



General Conference Executive Committee Newsletter

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

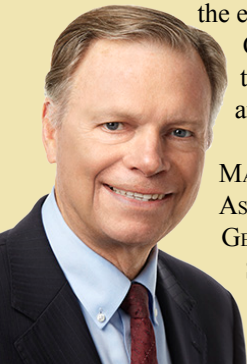
ANNUAL COUNCIL 2021
COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2021

Fifteen years ago, I attended my first Annual Council. I was impressed with the careful organization, thought-through agenda, and lively discussions. In many ways this year's Annual Council was similar but significantly different. The organization was superb. The session was broadcast via zoom in five different language groups. The complexities of successfully conducting a hybrid session coordinating presentations from an in-person audience at the world headquarters with international delegates was a feat that required a great deal of prayer, meticulous organization, and highly professional technical skills.

Throughout the session it was obvious God's hand was guiding. Although at times discussion was limited due to the zoom links, overall participation was quite good. Each day was bathed in prayer and mission focused. From the Treasurer's and Secretary's reports to departmental reports priority was placed on reaching a lost world for Christ. Two of the highlights of the meeting were the presentations on the Theological Issues Facing the Church in the 21st century and the Three Angels' Committee report.

I left Annual Council with the distinct sense that whatever challenges the Church faces, our sovereign God is in control and His Church empowered by the Holy Spirit will move forward to victory proclaiming the end-time message of Christ's righteousness in the context of the three angels to the entire world.



MARK FINLEY
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
GENERAL CONFERENCE OF
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

EDITORIAL



GETTY IMAGES / ARSEN VOLKOV

THROUGH THE STORMS: MISSION DURING CRISES

LEAD Conference sets course for 2021 Annual Council

BY GINA WAHLEN, GC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

*R*esilience. Mission. Creativity. Opportunities. These are some of the words LEAD host, Tiffany Brown, used to describe this year's Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) Conference, which featured inspiring testimonies, stories, and case studies of how God has led His people through crises in the past, present, and will lead in the future.

Following the official opening of Annual Council on Thursday, October 7, the LEAD Conference began and continued on Friday morning. The chosen theme,

"Through the Storms: Mission During Crises," set the tone not only for the LEAD Conference, but for the Annual Council itself as Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders focused on how God is leading His Church despite many challenges and difficulties.

"Brothers and sisters, don't ever take your eyes off of Christ, [and] His goal for His Church. And remember through the storm, God will see the mission through every crisis, because He is the master of the storm," urged Ted N.C. Wilson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in the opening devotional.

During the LEAD Conference, organized by the Office of Adventist Mission, numerous testimonies, reports, and more were given. All may be viewed in the [LEAD Conference listing](#) on the GC Executive Committee website.

Some of the personal testimonies featured [missionary and pastor Kleyton Feitosa](#) and [Pastor Bryan and Penny Gallant](#). Historical case studies included an [in-depth look at the faithful Waldensians](#), presented by North England Conference youth director and [Executive Producer of Lineage](#), Adam Ramdin; and [“Adventism and the Soviet Crisis,”](#) presented by GC Vice President Artur Stele.

Departmental reports, such as [“Families During Crises”](#) by Willie and Elaine Oliver, co-directors of GC Family Ministries, and [“Sustaining Giving in Times of Crisis,”](#) by Marcos Bomfim, Hiskia Missah, and Aniel Barbe from GC Stewardship, offered practical, Biblical advice for weathering whatever storms may come. Linda Koh, director of GC Children’s Ministries, showed [how children discovered creative ways](#) to continue mission despite the pandemic.

David Beckworth, a Seventh-day Adventist economist and senior research fellow at George Mason University, shared his perspective on creating [“Resilience Through Crisis,”](#) and Katia Reinert, associate director, GC Health Ministries, shared [how to build resilience](#).

Peter Landless, Director of GC Health Ministries, introduced [a poignant video](#), followed by 30 seconds of silence, honoring Adventist health care workers who served selflessly and “paid the ultimate price” during the first year of the COVID pandemic.

World divisions and attached unions gave their reports, such as [“Being a Blessing During Crisis,”](#) from the Middle East North and Africa Union; [“Mission in the Inter-European Division during the Pandemic”](#); [“Mission Creativity and Innovation”](#) featuring Venezuela in the South American Division; India’s [“Mission During Pandemic”](#); and South Africa’s [“I Will Go.”](#) All reports featured how, despite restrictions and challenges brought by the COVID pandemic, mission continued.

Inspiring poetry written and presented by Justin Kim, assistant director, GC Sabbath School and Personal Ministries, and editor of the [inVerse Sabbath School lessons for young adults](#), introduced various sections of the LEAD program (see pages 3, 18, and 39). Interspersed between the presentations were uplifting

music videos, such as [“Our Future Hope”](#) written by Gary Krause, GC associate secretary, and filmed/produced by Caleb Haakenson of Adventist Mission, and [“There We Rise”](#) by Eric and Monique Johnson.

A focused appeal was made by Dwain Esmond, associate director of the Ellen G. White Estate, in his presentation, [“Of Storms and the Blessed Hope,”](#) calling on all to get ready, because “Jesus is coming very, very soon.”

Immediately following Esmond’s appeal was a [special video tribute](#) honoring numerous denominational workers who have died of COVID in the past year.

Visibly moved, Ted Wilson remarked, “What an amazingly touching presentation—the ultimate sacrifice. As we have seen, through the storms, mission continues in the crises. . . . This has been an absolutely encouraging and powerful LEAD Conference.”

Quoting Isaiah 41:10, Wilson continued, “May these words sink into your heart and mind as we face the coming crises: ‘Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’”

Wilson then invited all to stand “in respect to those who have died, and to our Lord and Savior, who will lead us through,” as the three GC executive officers prayed.

In the final message of the conference, Pastor Mark Finley reminded all that “Crisis does not in any way inhibit ministry. Crisis becomes an opportunity for ministry. Crisis shakes you up, [and] causes you to think creatively. Crisis is indeed a time to depend on God.”

All video presentations and the complete LEAD program may be viewed on the [GC Executive Committee website](#).



The Sound of Souls Sleeping

By Justin Kim

Hear ye and hearken to the hallowed voices of the dead.
Nay! Of spirits, of ghosts, or immortal souls, I have not said.

But of those pilgrims who went before us;
They shout in silent lessons in chorus.

They speak to us, but not alive are they;
Sleeping in the earth since yester days.

These voices are not conjured, but remembered.
Their lives were fully given and fully surrendered.

From Adam's rib to Joseph's bones;
From Moses' call to the Psalmist's groans.

From resurrections like Talitha, newly arisen
To apostles and disciples singing in prisons.

From persecution throughout vast empires
To stocks and chains and stakes on fire

From countries of silk and the Soviets
To our own scholars and their associates.

Listen to Waldensian students undercover.
What spiritual lessons are to be discovered?

Through creativity and innovation
They pierced through the barriers of communication.

In each age, the gospel was resilient
Shining through, bright and brilliant.

They sing the song of hope and trust
To join our voices with them, we must.

Whether an ideology or a heresy,
Whether a dictator or a Pharisee,
Whether an empire or viral disease,
Let us stand firmly, church, on our knees.

The future we have nothing to fear,
Except as we shall forget from year to year.

How the Lord in history has mercifully led us
to be a people peculiar, of good works, quite zealous.

Nay, of spirits, of ghosts, or immortal souls, I have not said.
But listen and learn from these past lives instead.

OCTOBER 9, 2021

SABBATH SCHOOL



Karen Miranda, GC Family Ministries, and Jonathan Walter, GC Ministerial, led song service with the assistance of Meredith Herzel (GC Sabbath School and Personal Ministries [SSPM]), Leighton Kennedy, and Gabriella and Jana Apola.



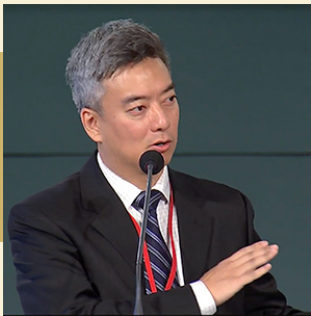
Sonya Howard, GC Presidential, offered the opening prayer.



Jim Howard, Assoc. Director, SSPM, outlined components of a thriving Sabbath School—Bible study and prayer, fellowship, and mission.



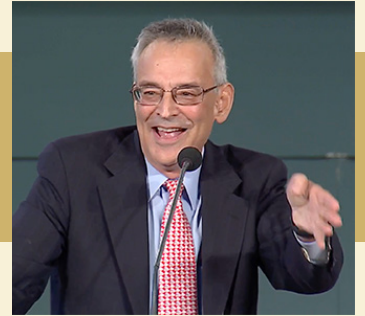
Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, Education Director, and Frank Hardy, participated in prayer.



Justin Kim, Asst. Director, SSPM, explained the five types of mission offerings.



During the local mission segment, Ramon Canales, Director, SSPM, interviewed Paulo Macena, pastor of the Ellicott City (Md.) Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Clifford Goldstein, ABSG editor and principal contributor of this quarter's lessons on Deuteronomy, presented the lesson study.



Through the wonders of technology, Meredith Herzel sang a beautiful self-quartet rendition of "Jesus Paid It All."



Derek Morris, Hope Channel president, affirmed points made during the lesson.



Peter Landless, Director, GC Health Ministries, made an important point during the lesson study.

OCTOBER 9, 2021

WORSHIP SERVICE

A CLEAR-CUT APPEAL TO LIVE ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD*

By Marcos Paseggi



In his message, Wilson repeatedly appealed to “give the trumpet a certain sound,” a biblical image referencing the mission of a watchman who alerted the people about impending danger in ancient Israel. “Our church members long to hear messages regarding conviction and affirmation for the biblical beliefs of our Advent movement,” Wilson said. “The theological pillars of God’s Seventh-day Adventist movement are solid and founded on God’s Word. His Word is sure and rock-solid.”

FAITH-DESTROYING TEACHINGS

In his sermon for the 2021 Annual Council meeting, General Conference President Ted N. C. Wilson made an unambiguous call for Seventh-day Adventist church leaders and members to live and witness according to what has been revealed in Scriptures.

“Accept and follow truth only according to God’s Word,” he emphasized in his October 9, 2021, message to the members of the General Conference Executive Committee. “My fellow leaders and church members, keep your focus on the Bible. Don’t allow strange voices to confuse what we believe.”

Living according to God’s Word is even more meaningful as we consider our mission mandate, Wilson explained. “We have strong, biblical foundational truths given to us by God from the beginning of our Advent movement to be delivered to the world,” he said.

Wilson spent one section of his pastoral message listing some “theological aberrations” before advancing what should be a biblically sound alternative.

He mentioned that many do not accept God’s Word as authoritative, with some calls even to question the reliability of the Bible canon. At the same time, others attempt to diminish the role of the Spirit of Prophecy. “The Spirit of Prophecy is absolutely reliable and is to be believed and accepted in its entirety,” he emphasized regarding the writings of Ellen G. White. “Make no apologies for using or promoting the Spirit of Prophecy and its heavenly counsel. It is a heaven-sent gift of God.”

Wilson also mentioned the denial of the urgency of the times (“Don’t pay attention to strange voices that may say ... our current setting will continue”), ecumenism (“We are never to compromise and engage in religious ecumenical activity”), and congregationalism (“we are a worldwide family of believers who love and support each other”). He also referred, among others, to opposition

to God’s commandments (“God’s law is eternal”), evolution (“God recently made this earth in six days and rested on the seventh day”), and rejection of health reform (“Lift up the banner of temperance against any form of mind-altering substance.”)

Among more than a dozen false theological teachings, Wilson referred to lifestyle behaviors that go against a biblical view of sexuality. “Sexual immorality in any form is to be changed through God’s power working in the life,” he emphasized. “God’s ideal is to be followed, again through His power, to put us in a right relationship with His moral and natural laws.”

While Wilson acknowledged this is a delicate subject, he said that we cannot be silent on what the Bible teaches as correct living and practice. “We are to show Christian respect to all people, but God calls us, through His strength, to follow His created plan for human sexuality.”

LIFTING UP CHRIST AND HIS MESSAGE

In the last section of his sermon, Wilson reminded church leaders and members “what our primary mission is,” which includes “lifting up Christ, His righteousness, His three angels’ messages, and His soon coming.” The three angels’ messages recorded in Revelation 14 are three special messages God’s people are called to share with the whole world.

Wilson emphasized that God is calling His people to proclaim these messages. The problem is, he

acknowledged, that “many people do not understand them or have ignored them, and some are attempting to distort or even change the meaning of these messages.” He emphasized, “To proclaim these God-given messages to the world, we must understand and accept them ourselves.”

Accordingly, Wilson encouraged church leaders and members to study deeply and believe the three angels’ messages personally, allowing them to also transform their hearts. He also suggested allowing God’s Spirit to fill one with a deep, Christlike love for everyone as one shares these messages, and using biblically based methods to share every aspect of them.

