



General Conference Executive Committee Newsletter

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

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2023

For Union and GC

administrators, Annual Council marks the beginning of intense activity. Decisions made need to be shared at Division and Union Year-end Meetings. This issue highlights some of the more important decisions taken.

Shortly after Annual Council, the Church family suffered a devastating loss. On October 20, Elder Maurice Valentine passed unexpectedly to his rest. Although he was only at the General Conference for 18 months, his wide experience of the church at all its levels brought a richness to his ministry and service. A life sketch is on page 3.

One of the many roles Elder Valentine fulfilled was the chair of the Human Sexuality Taskforce. One of the last items of Annual Council was the announcement of a new website resource for those with questions regarding human sexuality. On December 6, the website was launched (www.humansexuality.org). Please take time to check it out and provide your feedback to: ecn@gc.adventist.org.

In his Christmas message, Elder Wilson reminds us that history is not a random series of events, rather things occur in the fullness of God's time. We can look forward to 2024 knowing whatever happens, it is in the fullness of God's time and soon He will return.

AUDREY ANDERSSON,
GC GENERAL
VICE-PRESIDENT

EDITORIAL



MINDY OLSON P ON UNSPLASH

"IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME"

BY TED N.C. WILSON, PRESIDENT
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Editor's Note: This article is adapted from a message given by Pastor Wilson to the General Conference employees on December 6, 2023. Elements of the oral style have been retained.

Jesus Christ was born in the fullness of time. In Galatians 4:4-7 we read: "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son [and a daughter] . . ." (NKJV).

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME.

In 4 BC, just on time, Jesus was born. In the fullness of time, the Magi came to affirm the birth of the Heavenly King and brought gifts to finance the young family during their two-year escape to Egypt. And then in 27 AD, at the end of the prophetic 69 weeks, Jesus was baptized, in the fullness of time. We read the prophecy in Daniel 9:27—"Then he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week," the end of

the seventy weeks, the one week, “but in the middle of the week,” in 31 AD, “he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate” (NKJV).

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME.

And then, at the end of that seventy weeks, with the stoning of Stephen, the gospel went to all the world. Now, fast forward through the 2300-day/year prophecy—in the fullness of time—Jesus, who came as a babe, lived 100 percent human and 100 percent divine, we can’t explain it, but that’s what He did. He died, He arose, and He ascended to heaven, and in the fullness of time, according to Daniel 8:14, He entered the most holy place in 1844 where He ministers for us today.

In that marvelous book, *The Great Controversy*, we read, “The ministration of the priest throughout the year in the first apartment of the sanctuary, ‘within the veil’ which formed the door and separated the holy place from the outer court, represents the work of ministration upon which Christ entered at His ascension.”¹

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME.

“Christ pled His blood before the Father in behalf of sinners,” that’s you and me, “and present before Him also, with the precious fragrance of His own righteousness, the prayers of

penitent believers. Such was the work of ministration in the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven.”²

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME.

“For eighteen centuries, this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record.”³

And then, in the fullness of time,

“

Jesus came.

He was born.

He ascended.

He is interceding

for us. And He is

coming again.

“those who followed in the light of the prophetic word saw that, instead of coming to the earth at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844, Christ then entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to perform the closing work of atonement preparatory to His coming.”⁴

Jesus came. He was born. He ascended. He is interceding for us. And He is coming again.

What a privilege for us, as Seventh-day Adventists, to live and to prepare our own hearts, through the grace of Jesus, for that coming. That’s why Jesus Christ was born for us.

Thank you to each member of the General Conference Executive Committee, for what you are doing for God’s worldwide church and His mission, because in the fullness of time, Jesus *will* come again.

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 420.

² *Ibid.*, p. 421.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 422.

PRAYING TOGETHER

Father in Heaven, we are so grateful that Jesus Christ and the Father and the Holy Spirit at an undetermined time before the creation of this world met as the Godhead—Three in one. Lord, we can’t explain that, but we accept it by faith. They met and they decided that Jesus the Son was going to give his life for us. And for all who would be willing to accept his grace and His redemption. In the fullness of time, that took place. And in the fullness of time, Lord, we today give our hearts to You anew. We want You to fill us and to use us. For in the fullness of time, Jesus will return the second time to take us home. And ultimately, when that holy city descends on this earth, after the thousand years in heaven where all of us will proclaim that God is absolutely just, the holy city descends to this earth. This earth is remade and never again will death, dying, or suffering, ever rear its head, all in the fullness of time. Thank you for hearing us in this prayer and thank you that Jesus Christ was born. In Christ’s name we ask it, Amen.

GC VICE PRESIDENT MAURICE VALENTINE PASSES AWAY

By Gina Wahlen, Editor, *GC Executive Committee Newsletter* and Adventist News Network



On October 20, 2023, Maurice R. Valentine II, a dedicated servant of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, passed away, leaving a legacy of unwavering commitment to his faith and an impressive career of leadership within the Adventist Church. He was 63.

Valentine was a general vice president of the General Conference (GC) of Seventh-day Adventists at the time of his death. Shortly after learning of Pastor Valentine's sudden passing, Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference, shared, "Pastor Maurice Valentine's death is a tragedy for the world church. He was a very godly leader and an important part of our world church leadership team. Our hearts are broken with this tragic news."

A funeral service for Elder Valentine was held on November 5 at the New Haven Seventh-day Adventist Church in Overland Park, Kansas, followed by entombment the following day at the Johnson County Memorial Gardens in Overland Park.

Over his lifetime, Elder Valentine served at every level of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—as a local pastor, conference, union, and then division administrator and finally, as a GC vice president. During the funeral, friends and colleagues who served with Elder Valentine from each level shared memories of the man they knew, loved, and respected.

On December 4, a memorial service was held at the General Conference, where Valentine served as a general vice president.

ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE

"Maurice Valentine was one of those people who in a short time at the world headquarters made people feel appreciated, welcomed, and valued," said Willie Oliver, director of GC Family Ministries, in his welcoming remarks. "We remember the light he brought into our lives, chairing committees in a calm, serene, and spiritual

way," added Elaine Oliver, associate director of GC Family Ministries.

