

ADVENTIST REVIEW

JULY 7, 2025

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Driven
by Mission

MARK FROELICH



EXPERIENCED MISSIONARY RICK McEDWARD ELECTED SECRETARY OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE **HE HAS SERVED IN MISSION-RELATED POSITIONS AND AS A CHURCH PLANTER FOR DECADES.**

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Rick McEdward, president of the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission (MENAUM) since 2016, was elected secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on July 6. Delegates to the sixty-second General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, United States, voted to accept the Nominating Committee nomination of McEdward.

“As you can imagine, the last few hours have been challenging for me and my wife,” said McEdward after the del-

egates voted 1,630 to 153 to accept his nomination. “Please pray for us as we do our best for the Lord and His church.”

LIFELONG MISSION EXPERIENCE

McEdward, 59, grew up in an Adventist family in Seattle, Washington, United States. But at the age of 12 he moved with his family to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where his father landed a job as an X-ray technician at a large military hospital. As far as the family knew,

“Let us illuminate every dark corner of this world with Jesus.”

they were the only Adventists in the city.

“I remember stepping off the airplane as a 12-year-old boy and feeling the blasting heat of the Saudi air,” McEdward shared during an interview years ago.

McEdward recalled his time in Saudi Arabia as one of his greatest experiences and said it “set the tone for cross-cultural living for my whole life.” McEdward later lived on the Pacific island of Palau as a student missionary and, after his marriage, coordinated church planting in Sri Lanka and for the Adventist Church’s Southern Asia-Pacific Division from its headquarters in the Philippines.

He has also served as a pastor and, before joining the General Conference in 2011, as associate director of the Institute of World Mission at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Before being elected as president of the MENAUM, McEdward served as director of the Adventist world church’s Global Mission Centers for World Religions and associate director of the Office of Adventist Mission at the General Conference.

McEdward received his undergraduate degree from Walla Walla College (now Walla Walla University) in 1990 and his Master of Divinity degree from Andrews University in 1992. He completed a doctorate in missiology from Fuller Graduate School in 2013.

He is married to Marcia McEdward and they have two adult children, Julia and Joshua.

HIS TENURE AS MENAUM PRESIDENT

As president of MENAUM, a church region based in Beirut, Lebanon, McEdward served in a region that is considered one of the most difficult places in the world to share the gospel. “The challenges are constant in the . . . region, where daily life is shaped by war, conflict, and resistance to our work,” he said in his report presented to the delegates of the GC Session on July 5. “Currently six of our countries are involved in ongoing warfare, and last year violence reached the doorstep of our union office.”

In 2018 McEdward oversaw the development of a media center for effective outreach to people of other faiths. This included developing a new strategy for reaching a discipling people who live in that restricted context.

During the past few months McEdward has been sharing a newsletter with an increasing number of stories and reports about “some of the most exciting of my time in the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission.” Despite the challenges related to religious freedom in some countries of a region, an increasing number of people are studying the Bible and accepting Christ and the Adventist message, he reported.

Among the good news he shared, McEdward reported that recently he was able to meet the first Seventh-day Adventists in “two of our hardest-to-reach nations.” He added, “The way God works is so amazing! I was able to see the work of the Holy Spirit bring new witnesses into the kingdom.”

McEdward also celebrated that he witnessed the launch of the first Seventh-day Adventist seminary in Arabic. “I was able to teach the first class of our brand-new Arabic Theological Seminary with 20 native Arabic speakers who are working for the Lord or who would like to be trained to be pastors,” he shared.

Another highlight has been meeting important national and international leaders. He recently reported on a meeting with government, religious, and business leaders from around the world. “During this meeting we were able to interact with leaders and gatekeepers in the Gulf Region,” McEdward wrote. “While these contacts do not create immediate impact, over time they will provide opportunities for our church.”

In his July 5 call McEdward invited Adventist members to “step into the impossible.” “When we think about the size of the task at hand, it certainly feels impossible, but when we remember that . . . God . . . is calling us, we can confidently obey His Great Commission,” he said. “Let us illuminate every dark corner of this world with Jesus.”

Douglas has been a passionate supporter of the church's global mission by implementing a strategic framework to mobilize and allocate resources to advance its cause.

GC SESSION DELEGATES REELECT PAUL DOUGLAS TREASURER

VETERAN CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR PLEDGES CONTINUED FOCUS ON "MOBILIZING RESOURCES FOR MISSION"

BETH THOMAS

On Sunday, July 6, delegates at the sixty-second General Conference (GC) Session in St. Louis, Missouri, United States, reelected Paul Douglas as treasurer of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The motion passed with 1,851 votes in favor and 47 votes against.

Douglas has held this position since April 2021, when he was elected to replace outgoing treasurer Juan Prestol-Puesán at Spring Meeting, one of two annual business meetings held at the world church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

A native of Jamaica, Douglas began his service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1986 with the General Conference Auditing Services (GCAS), advancing from audit manager to regional manager, assistant director, and finally GCAS director in 2015, a position he held for 14 years.

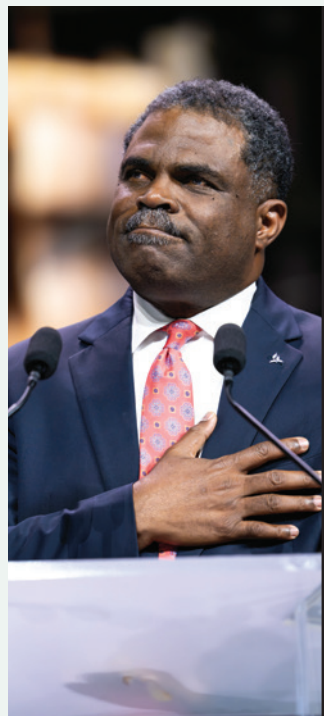
During his tenure as treasurer, Douglas has been a passionate supporter of the church's global mission, implementing a strategic framework to mobilize and allocate resources that advance its cause. Douglas says he "is committed to motivating church leaders to think and act differently as the second coming of Jesus Christ nears by be-

ing more intentional with a mission strategy; benefiting from integrated efforts among and between all levels of church organization; and believing that investing for impact is the most effective and efficient way to mobilize resources for mission."

He emphasized this in his Treasurer's report during the Friday afternoon business session. "The global treasury team has adopted the theme 'Mobilizing Resources for Mission' to represent our singular and systematic focus on mission. This is not a slogan for us, but rather serves as our signature commitment to be faithful stewards of the resources, financial, human, and technological, that God has provided the church to advance His kingdom."

Addressing delegates after his election, Douglas said, "I want to thank God for the continued privilege to serve in this capacity. I don't believe I'm worthy, but I'm willing, knowing that the same God who has called me is the same God who will empower me to do His work."

Douglas holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Loma Linda University, a master's degree in business administration from California State University, and a certificate from the Leader-



MARK FROELICH

ship and Strategic Management program at Cornell University, and has successfully defended his dissertation toward a Ph.D. degree from the Bayes Business School in London, England.

Douglas has been married to Rochelle since 1991, and they have three adult children. ■

62ND GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

Kids In Tune, a nonauditioned children and teen choir from Madison, Tennessee, presented “I Am Alive,” the theme song for the new Alive in Jesus Sabbath School curriculum, accompanied by piano, guitar, ukulele, saxophone, and shaker—all played by young musicians. Quoting Isaiah 37:31, Nina Atcheson, manager of the Alive in Jesus curriculum for the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference, said, “Everything in Alive in Jesus is bathed in prayer, given careful thought, and done with intention, so that by God’s grace, children around the world will . . . grow in Him to ‘take root downward and bear fruit upward.’”

PHOTO BY CHRISTINA COLLARD





Pictured are the elected General Conference vice presidents (from left to right): Saw Samuel, Artur Stele, Robert Osei-Bonsu, Audrey Andersson, Pierre E. Omeler, Leonard A. Johnson, and Thomas Lemon. DAVID B. SHERWIN

ONE TEAM, ONE MISSION

DELEGATES ELECT SEVEN GENERAL VICE PRESIDENTS

ADVENTIST REVIEW STAFF

On Sunday, July 6, the Nominating Committee recommended names for the election of seven General Conference (GC) vice presidents. The names were voted on and passed by delegates, 1,798 to 92.

Chairman of the Nominating Committee John Wesley Taylor V said, “The Nominating Committee decided that as [the general vice pres-

idents] function as a team, together—the Nominating Committee would like to recommend these names to you as a team.” Once the vote had been passed, chair for the afternoon session and outgoing vice president Geoffrey Mbwana said, “Congratulations. At one time I sat where they sat, so I’m so happy. God bless you.”

Audrey Andersson remains in her role as a general vice president, a position she has held since the 2022 GC Session. Prior to her election she was the executive secretary of the Trans-European Division (TED). Andersson holds a master’s degree in pastoral ministry and, during her tenure, has emphasized the importance of maintaining a distinctly Adventist

“The Nominating Committee decided that as [the general vice presidents] function as a team, together—the Nominating Committee would like to recommend these names to you as a team.”

identity while embracing a balanced, culturally relevant approach to mission work. She is the second female general vice president and the first European woman.

Leonard A. Johnson comes into his role as general vice president for the GC from the position of executive secretary of the church in the Inter-American Division (IAD), a position he has held since 2018. Johnson has more than 40 years of denominational service in the IAD territory, and has served as pastor, conference department director, conference executive secretary, conference president, and union president, a role he held concurrently with associate ministerial director for the IAD.

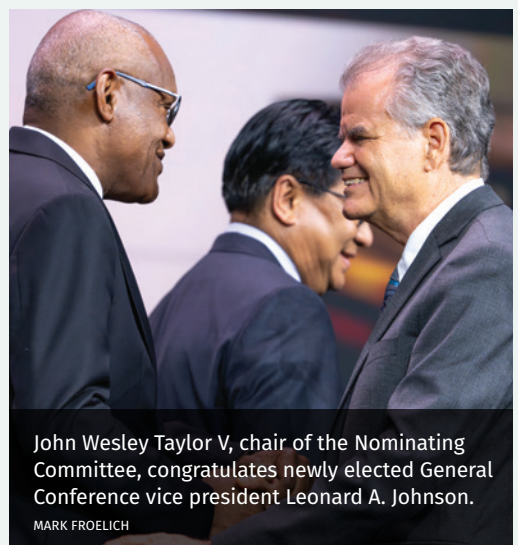
Thomas L. Lemon will continue in his role as general vice president for the GC, a position he has held since 2015. Prior to his election as vice president, Lemon served as president of the Mid-America Union Conference (2009–2015). He has served as a member of boards of directors for several higher education and health-care institutions, as well as media and outreach ministries.

Pierre E. Omeler (incumbent since 2024). Before serving at the GC, Omeler had been Atlantic Union Conference president from November 2021. He had been secretary of that union prior to that. Omeler, born in Haiti, moved to the United States in 1981 to pursue his education at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama. Omeler went on to pursue a Master of Divinity degree from Andrews University (1991) and a Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary (2015).

Robert Osei-Bonsu was West-Central Africa Division president. Originally from Ghana, he has served as an academic at institutions, including Valley View University, Adventist University of Africa (Kenya), and Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (Philippines), writing and co-authoring 35 peer-reviewed journal articles, seven book chapters, and 34 academic conference presentations. He also served as a pastor in Ghana and the South England Conference (UK). His career in ministry started as a literature evangelist in Ghana and Sweden.

Saw Samuel was elected as associate secretary of the General Conference in June 2022. Originally from Myanmar, Saw was president of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division when he baptized his own father. He had previously served as secretary of that division, where he had a passion to work with the unreached Chinese, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and secular urban people. Samuel has worked in administration and pastoral ministry in Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines. He studied at Spicer Memorial College and the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (Philippines).

Artur Stele has been reelected as a general vice president, a role he has held since the 2010 General Conference Session. A native of Kazakhstan, Stele earned a bachelor's degree in theology from Friedensau University in Germany, and a master's degree and doctorate in theology from Andrews University. During his tenure Stele has emphasized the authority of Scripture and biblical leadership, conducted Bible and mission conferences worldwide, and established the GC Leadership Development program. 📌



John Wesley Taylor V, chair of the Nominating Committee, congratulates newly elected General Conference vice president Leonard A. Johnson.