It is time to “revitalize your work, your church, your organization through revival and reformation, pleading with the Holy Spirit to bring spiritual life,” Wilson said. He emphasized, “Don’t get sidetracked, preoccupied, or lose focus on why we are Seventh-day Adventists.” Near the close of his message, Wilson repeated, “I urge our members and the world not to be deceived. Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, His Holy Word, and that which He is calling us to proclaim.”

To watch [Elder Wilson’s sermon](#), [click here](#).

To download his [sermon PowerPoint slides](#), [click here](#).

To download his [sermon transcript](#), [click here](#).

*Adapted from “[Adventist Church President Makes Clear-Cut Appeal to Live According to God’s Word](#),” published in the *Adventist Review*. Used with permission.



OCTOBER 11, 2021

BUSINESS MEETING

LEADERS CONSIDER THEOLOGICAL ISSUES FACING THE CHURCH: VOICES RAISED IN SUPPORT OF PRESENTATIONS

By Gina Wahlen



Message and mission were at the forefront Monday morning with the item, “Theological Issues Facing the Church,” including three presentations followed by a lively, nearly hour-long discussion as Executive Committee members expressed strong support for the presentations and appreciation for the opportunity for discussion.

Pastor Mark Finley, assistant to the president for evangelism presented a summary of ten significant theological issues the Church is facing today.

Dr. Artur Stele, a GC vice-president, and Dr. Michael Ryan, assistant to the president for initiatives, then followed by focusing more specifically on points raised in Finley’s presentation.

In introducing his presentation, Finley acknowledged more could be added, but that these were items of concern. The list included a series of questions and answers:

1. The Authority of Scripture

“Is the Bible mainly culturally conditioned? Does the Bible have authority in science, prophecy, lifestyle standards, and doctrine?” These are questions being raised that the Church needs to address,” Finley said. “Seventh-day Adventists still believe the Bible is the authoritative, infallible word of God.”

2. Adventist Identity

“Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church a divine movement raised up by God to prepare a people for the coming of Jesus or is it merely one of many denominations on the landscape of religions?”

Finley pointed out some within the Church assert that the idea of the Seventh-day Adventist Church being a divine, prophetic movement is somewhat arrogant. But, Finley asked, “Who are we and why do we exist? What is the divine mandate given to the Adventist Church? We still believe Seventh-day Adventists are a prophetic movement with a prophetic message and divine mission. Message shapes and drives mission, and mission guides methods,” he said. “We believe God raised up the Seventh-day Adventist Church for a divine purpose.”

3. Prophetic Interpretation

Some within the church are asking, “Are the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation still relevant in the 21st century or do we need to re-evaluate our prophetic understanding?” Finley responded, “The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation speak with increasing power and relevance to a last day generation.”

4. Creation and Evolution

“Are the first eleven chapters of Genesis an actual historical account of events or are they an allegory to explain how God did things ages ago? Does it make any difference what one believes about the Creation of the world and a worldwide flood?”

Strongly affirming the biblical account, Finley stated, “Seventh-day Adventists believe there was a literal creation week of seven days and creation anchors the entire Bible and gives meaning to our existence! If we are unclear about creation, that

affects your understanding of the 10 Commandments, Christ's statements on creation, and your understanding of Revelation 14:7. The first 11 chapters of Genesis really become significant anchor points of Adventist theology."

5. Jesus and Doctrine

"There is a growing movement among some Adventists who have the idea there is a distinction between Jesus and doctrine," Finley said. "They view an emphasis on doctrine as legalistic and arbitrary. What relationship does Jesus have with the doctrines of Scripture?" He answered, "Jesus and His teachings are inseparable. To fully accept Christ is to fully accept the doctrines He taught."

6. Moral Issues Deviating from Scripture

"Seventh-day Adventists have believed and do believe in the moral integrity and ethical values of Scripture," Finley said. "When it comes to creation, marriage, men and women, LGBTQ+ issues—issues such as co-habitation, unbiblical divorce and remarriage, and LGBTQ+—How do we respond?" he asked. "We respond Biblically; there is no other way to respond. Is it unloving and unkind to take a stand against these practices? There is nothing unloving or unkind in standing where Scripture stands. Certainly, we reach out in compassion and kindness to all people. But the Bible has a particular position on these issues. Biblical values and God's clear instructions call us to be lights in a world of moral darkness and confusion in the area of moral deviation from God's will."

7. "Advent Fatigue"

Acknowledging for more than 175 years Adventists have been proclaiming the soon return of Jesus, Finley asked three pointed questions: "Do we still believe He is coming soon? Is it unbiblical to preach the nearness of Christ's return in the light of the delay of the Advent? How can we motivate a movement to prepare for the soon return of our Lord?"

"Adventists still believe, as Scripture teaches, that the coming of Christ is 'nearer than when we first believed,' he affirmed. "However, our Adventist pioneers believed that Jesus was coming soon; 175 years later it's sooner today than it was then. So, Seventh-day Adventists have this passion in our hearts for the coming of Christ."

8. The Sanctuary and Pre-Advent Judgment

Pointing out "Since the late 1970s and early 1980s there have been a growing number of voices in the scholarly community that have questioned the validity of 1844," Finley asked, "How will the Church relate to these issues? *If* there is no pre-Advent judgment, that undermines the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the Day of Atonement, and particularly of the Sanctuary. The Pre-Advent Judgment and Sanctuary are *still* at the heart of Adventist theology, preparing a people for the coming of Jesus," he affirmed.

9. Ellen White and Divine Inspiration

Is Ellen White simply an "inspiring" writer, or was she divinely inspired and her counsel still valid today? Finley pointed out the importance of listening to the counsels of the Spirit of Prophecy and quoted from a letter written by Ellen White in 1890:

"There will be a hatred kindled against the testimonies which is satanic. The workings of Satan will be to unsettle the faith of the churches in them, for this reason: Satan cannot have so clear a track to bring in his deceptions and bind up souls in his delusions if the warnings and reproofs and counsels of the Spirit of God are heeded" (Letter 40, 1890, 1SM 48).

The issue of the inspiration of Ellen White and her authority is one of the major issues the last-day church will face, Finley said.

10. The Re-imagining of Adventism

In his final point, Finley noted "a shift in emphasis in worship from a biblically based, Word-centered service that is life transforming to a more emotional form of worship that focuses on meeting a 'seeker's' perceived needs through music and shorter story-telling sermonizing rather than biblical preaching. This re-imagining of Adventism includes a dumbing down of lifestyle standards, a minimizing of the health message and an erosion of understanding in Adventist identity.

"What you really have is a drift from the authority of Scripture," Finley said. Countering this 're-imagining,' he reaffirmed, "Seventh-day Adventists are a movement raised up by God with a divine, prophetic message to take to the world based on Scripture, and the authority of Scripture has guided and directed us."

AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

Artur Stele's presentation addressed the authority of scripture and hermeneutics—how to read and understand the Bible. He pointed out how from the beginning Satan has urged human beings to doubt God's word and to question His authority. Satan is still using these same tactics today, he said.

During the Middle Ages, the Bible was available only in Latin, requiring priests to explain it. One of the most powerful aspects of the Reformation, Stele said, was making the Bible available to people in their own languages.

Today, Satan is attacking God's Word in various ways, including the historical-critical Method of Bible interpretation, which views the Bible as culturally conditioned. In contrast, Stele pointed out that while “the Bible is culturally and historically constituted, it

is *not* culturally or historically conditioned.”

In explaining the process of inspiration, Stele read from *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 62): “God has been pleased to communicate his truth to the world

by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, none the less, from heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language; yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power.”

For those using a critical, postmodern approach to Scripture, the focus changes from the Biblical text and the author's intended meaning to the reader who determines what the meaning is.

“Instead of God-centeredness, we are invited to self-centeredness,” Stele said. Instead of asking “What is the Truth?” “What is the will of God?” readers are encouraged to ask, “What is true for me?”

In contrast, Stele shared: “A work can be done by presenting to the people the Bible *just as it reads*. . . repeat to all the Saviour's command, ‘Search the Scriptures’” (*Evangelism*, p. 434). Stele then urged all to be faithful students of God's Word, using a God-centered approach in reading and understanding Scripture.



GRACE THAT IS BIG ENOUGH

In his presentation, “How Big is Grace?”

Michael Ryan pointed out that some individuals within Seventh-day Adventist churches and campuses claim the “theology of the [Adventist] Church

is dark and will never be accepted by other Christian churches, will never be embraced by the non-Christian world, will never stop the exit of our young people from the church, and will never truly grant our members the freedom granted in the Bible, which they define as a lifestyle without boundaries. . . They are reflected in the world survey taking measure of the distinctive beliefs that identify a remnant. This creeping culture is real,” he emphasized.

Affirming that Seventh-day Adventist beliefs are filled with God's grace, Ryan stated, “At the core of understanding the size of God's grace must come the recognition that God's grace permeates absolutely every corner of the Bible message,” he said.

Pointing out the Bible makes no room for “hyper-grace,” a philosophy claiming no reform is needed in an individual's life and that “Bible doctrine is nonsense [that] destroys grace,” Ryan explained, “Seventh-day Adventists believe embracing what grace has provided expands grace.”

Showing how doctrines and grace are integrally related and cannot be separated, Ryan stated, “Grace has provided signs of [Christ's] coming. Grace has provided God's word. Grace has provided promises. Grace has provided Christ's righteousness. Grace has provided forgiveness. Grace has provided a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light.” He then appealed for the Church to “arise and preach the road to Christ's righteousness.”

LEADERS RESPOND

“Thank you for . . . helping us to find the theological reality we’re facing,” said Robert Folkenberg, president of the China Union Mission. Regarding creation, Folkenberg related the story of a new convert who was told, “the Bible is true, but the first few chapters aren’t true—evolution is true.” The convert asked, “So, if the first few chapters of the Bible aren’t true, when does God start telling the truth?” Pointing out most denominations no longer support biblical creation, Folkenberg continued, “I want to commend this administration and our Church . . . we must stand firm on the doctrine of God as Creator of this world in seven literal days, even if we are the only voice still standing.”

E. Edward Zinke, a lay member, noted within some Adventist institutions the “historical-critical apparatus is presented as *the* means for determining truth, [where] the natural world denies the foundational role of Scripture, the Bible is just ‘folk literature,’ *Sola Scriptura* is denied, denial of the substitutionary atonement, liberation theology and theistic evolution [are taught], denial of the value of prayer, denial that God acts in history and that the Bible is the record of those acts. . . . For me, it is a moral issue for us to claim to be a Seventh-day Adventist institution and not to fulfill that promise.” said Zinke. “Our job is to teach our students to think biblically, not critically.”

Sharing from personal experience, Kathryn Proffitt, a lay member from the Pacific Union, told how her eldest son became an atheist after being taught theistic evolution at an Adventist university.

He then convinced his three younger siblings that there is no God. “Four years ago, his younger brother died and went into a grave without the hope of the Gospel,” said Proffitt. “Brothers and sisters, each of these doctrines are serious and there are eternal consequences. No parent should have to face the possibility of losing our children eternally because of what they heard at church, or what they were taught at school. . . . We need to set the example of returning to the plain teachings of the Scriptures,” she said. “It’s our duty and eternal lives are at stake.”

Barna Magyarosi, Secretary of the Inter-European Division, expressed concern for young people who are struggling with questions. “. . . as leaders we need to be able to create a platform, together with our theologians, where honest discussions can take place and where the real issues are raised and tackled . . . where we can offer our young intellectuals well-researched, biblically-founded intelligent answers. . . . We have most of those answers, if not all of them,” he added. “I think with a concerted effort of pastors, teachers, theologians, and administrators, we can have these young people stand tall for what we believe.”

“I deeply appreciate these discussions,” said Kwame Kwanin, president of the Northern Ghana Union, stating the items of concern were “signs of the times.” He urged that “we shouldn’t limit what we are studying now to the Annual Council or the Division. We need it to trickle down to all of our churches, making it a revival for every member. . . . We need to nurture and mentor our members, especially the youth . . . for them to

QUOTABLES

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“We need to nurture and mentor our members, especially the youth . . . for them to appreciate the truth that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has.”

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—Rick McEdwards
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"If you are not solid in this matter [God's Word], it will be very easy to be deceived."

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Primacy of Scripture

Richard McEdward, president of the Middle East North Africa Union, affirmed the importance of Scripture in addressing the theological issues facing the Church. "I believe *all* of these basically come back to the primacy of Scripture," McEdward said. He suggested the remedy of establishing the habit of individual and family worship where the Bible is read. "God's Word has a transformational impact in people's lives. We need to do our best to re-engage with God's Word in a profound but simple reading with our families and our children, so they would also become part of God's mission to reach out because they have been changed by God's Word."