"His visits to our respective offices to speak carefully and with composure about very important matters, and to encourage and pray with us in his warm and winsome way."

Several of Pastor Valentine's general vice president colleagues shared their thoughts during the service.

"Maurice built his life from his earliest days on the foundation we all share, and that is God's Word," said Tom Lemon, before reading Genesis 1:26-27.

"Maurice lived with faith and hope, and he shared that faith and hope with others, affirmed Abner de los Santos before reading the hope-filled passage of 1 Corinthians 15:51-55.

Audrey Andersson spoke of how at the beginning of committees he chaired, Elder Valentine would often share thoughts from his morning devotional, "something that was fresh, that was new," she said. "He had a living and vibrant relationship with Jesus, and it shone through as he talked about his friend Jesus and as he related to other people."

In his remarks, Artur Stele said, "I found Maurice to be very kind, loving, a true friend and faithful man of God. We had the privilege to lead together the board of Andrews University, and it was always a privilege to sit near him because he always had something very important and wise to say." Commenting on Elder Valentine's last week of life, Stele pointed out that once again they were together at Andrews University, this time for a meeting of the Biblical Research Institute Committee (BRICOM). On the second day of the meetings, said Stele, "Maurice preached a sermon that I'm sure no one will ever forget. It was his last

sermon. He preached about Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. He preached about Christ the Creator, and how Christ is the center of it all. I have never seen Maurice more passionate than during that sermon,” he said.

Poignantly, Stele shared the last conversation he and Maurice had together. It was on Thursday morning, the final day of meetings at Andrews, and the last full day of Elder Valentine’s life. “Artur,” said Maurice, “this morning I went around the campus and stopped by each building and prayed for it.”

“Can you imagine?” Stele asked the memorial service attendees. “He was a man of God. We will truly miss him.”

Paul Douglas, GC Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer of the world church, told how one day Elder Valentine approached him in the lobby just outside the GC auditorium and said, “God has called you to a special ministry and a special work.” He went on to say, “I have the privilege to chair the ordination committee that will ordain you to the gospel ministry, and it will be a delight for me to do so.”

The two spoke for a while and then Elder Valentine prayed for him. “Maurice Valentine prayed for me,” said Douglas. “Now some of you might say that he prayed for you, too, and that’s nothing significant because he’s a pastor—he’s supposed to pray.” Then, emphasizing every word, Douglas continued, “I am here to tell you that *Pastor Valentine prayed for*

me. This prayer was different. He prayed for me as if I was his own son and pronounced a blessing on me and my life and my ministry. And when that prayer was done, I was convinced that something special had happened. Truly he was a man of God.”

Due to unfortunate circumstances, Pastor Valentine was not able to attend Douglas’ ordination service held a few weeks later. Douglas was at first very disappointed because Maurice was supposed to have offered the prayer of ordination. However, as he sat on the platform that day, his disappointment gave way to a sense of calm. “As I remembered,” he said, “Pastor Valentine had already prayed for me. So, I had a settled joy. For though his name was printed in the bulletin, and he did not pray according to the bulletin, his prayer was already printed on my heart.”

Following a musical selection, “I want to see Jesus, don’t you?” sung by recording artist Denise Barclay-Thompson, Pastor Ted N.C. Wilson, president of the General Conference, offered his deepest condolences to the Valentine family.

“Maurice was an exceptionally attentive and loving, caring husband; a nurturing, loving father, a doting, encouraging grandfather; a wonderful, supportive father-in-law; a faithful, diligent church member; and a careful, efficient, brilliant church administrator. He was an exceptionally gifted, wonderful

individual who was a loyal and thoughtful friend,” Wilson said. “All of this, and much more, was Maurice Valentine. I believed in Maurice. I watched him over a number of years and saw his careful approach to life and to his administrative duties. I appreciated him.”

Pointing out the spiritual atmosphere surrounding Valentine, Wilson stated, “I think he epitomized to a great degree the fruits of the Spirit we read about in Galatians 5—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. And these wonderful aspects came from His close relationship with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Pointing out the hope that Maurice Valentine shared with others and carried in his own heart, Elder Wilson read the ending of a guest editorial, titled “We Have This Hope” that Valentine had penned for the February 2023 issue of *Ministry* magazine:

“I have reached a point in ministry where my love for Christ outweighs all this life has to offer. Only one consideration stands juxtaposed to that of seeing my Savior with my family there—everyone needs to know of Jesus’ matchless love and soon appearing so that they, too, can daily experience His peace, share it with others, and be ready for His glorious return. *This* is the hope that burns within my heart! I hope it burns within your heart too.”



Visit the [Maurice Valentine website here](#). Read the Adventist News Network article on Maurice Valentine [here](#).

“THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING FOR LIGHT: ARE WE LISTENING TODAY?”

The King of glory stooped low to take humanity. Rude and forbidding were His earthly surroundings. His glory was veiled, that the majesty of His outward form might not become an object of attraction. He shunned all outward display. Riches, worldly honor, and human greatness can never save a soul from death; Jesus purposed that no attraction of an earthly nature should call men to His side. Only the beauty of heavenly truth must draw those who would follow Him.

The character of the Messiah had long been



foretold in prophecy, and He desired men to accept Him upon the testimony of the word of God.

The angels had wondered at the glorious plan of redemption. They watched to see how the people of God would receive His Son, clothed in the garb of humanity. . . .

To the land where the glory of God had been revealed, and the light of prophecy had shone, the angels came. . . .

With amazement the heavenly messengers beheld the indifference of that people whom God had called to communicate to the world the light of sacred truth. The Jewish nation had been preserved as a witness that Christ was to be born of the seed of Abraham and of David's line; yet they knew not that His coming was now at hand. . . .

Above the hills of Bethlehem are gathered an innumerable throng of angels. They wait the signal to declare the glad news to the world.

Had the leaders in Israel been true to their trust, they might have shared the joy of heralding the birth of Jesus. But now they are passed by.

God declares, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Isaiah 44:3; Psalm 112:4. To those who are seeking for light, and who accept it with gladness, the bright rays from the throne of God will shine.