MARK FROELICH

A STEADFAST SHEPHERD

REFLECTING ON THE LEGACY
OF TED N. C. WILSON

JUSTIN KIM

As Ted N. C. Wilson steps down after 15 years as president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the global Adventist community pauses to reflect on his leadership which was marked by conviction, faithfulness, and a resolute focus on mission. Wilson's 27-year tenure in the General Conference building (two years as an associate secretary and 10 years as general vice president) spanned various cultural shifts, waxing global complexity, a worldwide pandemic, and internal theological discussion. Through it all, he remained a steadfast shepherd, grounded in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy, as well as maintaining an unwavering commitment to the three angels' messages.

Elected in 2010, Wilson inherited a rapidly expanding global church, especially in the Global South/Majority World. Wilson emphasized the historical-grammatical method of hermeneutics, encouraging the church to rely on the power of Scripture to speak for itself. In addition to the primacy of Scripture, he championed the principles of spiritual revival and personal evangelism, the authority of the prophetic voice of Ellen G. White, fidelity to a literal, six-day creation model, and a priesthood of all believers—all positions that have earned him both admiration and critique. His passions were manifested in initiatives such as Revival and Reformation, Total Member Involvement, Comprehensive Health Ministry, The Great Controversy Project, and Mission to the Cities. These efforts inspired millions of lay members to engage in personal ministry, particularly in unreached urban areas. He has consistently emphasized the centrality of the Bible,



the justifying and sanctifying righteousness of Jesus Christ, and the role of the Second Coming in Adventist life and witness.

Wilson was deeply concerned with preventing fragmentation and dilution of the Advent movement. To his critics, he represented a missed opportunity for the church to embrace liberalism and relativism. Regardless of perspective, few question the depth of his integrity, the strength of his convictions, or the sincerity of his faith that he was acting in the best interest of the church.

Ted N. C. Wilson leaves office having shaped a whole generation of Adventist leadership and identity, both young and old. His impact will be measured not only in baptisms, initiatives, or countries visited, but in the countless totally involved members worldwide who felt called, equipped, and emboldened by his call to proclaim the everlasting gospel “to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.”

As a new period begins for our church, Wilson's legacy remains indelibly woven into its fabric—a legacy of conscience, fidelity, and urgency. Wilson has without question left the church more focused, more global, and more rooted in its founding vision. His term's close marks the end of an era—but clearly not the end of his influence. 🍀

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**JOHN
BRADSHAW**

DEVOTIONAL
MESSAGE
PRESENTED
SUNDAY MORNING
JULY 6, 2025

Of all Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be known for the preaching of the gospel, and we should be secure in our salvation. Unfortunately, for many that is not so. Ask any collection of church members if they are confident of their salvation, and you'll get a tepid response. I know, because I've done it.

Our mandate is to take the "everlasting gospel" to the world. It is not just about beasts and Babylon. As important as those things are (and they are), Revelation 14 reminds us that our

task, our responsibility, our privilege, is to proclaim to the world—boldly, enthusiastically, unabashedly, unashamedly, unambiguously—the gospel. We have a comprehensive message calling people back to true worship, alerting people to the judgment, inviting people out of darkness and into His marvelous light, and helping people to stand on God's side during this earth's last great crisis. All this remembering Jesus' words "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32).

We believe, as Paul did, that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and we say with him, as we recognize our hopeless case, "I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:25). We don't offer people a theory, a doctrine, or an idea about Christ. We present Christ Jesus Himself, the Savior, Redeemer, and merciful, faithful High Priest, who said, "The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37); "Come to me, *all* you . . ." (Matt. 11:28). These are more than statements. They are promises. And God has promised to save all who are willing to surrender their lives to Him. It's a promise.

TWO POLES

But we have a happy knack for confusing the clear, obfuscating the obvious, and undermining the unmistakable. That might also have something to do with loving sin too much to let

it go, or being so self-righteous that we can't see our own faults. So many people find themselves lurching between two poles.

For some, the cross is the sum total of the Christian experience: "Jesus paid it all. I believe that, and so I'm content." For others: "Yes, Jesus died for me, but I can't have assurance until I have put every last sin out of my life."

I had two young men approach me within the space of a year. "Pastor, I don't think I can go to heaven," one said.

"What makes you so special?" I asked him. "The Bible says that anyone who believes in Jesus may have everlasting life. Don't you believe in Jesus?"

"Oh, yes, sure," he stammered.

"So what's the problem?" I continued.

He was ready with an answer. "I've been told that I can't go to heaven until I've stopped sinning. And there are still sins that trip me up."

I looked him in the eye and said, "Welcome to Christianity." Then I shared with him the following:

We come in faith to Jesus, and we receive everlasting life (see 1 John 5:12). This is what we call justification, and there's no need to complicate that term. A woman with *some* insight once wrote that "pardon and justification are one and the same thing."¹ Forgiven of your sins, you receive a new heart and the gift of eternal life: Justified. And to put a finer point on it, "justification by faith . . . is the third angel's message in verity."²

THE SANCTIFICATION CONTINUUM

Looking at the sanctuary service, you'd equate justification with the altar of burnt offering. The sacrifice bore the penalty for the sinner's sins: justification. But the sanctuary service did not end in the outer court. The sinner progressed from the outer court to the holy place and, ultimately, to the most holy place and the presence of God Himself. This advance is what we refer to as sanctification—it's a process, "the work of a lifetime"³ it has been said. It's a continuum of becoming more like Jesus, of more fully reflecting His character.

Here's how Jesus described this process in Mark 4:26-30. He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

The scattered seed is the Word of God. In a person's life, at first nothing happens. That is, nothing visible to the human eye. But God is working. Aren't you glad God says, "My word . . . shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). There is power in the Word of God. Saving power. Power to

defeat temptation. Power to free you from vices and destructive habits. Power to make a new person out of you, and out of those you're praying for—your family members, your wayward children, your loved ones who left the church years ago. God is able! Jesus says that the seed is scattered on the ground. Something is happening!

And then somehow, mysteriously, by a power completely foreign to human beings, the seed begins to sprout. And how does it do that? First, the blade. That's the little sliver of green that pops its head up above the surface of the earth. Even though it's not as tall as the yellow meranti tree in Borneo, which can reach up to 100.8 meters (330.7 feet) tall;⁴ even though it's not like the mighty muyovu tree of Tanzania, 81.5 meters (almost 270 feet) tall;⁵ even though it's not the coastal redwood of California, stretching 116 meters (380 feet) into the sky, Jesus tells us this tiny shoot of green is growing! The process is underway!

And what's that little thing good for? You can't eat it. What it's good for is *growing*. You want to protect it, and give it the best chance possible to continue to grow. You don't dig up your beans, because the plant isn't fully mature. You tend to your beans. You keep the pests away. You water them. You encourage them to grow!

YOU WILL GROW

My wife and I are new grandparents. Our granddaughter is wonderful! She can't tie her shoelaces, can't feed herself, and can't drive a car. But we don't expect her to do any of those things, because she is growing. She'll get there! Christian friend, before you think you can't go to heaven because you're not the finished product, keep your eyes on Jesus and *grow*!

Notice the wording of Philipians 1:6: "He who has begun a good work in you will *complete* it until the day of Jesus Christ." Your Christian experience is an ongoing journey. After you accept Jesus you have the gift of eternal life, but you don't want to live like a lost person. You want to live increasingly in a way that honors God. "First the blade."

We are "born again." New Christians are babies. Babies grow. Friend, grow in the direction of Jesus. Feed on His Word, take time to pray, share your faith. You'll grow.

"Then the head." The plant is developing. It isn't ready to eat, but it's right where you want it to be. It isn't ready for harvest. But it's growing into precisely what it was created to be. It's growing.

Now, don't think I'm going light on sin. I'm not. Sin causes death. It caused the death of Jesus. We don't want it. God doesn't want it. The sanctuary service is ultimately about the putting away of sin, but today sin is still a monster

we have to reckon with. Even Ellen White wrote that a noble character is "formed by hard, stern battles with self"⁶

You don't stumble into heaven. You're not going to trip into sanctification. "The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle."⁷ But here's the key: "The soul must submit to God," White writes, "before it can be renewed in holiness."⁸

When we receive Jesus, we receive everlasting life. And then we grow. How much do we grow? All we can. Just keep on growing. When Jesus comes back, those who have beheld Him will be changed. "And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). 🍌

¹ Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1979), p. 103.

² Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Apr. 1, 1890.

³ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 65.

⁴ Mary Gagen, "The World's Tallest Known Tropical Tree Has Been Found—and Climbed," *National Geographic*, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/worlds-tallest-tropical-tree-discovered-climbed-borneo>, accessed July 2, 2025.

⁵ "Entandrophragma excelsum," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entandrophragma_excelsum, accessed July 2, 2025.

⁶ E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 331.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 43.

⁸ *Ibid.*

John Bradshaw is president of *It Is Written*.



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Behind the Scenes

What most didn't see

CHAD STUART

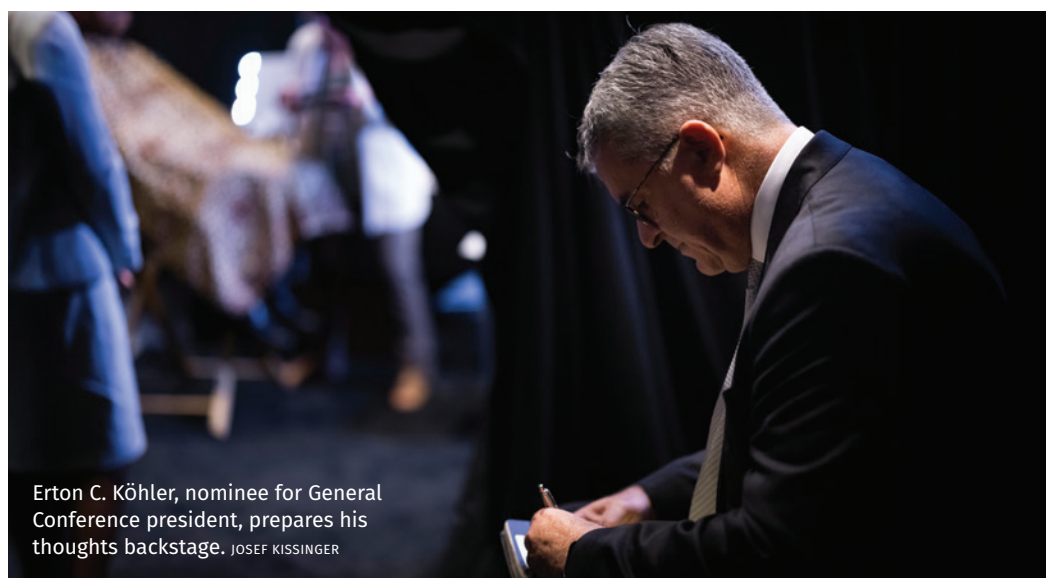
Based on the timing of the Nominating Committee announcement, everyone backstage assumed that the incumbent had been reelected to a fourth term—in fact, this is what we were preparing for and discussing when I noticed that Elder Köhler had walked through the curtain behind the stage and stood as a solitary figure in the shadows. From where I sat, it seemed he was carrying an obvious weight upon his shoulders that had not been there just hours before as he gave his Secretary's report.

I had earlier received a text from the business desk with the words, "NomCom soon." Those were the words to prepare the team in the back that we would soon be receiving the Nominating Committee officers and the Nominating Committee's recommended candidate. When I saw Elder Köhler, I texted the desk, "Erton?" and the reply came back "yes." So, as a friend, a pastor, and in my role backstage, I approached him.

Elder Köhler's first words after accepting the nomination were "You can imagine how challenging this moment is. No one is prepared for that." I have already read and heard some doubting his expressed sentiment of surprise. Don't doubt! I was there, and while I will not share the details of our conversation, I can testify by his words to me when I approached him, by his countenance, by his body language, he was in shock and feeling the weight of the decision.