Derek Morris, president of Hope Channel International, reaffirmed the primacy of Scripture. "I think the best way we can address these challenges is through a clear preaching and teaching of the Word of God," he said. "I would encourage all who are here, and those listening, to live what we've learned and be bold preachers and teachers of the Word of God."

Alberto Timm, associate director of the Ellen G. White Estate, said, "The days we are living in are very

challenging, when everything is fluid, including God's Word." Timm reminded the executive committee of Ellen White's statement in *The Great Controversy*, page 557, where she warns that demons will personify the apostles of Christ to deny and even change what "they" wrote in the Gospels. Timm emphasized the importance of accepting the authority of God's Word and its teachings now. "If you are not solid in this matter," he said, "it will be very easy to be deceived."

In addressing concerns regarding the denomination's educational institutions, Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, director of the GC Education Department, referred to the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE). This oversight committee establishes criteria competencies for pastors, lists qualifications for those who teach seminarians and religion in Adventist schools, and provides a process of endorsement for those teachers. "To date," she said, "ten divisions have implemented it and over 500 faculty have been endorsed."

Ella Simmons, a GC vice president, pointed out the importance of not only teaching the truth but also modeling it. Both she and Jan Paulsen, former GC president, asked about future plans

to address the issues raised.

Preach and Model Truth

Ted N.C. Wilson, current GC president, explained the purpose of the presentations was to "re-alert each of us as to what we are facing." He pointed out to simply vote an action would not be very effective unless "every one of us not only preach the straight truth, but as Ella said, model the straight truth." He noted this could only be done through the righteousness of Christ. "This is something each of us need to really take to heart," he said. "Everyone in attendance at Annual Council are leaders. Let God speak through you! Our people want to hear you speak full truth!"

Wilson also mentioned additional avenues the Church can use in spreading God's Word, including media platforms, the Biblical Research Institute, the Geoscience Research Institute, the Ministerial Association, and more.

"Don't let an opportunity go by without underscoring the absolute veracity and truthfulness of the Word of God--from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22--every single chapter, every verse, every word. We don't believe in "word inspiration," we believe in thought inspiration. But the Word of God is absolutely vital. Let's work together in a very important way," he urged.

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR ADDRESSING CONCERNS

Following is a list of theological concerns raised during the Annual Council Sabbath sermon and presentations given the following Monday. Along with the list are some resources that may be helpful in addressing these areas of concern.

1 The Word of God Not Accepted as Authoritative/The Authority of Scripture

- ["Methods of Bible Study,"](#) Official Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- ["Is the Bible Historically Reliable?"](#) by Dr. Gerhard Pfandl
- ["Seeking Understanding"](#) by Dr. Michael Hasel, (video, 27 mins.)
- ["What's to Believe About the Bible?"](#) by Dr. Clinton Wahlen

2 Attempts to Diminish the Spirit of Prophecy/Ellen White and Divine Inspiration

- ["The Authentic Gift of the Spirit of Prophecy: 5 Ways to Know"](#)
- ["Issues on Revelation and Inspiration,"](#) by Dr. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez
- ["Believe His Prophets: Why I Accept Ellen G. White's Prophetic Ministry,"](#) by Dr. Ted N. C. Wilson

3 Misconceptions of Justification and Sanctification

- ["What Adventists Believe About the Experience of Salvation"](#)
- ["What Adventists Believe About Growing In Christ,"](#)
- ["Justification by Faith and Judgment According to Works,"](#) by Dr. Ivan Blazen

4 Denial of the Urgency of the Times/"Advent Fatigue"

- ["The Second Coming of Christ"](#) by Pastor Mark Finely, (video, 19 min.)
- ["Welcome to the 'Days of Noah,'"](#) by Dr. Ted N. C. Wilson

5 Humanism Versus Heavenly Inspiration/Prophetic Interpretation

- ["Christ-centered Hermeneutics: Prospects and Challenges for Adventist Biblical Interpretation,"](#) by Dr. Frank M. Hasel
- ["Understanding Inspiration: The Symphonic and Wholistic Nature of Scripture,"](#) by Dr. Alberto Timm
- ["Culture, Hermeneutics, and Scripture: Discerning What Is Universal,"](#) by Drs. Clinton Wahlen and Wagner Kuhn (video, 30 minutes)

6

Disregard for the Sanctuary Service and the Gospel Message/The Sanctuary and Pre-Advent Judgment

- ["What Adventists Believe About Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary"](#)
- ["The Sanctuary and Its Cleansing,"](#) by Dr. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez
- ["Following Jesus Now,"](#) by Dr. Clinton Wahlen

7

Ecumenism Versus the Shaking and Sifting of God's Church/Adventist Identity

- ["The Shaking Time: What Is It to the People of God in the Last Days?"](#) by Frederick Lee
- ["Adventists and Ecumenical Conversation: How Adventists May Choose to Relate to the Existing Models of Ecumenism,"](#) by Dr. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez

8

Congregationalism Versus God's Worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Remnant Church

- ["What Adventists Believe About the Remnant in the Bible"](#)
- ["Independent Congregations or Worldwide Organized Church? Lessons From Early Adventist Church History,"](#) by Bob Pickle

9

Attacks Against the Godhead

- ["What Adventists Believe About the Trinity"](#)
- ["The Trinity in Scripture,"](#) by Dr. Gerhard Pfandl
- ["Core Tenets of the Trinity" Chart,](#) by Dr. Martin Pröbstle
- ["The Trinity in Seventh-day Adventist History,"](#) by Dr. Merlin Burt

10

Opposition Against God's Law and His 10 Commandments

- ["What Adventists Believe About the Law of God"](#)
- ["The Ten Commandments: A law to be obeyed or promises to be celebrated?,"](#) by Vara Prasad Deepati
- ["Unlocking the Enigma of the Old and New Covenants,"](#) by Skip McCarty, (digital study guides, podcasts, videos, PowerPoints, handouts)

11 Evolution Versus Biblical Creation

- ["What Adventists Believe About Creation"](#)
- ["Affirmation of Creation,"](#) Document of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- ["Response to an Affirmation of Creation,"](#) Official Document of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- [Geoscience Research Institute Resources](#)

12 Aberrant Lifestyle Behaviors Versus Biblical View of Sexuality/Moral Issues Deviating From Scripture

- ["An Affirmation of Marriage,"](#) Official Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- ["An Affirmation of God's Gift of Sexuality,"](#) World Commission on Human Sexuality
- [Homosexuality,](#) Official Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- [Transgenderism,](#) Official Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- [Sexual Behavior,](#) Official Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- [Same Sex Unions,](#) Official Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- [Responding to Changing Cultural Attitudes Regarding Homosexual and Other Alternative Sexual Practices,](#) Official Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

13 Rejection of Temperance Versus God's Comprehensive Health Ministry and Health Reform

- ["What Adventists Believe About Christian Behavior"](#)
- ["Comprehensive Health Ministry and the Three Angels' Messages,"](#) by Drs. Torbin Bergland and Peter Landless (video, 14 min.)
- ["Comprehensive Health Ministry,"](#) by Dr. Peter N. Landless
- ["Comprehensive Health Ministry,"](#) by Drs. Derek Morris and Ted N. C. Wilson (video, 22 min.)

14 Disastrous Influences of Eastern Mysticism

- ["Biblical Spirituality: Rediscovering Our Biblical roots or Embracing the East?,"](#) by Pastor Mark A. Finley
- ["The Emerging Church: A Call to Action and Authenticity \(Part 1\),"](#) by Dr. John Jovan Markovic
- ["The Emergent Theology: Voices of Confusion \(Part 2\),"](#) by Dr. John Jovan Markovic

Are Revival and Reformation Possible in the 21st Century?

Listening to Heaven's Appeals

By Mark A. Finley

Ellen White was deeply concerned. She had returned from Europe in the early summer of 1887. She had been away for two years and what she found when she returned to America greatly troubled her. The church she loved and had given her life for was struggling. There were institutional challenges, theological controversy, personality conflicts, and administrative rivalries. Throughout 1887 and 1888 she spent time traveling to camp meetings, writing, counseling church administration, and preaching as God opened the doors of opportunity. As the General Conference Session of 1888 drew nearer, she became increasingly concerned and impressed that if church leadership and the delegates to that Session humbled their hearts before God in earnest prayer, confession, and repentance that a mighty spiritual revival would follow.

In August of 1888 Ellen White wrote a personal letter of earnest appeal to the delegates appointed to the upcoming General Conference Session. The letter opens with divine counsel that speaks to both her generation and ours. It is as relevant today as it was then. It speaks to the delegates in a General Conference Session long ago and one that is soon to come. The delegates at the Minneapolis General Conference Session in 1888 had great spiritual needs and the delegates to the St. Louis, General Conference Session have similar spiritual needs. She writes:

“We are impressed that this gathering will be the most important meeting you have ever attended. This should be a period of earnestly seeking the Lord and humbling your hearts before Him. I hope you will regard this as a most precious opportunity to pray and counsel together; and if the injunction of the apostle to esteem others better than ourselves is carefully heeded, then you can in humility of mind, with the spirit of Christ, search the scriptures carefully to see what is truth.”¹

VERY IMPORTANT LETTER

The importance of this letter for the delegates at the 1888 General Conference Session and those preparing to attend the 2022 St. Louis Session 134 years later can hardly be overestimated. According to the prophet of God, for the delegates, the 1888 Session would be “the most important that you have ever attended.”

Her August 5 letter emphasizes three specific areas. She appeals

Ellen White's Earnest Appeal to the General Conference Delegates in preparation for the 1888 Session in Minneapolis

Healdsburg, California
August 5, 1888

Dear Brethren Who Shall Assemble In General Conference,

We are impressed that this gathering will be the most important meeting you have ever attended. This should be a period of earnestly seeking the Lord, and humbling your hearts before Him. I hope you will regard this as a most precious opportunity to pray and counsel together; and if the injunction of the apostle to esteem others better than ourselves is carefully heeded, then you can in humility of mind, with the spirit of Christ, search the scriptures carefully to see what is truth.

The truth can lose nothing by close investigation. Let the word of God speak for itself; let it be its own interpreter, and the truth will shine like precious gems amid the rubbish.

It has been shown me that there are many of our ministers who take things for granted, and know not for themselves, by close, critical study of the scriptures whether they are believing truth or error. If there was much less preaching by such and far more time spent upon their knees before God, pleading for Him to open their understanding to the truth of His word, that they might have a knowledge for themselves that their feet were standing on solid rock, angels of God would be around about them, to help them in their endeavors.

There is a most wonderful laziness that is indulged in by a large class of our ministers who are willing others should search the scriptures for them; and they take the truth from their lips as a positive fact, but they do not know it to be Bible truth, through their own individual research, and by the deep convictions of the spirit of God upon their hearts and minds.

Let every soul now be divested of envy, of jealousy, of evil surmising, and bring their hearts into close connection with God. If all do this, they will have that love burning upon the altar of their hearts which Christ evidenced for them. All parties will have Christian kindness and Christian tenderness. There will be no strife; for the servants of God must not strive. There will be no party spirit; there will be no selfish ambition.

Our people individually must understand Bible truth more thoroughly, for they certainly will be called before councils; they will be criticized by keen and critical minds. It is one thing to give assent to the truth, and another thing, through close examination as Bible students, to know what is truth.

We have been apprised of our dangers, the trials and temptations just before us; and now is the time to take special pains to prepare ourselves to meet the temptations and the emergencies which are just before us.

If souls neglect to bring the truth into their lives, and be sanctified through the truth, that they may be able to give a reason of the hope that is within them, with meekness and fear, they will be swept away by some of the manifold errors and heresies, and will lose their souls. I beg of you, my brethren, for Christ's sake, to have no selfish ambitions.

As you shall assemble together at this general meetings, I beseech of you to make a personal effort to cleanse soul and spirit from every defiling influence which would separate you from God. Many, many will be lost because they have not studied their Bibles upon their knees, with earnest prayer

that each delegate prepares their heart for the upcoming Session in “humility of mind with the spirit of Christ” urging them through the power of the living Christ to “cleanse soul and spirit from every defiling influence that would separate you from God.”

Corporate revival follows personal revival. All genuine revival begins when God's people are revived individually. It is this personal heartfelt work that Ellen White was calling for before the General Conference Session.

FIRST APPEAL

Her first appeal is for prayer, earnestly seeking God, and heartfelt confession and repentance. Her letter is reminiscent of two great prayers in the Bible: Daniel's prayer for the deliverance of Israel in Daniel 9, and Jesus' intercessory prayer in John 17. Daniel's prayer emphasizes confession of sin, humility of heart, and repentance of soul in the light of God's forgiveness and mercy. Jesus' prayer focuses on the love of God, the Word of God, and the unity of the people of God. Ellen White's letter to the delegates of the General Conference Session in 1888 includes all three of these points of emphasis.