In the fields where the

boy David had led his flock, shepherds were still keeping watch by night. Through the silent hours they talked together of the promised Saviour, and prayed for the coming of the King to David's throne. "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." . . .

The heavenly messenger had quieted their fears. He had told them how to find Jesus. With tender regard for their human weakness, he had given them time to become accustomed to the divine radiance. Then the joy and glory could no longer be hidden.

The whole plain was lighted up with the bright shining of the hosts of God. Earth was hushed, and heaven stooped to listen to the song,—

"Glory to God in the highest,



And on earth peace, good will toward men."

Oh that today the human family could recognize that song! The declaration then made, the note then struck, will swell to the close of time, and resound to the ends of the earth. When the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, with healing in His wings, that song

will be re-echoed by the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, saying, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."



Revelation 19:6.

—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 43-48

ANNUAL COUNCIL 2023*

October 5-11, 2023



DAY ONE: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5

The annual LEAD Conference was held with the theme “Mission Refocus: Disciple Making.” Erton Köhler, the GC executive secretary, explained the conference’s main focus was on “disciple-making and reclaiming.”

Over 20 presenters trained committee members on multiple initiatives, and reviewed case studies on the implementation of those initiatives within local regions across the globe. The topics included:

the power of the invitation, small groups, and helping new members get involved. Additionally, 17 additional breakout seminars on various topics were available to attend in the afternoon.

A new website for LEAD Conference materials was introduced. “The purpose of this website is to give you some resources on disciple-making, reclaiming, and membership [reviews],” Santos said. The website can be found at: www.adventistdisciples.org.

DAY TWO: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6

Delegates were introduced to the 2025-2030 draft strategic plan of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The plan, set to be voted on during the 2024 GC Annual Council, is based upon a recent survey of global church members.

In the surveys, it was discovered that several doctrines, such as the Gift of Prophecy and the State of the Dead, were not as firmly accepted compared to previous surveys because of new growth. Additionally, Bible reading, Spirit of Prophecy reading, and family worship statistics have continued to fall on a downward trend.

The previous strategic plan focused on mission, spiritual growth, leadership, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The new plan will focus on communion with God, identity in Christ, unity through the

Holy Spirit, and mission for all. Compared to previous strategic plans, the 2025-2030 plan is simpler and easier to implement locally.

Justin Kim, editor of *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World*, updated Executive Committee delegates on the status of the magazines and spoke about plans to rebrand the *Adventist Review* and transition to a “digital first” strategy. In addition to a redesigned website and brand identity, several new forms of digital programming are in the works.

David Trim gave a presentation on the upcoming 150th anniversary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Mission. Presentation slides available here. Read article here.

The Three Angels’ Messages Committee reported

on exciting new ways church members have utilized to spread the Three Angels' Messages, including sidewalk evangelism, special [Faith Finders Bible lessons for children](#), Bible conferences, and more.



Participants for the Divine Worship Service

DAY THREE: SABBATH, OCTOBER 7

- During Sabbath School, Nina Atcheson, a senior editor at the GC Sabbath School and Personal Ministries department, [presented a mission report](#) looking at the history of Sabbath School lessons in the church, and exciting new applications in the future.
- Derek Morris, recent past president of Hope Channel, led a [live Hope Sabbath School](#) featuring a panel of six young adult participants.
- Ted N.C. Wilson, GC president, delivered a [powerful sermon](#), titled “Chosen for Mission.” Download presentation [slides here](#). Read report on page 11-12 of this issue.
- The afternoon program featured Global Total Member Involvement [Presentations](#), including the [10,000 Toes Campaign](#) and [Sidewalk Evangelism](#).

Secretary. [The report](#) contained a critical statistical analysis and emphasized how the mission refocus of the Adventist Church alters the landscape of missionary service. Download presentation [slides here](#).

- In his statistical report, David Trim, director of the GC Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, shared statistics showing worldwide church membership stood at 22,425,452 at the end of June 2023, compared to 22,064,147 at the end of June 2022.
- Trim also reported a rebound in annual accessions from the 2020 pandemic slump. 2022 was a year of second highest records, with the second-highest number of annual accessions ever, while the church also weathered a loss of nearly 1 million members—the second-highest number of losses.
- Karen Porter, a GC associate secretary, shared that most church-sponsored missionaries will be redirected to the 10/40 window, the urban window, and the secular post-Christian window. Of note is that various world church divisions have redirected portions of their budget to fund or sponsor missionaries within one of the windows of opportunity.

■ [Seven leaders were elected](#) to fill six GC and one division vacancy. Each person was selected by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Executive Committee by an overwhelming majority. They include:

East-Central Africa Division Treasurer: Yohannes Olana Beyene

Scientist for Geoscience Research Institute: Lance Pompe

Field Secretary: Vyacheslav Demyan

Associate Director of Children's Ministries: Nilde Itin

DAY FOUR: SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8

- Sunday's business session began with [the Secretary's Report](#), led by Erton Köhler, GC Executive



Dr. David Trim

Associate Director of Planned Giving and Trust Services: Hector Reyes

Associate Director of Women's Ministries: Galina Stele

■ Asia-Pacific Division Territories were reconfigured. The Bangladesh Union Mission, Pakistan Union Section, Himalayan (Nepal) Section, and Sri Lanka Mission were moved from the Southern Asia-Pacific (SSD) and Southern

Asia Division (SUD) territory to the Northern Asia-Pacific Division territory. The reconfiguration of the divisions allows the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) to receive more targeted mission impact through 10/40 window opportunities.

■ A progress update was given on the development of the new "Alive in Jesus" Sabbath School curriculum for children and youth by Nina Atcheson, a senior editor at the GC Sabbath School and Personal Ministries department. The curriculum, set

for a staggered release beginning in 2025, will be the first significant overhaul of the GC's children and youth Sabbath School curriculum in nearly 20 years. "Alive in Jesus" will increase the quantity of available resources to parents and Sabbath School teachers, all while deepening the quality of the Sabbath School curriculum.