The plan was that Elder Köhler would then be introduced a few minutes after he and the committee arrived backstage. This did not happen, however; in fact, Elder Köhler had not yet accepted the call. So, he and his wife, Adriene, along with the Nominating Committee leadership, went to another location to pray, talk, and decide. And nearly an hour passed before the vote took place. I am grateful for a leader who must consider at least once more before saying yes to a calling that is beyond human capability.

When they returned from their time of prayer and discussion and decision, the burden of the moment was evident on the faces of Elder Köhler and in the tears of Mrs. Köhler and their children. Still, they also had a faithful resolve to serve the Lord in His calling. Years ago this family had set



Erton C. Köhler, nominee for General Conference president, prepares his thoughts backstage. JOSEF KISSINGER

their hand to the plow—the Lord was telling them the field needed more plowing, so they would not look back, but persevere in the strength of Jesus.

Personally I was deeply moved by the moment of unity among the delegates. Thus far in this session almost every motion of any substance that has come to the floor has been questioned and debated, and sometimes even after the vote has been cast, it is once again questioned and debated. Attempts have even been made to bring motions back for a vote again. So as the nominee was placed before the deliberative body, we thought there was still time for the family to emotionally prepare to go stand before them. Elder Köhler said, “We have time, Chad. People may want to express their opinion, or my name could be referred back.” The body didn’t want to do that; they were ready to move forward, and two minutes later we had a new General Conference president. The body was united—even the 188 votes against the nominee did not say, “We are not united or not supportive.” In such a setting this is not disunity; it is the blessed gift of freedom.

Two others who were united in the church’s decision were Elder Ted Wilson and his wife, Nancy. They shared with me that night, as Elder Wilson prepared to participate in the evening worship service, that they have great trust in the Lord’s working through the decision of the Nominating Committee and the delegates. In fact, just as I had observed an understandable pressure placed upon the Köhlers, I saw a new relief and ease in the Wilsons. When I asked Mrs. Wilson about how they were, she said, “We’re fine, and our grandkids are thrilled because they will get to spend more time with us!”

My heart rejoiced when Elder Köhler thanked Elder Wilson and Nancy for their service to the church as our president during the past 15 years, and the delegates and all those in the dome rightly and vigorously applauded. It does not matter if we agreed or disagreed with every decision Elder Wilson made during the 15 years; we should all acknowledge that Elder Wilson (and Nancy), to quote Elder Köhler, “gave the best of his life to this church.” And by the way, when Jim Howard asked



Chad Stuart, left, greets Ted N. C. Wilson and his wife, Nancy, backstage. CHAD STUART

I can testify by his words to me when I approached him, by his countenance, by his body language, he was in shock and feeling the weight of the decision.

how many people will commit to sowing seeds broadly with the plan to reach at least one person for Jesus this year, the hands of Elder Wilson and Nancy, who were sitting in chairs behind the stage watching his talk on a screen, shot high in the air—so the role ends, but their work for Jesus and His church will not end. I continue to pray prayers of gratitude for the Wilsons.

Today, after Elder Köhler had finished his acceptance speech and he and his family had departed the platform, he gathered his family and some close friends in a circle, and, with arms around each other, Elder Köhler prayed for his family and for Jesus’ church, our Seventh-day Adventist family. I invite all of us to join Elder Köhler in praying for his family and praying for Jesus’ church, this imperfect but wonderful family of Seventh-day Adventists.

Chad Stuart is the senior pastor of the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is working behind the scenes as a stage manager while at the General Conference Session.

GENERAL CONFERENCE AUDITING SERVICE REPORT

Where Trust, Quality, and Professionalism Meet



GCAS Connect2023 Attendees in Copenhagen LUDI LEITO

As the audit service of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS) is dedicated to financial transparency and accountability to help build and maintain the confidence of church members and administrators worldwide. During the past three years GCAS has made significant progress despite facing numerous challenges. These challenges included adapting to changes in audit standards, managing resource constraints, and navigating the complexities of auditing in diverse and evolving environments. GCAS has achieved significant success through strategic initiatives and continues to strive to meet the needs of the church.

QUALITY INITIATIVES

GCAS has focused on enhancing the quality of its audit services. To achieve this goal, GCAS completed a significant update to its Quality Manage-

ment program, including the implementation of the International Standard on Quality Management (ISQM) 1 and 2. This update demonstrates GCAS's commitment to quality and compliance with updated professional standards. Additionally, GCAS conducted a global internal quality review. Auditor training and workshops were then developed to follow up on identified areas for improvement, to address the new quality requirements, and to enhance the risk assessment and planning process. Through rigorous training programs and continuous professional development, GCAS auditors are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their duties with excellence.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION

Recognizing the rapid evolution of technology in the industry, along with its benefits and challenges, GCAS embarked on a comprehensive tech-



GCAS HISTORY:

Transparency and accountability have been an integral part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's organizational culture since the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was organized in 1863. On the same day it was organized, the church founders established an audit committee. J. J. Ireland, the first GC auditor, was appointed in 1913. According to the 1913 *Statistical Report*, the church had a membership of more than 120,000, divided into 25 union conferences, 126 local conferences, and 101 organized mission fields.

In the 162 years since it was organized in 1863, the church has grown to a membership of more than 23.2 million, made up of 140 union conferences/missions, 433 local conferences, and 321 local missions. The church operates education institutions, food industries, health-care ministries, media centers, publishing organizations, and a development and relief agency. With that growth and a continued commitment to transparency and accountability, the General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS) was formally established in 1977 as a service of the General Conference for North America. In 1993 GCAS was charged with the auditing function for the church worldwide.

GCAS currently employs approximately 350 professionals globally who are committed to continuing our church founders' legacy of transparency and accountability. The GCAS board, comprised mainly of laypersons with professional accounting and business expertise, reviews the summary of GCAS reports and provides a report to the GC Executive Committee each year.



nology transformation. This initiative involved researching and testing advanced data analytic and AI audit tools to assist auditors in conducting enhanced risk assessments, thereby improving audit quality, effectiveness, and efficiency. GCAS adopted new security procedures to address data protection requirements and cyber insurance requirements, ultimately safeguarding client data. GCAS continues to utilize suitable tools to improve remote and partially remote audit processes. These technological advancements not only elevate the quality of audits but may also reduce the time required to complete them.

PERSONNEL INITIATIVES

Our greatest resource is our people. During the past three years GCAS has recruited qualified personnel to ensure more comprehensive coverage of audits for church organizations worldwide, including staff needed to address requests for fraud investigations. GCAS also established a highly qualified global service team from our base in the Philippines, enabling further expansion of audit capacity at a reduced cost. GCAS invests in the ongoing education of our personnel to ensure they are equipped to deliver excellent services to

the church. Our Connect2023 seminar included more than 800 participants, encompassing our professional staff, their families, and invited guests from key denominational stakeholders. In 2024 GCAS introduced a new approach for delivering professional education through the GCAS Learning Calendar, a year-round program offering online classes each month, allowing employees to select sessions that align with their interests and skills. This approach enables continuous learning throughout the year without incurring travel time and costs. It can also facilitate targeted required learning to address specific needs.

OPERATIONAL ENHANCEMENT

To support its globally deployed team, GCAS implemented several operational enhancements. These improvements included expanding our human resources and information technology support teams, which are strategically located to

By highlighting risks and recommending improvements, auditors function as advisors, helping clients strengthen their risk management processes.

provide assistance “around the clock” while minimizing costs. GCAS adopted and continues to enhance our use of a workflow system to improve transparency and accountability in the management of our annual work plans and to enhance audit and quality management tracking. This system enabled us to streamline global activities for human resource management and recruiting, as well as improve the budget process. These

“WHY DON’T THE AUDITORS FIX THE PROBLEM?”

As issues were identified during audits and further investigations were conducted, some observers asked, “Why don’t the auditors just fix the problem?” The auditor’s responsibility is to provide an independent opinion on the organization’s financial statements, along with a report on deficiencies in internal controls and policy compliance to the organization’s governing committee.

Professional ethical standards require auditors to maintain independence from their clients. Although GCAS is internal

to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, *GC Working Policy* requires GCAS auditors to operate with professional independence in accordance with the highest professional and ethical standards. The policy states, “The professional relationship between GCAS and denominational organizations shall be the same as if it were in public practice.”

The audit is part of the system of checks and balances that involves management, the audit committee, and governance. The organization’s management and

governance are responsible for addressing and resolving identified issues. Auditors can advise management, but must remain detached from the decision-making process, and do not have the authority to fix problems.

The GCAS auditors, like auditors in public practice, provide their findings and reports to management, audit and governing committees, and, in compliance with church working policy, to officers of the higher organizations. They have an ethical responsibility to maintain confidentiality in all matters related to the audit.

enhancements have facilitated better communication and collaboration among team members, leading to more effective and efficient work.

ONGOING EFFORTS

GCAS does not “rest on its laurels.” We continually strive to align our work with leaders in the auditing profession. This involves staying updated on the latest developments in auditing and accounting standards, implementing best practices in our operations, and continuing to improve audit quality and efficiency. GCAS also actively engages with church leaders to ensure that our work meets the needs of Seventh-day Adventist Church organizations.

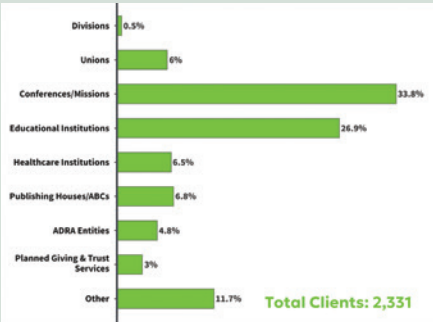
ENHANCING CONFIDENCE THROUGH RIGOROUS ASSURANCE

GCAS auditors need to be more than “financial and compliance checkers.” As part of our ongoing efforts, we need to function as trusted advisors, helping Adventist organizations navigate complex financial landscapes, identify risks, and optimize internal controls. The auditors’ objectivity enables them to provide insights into the organization’s financial health, operational efficiency, and future opportunities to achieve its mission. The core of an auditor’s role is the rigorous audit process, which culminates in a report that is essential for maintaining stakeholder confidence. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church context, stakeholders include the management of client organizations, their audit committees and governance, and officers of higher organizations. These stakeholders represent the constituent members who elected them. The audit process benefits the organization by providing:

Assurance: The auditor’s independent examination provides assurance that financial statements present a materially true and fair view of an organization’s financial performance and that management’s assertions are free from material misstatements, whether because of error or fraud. This confidence is vital to administrators, govern-

CLIENT BASE

The General Conference Auditing Service serves as the preferred provider of assurance and related services for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The client base includes all denominational organizations, such as General Conference institutions, world divisions and their institutions, unions or union of churches and their institutions, local conferences, missions, regions, field stations, and their educational institutions at the secondary level or higher, as well as Adventist Development and Relief Agency country offices and projects not audited by external auditors (General Conference *Working Policy* SA 05 25). Some organizations receive external audits because of regulatory requirements or other specific needs.



ing committee members, creditors, and other stakeholders who rely on the reports to make informed decisions.

Compliance and Governance: Auditors assess organizations’ compliance with regulatory requirements and internal policies. Seventh-day Adventist organizations are also required to comply with General Conference (GC) and division *Working Policy*, and GCAS has the necessary expertise to review these requirements. This evaluation of governance practices encourages organizational integrity, upholds ethical standards, and mitigates risk.

The trust between auditors and their clients is foundational, built on a relationship of independence, objectivity, and integrity.

Risk Identification and Mitigation: Auditors are critical in identifying potential risks that could impact an organization's financial position or operational resilience. By highlighting risks and recommending improvements, auditors function as advisors, helping clients strengthen their risk management processes. This proactive approach informs the organization so that it can take appropriate actions.

Enhanced Decision-Making: With the insights gained from the audit, management teams are better equipped to make data-driven decisions that align with their strategic and mission objectives. Whether it is refining processes, reallocating resources, or enhancing governance structures, the recommendations provided by auditors can directly influence an organization's performance and stability, which in turn enhances stakeholder trust.