SECOND APPEAL

The second area of emphasis in her letter is an appeal to the delegates to earnestly study God's Word. Her letter is both kind and compassionate but very straightforward. She laments the "laziness" in careful Bible study. She urges the delegates to prepare for the session by seeking the truth of God's Word through a "close critical study of the scriptures." She appeals to ministers "not to take for granted" the truths of scripture. Reading this letter, we hear an echo of Jesus' great intercessory prayer for His people in John 17:14, 17:

"I have given them your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world... Sanctify them by Your truth, Your word is truth."

There is sanctifying, life changing power in God's Word. It is the Holy Spirit through God's Word that brings revival and reformation. It is the Holy Spirit through God's Word that leads to confession and repentance. It is the Holy Spirit through God's Word that recreates new spiritual life in the soul. As Jesus so powerfully stated, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63)

The apostle James speaks of "laying aside all filthiness and wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls (James 1: 21). Peter speaks of being born again, "not of corruptible seed but incorruptible through the word of God that lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:22). The epistle to the Hebrews adds, "For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Deep heart searching, heartfelt prayer, confession, repentance, and serious Bible study are central to any genuine revival. The Word of God pierces our inmost souls, drives us to our knees, enables us to sense our unworthiness and leads to trust fully, completely, and solely in the righteousness of Christ for our salvation.

THIRD APPEAL

In harmony with Jesus' instruction in John 17 Ellen White's letter to the 1888 General Conference delegates

also urges them to put away their differences, settle their personality conflicts and for Christ's sake respond to one another with "Christian kindness and tenderness." Reading her letter to the delegates it becomes obvious that she is deeply concerned about the unity of the church. Her words are filled with tenderness, but they are direct.

She appeals that delegates be "divested of envy, jealousy, and evil surmising." She urges them to put away "all selfish ambitions." Then makes this remarkable statement: "The

love of Jesus Christ existing in the heart will consume these little things, or greater things, which tend to divide hearts. Satan sees that in unity there is strength; that in variance and disunion there is weakness."²

Unity was on the heart of the prophet as the 1888 General Conference Session approached. It was on Jesus' heart as well as His crucifixion approached. In that great intercessory prayer, He pleaded, "I do not pray for these alone but also for those who believe in Me through their word. That they may be one as you Father are in Me, and I in You that they all may be one in Us that the World may believe that you sent Me" (John 17:20,21).

The unity of the Church is one of heaven's divine credentials that we belong to Christ. Unity in Christ does not mean we will always see things alike. It does not mean there will be no

differences of opinion. It does mean we will always treat one another with dignity and respect. It does mean the eternal truths of the Three Angels' Messages that unite us are greater than anything that divides us. It does mean Christ's mission to reach the world with the everlasting gospel consumes our differences and focuses us on the proclamation of the gospel in this critical time of earth's history.

Revival—the renewal of spiritual life, and reformation—a change of corporate and personal behavior, rarely occur spontaneously. There is a period of seeking God, studying His Word, the confession and repentance of sin, unity of heart and mind that prepares the way for the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts reveals this preparation for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost before Pentecost ever



The Word of God
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took place. There would have been no outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost without the infilling of the Spirit in the Upper Room. The disciples were of “one accord” and met seeking God in prayer, contemplating His Word, and confessing their sins (Acts 1:12-14; see also Acts of the Apostles, pgs. 36,37).

AN EARNEST APPEAL FOR TODAY

Ellen White’s letter before the Minneapolis General Conference Session is an earnest appeal for the delegates for the upcoming General Conference today and the Church at large to prepare their hearts for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the General Conference Session. Here are three practical things each delegate can do to prepare their heart for the GC Session.

1. Seek God ourselves for a deeper devotional life through earnest heartfelt prayer, confession, and revitalized Bible Study.
2. Ask God to reveal any barriers to the unity of the Church in our own hearts. Confess any envy, jealousy, or pride that may be lurking deep within. Ask God to give us the grace to reach out to others that we may have offended or who have offended us, seeking the unity of

the body of Christ.

3. Unite with God and our brothers and sisters around the world in the upcoming 10 Days of Prayer in January and a Presidential monthly online prayer service especially for GC Executive Committee members and GC delegates, studying the great prayers of the Bible and praying together beginning at the end of January and continuing to the General Conference Session.

The words of the prophet speak to our hearts today, “We are impressed that this meeting will be the most important you have ever attended.” We cannot orchestrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit moves where He wills, but we can prepare today for the mighty outpouring of the latter rain in the future. Through the moving of the Holy Spirit on our hearts today we prepare for a greater moving of the Spirit tomorrow. May the 2022 General Conference Session be a time of spiritual renewal, genuine revival, and life-changing reformation for each one of us to usher in a mighty mission movement for the finishing of God’s work on earth.

¹ Ellen G. White, 1888 Materials, Ltr., August 5, 1888.

² Ibid.

Ellen White’s Earnest Appeal is now translated into five languages. You can read or download the letter at by clicking on your preferred language below.



ODE TO THE SEA CAPTAIN

By Justin Kim

1. Furrowed his brow is,
Chin scruffy, unshaven,
Hands burned by rope,
Coated cheeks with dried salt, embarrassed by
ocean winds.
His neck slapped red by the sun
As he squints to the horizon through the crests
of the waves.

Oh Captain, what see ye?

An angry storm with dark calligraphy
Raindrops of pelting ferocity
With lightning and thunder in synchrony
'Tis a temptation to fear this externality.

Though he has fought these furies a many
a time afore,
The temptation to fear is no less, no more.

2. Sweat upon his brow,
Lips pressed, eyes determined
Hands grip the ship's wheel,
Heart rate increases, breathing faster but
without air
His bowels embraced by red butterflies
As he squints to the horizon through the crests
of the waves

Oh Captain, what see ye?

Stubborn must I be to guide this ship through
Afraid though I be, courage for this crew
See not the wind nor the rain
Envision the harbor, havens of terrain.

Because he has fought these furies a many
a time afore,
He has the strength of faith to guide him all
the more.

3. Sweat upon our brow,
Faces masked, eyes protruding
Socially distanced, awaiting the time
Heart rate increases, breathing faster but
without air
Our bodies embraced by deadly red viruses
As we squint to the horizon through the crests of
the waves

Oh captains, what see ye?

Think you, O storm, that we are defeated?
We know One that Who is unimpeded!

We are of an ancient blood,
Of a lineage of warrior captains
Following the likes the first fisher of men, named
Peter
Or another who composed the words of amazing
grace on the seas
Or the scholar-sailor of the Sabbath named Bates.

Though we have fought these furies a many a time
afore,
The a temptation to fear is no less, no more.

But captains of conferences, what do we see?
Through the waves and beyond the storm, it is He!

Should He want, He could raise His hand to still the
waters.
Or should He will, we float with Noah, his sons, his
daughters.
For forty years of wilderness or forty days and
nights.
Lower our fists, but raise our folded fingers for
might.

Oh Captain, what see ye?

The Lord Jesus will lead us through the storm,
Who from above, promises those forlorn.
Trust the All-High through the fearful temptation.
He is the Author and our Captain of human
salvation.

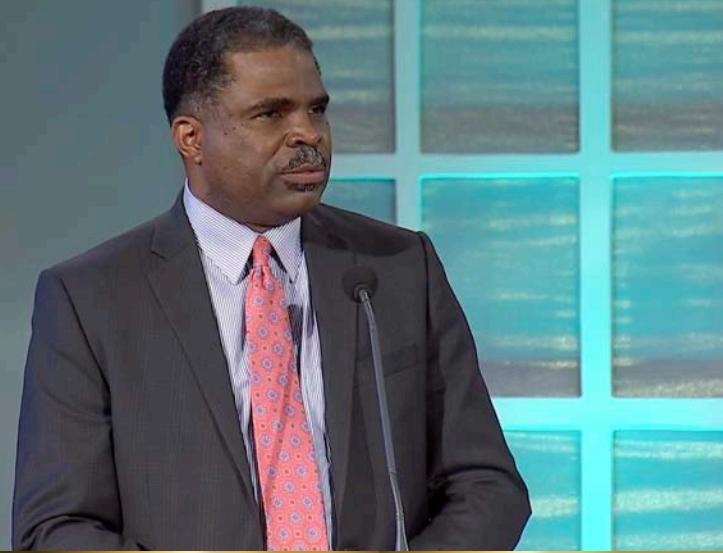


“By the Word of Their Testimony”

Testifying to the power of prayer, several leaders shared how their lives were touched through answers to prayer.

ERTON KÖHLER, GC Executive Secretary, shared a very personal answer that he and his wife, Adriene, experienced. A few years after marriage, the couple longed to have a child, but were unable to conceive. After seeking medical assistance and following all recommendations and treatment options, they were still childless. “We decided to put this situation only before our God,” said Köhler. “For some years we prayed, but in the middle of 1999, we decided to dedicate one specific week to pray earnestly and specifically for this request. And God answered our prayers!” Although it was termed a “high-risk pregnancy,”

Adriene experienced no complications and on February 11, 2000, a healthy son, Matheus, whose name means “gift from God,” was born. A few years later, a daughter, Miriana, was born—another gift from God. Matheus, now 21, is graduating from theology this year and will be serving as a pastor. “Today our family is complete, serving the Lord together, and believing that in any situation we can pray for miracles and God will hear us,” Köhler affirmed. “I believe in the power of prayer. I think we can all be united in prayer, to see and receive the greatest miracles God has prepared for His people now, and in the future.”



PAUL DOUGLAS, GC CFO/Treasurer, testified to God’s goodness despite various challenges related to financial operations in an international setting. “We all recognize the financial system of our Church is dependent upon the faithfulness of our members as they are obedient to their God and return to Him what is His. But also, our commitment to share resources with each other around the world so different aspects of the mission can be completed at different levels of our Church,” he said. “The Church has faced, and will continue to face,

different countries and jurisdictions around the world where currencies are blocked, where we don’t have access to those resources where faithful members have provided for God’s work. Compounding the situation is the matter of currencies and devaluation of currencies. So, the very value of what has been given is not even fully realized.” Douglas then explained how God worked a miracle in one country where funds given to the Church had been blocked, but God opened a way for the Church to have access to all of the donated funds. “We were surprised,” he said, but then added, “Maybe I shouldn’t say ‘surprised,’ because it was by divine providence.” He ended by appealing for continued prayer for “wisdom as to how to navigate these jurisdictional issues.”



BRENT HARDINGE

A Sneak Peek. Saw Samuel joined Annual Council 2021 via Zoom. You can see him speaking from the unique perspective of the business meeting chair.

SAMUEL SAW, president of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, shared how he and his wife, Orathai, experienced first-hand the effects of COVID-19. While Orathai suffered only mild symptoms, Samuel became very ill and was hospitalized, not only with COVID, but severe pneumonia and five other medical conditions affecting his heart, lungs, and kidneys. He was treated with high-flow oxygen and medication for five days, and on the sixth day Samuel's condition was stabilized and gradually improved. "Praise God, He has sustained me and my wife by His grace. We know for certain God was with us every step of our COVID-19 journey and we are deeply thankful and grateful for everything He has done for us," Saw said.

"When something as simple as breathing became a challenge, we became more appreciative to God for the good health and strength we had

before and after. We are so thankful for every prayer rendered for us during our ordeal." Reflecting on the seriousness of his condition, Saw continued, "I went very close to death, experiencing hallucinations due to the low level of oxygen. I realized my life was going to expire soon. From this experience, I have learned the most valuable lesson—'What is the ultimate purpose of life?' It is to live with Him in heaven for eternity. . . . When we know our earthly life is about to expire, how precious and blessed to know we have the blessed hope waiting for us beyond this life. Many die in this world without this blessed hope. And people are seeking, searching for this blessed hope that we have. May our living and serving be inspired by what Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 3:20. Rely on Him, "who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us."

"Our God is a miracle worker," said **JERRY PAGE**, GC Ministerial Secretary. "We want to thank Him for His grace and mercy." Reflecting on the first Annual Council he attended as Ministerial Secretary in 2010, Page recalled the testimony his wife, Janet, shared at that meeting. Although a pastor's wife, she had lost her spiritual life. "My ministry looked successful on the outside, but the fact was, I was pretty insensitive and didn't realize my wife had died spiritually by my side," Page admitted. Having recently been elected president of the Pennsylvania conference, Jerry and Janet attended the conference camp meeting where a speaker urged members to pray for the new conference president and his wife every day at 6:15. "For the next two years, everywhere we went, people said, 'We're praying for you!' It turned my wife's life upside down, and it changed me, too," Page admitted. He explained how prayer brought about healing in their lives and in the lives of others. Urging all to spend more time with Jesus, Page said, "The spirit in a room changes when we take time to pray and make Christ first."