■ Several reports were given, including from the Geoscience Research Institute, GC Youth Ministries, and GC Communication.

DAY FIVE: MONDAY, OCTOBER 9



said the GC's financial position is strong. Cash and net assets are up 9.4 percent and 0.28 percent, respectively, while investments are slightly down 6.5 percent. Tithe is up by 7.9 percent; offerings have also increased by 42.8 percent.

■ Douglas presented three new initiatives currently being implemented between the GC and division treasury departments that will ensure resources are being allocated to have the greatest impact possible. "Mission Refocus is an intentional push to move resources that have been focused on machinery and repurpose them on the mission," he said.

■ During the Treasurer's Report, the proposed GC World Appropriations and Allocations budget for the 2024 fiscal year was discussed in detail by Ray Wahlen, GC undertreasurer. Although some funding cuts

■ Paul Douglas, GC Treasurer (above), presented the annual Treasurer's Report. While he highlighted the Church's strong financial position, he also mentioned several economic headwinds that are

being closely watched. In addition, Douglas specifically emphasized the importance of focusing on the Church's mission. Download presentation slides here.

■ During the report, Douglas



ADRA International announced the Ralph Watts New Entry Program in celebration of 40 years of ministry. Elder and Mrs. Ralph Watts are seen center.

during the pandemic are now being returned to pre-pandemic levels, because of unpredictable economic conditions, the department is still taking a relatively conservative approach to the budget.

■ During the afternoon business session, Jim Howard, GC Sabbath School, and Personal Ministries director, highlighted a new initiative called “Global Total Member Involvement.”

This initiative, which can serve as the foundation of a local church’s evangelism planning, is a multi-faceted approach that aims to foster a universal culture of evangelism and disciple-making. The initiative serves as a framework for local church evangelism and will play a key role in worldwide mission refocus.

■ ADRA celebrated 40 years of worldwide service during its annual membership meeting.

services and provide crucial insight into mental health issues. Adventist Health Ministries will take a unique approach in disseminating “Reminded” material, offering a podcast, social media pages, short films, a documentary series, articles, and an online program featuring on-demand facilitator training at the “Reminded” website, social media, and YouTube.

■ Following exponential membership church growth in South Sudan, it was voted to grant the South Sudan Attached Territory union mission status. Membership stood at 17,000 in 2015 when the territory was first organized. In 2023, membership stands at 72,000.

■ The South Philippine Union Conference, the largest union in SSD with a membership of 767,709, was split into two separate entities—the Southwestern Philippine Union Conference and the Southeastern Philippine Union Mission. Mission permeates the union, with over 50,000 church members added annually.

■ Various reports were given including: “Hope for Africa in ECD,” “Children’s Ministries,” “I Will Go!” WAD Report, and “Mission to the Cities.”

DAY SIX: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10

■ In an effort to address the worldwide mental health crisis, Adventist Health Ministries launched “Reminded,” a revolutionary online mental health initiative to shed light on mental health challenges and empower users to navigate such challenges with knowledge and resilience. “Reminded,” through its upcoming multimedia approach, will assist in bridging the gap in global mental health



Dr. Torben Berglund on “Reminded”



Dr. Theodore Levterov, Ellen G. White Estate, was just one of the many who chose to go to the microphone during the Annual Council session.

DAY SEVEN: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11

- Kleber Gonçalves, director of the Center for Secular and Postmodern Studies at the GC, reported on the center's latest activities, highlighting several projects that have flourished in areas where the population has not responded well to traditional mission styles. The center responds to health concerns, intentionally focuses on family and community, emphasizes the Sabbath message, and utilizes the “Third Place” concept.
- Online churches: A special committee, formed in consultation with the worldwide divisions of the Church to process the challenges of digital ministry and create guidelines for Adventist churches exclusively online, stated in an update that online churches are incompatible with Adventist theology and that in-person gatherings were to be especially

emphasized. “Building and maintaining the sense of fellowship can be very difficult online,” said Ramon Canals, GC Ministerial Association secretary. Sam Neves, associate director of GC Communication added, “After careful academic research as well as conversations with dozens of people from almost every division, we cannot find room for online churches that meet exclusively online. People need to meet face-to-face. If there are hopes of having churches that meet exclusively online, we cannot find that to be possible within our theology.”

- The chair and co-chair of the Human Sexuality Taskforce announced an upcoming Human sexuality website (see article on page 18 of this issue).

*Adapted from “What You Need To Know” (Days 1-6) of General Conference Annual Council, by Adventist News Network (ANN) staff. Used with permission.

UNIQUELY CHOSEN FOR MISSION*

PRESIDENT GIVES ANNUAL COUNCIL SERMON

By Marcos Passegi
Senior Correspondent, Adventist Review Ministries

Seventh-day Adventists have been uniquely chosen for mission, General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson said at the beginning of his annual address at the 2023 Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, on October 7. It is a mission that includes sharing the three angels' messages for the end times with Holy Spirit power as described in Revelation 14.

“God tells us in numerous places in His Word about being chosen,” Wilson said. “What a privilege to be called and chosen by God to deliver the last warning to a perishing world.”

Mission is the *raison d'être* for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Wilson emphasized, noting that 2023 marks “the 160th anniversary of the organizing of the General Conference and the 150th anniversary next year of formal church mission service.” He added, “Since that time the church has globally grown exponentially, with missionaries going from everywhere to everywhere.... God’s global work is flourishing because we are chosen for mission. Nothing can stop God’s mission.”

HINDERING THE MISSION

Wilson reminded the hundreds of General Conference Executive Committee members listening in person and the many others following online that the devil tries everything to hinder the mission of the church, including through violence, hostile environments, persecution, discouragement, confusion, internal bickering, distractions, and false doctrines, among many other attacks against God’s people.

“These confusing interruptions tend to derail God’s mission as entrusted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” he said.

In the next few minutes, Wilson listed some of those confusing interruptions.

First, he referenced a lack of understanding the Bible, how to interpret it, and even some antagonism

against God’s Word. “The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes in the authenticity and authority of God’s Word, the Holy Bible, to be applied to all people everywhere and for all time,” Wilson

emphasized. “Do not be influenced by those, even in the church, who ignore, denigrate, or depreciate the Word of God.”