The trust between auditors and their clients is foundational, built on a relationship of independence, objectivity, and integrity. Clients turn to auditors not only for compliance but also their ability to offer perspectives on emerging trends, potential risks, and areas for growth. The auditors' role as advisors stems from their ability to blend technical acumen with a deep understanding of their client's business and mission, delivering value beyond the audit report itself.

ADVISORY SERVICES

GCAS recognizes that audit services may not meet the needs of all church organizations. Some organizations are required to have an external,

independent audit, but may need specialized services from GCAS. GCAS has provided specialized consulting, internal audit consulting, and client training seminars, as well as various types of fraud investigations. Currently, in response to requests from GC and division IT directors, GCAS is consulting with an external firm that specializes in IT audits to advise GCAS on developing a proposed GCAS IT assessment program for church leadership's consideration.

ONGOING OPERATIONAL ENHANCEMENTS

GCAS continues to focus on improving operational procedures. Ongoing efforts include the development of a centralized knowledge base to enable more timely responses to resolve audit and accounting questions raised by auditors and clients, a comprehensive review and improvement of our cost recovery and billing system, and development of a GCAS master database for improving operational reporting and internal analysis.

GCAS'S VISION

GCAS's vision is "to be a valued and indispensable partner to Seventh-day Adventist leaders and organizations around the world." What does that mean? It means that we aim for our work to be recognized as the equivalent of the best in the auditing profession. We aspire to the highest levels of integrity, professionalism, respect, efficiency, and service. The achievements of GCAS in the past three years are a testament to our commitment. Through quality initiatives, technology transformation, personnel initiatives, and operational enhancements, GCAS has positioned itself to continue supporting the financial integrity and transparency of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the confidence of its members.

Our website provides access to GCAS information, including: About Us, Client Services, Careers, and Annual Reports. <https://gcasconnect.org/>



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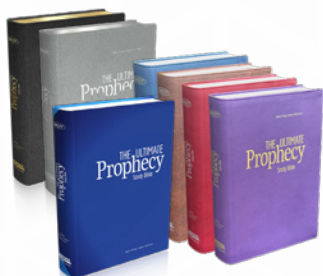
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STACY IS HOPE

HANNAH DREWIECK

HOPE CHANNEL
EVENING DEVOTIONAL
MESSAGE PRESENTED
SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2025

Stacy's mother died by suicide when Stacy was just 9 months old. Her father disappeared. Her stepfather was kind when sober, but sobriety rarely lasted. Raised by a great-aunt, Stacy grew up in silence and confusion, surrounded by emotional pain. Church was present, but so was fear.

"I used to think God was up in heaven with a giant flyswatter, just waiting to clobber me if I did something wrong," she said. She believed in God, but not in grace. "I've always been a believer," Stacy admitted. "But I don't know if I was a receiver." She kept trying to earn God's love, always coming up short.

Her life became a series of losses: domestic violence, chronic illness, abandonment. She gave up safety, home, and even health, sacrificing



“I just needed someone to pray for me.”

stability just to survive. A housemate became threatening. Alone and in temporary housing, she reached out to *Let's Pray* on Hope Channel. “I just needed someone to pray for me.”

The next day a call came from Vanessa at Hope Channel International. Assuming it was a telemarketer, Stacy didn't answer right away. But when she finally picked up, everything changed. “She just wanted to pray with me. She gave me back my identity. My ‘somebody-ness.’”

That moment led Stacy to *Hope Sabbath School*, a program on Hope Channel. She started watching with skepticism, trying to find flaws. But the more she listened, the more she realized the truth was clear and consistent. And when she learned about the Sabbath, it hit her: “Lord, You didn't give us 10 commandments and say pick nine.” She was baptized in 2020—not because someone pressured her, but because she finally understood the love of God.

Then in 2023 Stacy collapsed from a medical emergency. She lay unconscious on her apartment floor for four days before she was found. She had suffered two cardiac arrests, a stroke, and brain trauma. She woke up in the hospital on a ventilator, unable to speak.

But she could still pray. “I couldn't speak,” she said, “but I could still talk to my Father.” When she recovered, she said something few would expect: “It was good that I was afflicted, because I got to see the power of God.”

Her life since then has been defined by sacrifice—this time not forced, but chosen. Stacy gives herself to others. She studies with people, prays with them, and shares her story wherever she's invited. She remains close to Vanessa as well as Derek Morris, host of *Hope Sabbath School*, both of whom continue to guide her spiritually.

To Stacy, Hope Channel is more than a network. “This channel is different,” she says. “It doesn't try to commercialize following Jesus. It's not something I have to do. It's something I get to do.”

Stacy became hope by offering the same grace she received. She sacrifices her comfort to speak for those who are hurting. She gives of her time to pray with strangers. She opens her story to remind others that Jesus still saves.

“Jesus wants to save you,” she says. “He doesn't complicate salvation. We do.”

Stacy became hope.

By living to tell her story.

By refusing to give up.

By becoming the kind of person who prays with strangers, believes for the broken, and knows what it means to be found.

When we choose to live like that, we are all hope. 🍀

Hannah Drewieck is the communication coordinator for Hope Channel International.

The Ministry of Adventist Risk Management, Inc.

How asset protection is key to mission

DAVID FOURNIER

At Adventist Risk Management, Inc. (ARM), we think of our role as the official risk management and insurance company of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as protecting the church's ministries in multiple ways. That's why we love to say, "Our ministry is to protect your ministry." We accomplish this through providing risk management consulting, education, training, and insurance solutions. This is achieved through the church's captive insurance company (a form of self-insurance) and by placing risks in the insurance marketplace through our brokerage.

But ARM's greatest focus in asset protection is its people.

IT'S ABOUT OUR PEOPLE

John was hospitalized in Manila, Philippines, when ARM got a call. He was in the Philippines as a retired volunteer working on an evangelistic mission project for several weeks. Unfortunately, John contracted a flesh-eating bacterial infection while assisting with a baptism and, unbeknownst to the trip organizers, removed himself from the event and flew back to Manila. There he collapsed in his hotel and was rushed to the hospital. In the hospital he received excellent care, but his condition was serious and required more than what could be offered in Manila.

Being so far from family while experiencing such a serious and painful medical condition was extremely difficult, and John just wanted to go home.

Fortunately, the mission trip organizers had purchased short-term travel insurance coverage through ARM. They had already been in contact

with the emergency support services available with that product. Transporting someone in a situation as serious as John's is not as simple as buying a plane ticket, getting on the airplane, and going home. Arranging for medical evacuation requires providing an in-flight medical care certification and the approval of the airline to fly someone in a serious medical condition. It also requires the approval of the releasing hospital, with special arrangements made on the other end of the journey for immediate ambulance transportation to a hospital standing ready to accept the patient.

After a very long trip home, John was finally reunited with his family and able to receive the care he needed to recover fully. ARM is privileged to provide insurance products that help cover the cost of these complex operations and partners that can help arrange services that protect the lives of our volunteers and the church's mission.

PROTECTING THE STRUCTURES

While it is most gratifying when ARM's ministry is seen in a personal way, there is also a key component of our work that involves protecting the structures of our church organizations. After all, it is often within these structures that mission and ministry are accomplished on a larger scale.



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Several years ago a conference faced a series of large lawsuits. The lawsuits came against the church in waves with multiple plaintiffs. Over time these waves of lawsuits amounted to a great deal of money, far more than anything the conference had in cash reserves or even physical assets. The church's insurance program has now paid out on this case more than any other single claim or group of claims in our church's history. This has greatly depleted the reserves of the church's captive insurance company, but serves as an example of why we work together as an organization and have a captive insurance company. Without this type of protection, this conference would cease to exist, greatly damaging the work in that entire union territory. We are happy to report today that the conference has seen revitalization and refocus on its mission to spread the gospel.

Another example of the work ARM is involved in is consulting our church's organizations. We do not want to see vulnerable people harmed. This includes employees, volunteers, members, guests, and especially children. To that end, ARM instituted a program for church organizations to background-check potential hires for cases of inappropriate behavior up to abuse before extending an offer. We hope this initiative will allow

Adventist Risk Management's greatest focus in asset protection is its people.

conferences to avoid employing individuals who have proved untrustworthy with the vulnerable populations we are charged with protecting.

HIGHLIGHTS

Since our last General Conference Session in 2022, Adventist Risk Management, Inc., has:

- Insured \$14 billion in property.
- Paid \$250 million in claims.
- Engaged in 500+ risk training presentations.

In 2025 we look forward to further addressing topics related to risk mitigation as we partner with our various ministries in our collective work of spreading the gospel. We expect increasingly difficult times as the Lord's return approaches, but we thank God for the blessing of His mercy and Spirit in our lives and work. May all our ministries be guided by wisdom and discernment to do the utmost for the Lord's people in the upcoming quinquennium. 🕊

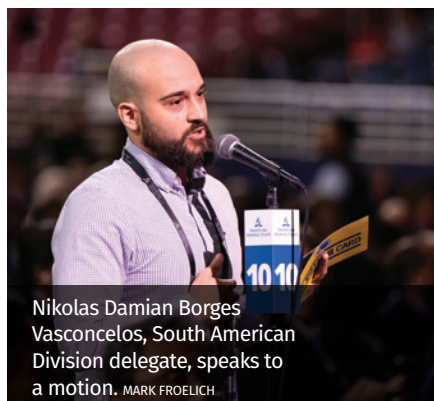
David Fournier is vice president and chief general insurance officer for Adventist Risk Management, Inc.

SESSION GALLERY



Galina Steele, director, GC Women's Ministries, surrounded by Women's Ministries directors from around the world.

CHRISTINA COLLARD



Nikolas Damian Borges Vasconcelos, South American Division delegate, speaks to a motion. MARK FROELICH



Pathfinders served as deacons to collect the Sabbath offering.

CHRISTINA COLLARD



The Adriel Male Voice group were one of the featured musical guests on Friday afternoon. CHRISTINA COLLARD



Tens of thousands worshipped together on the first Sabbath of the 2025 GC Session. JAMES BOKOVOY



A soloist performs during a powerful musical rendition of "One Voice, One Mission."

MARK FROELICH



Many took advantage of photo opportunities with friends on Sabbath, July 5. DAVID B. SHERWIN



An array of technology and skilled individuals support the GC Session behind the scenes.

DAVID B. SHERWIN

Not Just for Grown-ups

Sabbath School shows GC Session has a place—and a purpose—for kids of all ages

BETH THOMAS

Sabbath is a happy day, happy day, happy day. . . . I love every Sabbath!" The words of a familiar old Sabbath School song drifted through my head as I ambled past classes filled with beautiful, bright-eyed children from every nation, kindred, tribe, and tongue on the first Sabbath of the General Conference (GC) Session. I wished my own two children were still young enough to enjoy the lively music, craft stations, and colorful little chairs.

GC Session is considered the most significant decision-making gathering of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but it's not just for adults. Many delegates, guests, and exhibitors bring their families with them to session for a variety of reasons: vacation, family time, or to discover something even more significant.

Boaz Papendick, a ministry leader living in Senegal, West Africa, brought his family to GC Session to gain a vision of what the church is and to hear the reports from different divisions. "We're coming from Senegal, where there are only 300 to 400 Adventists [which is like one congregation in other places], and this helps them to see that the church is much, much bigger," Papendick explained.

There is no regular programming for children during the week, but Sabbath School at GC Session gives children something to look forward to. Delegate Daniel Kancel, a native of Guadeloupe, West Indies, is an international service employee



Teachers make Sabbath School fun with props to illustrate stories. MARK FROELICH

(ISE) serving as president of Université Adventiste Zurcher in Madagascar. His wife and twin 9-year-olds accompanied him. “During the week,” Kancel said, “I am very busy with the business meetings, and Sabbath is a time we can be together as a family. The regular programs are not usually made for children, so the children get bored, because it’s more for adults. It’s a good thing they provide the program *Alive in Jesus*, so at least there is something for them. They don’t understand much English, but there is music, activities, and other kids playing. As the day will be long, it’s good that they have time they can enjoy the Sabbath; otherwise, it will be a burden for them.”