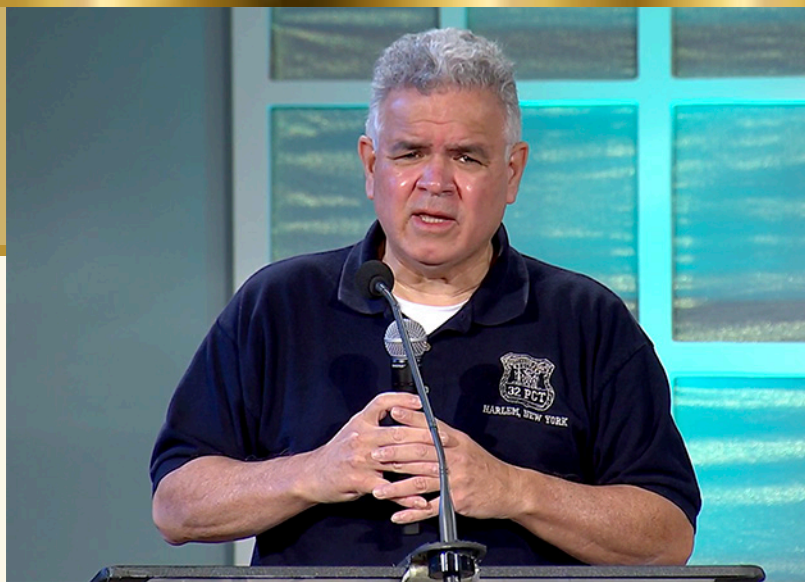
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When something as simple as breathing became a challenge, we became more appreciative to God for the good health and strength we had before and after.

TESTIMONY SPOTLIGHT: “TRANSFORMED”

Ed Incle, a New York City police captain, was afraid of dying. Although he had been on the site of the Twin Towers within the first 48 hours following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, what really “rocked his world” was when he learned he had a lesion on his vocal cords—squamous cell carcinoma. “It was like a shot across the bow from the Lord . . . He was trying to reach out to me, and I hadn’t been listening,” said Incle in his video testimony, “Transformed,” shown Sunday morning during Annual Council. Following successful surgery to remove the cancer, Incle started seriously thinking about the meaning of life. “I had done a lot in my life—I was a professional minor league baseball umpire, an actor, a lawyer, an NYPD captain, I got three degrees. [But] all this stuff didn’t seem to matter because I said to myself, ‘Why am I here? Is this the only purpose?’ So that’s when I thought I needed to get closer to God; I needed to read the Word.”

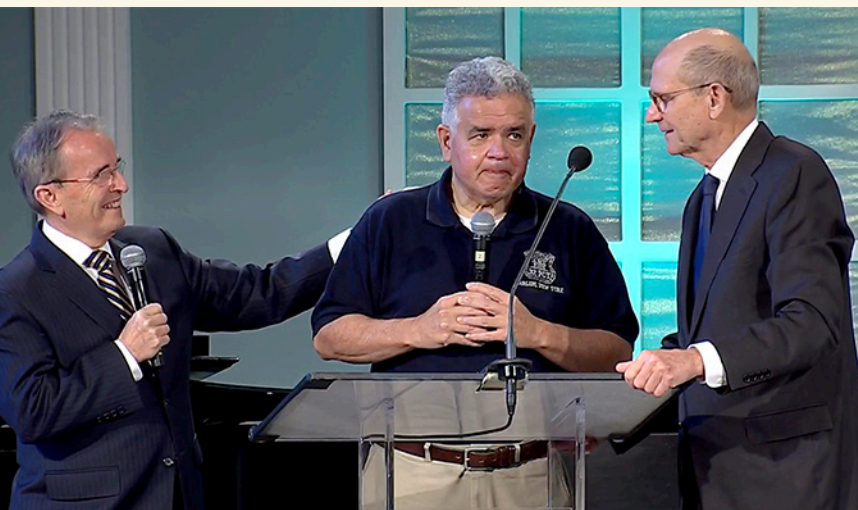
Not sure where to start, Incle began attending a Baptist church in New Jersey in 2017. At about the same time, he started watching a television channel called “Hope TV,” where he particularly enjoyed listening to Doug Batchelor, from Amazing Facts, preach, and attending “Hope Sabbath School” with Derek Morris. “What I liked about Hope Sabbath School and Amazing Facts was that it called me to look at the Bible for myself, not take somebody else’s word for it, [they encouraged] me to do my own study.”



Incle explained that while he found “very good Christians” at the Sunday church he was attending, he discovered that some of their beliefs were not Biblical. “They gave me answers that didn’t satisfy me,” he said. “2020 was a blessed year for me because that was when I decided to make the break and go to a Seventh-day Adventist Church, which I thought was the only church that really followed the Bible to a ‘T,’ particularly the Sabbath.” Incle explained how even as a young man in his 20s, he “wondered about the Sabbath. I’ve always had a problem with working on a Saturday,” he said. “It always used to bug me, and I could never really explain it until I came to know Jesus in a personal way, and to study Scripture. That’s when I realized—Wow! All the way back in my 20s, which was a long time ago because I’m in my 60s now, God has been reaching out. He’s been so patient, calling out my name. And then finally, when I got the cancer, I did the pivot. The reason I am here is not to obtain material success, not to obtain a big resume—it’s to worship Him, because everything that is here, everything that I am, is because of Him. That’s why I will always be indebted to the Hope Channel, and to Amazing Facts, because they got me to study Scripture. And once you study Scripture, you get to know the Lord more intimately, and once you know the Lord more intimately, there’s no going back.”

Following the video, Ted Wilson introduced Ed Incle, who was on-site for a live interview with Derek Morris. As he stood at the podium, Incle was visibly moved as applause erupted across the GC auditorium.

In the live interview, Incle shares “the rest of the story,” including his first visit to a Seventh-day Adventist Church, his baptism, his meal delivery ministry and more. [Watch the introduction and live interview on the video for Sunday, October 10, here, beginning at 2:25:20.](#)



ANNUAL COUNCIL BEHIND THE SCENES

For the first time in its history, the GC Executive Committee met for its Annual Council in a hybrid setting—with meetings held on-site at the World Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, while providing worldwide connection for its members through five simultaneous interactive Zoom meetings, held in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Russian. The meetings were also available to the general public through livestreaming in those five languages. The cutting-edge technology making this possible was headed up by Scott Grady, the Church's technical manager for its largest meetings, and his team of 12. For a behind-the-scenes look at this technological first, [watch a short video and read an article here.](#)

1 Overview of the engineers and technicians working in the GC Atrium.

2 GC Undersecretary Hensley Mooroven training leaders on how the hybrid system works.

3 Scott Grady, technical manager, and Greg Simpson, sound engineer.

4 Camera operators were a vital component of the hybrid meetings.

5 One of the interpreters who provided translation services.

(PC: Brent Hardinge /ANN)

6 Robert Baker, Zoom Master Control, monitors the five simultaneous Zoom connections to ensure those needing to speak from a Zoom meeting are able to be seen and participate at the 2021 Annual Council.

7 Zoom Coordinators in each of the five language groups helped to ensure that all members could participate in the meetings.

(PC: Brent Hardinge /ANN)

8 Operating the video master control board.

9 View of the GC auditorium and multiple Zoom meetings from the meeting chair's position.

(PC: Ted N.C. Wilson/GC)



PHOTOS: BRENT HARDINGE AND GINA WAHLEN

During the past 18 months, the Church has suffered but faced it head on, reinvented itself and, by the grace of God, overcome its challenges,” said GC Executive Secretary, Erton Köhler. Thus started Köhler’s first Secretariat report to the Executive Committee during the Annual Council meeting held October 10. Köhler gave many examples of the amazing work the Adventist Church has done globally during the 18 months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Adventist Church, said Köhler, worked through multiple communication channels—digital ministries, publishing ministries, and Hope Channel, hospitals, clinics, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), schools, and missionaries to bring people into a personal relationship with Christ and provide life-giving aid.

“What a challenge we have! A challenge that will only become more and more complex in the future,” said Köhler. “But our eyes shouldn’t focus on the crises, but on the One that is bigger than the crises, always believing that our greatest challenges precede His greatest miracles.”

“It’s time to move forward, fully depending on prayer and on our biblical identity, accepting the commitment to be a positive influence in this world, and renewing our focus



Secretariat Report Focuses on Mission and Determination Despite COVID-19*

By ANN Staff

on virtual and in-person mission through Christ’s method,” Köhler concluded.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON GLOBAL CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

David Trim, director of the [Adventist Church’s Archives, Statistics and Research department](#), told attendees there can only be one topic: “the impact on the Church of the COVID-19 pandemic—what has happened; and what the statistics suggest might happen in the near future.”

Trim noted the most distinct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Church could be found when looking at accessions, or the number of people coming into the Adventist Church. For the first time since 2004, accessions have dropped below 1 million—from 1.3 million in 2019 to just over 800,000 in 2020.

While this decline in accessions would most certainly be due to the decrease in public

evangelism meetings, Trim suggested it could also be due to a decline in personal witnessing, or “the crucial importance of interpersonal contact.”

In speaking about losses, or those who have left the church, Trim notes the decline does not stand out as much as accessions. The 564,000 losses from 2020 were a median figure for the past 15 years. While this number could be because the pace of audits fell during the pandemic, it could also be that, because of the pandemic, pastors paid more attention to their congregations’ well-being.

While speaking of accessions and losses during a pandemic, the report also focused on deaths. Trim noted that while the figures for deaths in 2020 were relatively low, he cautioned we still might not have a full understanding of losses due to death for the past 2 years. He suggested with congregations unable to meet, and records not always kept up during the pandemic, deaths may not have been recorded by the local church as they were happening, and so 2020 deaths are now being added to the deaths for 2021.

Where does the Adventist Church stand on membership attrition after 2020? Trim notes we now have 56 years of well detailed statistics on membership gains and losses. Since 1965, 42,225,021 people have been members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In the same amount of time, at least 16.8 million have left or drifted away. That leaves a net loss rate at 4 out of every 10, or 41 percent. An aspect in which, Trim notes, the Church must do better.

In conclusion, Trim noted that

while the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the Church, we have much to be thankful for and much we need to strive for. “As global conditions start, as we hope, to ease, there is much we still need to do, and much we need to renew doing, much we need to take up with renewed effort, as we look towards our blessed hope of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.”

MISSIONARIES CONTINUE TO SERVE

Even during the pandemic, the Adventist Church continued to train and send missionaries, including International Service Employees (ISEs) and Adventist Volunteers, around the world. While methods have been updated because of the pandemic, Adventists everywhere are still answering the call “I Will Go”.

Since March of 2020, 40 new missionary families have reached their host locations. Currently there are 373 ISE families around the world, in all levels of administration, education, medical outreach, ADRA, and more.

The ISEs have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic with 4 succumbing to the pandemic. During her presentation, associate secretary Karen Porter honored and thanked the ISEs who are serving and gave tribute to those lost.

VividFaith, an initiative connecting people with mission-focused service opportunities, launched in June 2020. Fylvia Fowler Kline, manager of VividFaith, reported that during the first fifteen months, 80 organizations had signed up to use it as a recruitment tool. But, because of pandemic-related challenges, there are only an average of 60 assignments available at any given time. However, more than 850 new “VividFriends” have registered and are searching for mission opportunities. As Kline notes, “They are ready. They are saying ‘I Will Go’ --despite the circumstances.”

Adventist Volunteer Services (AVS) also continued to engage volunteers. AVS launched a new website and “Passport to Mission” online course that was updated in collaboration with the Institute of World Mission. There was also a growth in mission schools around the world,

with more than 6,000 new students.

Investment in systematic volunteering, the concept of everyone volunteering where they are, led to an expansion of the One Year in Mission Project to include the community where the volunteer is located.

REACHING PEOPLE THROUGH GLOBAL MISSION

“We are praying for a mission that is stronger than crises, and we’ve seen in the past year through the pandemic that Adventist Mission has continued going forward because of people willing to say ‘I will go,’” said Gary Krause, director of the Office of Adventist Mission, during the final segment of the 2021 Secretariat Report.

Global Mission pioneers are frontline workers who plant churches in new areas and among unreached people groups. Last year, during the pandemic, a new church was established every 5 hours. In 2020, 1,736 new Adventist churches were organized around the world.

The Mission Priority System is now working to help prioritize mission projects based on mission challenge and unreached people. Krause announced a new mission dashboard, coming soon, for church leaders to see the global mission status for their region.

Along with the Total Employment Tent Making Program, Urban Centers of Influence are finding innovative ways to reach people using Christ’s method of ministry. Through the pandemic, the six Global Mission Centers have continued helping divisions reach the large non-Christian people groups in their territories through innovative methods, materials, and models.

Krause wrapped up his report by talking about mission awareness and the communication channels Adventist Mission uses to share how mission offerings are “like a river flowing around the globe, bringing life and energy to mission.”