Wilson then referred to confusion and misinformation about the Godhead—“Seventh-day Adventists believe there is one God, and that this one God is three co-eternal Persons who work together in unity”—and misunderstandings about human sexuality—“The church does not and will not accept individuals as church members or elected church leaders who are not adhering to the biblical understanding and practice of human sexuality,” he said.

He also mentioned confusions about the sanctuary service, misconceptions about biblical creation and the seventh-day Sabbath, and some of the false doctrines circulating. He zeroed in on those who promote love for God as the opposite of pious behavior. “These false doctrines are very dangerous and should not be accepted since they destroy the entire understanding of Christ’s justifying and sanctifying righteousness.”

In the next section, Wilson mentioned those who seem to have lost their sense of urgency in the Advent movement. “The second coming of Christ



... should permeate every aspect of Seventh-day Adventist life,” he emphasized. “We are living at the end of time. Let us live with that sense of urgency that will allow the Holy Spirit to work through each of us.”

Connected to this, Wilson mentioned the loss of identity as God’s remnant church. “Do not be confused as to who Seventh-day Adventists are ... God’s special messengers and His remnant church. Don’t allow ‘mission drift’ in our church entities and institutions, which results in loss of identity,” he pleaded.

The next part of Wilson’s sermon saw him address false accusations about the church’s relationship to ecumenism—“Nothing can compromise our biblical understanding of truth and nothing will”; challenges to church authority — “We are called to press together... Do not drift into congregationalism”; and misunderstanding about the Spirit of Prophecy in the life and work of Ellen G. White — “I urge you to have a strong commitment to reading the Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy and following God’s instructions for His last-day remnant people.”

He also mentioned the lack of understanding about the true meaning of the seventh-day Sabbath as God’s sign of creation and redemption, confusion regarding the state of the dead, and derision regarding the Adventist understanding of the last-day prophetic events. “Do not be deceived into thinking that there are explanations for end-time events other than that shown through Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation and by the



Dedication of Jonathan Contero and his family as they move to Switzerland.

book *The Great Controversy*,” Wilson said. “Read the biblical prophecies and the book *The Great Controversy*, and you will be reaffirmed about end-time events.”

Finally, Wilson referred to a lack of enthusiasm for direct personal and public evangelistic outreach — “Personal and public evangelistic outreach is the lifeblood of the Advent movement” — and the neutralization of personal Christian lifestyle and church compartment. “Remain faithful to God’s injunctions to live a pure and simple lifestyle as a witness to the world,” he said.

GOD IS IN CONTROL

While Wilson called his listeners to “resist temptations by false teachers to deviate from our biblical beliefs and heaven-sent mission,” he made clear that God is above any challenge we might face.

“Regardless of the confusing interruptions to mission, God is in complete control of the destiny of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the proclamation of the Advent message,” Wilson emphasized. “Despite the future attacks on the mission of the church, God will see His remnant church through to His second coming. Regardless of the slippage of biblical beliefs and practice by some, regardless of the shaking and sifting, God is directing His final mission,

which will not fail despite the attacks from within and without.”

LANDMARK ANNIVERSARIES

Against that background, and as church leaders focus on remembering the 160th anniversary of the General Conference itself, Wilson emphasized that it’s a relevant time to remember that God has chosen us for the mission of giving the final cry before His second coming. “By God’s grace, we will not celebrate many more anniversaries on this earth,” he said.

At the same time, the denomination is preparing to remember in 2024 the 150th anniversary of the sending of the first missionary, John Nevins Andrews, who, with his son and daughter, left for Switzerland on September 15, 1874.

In honor of that milestone and to renew the Adventist focus on mission, Wilson announced that a family would be sent as missionaries to Switzerland, just as Andrews did almost 150 years ago. A brief ceremony saw the family marching across the GC auditorium for a special prayer of dedication.

Wilson closed by calling again for a redoubling of missionary efforts. “Now is the time for greater mission effort locally and worldwide. Now is the time to follow Christ’s way of evangelism,” he said. “Let us relieve suffering and teach Christ’s righteousness engaging in complete mission outreach ... [because] we are chosen for mission!”

*“This article first published in the *Adventist Review*, October 7, 2023, as “Now Is the Time for Greater Mission Effort,” GC President Says.” Used with permission.*

IN THE FACE OF UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES GC SECRETARY CALLS FOR REFOCUS ON MISSION*

By Marcos Passegi
Senior Correspondent, Adventist Review Ministries

God has called the Seventh-day Adventist Church for this time of unprecedented changes, challenges, and opportunities, GC secretary Erton Köhler said in his Secretary's Report during the 2023 Annual Council on October 8.

"Changes are not new to us," Köhler said in his message to the hundreds of members of the GC Executive Committee (EXCOM) gathered in Silver Spring, Maryland. "But today's changes are different: they are rapid, they are impactful, and they are profound." He added, "We can't be afraid of changes, but they can compel us to leave our comfort zone, be awake, and use all our resources, and the best initiatives to share our biblical message of hope to this world."

Against this new reality, Köhler celebrated the ongoing mission refocus of the 22-million-strong denomination. At the same time, he called the church to continue tackling challenges with the power of the Holy Spirit and bold, mission-driven actions.

THE ROLE OF MISSION REFOCUS

"Mission Refocus is one of our priorities to face this changing time," he emphasized, referencing an initiative of the world church that seeks to redirect planning efforts and funds to reach others for Jesus, particularly in challenging areas of the world. Mission Refocus is not only about sending missionaries and integration, Köhler explained, but also to "adjusting how we accomplish the mission to efficiently reach a world facing profound changes."

Results are trickling in, Köhler reported. "After a few months of prayer, discussion, and evaluation, many of our organizations and institutions have established plans to adopt and send missionaries to some challenging places worldwide," he said. "It is impressive to see how different organizations and institutions thought beyond their geographical borders and made sacrifices to be part of this worldwide initiative. Some of our attached fields that need extra support to accomplish their mission are now also contributing to help others."