Children from around the world gathered in age-specific rooms, from birth to 15, filled with music, Bible stories, crafts, and interactive learning stations. Youth ages 16-plus had separate programming. Each group studied the story of Noah’s ark from the new *Alive in Jesus* curriculum, produced by the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department.

From colorful decorations (including pretty lifelike stuffed animals) to a volunteer staff trained in children’s ministries, every detail was designed to create a safe, Christ-centered experience. Nilde Itin, associate director of Children’s Ministries for the General Conference, said this program has been a collaborative effort between Children’s Ministries and Sabbath School leaders from several divisions, along with a team of more than 60 volunteers.

Kenneth Diaz, 19, from Collinsville, Illinois, United States, was part of the registration team. He and his entire family signed up to help with the Sabbath School program after learning at their local church about the need for volunteers. “At a big conference like this, most people just see it as something for adults and something formal, and they overlook the kids. But this is a great event to have kids come and involve them too!”

For many children, Sabbath School programs at session offer a chance to connect with others their age from different parts of the world, promoting a sense of belonging in the wider Adventist family.

Exhibitor Armando Miranda, associate Youth director for the North American Division, has been



Children enjoy Sabbath School activities.
MARK FROELICH

The GC Session Sabbath School program provides children with a front-row seat to the global Adventist family.

coming to GC Session since he was a child, and now brings his three children with him. His older sons are volunteering in the exhibit hall this year, while his daughter is spending time with his wife, Karen. They are enjoying time visiting with friends they haven’t seen in a long time, and the social environment GC Session provides. At the same time, his children are being introduced to something greater, he says. “When you come here, you see a worldwide movement—you see a worldwide church, and you start to feel a part of something bigger. The children don’t get it until they start seeing that there are children who don’t speak the same language, but they come to Sabbath School together. They’re in the same boat, but from a different country! That gives them a broader perspective of Adventism and Christianity, and everything that we do.”

The GC Session Sabbath School program provides children with a front-row seat to the global Adventist family. Through music, stories, crafts, and interaction with others, they catch a glimpse of a church that spans continents and cultures, yet comes together each Sabbath to worship the same God. 🦋

A New Job at Session

Not all jobs are determined by the Nominating Committee.

LISA FROELICH

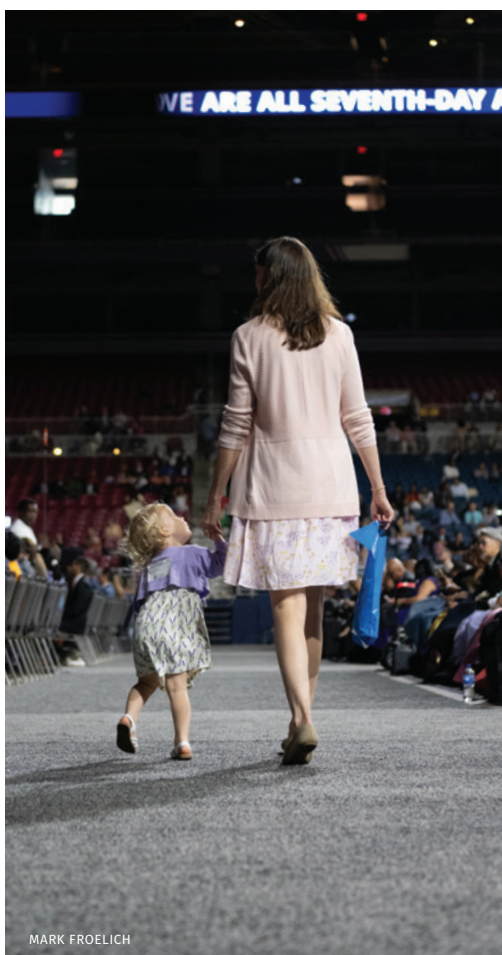
I've had the privilege of attending General Conference (GC) Session for the past 25 years. Each year my role has changed and, in many ways, deepened. My first session was in 2000. I went along with my family as a delegate's kid and got to participate in fun events, such as the day camp they offered. The next four sessions I worked. I started off as a NewsKid for the *Adventist Review*, then "graduated" to becoming an exhibitor for the next two sessions, then at the previous session in 2022 I assisted platform management and worked behind the scenes among our greatest leaders, which I loved.

Along with these rising job opportunities came the growth of my perspective of what GC Session is. I've been able to see it from a kid's point of view, which didn't quite grasp the importance of what goes on over the course of these 10 days. I've been able to see it from a worker's point of view, which helped open my eyes to what goes on in our world church, and helped me gain more interest in "church politics" and appreciate all that our church does. And now, in my sixth session, I gain another new perspective, another job that's different from all the rest—mom.

Living the GC Session life with my 2-year-old daughter, Audrey, has been an experience. Trying to think of multiple ways to keep her busy throughout the day has become the new norm. Before leaving for St. Louis, I researched walkable things to do in the city to try to create a plan for our daily routine. We did manage one walk to the Gateway Arch, but so far the excessive heat has won the battle of us attempting to have a daily adventure outside. Our trips to the convention

center for lunch and briefly visiting my husband, Mark (who is working at this session), have been some of the most exciting parts of our day, because we could finally leave the hotel. I also have to give a shout-out and big thank-you to the woman on the lunch staff who has graciously offered to follow me in line to make Audrey's plate for me and carry it to our table more than once. Getting food for yourself and your toddler in the lunch line is quite a balancing act!

I struggled for a while with FOMO (fear of missing out). I wanted to be in the action. I missed my former jobs. I missed being behind the scenes. I missed helping others. I even missed doing what my family calls the "GC Session walk," zigzagging



quickly through the crowds to get to the next place. I wanted to be where everything was happening. Now I've traded my fast "GC Session walk" for a more leisurely one with a stroller (while trying to avoid running over people's feet), and instead of spending hours working and interacting with hundreds of people each day, my days are spent focusing on one person—Audrey. It's been a bigger adjustment than I anticipated, but today I realized this new job of mine creates a unique way of viewing session, as well as a priceless opportunity.

As I write, Audrey is taking her Sabbath afternoon nap. She just experienced her first GC Session church service. Before church began, I took her to the children's Sabbath School section of the convention center to register. It ended up being a longer process than expected, but once we made it past registration, instant relief came over me—I wasn't the only one! There were others just like me! It may seem silly to not think about other toddler moms attending session, but I hadn't seen anyone Audrey's age until stepping into the Beginners room, suddenly I didn't feel so alone. The Alive in Jesus team did a great job welcoming all the toddlers to the different stations. Audrey warmed up to the helpers and her fellow beginners immediately. Being around others just like us was something I think both her and I needed after a week of trying to adjust to our new routine.

From there I made the nerve-racking decision to sit with my family in the front row of the dome for the church service. It's been a tradition for us since my mom has worked with the *Adventist Review*, so I was very familiar with the feeling, except for one big change—navigating it with a very active 2-year-old. The last thing I'd want would be for Audrey to be a distraction not only to those sitting around us but also those on the platform. And what if she started crying? We were in front of literally the entire stadium, and the closest exit was not exactly close. I prayed my way through the service, and God answered. Some snacks and toys in our Sabbath bag helped Audrey stay quiet and entertained for most of the service, and we can successfully check off that GC Session Sabbath experience for her.



Time spent in the dining hall can be more exciting than the business sessions for a 2-year-old.

MERLE POIRIER

Although she'll have lots of pictures and videos to look back on one day, Audrey is too young to remember this GC Session. She doesn't understand the significance of welcoming a new GC president or how amazing it is to sit on the front row of a stadium full of Adventists from around the world singing "Lift Up the Trumpet" and "We Have This Hope." Her memory of how everything looked and felt will fade away. But that doesn't lessen the impact of what she has experienced during these 10 days. A seed has been planted. It's building the foundation for her to one day see just how incredible the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is. It's with that knowledge that I realize this new role and perspective on GC Session is one of the most valuable I could ever have. And who knows? This could be just the beginning of her journey to reaching six GC sessions one day too. 🍀

Lisa Froelich is wife to Mark, who is working as a photographer at the 2025 GC Session, mother to Audrey, and chair of the Music Department at Spencerville Adventist Academy in Maryland.

Postgraduate Education With a Heart for Mission

GINGER KETTING-WELLER

The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago—a revelation of Christ.”*

These words, penned by Ellen White, are as true today as they were then. The world needs leaders who, through their life and ministry, can represent God to a world devoid of God’s love and mercy. Leaders who humbly conduct their duties with a loving, gentle spirit. Inspiring, motivating, and encouraging those under their care by their Christlike influence.

The early missionaries across Asia recognized the need for local leaders—leaders who understood the culture, worldview, and context of the local churches in Asia. Leaders whose Christlike influence would inspire and grow the local church in Asia to be a blessing. Many had a vision for training national workers who would shoulder the responsibility of carrying the gospel to their citizens. Thus, from the beginning, the development of people to carry the gospel message was prioritized across Asia by early leadership, and schools were established.

The journey to establish AIIAS started in 1967 when the Far Eastern Division appointed a committee to explore creating a division graduate school. On March 23, 1972, the committee voted to name the institution Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS). The journey culminated eventually in 1986 with the Filipino Presidential Decree formally establishing AIIAS as an international graduate school in the Philippines.

The journey was driven by an overarching vision to train local leaders to serve the church in Asia.

As a General Conference institution, AIIAS joins Andrews University, Loma Linda University, and the Adventist University of Africa in preparing leaders from around the globe. Its special emphasis on Asia remains with AIIAS serves primarily the Northern and Southern Asia-Pacific divisions and the Chinese Union Mission (formerly Far Eastern Division).

AIIAS has embraced a vision beyond mere leadership training. It includes training leaders with a purpose—the burden of carrying the gospel to others. Adventist mission is at the heart of all AIIAS degrees. It is central to who we are.

Uniquely positioned for missions, AIIAS is situated within the 10/40 window. We are surrounded by all the major religions, including Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Confucianism, Catholicism, atheism, agnosticism, and animistic Indigenous religions. There are urban clusters and megacities, isolated villages and rural towns, and everything in between. The AIIAS vision is “A Christ-centered community of leaders with a heart for mission.” Built into our degree programs is a spiritual element, with a missions emphasis. The mission trips, outreach, and service are meant to prepare local missionaries who will serve the church in Asia and the world. Every year there are a variety of mission opportunities. The photos included in this report tell the stories of the Graduate School and Theological Seminary’s mission activities during 2024.

Our prayer is that God will continually empower us to equip our students to be missional leaders with a heart for others to be a blessing to society. 📌

* Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 143.

Ginger Ketting-Weller serves as president of AIIAS.



Allias has embraced a vision beyond mere leadership training. It includes training leaders with a purpose.



Education Department Student Association
(ESDA) Mission Trip Thailand 2024



Business School Mission Trip Mindanao 2024



EDSA Mission Trip Thailand 2024



Seminary Evangelism 2024



Seminary Community Outreach 2024



Public Health Mission Trip India 2024

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ISRAEL FIELD REPORT

Proclaiming Peace in Israel



Israel Field Baptism Day, during which 30 candidates gave their life to God

Warmest greetings from Jerusalem, the city of peace. Christians who live in Israel enjoy a unique and extraordinary privilege: they dwell in the very land where the biblical narrative unfolded. Every hill and valley echoes with the footsteps of prophets, kings, and the Messiah Himself. To walk the streets of Jerusalem, to visit Galilee, Bethlehem, or the Mount of Olives, is not just a historical journey—it is a spiritual encounter with the Word of God.

One of the great motivations for all members of the Israel Field is to share with the population the everlasting message of peace “to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6). Since Jesus is our peace (Eph. 2:14), our inspiration comes from the fact that He is the promised Messiah, and Emmanuel, God with us. The inhabitants of the country of Israel are very knowledgeable and are unequivocally acquainted with the Old Testament writings. Our goal is not to argue, to proselytize, but to gently reveal the beauty of Yeshua, who is the promised Redeemer, rooted “in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). We don’t see this message as an invitation for all to distance themselves from the heart of the message conveyed by Judaism. We just share the good news of salvation for “everyone who believes, for the Jew first” (Rom. 1:16), which is a natural extension, the fulfillment of the biblical prophetic revelation.