Watch the full Secretariat Report [here](#).

*Adapted from “The Seventh-day Adventist Church Works to Overcome Challenges of COVID-19 and Reach People for Christ” by ANN. Used with permission.

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We are praying for a mission that is stronger than crises, and we’ve seen in the past year through the pandemic that Adventist Mission has continued going forward because of people willing to say, “I will go.”



GETTY IMAGES/ NATANAELGINTING

CHANGE OF STATUS RECOMMENDED FOR NORTHERN GHANA UNION MISSION

On Sunday, members of the GC Executive Committee voted a recommendation to the 61st GC Session to grant conference status to the Northern Ghana Union Mission (NGUM).

Following the regular process, after the West-Central Africa Division (WAD) brought the request to the GC for a change in status for NGUM, a survey commission was appointed to ascertain whether the union mission was ready to be granted union conference status. The survey commission was headed by Geoffrey Mbwana, a GC vice-president.

Gerson Santos, GC field secretary and secretary of the survey commission reported some very encouraging key indicators of the NGUM's readiness for union conference status, including the

keeping of a stable financial position and continued support to other levels within their region. Some of these indicators included:

- Nine out of the ten regions of the NGUM currently carry full conference status.
- The NGUM currently has nearly 195,000 baptized members, and an excellent retention rate of 78 percent for new members.
- High mission involvement, with 70 percent of members participating in some form of mission outreach.
- An impressive 142 percent increase in tithing—from 12.8 million Ghanaian cedis (approx. US\$2.1 million) in 2014 to almost 31.1 million cedis (more than US\$5.1 million) in 2020. Per capita, tithing rose 48.7

percent—from 107.27 cedis in 2016 to 159.59 in 2020.

- A broad array of support services, including 250 Adventist elementary schools, 155 high schools, two Adventist colleges, 15 hospitals and medical clinics.

Following its work, the survey commission brought its report to the GC Administrative Committee, which after reviewing the report, voted to send the recommendation to the Annual Council meeting of the GC Executive Committee, where it passed by 163 votes to 1.

For a full report, see [“Adventist Leaders Vote to Recommend a New Status for Northern Ghana Union Mission,”](#) in the *Adventist Review*.

BUSINESS MEETING

Treasury Report Emphasizes Positive Gains: Encourages Investment in Mission*

By ANN Staff

Paul Douglas, GC CFO/Treasurer, opened his inaugural Treasury Report to the 2021 Annual Council’s Executive Committee, with some good news.

“In looking at the state of our finances at the end of August, I can report that the financial picture is much stronger today than it was a year ago,” he said. “Several areas on our financial statement show positive trends year over year, for which we can only give God the glory.”

CURRENT STATE OF CHURCH FINANCES

While many things contributed to the positive financial outlook for the Church, including cash and investments increase, account receivable decrease, and notes receivable decrease, Douglas reported tithe being ahead by 5.2 percent compared to last year—7 percent more than the Church had budgeted to receive; and offerings being up by 14.2 percent—30 percent more than the Church had budgeted to receive.

Douglas also noted that program expenses were down by approximately 10 percent, as compared to this time last year. However, those expenses are still 11 percent higher than what was expected. This is due to changes in the exchange rate between the United States and local currencies where appropriations were sent.

Douglas also credited GC

department heads for their roles in keeping expenses down. At the time of the report, the expenses to operate the GC office and its activities were 8.4 percent less than a year ago, and 16.9 percent less than budgeted.

“The financial markets have provided positive results for us so far this year,” Douglas noted. “The investment return as of August totaled approximately USD 5 million. After removing the unrealized portion of those gains, we have accounted for approximately USD 2 million that have been received in actual cash,” according to Douglas. This amount that would be described as realized gains is 44.8 percent more than what we received for the same period last year and 50.4 percent higher than what we expected to receive as part of our budget for this year.

While all of this amounts to a decrease in total net assets in the amount of USD 4.3 million, this decrease is less than the USD 7.3 million decrease one year ago in August. It is also far less than the projected USD 6.5 million decrease the Church expected to see when budgeting for this year.

Looking to the end of this year and into the next, Douglas believes the positive trends will continue. Many of the treasurers from the General Conference’s 13 world divisions and 2 attached unions are reporting higher tithe and offerings, even when compared to 2019 that



Paul Douglas

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I can report that the financial picture is much stronger today than it was a year ago.

would be considered a normal financial year. Douglas cautions, though, that doesn't mean we should increase spending. "The economic disruption came upon us suddenly," he says, "but even with positive indicators we are seeing, the most prudent approach is for us to make plans to come out of it slowly."

CHURCH BUDGET AND TITHE

During the Treasurer's Report, Ray Wahlen, GC undertreasurer, gave his report on the budget and the use of tithe. "God has certainly brought the GC through some challenging financial times to a position we didn't even dare to dream about at this time last year," said Wahlen. "This has eased the picture for the 2022 budget year somewhat, but challenges still remain."

Wahlen urged the Executive Committee to commit to the quinquennial strategic plan, "I Will Go," saying the three focuses of mission, spiritual growth, and leadership, must guide spending decisions. "Projects that are efficient and inexpensive, even though successful – could be a waste of scarce resources if they are not in alignment with the agreed upon priorities," he said.

Wahlen said the approach to the 2022 budget will be with a strong emphasis on mission. The Adventist Church has usually set the income at 100 percent of the actual tithe and world mission offerings from two years before. Due to the current state of the world, however, and to avoid taking undue risks, the Church will use 100 percent of 2019's actual income, which will strike a balance between the risk of overstating income potential and the possibility



Ray Wahlen

of faster economic recovery.

When looking at the budget for 2022, two points need to be highlighted. The first is the portion received from the North American Division is projected to decrease from 49 percent to 46 percent, due primarily to the scheduled tithe percentage reductions. Secondly, the South American Division will likely be the third largest contributor at 13 percent in 2022 due to losing approximately USD 10 million in currency devaluation.

The largest portion of the GC budget goes to regular and special operating appropriations to the 13 World Church divisions and GC institutions. Wahlen noted the required quinquennial review of appropriations will happen within the next 12 to 18 months. The review will be undertaken in full view of the "I Will Go" Strategic Focus document.

The bottom line result of the income and expense allocations is a projected loss of USD 16.4 million.

This is a result of a deliberate plan to absorb from GC reserves, or net assets, a significant portion of the negative impact of the recent financial disruption due to Covid-19 and the longer-term phase-in of the new tithe-sharing percentages. It is also a USD 5.3 million improvement from 2021.

The projected loss will be covered from the budget reserve, with a transfer of up to USD 11.5 million as estimated in the tithe parity plan and a transfer of up to USD 4.9 million related to the Covid shortage.

Wrapping up his portion of the Treasurer's Report, Wahlen thanked his team for their hard work, but gave glory to God first and foremost. "Most of all, however, I express gratitude to our Father in Heaven who has provided so generously once again through the faithful giving of our church members around the world," he concluded.

IMPACT OF COVID

Covid-19's impact can be felt in every aspect of the Church. Yet those in the GC Treasury Department believe this is the time for church members at every level to answer the call "I Will Go." Douglas encouraged each person in the room and online to heed the call of mission.

"My appeal today is for every local church treasurer, every conference treasurer, every union treasurer, and every division treasurer to work with their fellow officers and committees to embrace the objective of aligning church resources to make the greatest impact to achieve God's mission," said Douglas. On behalf of his colleagues, he promised the GC

would join each person, entity, and institution in making God’s mission their number one priority.

Along those same lines, Douglas announced that GC Treasury is in the early stages of partnering with the Planned Giving & Trust Services department to craft a plan that will see the GC investing resources in frontline “I Will Go ” mission activities. These funds would be administered with a special emphasis on activities by members in our local churches.

RESPONDING TO THE CURRENT MOMENT

Believing we are in the final moments of earth’s history, Douglas

continued to urge attendees to go headfirst into the mission. “My brothers and sisters, we are in the final moments, but I have good news for you today. This will be our finest hour,” concluded Douglas. “The times in which we are living are challenging us individually and corporately as a Church...we are confident in our great God. His perfect love casts out all fear, so we do not fear what is to come! We will remain faithful. We will remain hopeful. We will remain watchful for His soon return.”

Watch the full [Treasurer’s Report here](#).

* Adapted from ANN’s [Annual Council Treasury Report](#).

“

We are in the final moments, but I have good news for you today. This will be our finest hour.



NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PRESENTS GCAS REPORT

I work for GCAS because I believe this is where God led me to serve,” said Robyn Kajuire in her first Annual Report as Executive Director of the General Conference Auditing Service

(GCAS). “It is my privilege to work with a talented group of GCAS professionals who are supporting the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world.”

The client base for GCAS is made up of 2,280 denominational organizations, including all General Conference institutions, world divisions and their institutions, unions/union of churches and their institutions, local conferences/missions/regions/field stations and their educational institutions at the secondary level or higher, and ADRA country offices

and projects not audited by external auditors.

Kajuire pointed out that transparency, accountability, relationships, and mission encapsulate the focus for the global service GCAS provides. “My vision is for GCAS to be recognized and valued as a global resource to Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders and organizations,” she said. “Our challenge is to build upon and to strengthen the foundations laid by others. We must increase the value of GCAS services to church organizations by helping them to navigate and to thrive in a rapidly changing financial and economic landscape.”

Acknowledging challenges some institutions are facing, Kajuire gave the assurance that “GCAS is here to support your organization. We know your organization, we believe in your mission, and are interested in your success.”

Kajuire ended her report by sharing specific examples of how many of the approximately 300 employees of GCAS are personally involved with mission outreach. “Even though we are business professionals dedicated to the Church, we also encourage our employees to be personally engaged in mission.”

“OUR FINAL WORK”

In a special presentation featuring Comprehensive Health Ministry and the Three Angels’ Messages, Dr. Peter Landless, GC Health Ministries Director, told how, following a planning meeting, he mentioned the familiar quote of Ellen White, “the time is coming when no other work will be done but medical missionary work.” One of his associates, Dr. Torben Bergland, questioned, “Do we use this phrase in appropriate context?” As a result, Bergland accepted the task of researching the answer and his work was featured, along with that of Landless, in a nearly 15-minute video, titled “Our Final Work,” explaining the full context and meaning of the statement and its

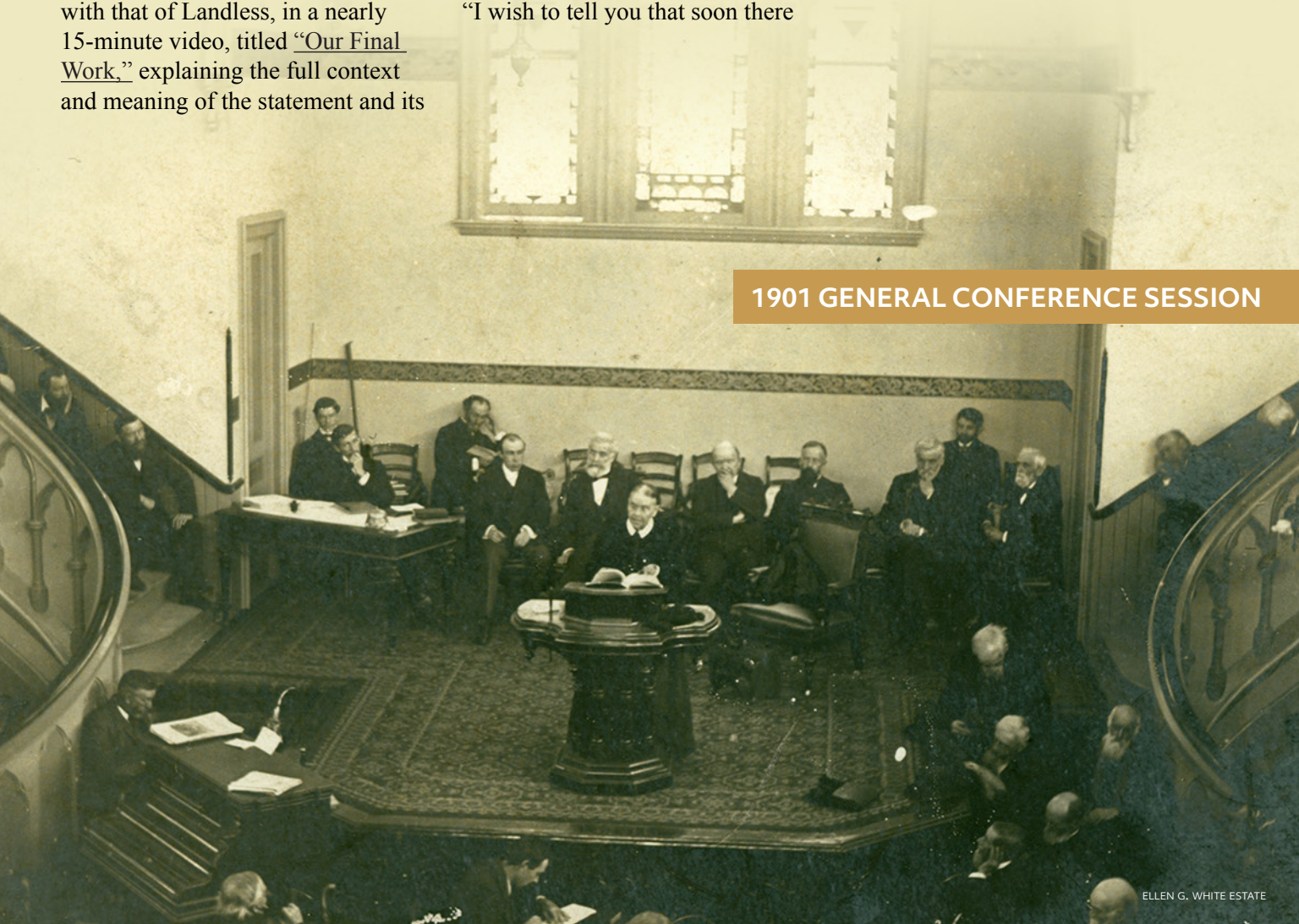
application for us today.