PRESSING CHALLENGES

Köhler spent considerable time listing some of the pressing challenges the Adventist Church is facing as it tries to accomplish its mission. He mentioned the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic that



Pastor Erton Köhler used binoculars as an illustration for mission refocus.

has impacted church life and the ongoing wars that have disrupted the supply chain even in developed countries, increased global political instability, and skyrocketed the number of refugees.

Concurrently, we are living through an unprecedented ecological crisis, Köhler said, which has affected every church territory. Connected to this are challenges to the world economy, he reminded church leaders.

Social challenges include the rise of the "Me Me Me generation," also called the "Selfie generation." It's made up of digital natives who are "emotionally weak but, at the same time, eager to defend justice and constantly seeking to live a meaningful life," Köhler said. "In terms of morality, 60 percent of Millennials live by defining what is right for them—their own rules of conduct."

“The worst that can happen for God’s church is that when the Lord comes, He will find all the extra money He sent us to accomplish the mission, earning interest in the banks and not being used in the field.”

Another challenge is related to society’s understanding of human sexuality, Köhler said, and social polarization and cynicism toward all authority, including church leaders. He also mentioned challenges brought by technology, including the impact of social media and, more recently, artificial intelligence.

Finally, mission changes are impacting the world, Köhler said, as countries that have sent missionaries for at least a hundred years have diminished their global mission impact, and new countries—Brazil, South Korea, Philippines, and others—have stepped up by becoming senders of missionaries.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MISSION

The challenge, Köhler emphasized, is to see these global changes and challenges as opportunities for mission. As the foundation for any change or new initiative, Adventists leaders and members need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. “The more complicated the global scenario is, the more needed the Holy Spirit is,” he said. “We need wisdom from the Lord more than ever.”

Regarding the church’s financial investment in mission, “if God sends more, let’s invest more, especially in well-planned mission initiatives,” Köhler said. “The worst that can happen for God’s church is that when the Lord comes, He will find all the extra money He sent us to accomplish the mission, earning interest in the banks and not being used in the field.”

Köhler also emphasized the importance of keeping our identity alive. “Churches that lose their identity and authenticity also lose their relevance,” he

reminded church leaders. “Identity is non-negotiable.”

Against that context, the best way to approach today’s generation is by highlighting our biblical message of hope, Köhler said. “A hopeless world is looking for a hopeful church . . . which offers people a better life in Jesus and a new life according to His Word.”

At the same time, another opportunity for mission implies focusing on disciple-making, as it’s not only the heart of the great commission but is the best way to reach the hearts of people living in the world today, Köhler said.

Technology is also a game-changer for mission because it can reach everybody, everywhere, at any time. “We have everything we need to move forward with a sense of urgency,” Köhler said.

Against present realities, “everybody can do something to keep the focus on the mission and to help us face our vast worldwide challenges. This is why Mission Refocus is not just a priority but an increasingly urgent priority,” he said. “Let us promote God-led changes. Let us promote Bible-based changes. This is what we call Mission Refocus in a time of change.”

**First published in the [Adventist Review](#), October 9, 2023. Used with permission.*



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GC TREASURER'S REPORT ENCOURAGES FAITHFULNESS TO THE MISSION

By Ancis Anderson, Adventist News Network



On October 9th, Paul H. Douglas, General Conference (GC) treasurer (above), opened the day's business session for the 2023 Annual Council with the Treasurer's Report, emphasizing the theme *Mission Refocus*.

Douglas began by highlighting global macroeconomic trends that

have a significant impact on the financial situation and financial system of the Church: inflation, interest rates, and currencies. While inflation remains a challenge, the rate is retreating from its peak in many parts of the world. However, the cost of goods and services remain high in real terms for people as part of daily life. In their attempts to control

inflation, governments use interest rates as a policy mechanism, but present economic realities are seemingly less than expected. Douglas also highlighted key currencies the Church uses to facilitate mission activities around the world have seen improvement against the United States dollar, which is the principal currency of exchange. Although some currencies have improved since 2022, these key currencies remain weaker when compared to rates in 2014. Another challenge related to currencies, according to Douglas, is an increasing number of nation states making it more difficult to move currency across their borders. Considering the Church's financial system is premised on sharing resources, treasury leaders are working intentionally on how to navigate and mitigate this risk, enabling the free flow of resources to move the mission forward.

Despite global challenges and a volatile economic and political environment, the financial position of the GC is strong. However, as expressed by Douglas,

“Covid-19 has left a legacy impact on economies around the world, but, by God's grace, God's church continues to grow both in membership and giving...” Most divisions have reported an increase in tithe and offering compared to this same time last year, while some have seen an increase surpassing pre-pandemic times. Douglas stated that moving forward, GC treasury is taking a posture that finds a balance between the duality of economic recovery and economic uncertainty.

MISSION REFOCUS: PUTTING OUR MONEY WHERE THE MISSION IS

After highlighting the Church's financial position, Douglas emphasized the importance of focusing on the mission. He presented the responsibility of the Church financial resources through the lens of the Mission Refocus initiative the Church is using to fulfill its God-given mission to reach the world – especially within post-Christian areas; 10/40 window; and urban centers around the world.

Mission Refocus consists of four areas: rebalancing missionary placements from administrative to the work on the frontlines; adopting mission fields in unentered and low-entered territories; making disciples who both grow in Christ and who say “I Will Go” make disciples for Christ; and mobilizing human, financial, and technological resources for mission. With respect to mobilizing resources, Douglas introduced three areas of focus currently being addressed by GC and Division Treasury leadership to ensure resources are



positioned to have the greatest impact. The focus areas include a partnership with the Stewardship Department that has a positive influence on church members that is about “faith-raising” and not “fund-raising”; a study of appropriations and allocations made to the world field so investments in mission are deliberate towards having the greatest of impact; and application of a digital strategy that employs technology to advance and accelerate the mission.

Douglas urged, “*Mission Refocus* is a spiritual movement. It is also a sound investment...[it] needs to do more than inform how we think; it needs to inform what we do. It is not about analysis, it is about action. *Mission Refocus* is an intentional push to move resources that have been focused on machinery and repurpose them on the mission.”