ISRAEL FIELD OUTREACH

God has given us the grace to witness 75 baptisms during the past three years. According to Oleg Elkin, executive secretary of the Israel Field, 860 members and friends are worshipping God in 21 congregations across Israel. Each is full of gratitude for the overwhelming support coming especially from the General Conference office, as well as the South American and Inter-American divisions. We wish the best of success and prosperity and God’s blessings to all entities that are investing in the Israel Field. In addition, during the past year of activities, the Israel Field joined the General Conference initiative when we scheduled the first Field Baptism Day in May 2025. We were blessed to see 30 candidates give their heart to God.

Each baptism is a true miracle representing a remarkable action of the Holy Spirit. A good example is Zoriana, a young girl who spent the years of her childhood in Israel. She decided to make a covenant with the Lord through baptism, insisting her baptism be in the Jordan River during the week before she was scheduled to leave for Canada. The baptismal ceremony was to be Sabbath, October 7, 2023. But the date created several internal problems, including for members of her family. After much negotiation, the baptism was moved to a week earlier. Everything went well. It was only after the beginning of the war in Israel on October 7 that Zoriana understood, as well as her family, that if



they had gone ahead with the date initially chosen, there would have been no baptism. The war would have stopped everything. Clearly God answered Zoriana's prayer, allowing her to turn a new page in her life through the waters of baptism.

Another aspect of our ministry to the people of Israel is the translation of our books into Hebrew. Through the resolute efforts of Shalom David and through generous donations from those who want to facilitate the spreading of God's message, numerous books have been published. *Child Guidance* was published in 2022; *The Adventist Home* was finalized in 2023; and *Messages to Young People* was published in 2024. The publishing team is providing an extraordinary contribution by translating the *Adult Bible Study Guide* for adults, as well as *Guide* for juniors. But another aspect should be emphasized. Through the kindness of Safeliz Publishing House in Spain, 80,000 *Steps to Christ* were published in Israel. We are proud to disseminate this message in Israel, and we are doing it in eight languages.

One essential activity is led by our Youth Department. They are doing tremendous things in challenging situations. Our youth are very diverse. Some have been born in Israel. Many others come from different countries around the world. The main goal of the Youth Department is to create spaces where young people can come together in worship and fellowship so they can integrate and feel part of the church in Israel. To reach this goal, the department is organizing four meetings a year, in different places in Israel, and one youth camp,

which usually includes worship and outdoors activities. A special thanks to Gerardo Farias and Dara Doroshenko, who are leading the youth projects with wisdom, enthusiasm, and the right vision.

During a long and disturbing conflict, during which Israel has had to fight against seven different adversaries, during which stress is felt across the country, our message of optimal and wholistic health has been well received. Ilona Grizan, Health Department director for the Israel Field, organized her work, initially serving displaced people who lived far from their homes. She then expanded her outreach to other segments of the population, including those directly involved in the conflict. Andrei Borz, director of Shalom David, has supported her ministry well, providing valuable assistance with his members who have tirelessly provided quality care, healthy and delicious food, massage, stress management classes, counseling, prayers, and more.

CONQUERING NEW HORIZONS

The Israel Field is not just maintaining existing congregations. Through the constant and vast support of Global Mission, we were able to develop four different projects during the past three years: Bat Yam, Holon, Azerbaijani group, and Nazareth. In each we have had fantastic experiences of transformed lives. One example is Luba, a volunteer who knows how to establish quality contacts with the native population. Currently she is organizing classes for beginners in Hebrew. She is presenting Bible studies to 30



Youth camp in Israel in 2023

ISRAEL FIELD REPORT CONTINUED



Israel Field Faith Convention in Nazareth in 2023, with Elder Ted Wilson as guest speaker

to 40 non-Adventist visitors. God blessed the work of Luba. Two congregations were born through her tireless ministry.

One of the most effective ways to bring the everlasting message of peace to each and every one in Israel is through media. We are delighted with the support of Hope Channel International and understand that without their help it would have been difficult for us to make significant progress. Also, our partnership with Hope Media Germany is an enormous blessing for the Israel Field. Special thanks goes to Klaus Poppa and his team for everything they do, facilitating the creation and the development of the Hope Channel Israel ministry. We would also be remiss not to mention Adventist World Radio, which is contributing significantly to the success of the radio studio in Nazareth for the Arabic-speaking population.

INNOVATIVE VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE ISRAEL FIELD

During wartime there are not many methods that work well in preaching the biblical message of peace. People are not ready to listen to theological debates or even to enter into a discussion that challenges what they have always believed. Ellen G. White said in *Gospel Workers*: “[Christ’s] compassion knew no limit. On so large a scale did He conduct His work of healing and teaching that there was no building in Palestine large enough to receive the multitudes that thronged to Him.”* This is how we developed our six compassion



Gathering of Romanian-speaking members in 2024. Despite challenging situations, our members are courageously facing problems, including war.

projects in Israel: Haifa, Tel Aviv, Nazareth, Galilee, Jerusalem, and youth ministry. Everything has worked well. One of them, Haifa, was accomplished in an exceptional way. Under the direction of communication director Sergey Greg, our building is open six days per week. In addition, Haifa United organized some meetings with those impacted by our ministry of compassion and prepared a concert as well as other activities outside its facility. More than 150 non-Adventists attended these gatherings. We can only say, To God be the glory!

CONCLUSION

It is an immense privilege to be among the inhabitants of this beautiful country. As Eben Loriezo, treasurer of the Israel Field, as well as a spiritual leader of four churches said, “We can do nothing alone. It is only the power of the Holy Spirit that can help us to fulfill God’s mandate and the solidarity of our members across the world.” We need your prayers. Please intercede for God’s people in Israel.

May the words of the prophet Isaiah become our reality very soon: “For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of **peace** be removed” (Isa. 54:10). We want to act with determination to bring that wonderful message to all. May we be worthy of His grace and execute His will in the land of the Bible. 🌿

* Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 41.



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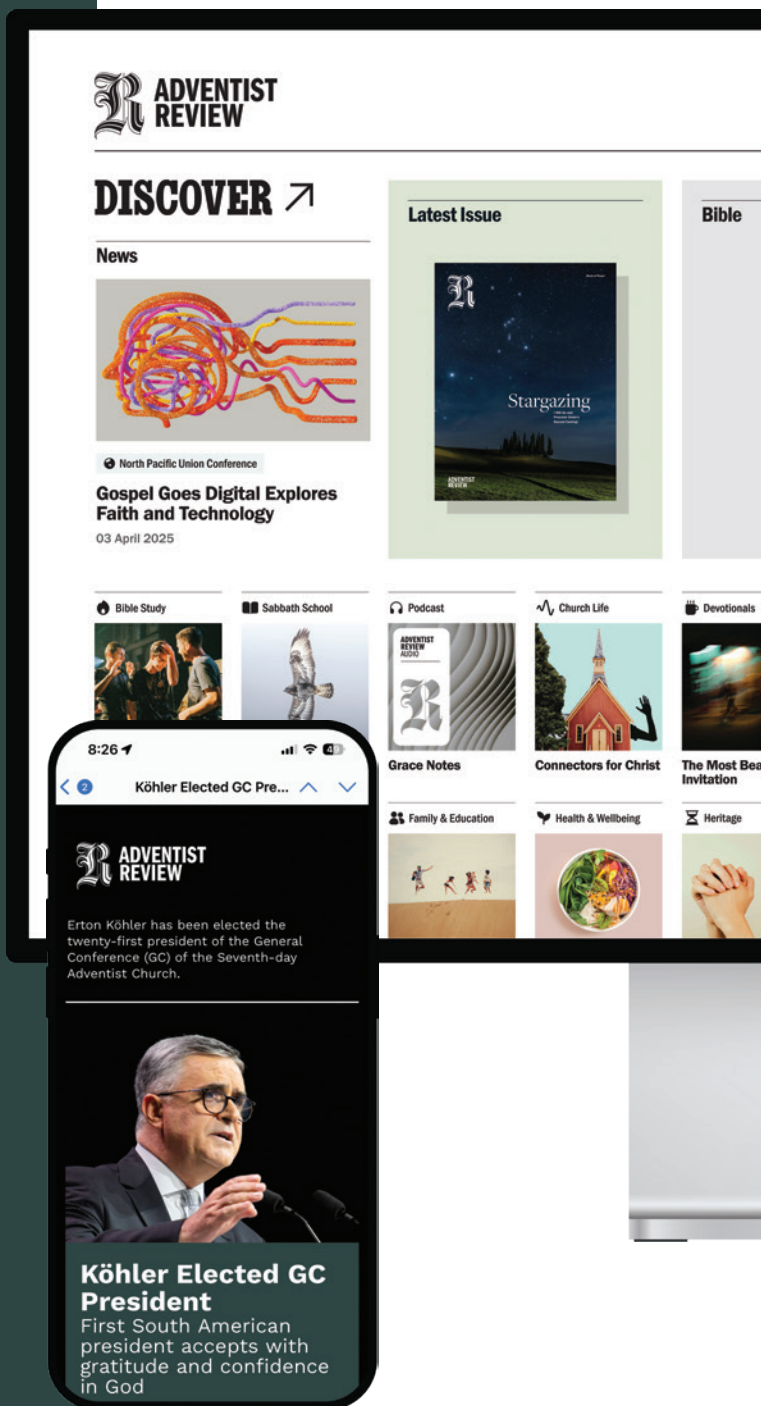


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NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION REPORT

I Will Go in the Most Challenging Field



Pastor Ted Wilson and his wife, Nancy, center, pose with the field officers of the NSD.

The Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) is a territory of diverse ethnicities and religions with a long history of rich cultural heritage. Throughout its vast landscape 680 million people live in the countries of Japan, Korea, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Taiwan, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and North Korea.

NEW TERRITORIES OF NSD

In 2019 the Chinese Union Mission, part of the NSD up to that time, became directly attached to the General Conference (GC). Because of this, the NSD requested new territories to be added to its division. On October 23, 2023, at the eighth business session of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, the territories of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka (previously of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division), and Nepal (previously of the Southern Asia Division) joined the NSD.

Since then, the division's Muslim population has grown to nearly 400 million, presenting challenges and opportunities. Added to the deeply rooted religions of Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, and Hinduism, these diverse but entrenched beliefs both humbled and urged the leaders of the Northern

Asia-Pacific Division to their knees in prayer for the millions within its lands who need a Savior.

CHALLENGES IN NEW TERRITORIES

Through diverse efforts and initiatives NSD officers and directors immediately began visiting these newly added countries. They held mission strategy meetings with each country's union and mission officers, and visited educational, medical, and mission institutions to assess the situation. And they encouraged local leaders, listened to their challenges, and discussed potential improvements.

As a result, they were able to lay the foundation for further development in mission work in these new territories.

GENERAL CONFERENCE LEADERS VISIT NSD

With unified awareness of the great challenges of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, the leaders of the GC joined the NSD last November to encourage and strengthen those who have been called to carry out this weighty mission.

President Ted N. C. Wilson, executive secretary Erton C. Köhler, treasurer Paul H. Douglas, and assistant to the president Magdiel Pérez Schulz



visited Korea and attended NSD's year-end meeting and the 120th anniversary of the Korean Union Conference.

During this time Elder Wilson delivered encouraging messages to the division's executive committee. He led a revival meeting at Sahmyook Central church in Seoul, and preached God's message for the Korean Adventist members during the 120th anniversary, strengthening Korean believers to continue in their pursuit of mission.

With a dedicated commitment to achieving a balance between mission and spirituality during the past quinquennium, the NSD actively promoted the GC initiatives through such programs as Global Total Member Involvement, Comprehensive Health Ministry, Biblical Creationism, Back to the Altar, and Human Sexuality.

GLOBAL TOTAL MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

As a part of the GC's emphasis on "Global TMI—Disciple Making Evangelism and Harvest 25," the Northern Asia-Pacific Division launched the "Loud Voice 2025" project. This project has been holding simultaneous evangelistic meetings in 2,025 locations around the division, with the goal of baptizing 20,250 people throughout the year 2025.

Church workers and members across the NSD have been actively participating in these evangelistic efforts in the spirit of "Mission First," dedicating their lives to God and to fulfilling Jesus' gospel commission.