As shown in the video, it was at the pre-meetings of the 1901 GC Session, and at the Session itself, where Ellen White spoke of the scope and importance of the “medical missionary work,” showing how it is the same work that Jesus did while on Earth and is directly connected to “the gospel work.” She further explained how this combined partnership is to unite with the proclamation of the Three Angels’ Messages. And it was at this GC Session, on April 12, 1901, where Ellen White told the 267 delegates, “I wish to tell you that soon there

will be no work done in ministerial lines but medical missionary work” (GCB, April 12, 1901, par. 21).

“The health message burns in our hearts and our souls,” said Landless following the video. “It has been given so that we can work the plan of gospel ministry, comprehensive health ministry, as health workers, as ministers, as church members—every member a health educator, a medical missionary. We need to believe it. We need to live it. I need to live it, model it, teach it, preach it, as a veritable part of the Three Angels’ Messages.”

1901 GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION



NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF IN THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES

Addressing fears and doubts toward the end times that some Adventists may be experiencing, Ganoune Diop, Director of the Church's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) department, gave a 36-minute presentation on "Revelation 14, Pulse of Seventh-day Adventist Identity, Mission, and Message." "God raised the Seventh-day Adventist movement to bring a message of hope to the whole world before the second coming of Jesus Christ!" he said. Diop assured listeners that whatever crisis may come, "we can go through, confident that Jesus is with us." Highlighting Rev. 5:5, 6, Diop explained how Jesus is the only one worthy to open the scroll, and how His omnipotence and omniscience should give us hope. Describing chapter 14 as the "heart of Revelation," Diop pointed to the chapter's many vital themes: "Creation, redemption, judgment, the defeat of Satan, the demise of persecutors

... of God's people, a blessing from Jesus and the Holy Spirit, the protection and sealing of God's people, the commandments of God ... judgment, a day of atonement," and more. Noting how some confuse future events with current reality, Diop warned against conflating "other Christians with future enemies" and acting "as if their destiny is already sealed," citing Ellen White's statement in *Evangelism*, p. 234, "No one has yet received the mark of the beast." Although we know difficulties lie ahead, Diop reminded all that "Regardless of the circumstances, we can bring a message of hope, but not only that; we must also believe this message."

WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES OUTREACH

The Three Angels' Message Committee presentation featured exciting reports from many church departments, entities, and lay member organizations, revealing widespread support for this special initiative. Co-presented by Mike Ryan, committee chair, and Artur Stele, GC vice-president, the first report featured "Sidewalk evangelism," coordinated by E. Doug Venn, the church's Urban Mission Centers director. This exciting outreach method utilizes hundreds of students in reaching people in the 100 largest cities through engagement followed by specially-prepared Bible studies on the three angels' messages, and positive results are already being seen.

Several entities, including Hart Research Center, Three Angels Broadcasting, Hope Channel, Review & Herald Publishing, and the General Conference have created a strategic partnership for mission, bringing about a 13-part television series, "Three Cosmic Messages" hosted by evangelist Mark Finley. The series utilizes both digital and print media, featuring beautiful graphics and 13 accompanying sermons pastors are utilizing around the world. The team has also produced an engaging book, *Three Cosmic Messages: Earth's Final Conflict*, which is being circulated by the tens of thousands worldwide.

HOPE CHANNEL has created the "Three Angels Messages Global Proclamation Project," involving more than 500 young presenters. "I definitely think it's very relevant and necessary for youth to know [these messages] because it gives us a hope, future, and comfort," said Nakita Uluan, a presenter. Currently, the series is available in 30 languages, with the aim of having it available in 70 languages by 2026.

HOPE
RESEARCH
CHANNEL

Another combined effort of lay members at HART RESEARCH INSTITUTE, along with several partners including the Three Angels Messages Committee, has produced an educational curriculum, "Three Angels' Messages for Kids." So far, training has been given in 23 local conferences and 5 union conferences in North America and the lessons are now being implemented in multiple schools classrooms. Requests have also come from institutions in Germany and Austria. In addition, students in several academies are using the lessons to present a full series on Revelation 14, reports Sandra Doran, curriculum and creative director. The curriculum is also presented online, reaching students around the world.

HART
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

The GC CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES department, headed by Linda Koh, has been involved in two creative projects for reaching children: 1) the "Creations Detectives" comic book, in partnership with the Geoscience Research Institute; 2) an animated video series on the three angels' messages.

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

The GC WOMEN'S MINISTRIES has created a series of 12 Bible studies focusing on the three angels' messages. The lessons may be used in person or online, according to Heather-Dawn Small, departmental director.

FAMILY MINISTRIES

Willie Oliver, Director of GC FAMILY MINISTRIES, explained the importance of the Elijah message found in Malachi 4:5-6 and last day events heralded by the three angels of Revelation 14. The Family Ministries department is distributing copies of the newly-published book, *Where are the Elijahs?* by John B. Youngberg, to all division and attached field Family Ministries directors.

COMMUNICATIONS

Williams Costa, GC COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT director, and Sam Neves, associate director, explained the Digital Evangelism Initiative, "a phenomenal tool for digital missionaries," said Costa. "Adventist Teams is a digital mission game where each digital missionary builds a team of dedicated Seventh-day Adventists who are ready to share the best digital content in our church," Neves explained. "We believe we will discover amazing leaders among our lay members. After all, God's dream . . . is that all of us become totally involved in the proclamation of the three angels' messages." A full report on the Digital Evangelism Initiative was presented and may be [viewed here](#).

GC PUBLISHING MINISTRIES plans to publish materials focusing on these messages in 50 new languages, according to Mike Ryan. In addition, the Missionary Books of the Year for the next three years will carry the three angels' messages: in 2022, *The Final Hope: Three Messages for an Anxious World* by Clifford Goldstein, and *The Great Controversy* by Ellen White in 2023 and 2024. "Already, excitement is building for this project" said Almir Marroni, Publishing Ministries director, explaining how one church isn't waiting until 2023 to distribute *The Great Controversy*. "We've been looking for years how to reach out in our community as a church, and this event, being able to hand out *The Great Controversy*, was exactly what we needed," said Pastor Jerry Duvall, whose church members in Missouri handed out 1,408 copies of the book in one day. "And I underestimated my church," he admitted. "They're excited. It brought this church back together in unity; it's something we can all get behind. If you're looking for something to do in your church, this is a great outreach and it energized this church!" A very inspiring report on [The Great Controversy Project 2.0](#) was given by Almir Marroni and [can be viewed here](#).

PUBLISHING MINISTRIES

Providing a solid biblical foundation for understanding the three angels' messages, and the Bible as a whole, the [BIBLICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE \(BRI\)](#) has published a new book, *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach*. Edited by Frank Hasel, BRI associate director, the book contains 14 interesting chapters written by 12 respected Adventist scholars who tackle many important aspects of biblical hermeneutics (how to understand the Bible) from an Adventist perspective. In addition, BRI has produced [14 insightful videos](#) with practical illustrations, introducing some issues addressed more fully in the book. "These videos are already having a positive impact," said Hasel as he introduced a short video testimony from a theology student in France. "I really liked the videos on hermeneutics, because even though I was raised in an Adventist family, they [videos] allowed me to more profoundly and clearly understand the core reasons of my faith . . . that my faith is biblical and . . . makes a lot of sense from a logical and theological point of view," the student said. "I believed it would be a blessing to others and therefore I shared it on my social media." The videos are available free in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Chinese (Mandarin), and Arabic on the [BRI YouTube channel](#).

BIBLICAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Other forthcoming resources include a new compilation on the three angels' messages by the [ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE](#) and an *Adult Bible Study Guide (ABSG)* focusing on the topic.

EGW
ESTATE &
ABSG

"I am so happy the Church is embracing this new initiative, to make the push to proclaim this message to the world. It's just a thrilling thing to be part of and I

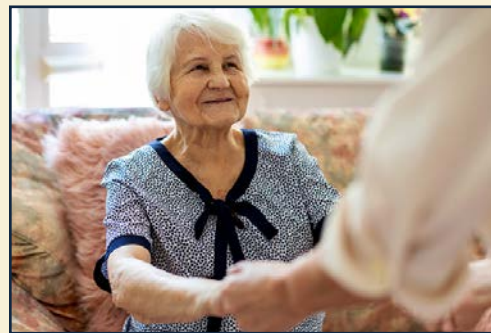
hope every person who is listening to this report can determine they also will provide visioning, leadership, and involvement," invited Ryan, committee chair.

“I WILL GO” STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE



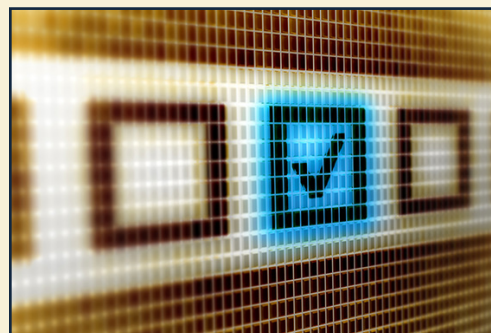
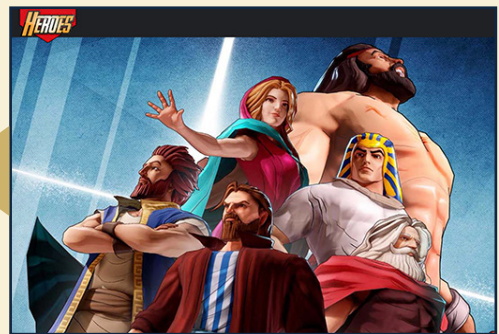
As shown in the “I Will Go” strategic plan update, action plans are being implemented around the world, focusing on the three overarching goals of spiritual growth, mission, and leadership, along with the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of the strategic plan.

Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, GC Education Director, explained how the Education department has created or linked resources to help teachers and students in meeting the KPIs. With nearly 9,500 Adventist schools, 117 universities and colleges, nearly 112,000 teachers and professors and more than 2 million students, Beardsley-Hardy explained, “Each institution will report to their own board or governing committee about how it will achieve the KPIs in the “I Will Go” plan.”



Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (ACM) Director, **Mario Ceballos**, shared how the strategic focus for the more than 2,000 ACM chaplains worldwide encourages each chaplain to take initiative in their circles of influence by initiating dialogue, introducing themselves to people of other faiths, and sharing the good news of the gospel.

Williams Costa, GC Communication Director, outlined how their integrated approach to evangelism is supporting the “I Will Go” plan, with projects such as the GAI N Conference, Adventist Communication Training, Heroes II Bible game, the Digital Evangelism Initiative, Total Member Involvement support, and strategic partnerships with ADRA, Hope Channel, Adventist World Radio, and more. The Communication department will continue working to maximize the potential of technology, he said.



Rounding out the strategic plan update, **David Trim**, Director of the GC’s Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR), explained how the KPIs were determined and how success is measured. “The strategic focus was founded in research of unparalleled breadth and depth,” he said, noting that 63,756 church members from all 13 world divisions took surveys in 2017 and 2018, indicating the strengths and weaknesses of the previous strategic plan. Future global surveys will measure the effectiveness of the “I Will Go” focus, he explained. This data will inform the strategic focus for the next quinquennium.

Annual Council REPORTS

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- ADRA International
- International Religious Liberty Association
- Adventist World Radio
- Hope Channel International

POLICIES: ONE WAY WE ACCOMPLISH MISSION

Tuesday's meeting was filled with policy item discussions, and reports from various entities. Hensley Mooroven, GC Undersecretary, described the "Two Faces of Mission," comparing it to a coin, with one side being "the missionary face," and the other "the organizational face," including processes, protocols, systems, and policies. "All of them are here to ensure that mission happens," he said. "These are not dry, cold, boring policies—No!" he exclaimed. "This is what will help us accomplish our objective."