2024 WORLD APPROPRIATIONS AND ALLOCATIONS

Following Douglas’ presentation, J Raymond Wahlen II, GC undertreasurer (see above), introduced the 2024

World Appropriations and Allocations Budget Proposal. He began by encouraging Executive Committee members that, though the Church has faced challenges as it emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, “continuity has returned for most areas.” However, in light of unpredictable political and economic factors, the GC Treasury leadership team continues to take a balanced approach.

Three major things were considered in formulating the 2024 budget – tithe percentages, currency fluctuations, and post-pandemic giving patterns. Wahlen mentioned changes in tithe percentages approved by the Executive Committee in the year 2019, and how they continue to impact this budget.

A few areas which underwent cuts in funding due to the COVID-19 pandemic have now been funded or received increased funding. These areas are department special projects, web development, excess liability insurance, and world contingency. Travel budgets are also increasing after pandemic cuts were introduced. Post-pandemic adjustments have been made, keeping in mind the technological capabilities to hold meetings via online platforms.

When considered in combination, Tithe received by the General Conference and the World Mission Offering are projected to shift in terms of the original giving currency. Due primarily to the shifts in the approved tithe-sharing percentages, the North American Division’s share of participation in the General Conference budget will likely decrease to 41% in 2024 from the 48% that was actually received prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wahlen concluded his segment of the Treasurer’s Report by explaining how the tithe was used in the year 2022, in fulfillment of the GC Working Policy which requires an annual report. The report showed that as a global average, the tithe was used primarily for pastors, evangelists, and frontline workers, followed by the operating expenses of administrative offices, and other evangelistic categories.

Wahlen highlighted, “We praise the Lord for the assets that He has entrusted to the World Church, and for the continued recovery of the tithe and offerings, not only for the GC, but in fields around the world.”

160 YEARS OF CHURCH GROWTH AND GIVING

The last section of the Treasurer’s Report came via a video presentation by Douglas as he walked attendees

through the Church's history and its response to financial struggles and societal challenges through the past 160 years. His introductory statement set the tone for the video as he stressed, "160 years of growing and giving are a testament to the providences of God and the faithfulness of His people to support the mission for which we have been chosen."

Douglas' tour began with the Church's founding right in the middle of the Civil War when, "a band of believers accepted they were called and chosen for mission" and committed themselves to what God called them to. The tour also walked Executive Committee members and online viewers through several turbulent times, including World Wars I and II, the Great Depression, the Oil Crisis of 1970, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the different time periods of our history, the Church experienced exponential growth in tithe, offerings, and membership. "...The Church of God exhibited a resilience which can only be attributed to the power, presence and providences of God." "... We can clearly see that even in the most difficult of times, the people of God remained faithful in their obedience to Him."

CHOSEN FOR MISSION

The final segment of Douglas' presentation focused on tithe and membership milestones since the founding of the Church in 1863, as well as the history and development of the tithing and offering plans of the Church and planned gifts by church members. Douglas also highlighted the importance of a tithe-sharing plan for supporting mission

on a worldwide basis, and the impact of various offerings by showing several examples.

Douglas concluded his message by urging Church leaders and members everywhere, "We have come this far by faith, leaning on the confidence of our Lord. We will continue moving forward by faith, as we look to the coming of our Lord. We have nothing to fear for the future because we will not forget how God has led us in our past history. God, our God, has not given us a spirit of fear or a spirit of timidity, but He has given us a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline. So, let us therefore, move forward together in mission to reach the world for Christ. We have been chosen for this mission."

"This article was first published by Adventist News Network on October 10, 2023. Used with permission.

Quartet of the officers sing for Annual Council: (l to r) Ted N. C. Wilson, president; Erton Köhler, secretary, Paul H. Douglas, treasurer, and Magdiel E. Perez Schult, assistant to the president.



HUMAN SEXUALITY WEBSITE LAUNCHED

PROVIDES BIBLE-BASED RESOURCES

By Adventist News Network and *Adventist Review*

On December 6, 2023, the General Conference (GC) of Seventh-day Adventists launched www.humansexuality.org, which was designed and developed by the GC's Human Sexuality Taskforce in efforts to help local and global church leaders address a wide range of topics that are impacting local churches and their communities. This new website provides insightful, biblically-based content that integrates faith, understanding, and guidance on the topic of human sexuality through the biblical lens of "love, truth, and life".

WHAT IS THE HUMAN SEXUALITY TASKFORCE?

With increasing concerns regarding the contemporary issues surrounding human sexuality and the increasing need for Bible-based resources, Pastor Ted N.C Wilson, president of the Adventist Church, announced the formation of the taskforce during the first day of the yearly Spring Meetings on April 10, 2023. The taskforce addresses ongoing conversations surrounding issues and questions related to sexuality, both in churches and online.

The task force is focused on creating relevant resources, such as videos, seminars, and more, to help those who visit understand what the Bible has to say about human sexuality. The website is the first step towards providing Christians with useful resources based on the Word of God, that are practical and helpful to answer the questions many are wrestling with today.

EXPLORING HUMAN SEXUALITY

Humansexuality.org features a thoughtful exploration of human sexuality through three distinct categories: Love, Truth, and Life. The website aims to guide readers through

examining God's love and the principles outlined in the Bible regarding human sexuality while providing practical insights for application in daily life.

The "Love" section underscores the role of God's love in the creation of the world and its ongoing influence on understanding human relationships.

"Truth" takes a theological approach to human sexuality, featuring articles by notable Adventist theologians and leaders, offering biblically sound examinations of texts and questions often misunderstood or misused. Finally, the "Life" category

emphasizes the concept of abundant life through Jesus and aims to guide readers toward practical applications to real-life struggles and issues, providing them with a flourishing and fulfilling existence grounded in their faith.

The website also features engaging personal stories, offering insights into the real-life experiences of individuals navigating their sexuality within the framework of their faith. The testimonies are provided to inform our understanding and learning through the challenges that others have navigated.