Public Campus Ministry (PCM) missionaries take a pledge before leaving for the mission field.

Each institution is an important soul-winning ministry, where God's love is practiced, and many people are meeting Jesus and being transformed.

To accomplish this, the NSD has established strategic and systematic mission projects designed to reach people in this constantly changing world.

MISSION REFOCUS

Through the GC "Mission Refocus" strategy, the NSD has chosen to concentrate evangelistic efforts on the front lines, where the gospel is most urgently needed, developing plans to successfully share the gospel.

PIONEER MISSION MOVEMENT

In 2002 the NSD created the Pioneer Mission Movement (PMM) to reach the frontlines of the mission field. Since then, 149 PMM missionaries have been dispatched to 26 countries. This project sends pastoral families to overseas mission fields for six years to plant churches and share the gospel with local communities.

A PMM PASTOR'S MISSION STORY

Pastor Kwon Soon-Bum is one of the PMM missionaries sent by the NSD to Taiwan. Initially he faced many challenges because of the secular environment and Indigenous religions in Taiwan. Yet God has worked amazing miracles through his ministry. The church gradually grew from 15 members, with 30 young people receiving baptism, and 70 more people finding new life in Jesus through his efforts.

Pastor Kwon is also dedicated to Public Campus Ministry, sharing the gospel with young people. He aims to establish a university mission center and to develop mission-study materials to train student missionaries.

NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION REPORT CONTINUED



Those participating in the 1000 Missionary Movement hold candles high as they are dedicated for service.

Hwang Lu-Xian was among those students Pastor Kwon met through his ministry. Hwang first visited the Beitun church through the campus ministry and was baptized in July 2020, but he faced strong opposition from his family. Most Taiwanese families follow Buddhism, which is deeply rooted in their daily lives and forms an essential part of their existence. Facing rejection, he eventually left his home and lived in the Beitun church for about two years, holding on to his faith while serving the church.

Despite these hardships, he experienced God's guidance and embraced a new dream. Following that dream, he moved to Korea at the end of 2023,

to begin his studies at Sahmyook University. He is now studying for a master's degree in theology at the seminary, responding to God's calling.

Across Taiwan, Pioneer Mission Movement pastors and young Public Campus Ministry missionaries are spreading the gospel. They continue to build the kingdom of God on campuses, in churches, and in daily lives.

So far, PMM missionaries have been sent to Japan, Taiwan, Mongolia, China, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Macao, Korea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Congo, Uganda, Russia, Tanzania, Indonesia, India, Kosovo, Türkiye, Northern Cyprus, Peru, Armenia, Vietnam, Pakistan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia. As a result, 369 churches and companies have been established, and 34,719 people have been baptized.

1000 MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

Since 1993 the 1000 Missionary Movement (MM) has played a crucial role in frontline missions, sending young people into mission fields and empowering them through dedicated service. After intensive training on the 1000 MM campus in the Philippines, operated jointly by the Southern Asia-Pacific and Northern Asia-Pacific divisions,



Participants in the 1000 Missionary Movement shout the missionary chant during training.



NSD president, YoHan Kim (left), and North Korea Mission director, BeomSeok Oh (far right), hold a North Korea mission banner with the General Conference officers.

these young people are sent two by two to mission fields, where they devote one year for mission.

For the past 32 years nearly 12,000 young people from 64 countries have served as missionaries. The fruits of their labor include 80,585 baptisms, 809 church buildings constructed, and 1,530 churches and companies established in 47 countries.

NORTH KOREA MISSION

Among all the challenges the NSD encounters in its mission work, the most difficult is reaching North Korea. Even today 25 million North Koreans suffer from hunger and lack of freedom, and have never had the opportunity to hear about God. Under the guidance of the GC, the NSD established the North Korea Mission department in 2021 and is actively involved in mission activities for North Korea.

To prepare for the opportunity of entering North Korea, the NSD has coordinated a prayer campaign, engaging many dedicated people in intercessory prayer. Missionaries are now being trained through various educational programs to be ready to share the gospel when the time comes to enter this closed country. Recently, because of these efforts, North Korean defectors have accepted the Adventist faith and have been baptized.

DEPARTMENTAL MINISTRIES

Each department of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division has carried out various initiatives over the past years.

The Stewardship Department continues to hold seminars for pastors and church members across the NSD to educate and encourage workers and members to be faithful in their tithes and offerings, explaining the importance of putting God first and demonstrating His goodness through faithful giving.

The Youth Department successfully organized the third international Pathfinder Camporee with 4,000 participants, fostering the faith of young people. Changed lives through the activities and spiritual gatherings stand as a testament to the hard work of planning and overseeing such an event.

Sabbath School and Personal Ministries, as well as the Ministerial and Children's, Women's, and Family Ministries, faithfully visit the various NSD countries to instruct in how to raise children, form happy marriages, and grow stronger spiritually as pastors and spouses. Their work addresses the realities that pastors and churches face.

The Education Department spreads its umbrella over each school institution to ensure that schools and colleges remain true to academic standards

NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION REPORT CONTINUED



NSD President YoHan Kim (center) receives a key from Southern Asia-Pacific Division president Roger Caderma (second from left), symbolizing the transfer of Sri Lanka to NSD as a newly acquired field.



Certificates are presented to Pioneer Mission Movement (PMM) missionaries by NSD president YoHan Kim.

while imparting the love and saving grace of Jesus, knowing that one of the greatest tools of evangelism of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is education.

The Health Ministries Department continues to oversee numerous evangelistic seminars aimed at training local churches in healthier habits, providing foot massage therapy and healthy meal preparation, and informing members and non-members of the health hazards related to a poor diet and lack of exercise.

The Communication Department uses the power of the written word, film, and video, and the fast-paced, ever-changing internet possibilities, to inform and reach millions of people, often within seconds. The department constantly works in technology to find new avenues to communicate the ageless story of Jesus and His love.

Adventist Mission oversees the multiple mission groups within the NSD, encouraging and instructing missionaries, finding the best candidates for the mission field, visiting mission sites to see and feel what missionaries are experiencing, and sending forth, with God's blessing, courageous and fearless men and women ready to reveal the love of God to those around them.

INSTITUTIONAL GROWTH

Currently there are 233 institutions, including universities and colleges, secondary and primary schools, hospitals and clinics, publishing houses and food industries, serving the people of the NSD

territory. Every year thousands of students accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior in these centers of academia. Each institution is an important soul-winning ministry, where God's love is practiced, and many people are meeting Jesus and being transformed.

Our gracious God has richly blessed the humble efforts of His people in the Japan Union Conference, the Korean Union Conference, the Pakistan Union Section, the Bangladesh Union Mission, the Taiwan Conference, the Mongolia Mission, the Sri Lanka Mission, and the Nepal Section as they have worked to spread, in a mighty way, the three angels' messages to the hundreds of millions who call our territory "home." We praise God for the wonderful way in which He has guided our footsteps to accomplish His mission.

I WILL GO IN THE MOST CHALLENGING FIELD

The Northern Asia-Pacific Division exists for the sole purpose of placing "mission first," to carry out the gospel commission of reaching 680 million people within the NSD territory. Following the mission given by God, we will continue to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth, shouting the slogan "I Will Go!" Mission is not our choice; it is our identity and our life. As Jesus' second coming draws near, let us continue to move forward! Maranatha! 🙌





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SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION REPORT

A Living Church



President Stanley Arco prays with administrators during one of the leadership meetings. GUSTAVO LEIGHTON

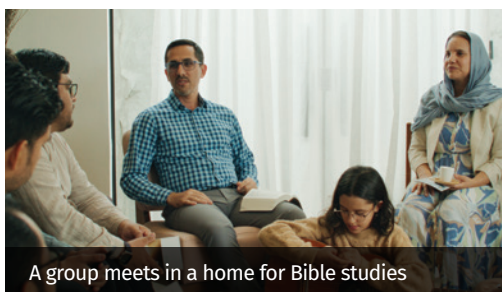
From 2022 to 2025 the Seventh-day Adventist Church in eight South American countries has been faced with the reality of a world experiencing the concrete effects of post-pandemic years. The period was marked by remarkable changes in people's behavior. It was a period that required diverse efforts to fulfill the mission of preaching the gospel, always in search of greater and more complete involvement of members in preparing people for the return of Jesus Christ. In other words, Seventh-day Adventists in South America understood the urgent need to work more fervently for a living church.

But what does a "living church" mean? This slogan is undergirded by a concept that both inspires and challenges at the same time. The 2,704,791 members, gathered in 30,282 congregations, under the leadership of 5,563 pastors, have come to understand that they need to intensify the mission inside and outside the walls of the churches located in such countries as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay, as well as the Falkland Islands. This

is happening in congregations, conferences, missions, unions, as well as education institutions, health institutions, publishing houses, and the humanitarian agency.

BIBLE TEACHING

To inspire even more women, men, youth, children, teenagers, and elderly individuals, who are already a lively and mission-minded group, four emphases gave direction to the last triennium. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America highlighted four pillars that generated coordinated and interconnected



A group meets in a home for Bible studies



actions in order to enhance sustainable internal growth and a greater reach of people for the kingdom of God.

An important highlight was the need to have more members ministering in Bible studies and, naturally, a greater number of people instructed in the Word of God. During this period, 2,120,145 new students of the Bible were registered within the territory on different platforms. There are a myriad of stories behind these figures. It is gratifying to mention people who began their studies with the help of the consolidated teaching support system, through the friendly robot Esperança (an artificial intelligence system) under the coordination of the Novo Tempo Communication Network. The chatbot is equipped with a vast database that helps people understand the texts and themes in the Bible. Novo Tempo's Digital Bible School has experienced 108 percent growth during the past three years.

But there are also examples of the commitment of "flesh and blood" missionaries, such as Juventino André. Born in the community of Terra Preta do Limão, in Barreirinha, Amazonas state (northern Brazil), he is an example of a South American who gives Bible studies in a personal way. To date, he devotes the first hours of the day to looking after the land and the animals. The rest of his time is devoted entirely to the mission. Juventino André rows daily to the communities near his home to give Bible studies. He often travels to the community of Terra Preta, which requires about 30 minutes of rowing.



Some volunteer Bible instructors travel by boat to teach the gospel in certain regions of South America.



Seventh-day Adventists in South America understood the urgent need to work more fervently for a living church.

THE FUTURE

The future is not just about digital technologies, but about people. From 2022 until now, the South American Division (SAD) countries have invested time and resources in inspiring the so-called new generations. The idea is to build and consolidate good relationships between the youngest and the most experienced in the church. This has opened space for children, teenagers, and young people to become even more involved in proclaiming Jesus' return. And in the case of the youngest, to be qualified to become the future leaders of the denomination.

The movement has meant, in practical terms, that around 1.1 million children and teenagers participated in some way, between 2022 and 2024, in evangelism and discipleship projects. In addition to this, a project was launched in 2024 to allocate financial resources for the construction and refurbishment of rooms for activities with children and teenagers during Sabbath School. At least 155 projects are already underway, in a partnership between the division, unions, and fields.

And it's not only the children who have been working to show the principles of the kingdom of God. A significant group of more than 1.3

SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION REPORT CONTINUED



Even in remote regions of the forest there are Adventist congregations holding regular weekly meetings.

million young people have also made a difference in the past three years, through projects such as Caleb Mission, One Year in Mission, and other spiritual and social activities.

The effort to evangelize the younger generations also includes the 406,051 students who are spiritually prepared in the Adventist Education Network's teaching units. Colleges, schools, and universities go beyond the idea of simply offering technical and scientific content; they go further and provide opportunities for spiritual growth and the learning of eternal values.

Of course, when talking about new generations, it should be remembered that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has taken the initiative to produce audiovisual content to reach this audience in an appropriate language. The streaming platform Feliz 7 Play continues to produce content geared for children and teenagers. By April 2025 the number of users on the platform had reached 1,328,230, and the number of views of the content (series, cartoons, movies, documentaries) had reached 47,007,580, both in Portuguese and Spanish.