While most policy items generated little discussion, the recommended amendment to policy GC FE 20 10, "Composition of College and University Boards" elicited several comments. "My appeal is that we take a look at the policy and have better definition of the role of the president of the union and the presidents of conferences," said Mike Ryan. "It is somewhat tentative or optional as to whether they would even be a member of the college board." Explaining his point further, he continued, "We need to do everything we can to strengthen that link between the president of the union, who is elected by the constituency, and attends the GC in session." Several other members spoke to the issue and were assured the policy would be reviewed and the comments would be taken under consideration.



ADRA INTERNATIONAL REPORT

Giving God the glory, Michael Kruger, ADRA president, reported [in a video presentation](#) how, despite the COVID pandemic, the impact of ADRA more than doubled in the past year, with the agency serving 35 million people around the world in 2020, as compared to 14 million in 2019. "The Lord came through for His agency, and He has blessed in a mighty way so many who are in need around the globe."

Acknowledging how COVID brought a whole new set of challenges, Kruger explained how the agency had to pivot in terms of the work they were doing. "We directed our activities to vulnerable communities, but now through the lens of the global pandemic."

Alex Balint, ADRA's Director of Social and Corporate Partnerships, pointed out with country borders and ports closed, the supply chain was disrupted. Nevertheless, working through the global network of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and other partners, a supply chain was established to reach the most vulnerable in many places around the world.

—ADRA, continued from page 35

“Our local church infrastructure around the world, that’s what makes us stronger,” Balint said. “And in responding to the pandemic, it wasn’t ADRA alone—it was ADRA with *all* the Church institutions working hand-in-hand with our partners, our friends, our volunteers. The Church was a mobilizing force, and so was ADRA. We had the resources, but we needed the volunteers. We needed

everybody to work together. And to me it just demonstrated how strong of an influence for good we can be in the world if we work together.”

“ADRA. That’s what we do,” said Nicole Watson, associate director for ADRA’s Network Marketing and Development. We are involved in crises and emergencies, and we’ve had many over the last 18 months in various capacities, and we have not

missed a beat.”

“I believe we’ve made a significant impact around the globe,” said Kruger. “We’ve taken the mission of the Adventist Church to vulnerable people we hadn’t been to before. It’s a wonderful testimony to God’s blessing at a time of need. The Lord says, ‘With Me, nothing is impossible,’ and He has demonstrated that.”



Ganoune Diop

INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ASSOCIATION (IRLA) REPORT

When we [Seventh-day Adventists] talk about religious freedom, people listen,” said Ganoune Diop, in his International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA) report. Diop, who serves as Secretary General of the Association, explained that one of the reasons people listen

is because Adventists put conscience at a higher plane than many, recognizing conscience is something unique God has given each person.

“Religious freedom is a compound freedom,” he said. “In our [Seventh-day Adventist] Constitution, in our Working Policy, we have there explicitly stated

that religious freedom undergirds all the other freedoms. That shows the high value we put into religious freedom.” Explaining further, he stated, “Freedom of conscience is a divine gift constitutive of our humanity. It is a symbol of our interconnectedness . . . The principle upon which IRLA is grounded is the fact that the respect due to every person is connected not only to human dignity, but also to the sacredness of human beings, temples of the Holy Spirit of God. Because of this, it is a moral imperative to promote freedom of religion. It is about saving lives . . . It’s about giving people space to choose the course of their own lives and write their own stories—hopefully with God—but that cannot be forced,” he said.

Diop stated the most daunting task for religious

liberty revolves around the issue of identity. “Some things have radically changed in our world regarding what it means to be a human being,” he said, pointing out there is an unprecedented culture today based on the individual as center of reality, rather than God. “How do you define identity?” he asked. “Oh, it’s just about how you feel inside of yourself. This is a challenge for religious freedom; [it’s] all centered in ‘me.’”

Concluding his report, Diop urged, “Proactive thinking regarding how to promote religious freedom has become urgent and vital if we do not want to become outdated and irrelevant. We would like to position IRLA to be at the cutting edge of how to make a compelling case for religious freedom without compromising our moral values.”



More than 700 rebels were baptized as a result of an AWR campaign.

HOPE CHANNEL INTERNATIONAL REPORT

God has been blessing as the [Hope Channel] network continues to expand, now to 68 channels broadcasting, in more than 80 languages around the world,” said Derek Morris, president of Hope Channel International (HCI). Gideon Mutero, HCI vice-president for finance stated that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the financial position of HCI improved significantly in 2020, thanking the world church and donors for their support. Vyecheslav Demyan, vice-president for programming, noted plans to widely broadcast the three angels’ messages, including “more than 500 young preachers in proclaiming the three angels’ messages in 70 languages in the next five years,” he said.

Highlights from the video report that followed included how HCI created a new program, “Hope at Home,” providing a safe way for viewers to have church and community during the pandemic in 2020, continuing into 2021.

HCI launched into new territory with “Small Talk, Big God,” broadcasting on Facebook and reaching more than 1 million viewers across 167 countries. In June 2021, evangelism meetings were held in Tanzania, with the messages relayed via Hope Channel to 3,978 satellite locations across the country, resulting in more than 30,000 precious souls requesting baptism.

HCI partnered with the General Conference’s Three Angels’ Messages Committee and Hart Research Institute to bring viewers “Three Cosmic Messages,” presented by Pastor Mark Finley. Through a partnership with Adventist World Radio, HCI broadcast AWR’s evangelistic series, “Unlocking Bible Prophecies 2.0” with Cami Oetman.

Holding its first-ever live fundraising telethon, “A Day of Hope,” more than \$300,000 was raised.

ADVENTIST WORLD RADIO REPORT

This year’s Adventist World Radio (AWR) report centered around the amazing story of the surrender of nearly 500 rebels on the island of Mindoro in the Philippines. “They, and their children, and their children’s children have been up in the mountains for 50 years, fighting a war,” explained Duane McKey, AWR president, in the video report. The rebels were part of the Philippine Communist Party’s “New People’s Army” (NPA), waging war on the Philippine government for the past 50 years, causing the death of approximately 40,000 people.

In 2017 AWR began broadcasting a series of evangelistic sermons and Bible studies across the island of Mindoro. As these messages were carried across the airwaves, unbeknownst to AWR, hundreds of rebels in the mountains were listening to the broadcasts. The Holy Spirit was working on their hearts and in 2020 they surrendered not only to the Philippine government, but to God, with hundreds requesting baptism. “What bullets couldn’t do, God has done!” said McKey.

Amnesty was granted to the former rebels by the Philippine government, and on November 13, nearly 500 of the

rebels, including their leader and his wife, were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in a ceremony on Mindoro.

Other highlights from the report included the conversion of multiple prostitutes in Bangladesh who are now secretly taking AWR-supplied “Godpods” (electronic devices containing the Bible and other religious material) into the largest brothel in the world, sharing them with other women there. In addition, AWR is establishing four evangelism centers in Bangladesh. In Madagascar, a man walked 100 miles to get a new Godpod after the one he had was no longer working. And in the center of the ancient city of Nazareth, AWR is building a new evangelism center and studio. In the Philippines, 1,500 digital missionaries are part of the “I Will Go” initiative, and through AWR’s worldwide cell phone evangelism project it is estimated that more than 3.2 million people have been reached.

“Habakkuk 1:5 is our text!” exclaimed McKey. “Look among the nations and watch—

Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you.”

VOICES

FROM

ANNUAL

COUNCIL

"The theological pillars of God's Seventh-day Adventist movement are solid and founded on God's Word. His Word is sure and rock-solid."—*Ted N.C. Wilson, President, Seventh-day Adventist Church*

"I believe we were called to be the voice of God and not our culture's echo."—*Erton Köhler, GC Executive Secretary*

"God is miraculously restoring His church to fiscal health and doing so in the middle of a devastating pandemic. Will we show the world our wealth or will we show the world our God?"—*Paul Douglas, GC Treasurer*

"There is nothing unloving or unkind in standing where Scripture stands."—*Mark Finley, Special Asst. to the President*

"Once you study Scripture, you get to know the Lord more intimately, and once you know the Lord more intimately, there's no going back."—*Ed Incle, newly baptized member*

"Theology is important because our mission was born out of the message, and if we take away our specific theological understanding then we have no ground for our mission"—*Barna Magyarosi, EUD Secretary*

"Correct theology drives mission."—*Adam Ramdin, youth director, North England Conference*

"These issues, if ignored, will threaten the vitality of mission into the future."—*Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, GC Education Director, regarding the Theological Concerns presentation*

"No parent should have to face the possibility of losing our children eternally because of what they heard at church, or what they were taught at school. . . . We need to set the example of returning to the plain teachings of the Scriptures."—*Kathryn Proffitt, lay member*

"The letter written before the 1888 General Conference Session is extremely important. . . My prayer is that we not only read the letter, but that we recapture the message."—*Andi Hunsaker, lay member, ASI President*

"We've reached the point in the church where it's time for all to stand up and be counted."—*Hal Butler, lay member*

"God's Word has a transformational impact in people's lives. We need to do our best to re-engage with God's Word in a profound but simple reading with our families."—*Rick McEdward, MENAUM president*

"What bullets couldn't do, God has done!"—*Duane McKey, speaking of the conversion of hundreds of former rebels in the Philippines.*

"Crisis is a time when you are closest to the Lord. . . You realize that eternity is what you are looking for."—*Artur Stele, GC Vice-president*

"You can focus on the coming crisis, or you can focus on the coming Christ!"—*John Bradshaw, Director, It Is Written*

"Amid pandemics and peril, of corruption and carnage, murder and mayhem, God attacks a lion with a flock of lambs!"—*Dwain Esmond, assoc. director, White Estate*

"I would encourage all . . . to live what we've learned and be bold preachers and teachers of the Word of God."—*Derek Morris, HCI president*

"Our young people are truly the wings of the three angels' messages."—*Gary Blanchard, GC Youth Director*

"We can reach the world in seconds using a personal touch."—*Williams Costa, Director, GC Communication, speaking of the new Digital Evangelism Initiative*

"The health message . . . we need to live it, model it, teach it, preach it, as a veritable part of the three angels' messages."—*Dr. Peter Landless, Director, GC Health Ministries*

"Transparency, accountability, relationships, and mission. These words resonate with me and provide focus for our global service."—*Robyn Kajura, GCAS Director*

"In God we trust, but in everything else we audit!"—*Esther Abayo, auditor, ECD*

"What are you going for unless the world can see Jesus in you?"—*Willie Oliver, Director, GC Family Ministries*

"What's that I see in the clouds? There we rise, in the clouds. We will be with our Lord, face to face, forever more. Jesus come!"—*Eric and Monique.com*

WHAT SHALL BE SAID?

On that glorious morning of the Lord's return, what shall be said?

When our eyes witness His ascendant glory descending in grace upon us, what shall be said?

When the dead shall arise and the righteous meet Him in the air, what shall be said?

We shall see our beloved quickened;
Past righteous resurrected;
Those justified and sanctified as glorified;
And what we shall we say to them...?

... when they come begging to know what happened to the rest of the story?

Did the everlasting gospel ever last?
Did the message of salvation save nations?
Did the preaching of the good news reach anew?
What happened to that soul, dear sir?
What happened to the mission, dear madam?
What happened to that city, dear sister?
What happened to that village, dear brother?
What shall be said?

What shall we say to the pioneers who founded the work in faraway lands only to have been felled for the faith?
What shall we say to those who sacrificed their savings, their status, their associations for the message?
What shall we say to the persecuted, the imprisoned, the pious, and the preyed upon?
What shall be said?

We shall say that:
We went
We preached
We taught
We disciplined

We smiled
We cried
We spoke
We counseled

We sang
We healed
We built
We protected

Yea, we traversed tides and waters; travelled through tundra and terrain;

scaled mountain sides and sailed to the countless isles.

We erected towers with invisible technology to teach of His return.

We built metal discs the size of dinosaurs to declare His name to distant domains.

We took to the skies on iron eagles.
We knocked on every door.

We led
We fought
We formed
We translated

We wrote
We prayed
We printed
We listened

We created
We baptized
We articulated
We lived it out

We watched the world web itself of windows and wikis, where moving canvases of virtue and voice witnessed the Wonderful One.

We overcame famines and droughts, earthquakes, and tsunamis.
And yes, we even persisted through pestilences that percolated and paralyzed this planet.

By His grace, challenges themselves were challenged; hurdles were hurled; and barriers were barred.

What shall be said to them?
You did not die in vain.
You did not labor in shame.
Yours was not for nothing.

On that glorious morning of the Lord's return, what shall be said?
No, not any of these, except . . .
Well done, good servant.
Well done, faithful servant.
Well done.

That's what shall be said.