To ensure the site remains current and reflective of contemporary discussions, the Human Sexuality Taskforce is committed to making regular updates, addressing submitted questions, and adding to the site's growing resource list. In this way, the site is a developing resource that will continue to grow with the dynamic and complicated topic it addresses.

With the increased focus on supporting those seeking to learn what the Bible says as they navigate the questions they are asking, the Adventist Church and the Human Sexuality Taskforce invite visitors to read and use the provided resources to better comprehend human sexuality through the biblical lens of love, truth, and life.



To find the Adventist Church's resources on human sexuality, please visit humansexuality.org or scan QR code at left.



A new year provides a good opportunity for goal-setting. For many people, the problem with resolutions is that they're not specific enough. Instead of setting a goal to simply "get healthier," brainstorm what specific actions will help you achieve that goal. Here's a list of specific, measurable actions to improve your wellness—in mind, body and spirit.

GIVE YOUR BRAIN A WORKOUT.

As people get older, exercising the mind regularly is linked to a lowered risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Any activity that challenges your brain will help you keep your mind in shape. For example, puzzles, crosswords, board games and learning new languages or instruments are all brain-challenging activities. Commit to engaging in one of these activities 3-5 times per week. Within a few weeks, brain games will become part of your everyday routine.

PRIORITIZE REST.

Getting quality sleep is one of the most often overlooked health habits. But sleep is crucial for your health. In fact, chronic sleep deprivation is linked to a higher risk of heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and stroke. Your immune system also relies on sleep to keep you healthy. It is recommended that adults get at least 7 hours of sleep each night.

START A PRAYER PRACTICE.

Many people turn to prayer in times of stress, worry or discouragement. While scientists have found it hard to study the benefits of prayer specifically, there is **research** that people who pray regularly do not experience as many feelings of anxiety, fear or isolation. Those who pray with others also have lower rates of depression and a stronger sense of connection with others. Prayer is personal—so look for ways to approach prayer that are meaningful for you.

MOVE YOUR BODY.

Moving your body consistently is a crucial part of your physical and mental health. The **American Heart Association** recommends getting at least 2.5 hours of exercise per week. For many people this looks like five 30-minute exercise sessions each week. If you don't have an exercise habit, set a small, realistic goal such as going on three 20-minute walks each week. Over time, you will build up your stamina and can increase your duration or add more types of activity, including strengthening and stretching exercises.

CARE FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH.

Another way to treat your mind well is taking care of your emotional well-being. Talking about your feelings with a trusted loved one or therapist is an excellent strategy for improving your mental wellness. A therapist can provide guidance for identifying negative thought patterns, as well as tips for how to improve them.

EXERCISE GRATITUDE.

Practicing gratitude can have a profound impact on your physical and mental well-being. **Researchers** have found that a spirit of gratitude is linked to better heart health, a longer life span and lower rates of depression. To start a gratitude practice, set a goal to make a gratitude list every day. If making a list doesn't resonate with you, consider how you can express gratefulness directly to others. For example, make a commitment to send two handwritten thank-you notes per month—these could be to thank someone for a specific kind deed, or simply to let someone know you appreciate them.



*Adapted from *Adventist Health Blog*, Dec. 10, 2021.



THE BACK PAGE

Directions: For more information on an item, click on the corresponding number on the map.

1 Hundreds of leaders from various ministries within the Central Mexican Union gathered in **Mexico City** for their first-ever comprehensive health training initiative to educate church members and those from the community on healthy foods and better eating habits. The training sessions were led by experts from Alimentos COLPAC, one of Inter-American Division’s largest food factories. The main objective focused on prevention and care for one’s body through the principles of healthy cooking and good nutrition.

2 Christian Record Services (CRS) based in **Lincoln, Nebraska**, recently expanded its offices with an opening of a Braille production suite. Funded in part by a \$597,000 grant from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the increased space will allow CRS to produce higher volumes of valuable literature for the visually impaired worldwide.

3 More than 60,000 people in **Southern Brazil** celebrated the 160-year anniversary of the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Of the 22 million members worldwide, Brazil has the largest Adventist community in the world, with 1.7 million believers. Celebrations were held in **Parana, Santa Catarina**, and **Rio Grande do Sul** and included

music, baptisms, and community outreach.

4 Civil and religious leaders, along with 70 community members and 92 church members attended the opening of the Bible Expo at the **Cremona, Italy**, Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Bible Expo is a traveling exhibit organized by the Italian Union, in collaboration with the Bible Society in Italy. The Expo displays precious specimens of great historical value associated with the Holy Scriptures, as well as modern versions in more than 50 different languages. Visitors can browse among the scale models of the tabernacle of Moses, Solomon’s temple, and Noah’s ark; they can also see a model of the ark of the covenant and the high priest dressed in the characteristic breastplate, stand by a life-size statue of Daniel 2, and more.

5 Two hundred and forty Seventh-day Adventist communicators and church administrators gathered in **Johannesburg, South Africa**, in early December for the 2023 Global Adventist Internet Network (GAIiN) Conference. The event brought together those serving in radio, television, print, and digital ministries across the African continent for training, networking, discussion, and inspiration. “No family survives without communication,” William Costa, Director,

GC Communications, reminded GAIiN participants. “The Adventist Church needs to share stories about how the Holy Spirit is working in different parts of the world.

6 Hope Channel Philippines commemorated its 13th Anniversary at the South Philippine Union Conference headquarters in **Cagayan De Oro City** on Nov. 24-25. Digital evangelists, church leaders and members celebrated God’s leading and embraced the role of media in spreading the Gospel throughout their territory. During a Friday night commissioning ceremony, media missionaries reaffirmed their commitment to and passion for disseminating the message of hope and love through mass media.

7 A service trip made by Year 11 students from Wahroonga Adventist School (Sydney, Australia) to Vatuvonu Adventist High School in **Vanua Levu, Fiji**, has transformed the students’ lives, according to Nicholas Kross, Wahroonga’s lead chaplain. According to Pastor Kross, an unforgettable experience was listening to the powerful, harmonious voices of the local students during worship, singing without musical instruments. “By the end of the visit, our students were lifting their voices to match the heartfelt presence put forward by the local students,” he said.