventually managed to cross the Ukrainian border and fly to the United States. Both had U.S. visas from previous trips to the United States.

Adventist churches in Ukraine have been swamped since the conflict began, with 50-100 people arriving nightly at individual churches for help. The Ukrainian Union Conference has sent funds to the churches, and members themselves also have emptied their own pockets to assist. But as the flow of displaced people remained high and funds ran low, Ukrainian church leaders appealed to Adventist Mission for help. Adventist Mission responded by transferring funds from its Hope in Crisis emergency fund and inviting church members globally to contribute. Tax-deductible donations to help people in Ukraine can be made on Adventist Mission’s website, adventistmission.org/donate. Select “Hope in Crisis Projects” as the preferred project.

PINEAPPLE-MANGO SMOOTHIE

Looking for a healthy, delicious drink for a quick pick-me-up? A great kick of natural sweetness without added sugar practically makes this smoothie a dessert. The pineapple-mango combination delivers a super-high vitamin C content, good fiber, and an interesting blend of tart and sweet that will appeal even to fruit haters. Pour leftovers into small containers and serve them later as a healthy and delicious dessert alternative.

Serves: 8

Prep Time: 3 minutes

Cook Time: 0 minutes

Ingredients:

2 cups mango chunks, frozen

1 cup pineapple chunks, frozen

1 cup cold water

1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)

1 cup fresh orange juice

INSTRUCTIONS:

Place all ingredients in a blender and puree until smooth. If needed, turn off blender a few times and use a rubber spatula to scrape contents from sides and back into blender cup.

Nutritional Data: calories 66.72, total fat 0.22g, saturated fat 0.04, cholesterol 0mg, sodium 2.25g, carbohydrates 16.59g, fiber 1.08g, sugars 14.60g, protein 0.67g

Excerpted from *Eat Plants Feel Whole*, George E. Guthrie, MD, AdventHealth Press. Available from the publisher at AdventHealthPress.com. Used with permission.





Dear General Conference Session Delegates:

Soon, after two postponements due to the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic, delegates from around the world will be gathering in St. Louis, Missouri, for the 61st General Conference Session. As you know, the Session is the largest, most representative business meeting of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. And yet, it is so much more. Even though this Session will be shorter and more limited in some ways than previously, it is still a time to gather as a worldwide family to worship, pray, plan, and fellowship together.

As a delegate, you have been given a special opportunity for God to work through you as a representative from your area of the world, guiding you through the Holy Spirit in advancing the heaven-born mission of the church. I am certain you will be blessed abundantly as you serve Him in your important role.

The theme for this Session, “Jesus is Coming! Get Involved!” reflects our Adventist belief in the soon coming of Christ and emphasizes our active participation in preparing for His coming. This preparation involves completely surrendering our lives and wills to Him, daily connecting with Him through Bible study and prayer, and in loving, Spirit-filled service proclaiming the Three Angels’ Messages and ministering as Jesus did to a world in need.

Let us prepare for our upcoming GC Session by spending time with God in prayer, asking for His will to be done in His church, and in prayerfully searching and relying on His Holy Word, the Bible, and His end-time gift to the church, the Spirit of Prophecy, for guidance.

Let’s move forward together, focusing on God’s promises, and on the Holy Spirit’s wonderful work in our personal lives and in the Church for personal and public witnessing and evangelism. Let us lift up God’s Word as central in all we do. Let Christ’s righteousness be the theme of our personal and public expression of who Seventh-day Adventists are—Christ’s followers carrying out His loving ministry to those in need—physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually.

As we—individually and corporately—submit to and follow God’s leading, I believe He will work in a marvelous way during the 61st Session. Let us plead for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Let us ask Him to guide in all we do, in all discussions and in all the decisions. Let us pray that the entire church organization—every division, union, conference, mission, department and entity—around the world will work in an integrated manner under the Holy Spirit’s guidance to carry forward the important mission of God’s last-day remnant church.

In a message to the delegates of the General Conference Session in 1913, Ellen White wrote the following words, which I believe are just as true for us today:

“I have words of encouragement for you, my brethren. We are to move forward in faith and hope, expecting large things from God. The enemy will seek in every way to hinder the efforts that are being made to advance the truth, but in the strength of the Lord you may gain success. (Selected Messages, Book 2, p. 403).

May God guide in your delegate activities as we each humble ourselves before our Creator, Redeemer, High Priest, Savior, Best Friend, and Coming King. Jesus is Coming! Get Involved!

Ted N.C. Wilson
President