SABBATH SCHOOL AND ELDERSHIP

The synergy between new and experienced generations favors the fulfillment of the mission. Therefore, a church that is alive and strongly focused on the mission of spreading the gospel needs a consistent biblical foundation, which results in highly committed leadership. For this reason the other two emphases of the South American Division during the past three years have included actions related to strengthening Sabbath School and eldership. During the quinquennium there was a significant effort to revitalize the Sabbath School. In 2022 the number of Sabbath School members was 1,127,771, rising to 1,252,717 in 2025, resulting in a growth of 11.1 percent. There was also a 5.6 percent increase in the number of small groups in homes. In 2022 there were 160,034, rising to 169,054 in 2025.

Men and women have served as elders in their local churches. They are the ones who lead the local congregations daily. During the past three years the national body, made up of 45,181 officers (including group directors), has been qualified

mainly through support courses in the areas of theology and leadership. The aim is for the elders to support the district pastors more effectively and to help coordinate the projects and programs that take place in the churches on a weekly basis.

CROSS-CULTURAL MISSION

The four South American emphases exist to enhance mission. And the idea is to go beyond the commitment to evangelize around us, accepting the divine mandate to go “to the ends of the earth.” In other words, it means looking back on our history and learning from the example of those who came before us. The Adventist missionaries who arrived in South America, especially in the nineteenth century, gave their time and lives for the sake of evangelism in inhospitable places under very adverse conditions.

Today the global Mission Refocus project aims to increase and speed up the exchange of missionaries between different countries. And the South American Division has responded positively. One highlight from 2022 to 2025 was sending missionaries on cross-cultural work as the division carried out a special program to consecrate and send missionaries. In all, the project foresees that 50 families will serve in countries in the 10/40 window, where the message of Jesus is still not well known.

Another avenue for the permanent sending and receiving of missionaries is the Adventist Volunteer Service (AVS). Currently the territory of the eight countries served by the SAD has contributed to sending and maintaining 392 missionaries and volunteers to serve in different parts of the world. This group of dedicated and altruistic people integrates community, educational, cultural, and spiritual projects in regions with specific needs.

LIVING WORD

The life of a church is largely based on respect for and faithfulness to the Word of God. Despite technological advances, printed books and magazines with content compatible with biblical teaching and

different Bible models still make up the list of materials used by the church in South America for evangelism. Believing in the prophetic guidance contained in Ellen White’s writings, South American Adventists have produced more than 55.5 million copies of different missionary books predominantly for free distribution campaigns from 2022 to 2024.

The continuous activity of distributing books, magazines, and Bibles also takes place through the tireless group of 10,345 colporteurs in the eight South American countries. This includes representatives of the Publishing Ministry who are considered permanent, full-time literature evangelists, as well as student literature evangelists, who use part of their vacations or free time to get involved in evangelism by sharing and selling quality literature.



One of the mission boats that sails the Amazon serving riverside communities



Some Adventist business owners take the opportunity to gather employees to pray with them, witnessing in their workplace.



The concept of a living church for Seventh-day Adventists in the eight South American countries forming the SAD is based on integration and cooperation toward the same goal—proclaiming the soon return of Jesus Christ.

DISCIPLESHIP, MISSION, AND SOLIDARITY

The great movement for a more alive church goes beyond structures and institutions, reaching spiritually transformed people. They are individuals led by the Holy Spirit, who decide to serve Jesus. And from that decision, they become disciples who teach the Bible through a life of self-giving and unity.

Between 2022 and 2024, 660,458 people joined the church in the eight countries served by the SAD through baptism, rebaptism, or profession of faith. These people demonstrated their commitment to God in different ways, including, for example, faithfulness in tithing. During this period there was a 35.35 percent increase in tithe remittance.

From 2022 to 2024, in the territory of the South American Division, there is an official record of 1,959,533 individuals giving Bible studies. And unity assists this push to transform the lives of

others. The efforts of many have resulted in significant social aid through ASA (Adventist Solidarity Action) and ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) between 2022 and 2024.

During this period ADRA helped almost 4 million people in South America. ASA, which operates in the context of local congregations, helped more than 6.1 million people through different projects coordinated by volunteers in the eight countries of the region.

The concept of a living church for Seventh-day Adventists in the eight South American countries forming the SAD is based on integration and cooperation toward the same goal—proclaiming the soon return of Jesus Christ. While preparing themselves and others for the final redemption, Adventists remain active in fellowship and mission, faithful to God and focused on demonstrating love to others in practical ways. 🍀

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NEWS



Prime Minister James Marape invited the Wilsons on stage to present a gift.

JAMES BOKOVY

PNG HEAD OF STATE ATTENDS GC SESSION

PRIME MINISTER JAMES MARAPE REPORTS ON PNG 4 CHRIST INITIATIVE

JARROD STACKELROTH

The prime minister of Papua New Guinea (PNG) has taken part in a presentation on Global Total Member Involvement (TMI) during the sixty-second General Conference (GC) Session, even singing an item with members of his group Footprints Ministry during the Friday evening program.

The Honorable James Marape, prime minister of PNG, spent the Sabbath hours at the session and thanked the church for the invitation to attend.

“I want to say thank you very much for inviting us to be part of the sixty-second General Conference Session,” he said.

“I want to say [that the PNG 4 Christ program] was a success as far as conversion was concerned—[the] work of nurture is still going on.”

He went on to thank the church for their impact on the country during the program.

“From the government’s perspective it was a blessing for us. When we have the most diverse nation on the face of Planet Earth, more than 836 languages spoken by the 11 million people of my country, all united under Christ coming together, I just want to say thank you very much to the church—from the global church to my own SPD, to

my own union mission and all the local missions, for pulling together the conversion of more than 500,000 people and church interest of a million in a country of more than 11 million people. Thank you for your prayers worldwide.

“Thank you very much for all the support that has come to PNG in making it a country that 100 percent knows the Seventh-day Adventist truth exists.”

Marape then invited outgoing GC president Ted and Nancy Wilson to join him on stage, and presented them a framed gift of gratitude for their support. Wilson not only preached

“Thank you very much for all the support that has come to PNG in making it a country that 100 percent knows the Seventh-day Adventist truth exists.”

at one of the 2,300 sites but also traveled to various parts of the country to present, open churches, dedicate prayer rooms, and encourage the church membership.

“I want to invite Elder Wilson and Nancy on stage. The church from the South Pacific wants to say thank you very much for the strong leadership. They led the church up front. He was not just the president of the global church; he was a pastor and an evangelist. . . . May God bless your family in your continued ministry for the Lord.”

“It has been almost 2,000 years since Jesus said to go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. PNG qualifies as the ends of the earth. We are here presenting the gospel to all of you,” he said.

The Footprint Ministry male vocal group, joined by Marape, then sang the song “Awesome God.” Marape has been singing with the Footprint Ministry since his days as a boarding student at Kabiufa Adventist Secondary School in the 1980s. The group includes Vagi Thoa, Ismael Nombe, Ray Paul, and Magaru Riva.

During the half-hour segment a delegation from PNG, including PNG Union Mission president Malachi Yani and South Pacific Division president Glenn Townend, shared stories on the impact of the 2024 PNG 4 Christ campaign on the country.

Yani said the church in PNG had been praying for eight years in the lead-up to the program, which was

delayed four years because of the COVID-19 pandemic. “I believe the Lord will continue to bless the church in your country, my country, and around the world.”

Townend grew up in PNG, and his father served as a missionary during the same era as Marape’s father. He told the story of Lae, a town he remembered as having one church 50 years ago but saw 200,000 people gather for the PNG 4 Christ programs spread across the city.

Attendees heard a brief testimony from Yank Rut, a businesswoman from Western Highlands Mission who was the TMI coordinator there. She personally provided 56 PA systems and speakers in all the sites, planted 201 TMI churches in preparation for dedication, supplied 28 signboards, funded 102 sites, and accommodated international doctors and preachers at her newly built hotel, Mount Ararat, in Mount Hagen.

The last to present were Kelvin and Irene Waukave, a lay couple living near Goroka, Eastern Highlands Simbu Mission. Kelvin lost his brother to coronavirus in 2020. He said his family had been inspired by Ellen White’s words, which he paraphrased as saying, “The work which the church fails to do in times of peace and prosperity we will have to do in times of crisis.”

The family planted a church in their home, using the Discovery Bible Reading method. Their small group was able to meet regularly, and studied the Gospels and the book of Acts. They added 98 members during PNG for Christ.

“Our story of small groups represents hundreds and thousands of small groups, small churches, individuals who came together under the banner of Christ, with the strategic foundation of TMI, laid the foundation of more than 300,000-plus baptisms in PNG in 2024,” said Kelvin Waukave. 📌



Footprint Ministry singers (left to right): Vagi Thoa, Ismael Nombe, James Marape, Ray Paul, and Magaru Riva.

JAMES BOKOVY



CHURCH GROWTH LEADS TO NEED FOR NEW AND REORGANIZED UNIONS

NEW REGIONS EXCITED FOR NEW MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

JARROD STACKELROTH

Since the 2022 General Conference Session, membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has increased by 8 percent, with the Seventh-day Adventist Church needing to establish 11 new and reorganized unions in the three years since.

It was one of the first items of business that General Conference delegates were asked to vote on at the sixty-second GC Session so that

the delegates from that region could fully participate in the session.

The two new union conferences are Southwestern Philippine Union Conference and the Mid-Ghana Union Conference. There are nine new union missions: South Sudan Union Mission, Northern Luzon Philippine Union Mission, Southern Luzon Philippine Union Mission, Southeastern Philippine Union Mission, North-Central Ghana Union

Mission, North-East Cameroon Union Mission, West-Central Cameroon Union Mission, Costa Rica Union Mission, and Nicaragua Union Mission.

There has been significant growth since the previous General Conference Session only three years ago, with membership increasing by 1,449,831 people.

In announcing the motion, Chairman Artur Stele, GC vice president,

The Philippines is one country that has experienced significant growth, and the addition of new unions will help them take care of the growing membership.

remarked, “It’s a great joy to receive new unions into the sisterhood, isn’t it?”

The motion passed was: “To accept into the sisterhood of unions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church the new and reorganized Union Conferences and Union Missions, as recommended in the General Agenda (items 111-116).” The vote was accepted 1,740 votes to 8.

“Welcome to the wonderful family of God as an official union,” said General Conference president Ted Wilson. “May God bless you as you participate in this session.”

The joy was visible as the crowd applauded delegates from the new unions, who were asked to stand up and make themselves known, with a group from Costa Rica appearing on the big screens, waving their national flag.

South Sudan had been an attached territory since 2015, after becoming an independent country in 2011. South Sudan is administered by the East-Central Africa Division and has 146 churches across four fields and a total membership of 76,899. The union had only 26,347 members in 2016.

The Philippines is one country that has experienced significant growth, and the addition of new unions will help them take care of the growing membership.

Luzon is the largest and most populous of the Philippines’ 7,641 islands, and the capital, Manila, is based in the newly formed Northern Luzon Philippine Union Mission.

“By God’s grace the church in Northern Luzon has experienced steady growth— from bustling urban settings, as well as going to the mountains and the villages,” said Pastor Sherman Fiedacan, Communication director for the Northern Luzon Philippine Union Mission, as well as president of Hope Channel Philippines.

“The gospel continues to touch the hearts of the people, and we now serve about 300,000 members in 30 provinces.”

The union now has four missions and one conference, and Pastor Fiedacan said the conference can more easily focus on the needs of the urban area around Manila and is planning to continue to grow the influence of Hope Channel and digital evangelism in the region.

“Our aim is to strengthen the infrastructure for the mission, to train and equip local leaders, and to expand the digital ministry of the church through the Hope Channel Philippines.”

The Southwestern Philippine Union Conference is the mother union from which the newly formed unions came. “The mother union is grateful to witness how the growth of the work in our territory has produced tremendous results, particularly in the strategic and efficient management of resources and mission,” said Pastor Roxie Joy Pido, Communication director for Southwestern Philippine Union Conference. “This development allows for a more focused approach in caring

for our churches and ensuring their active and well-guided participation in Total Member Involvement.

“Before [dividing], the union was overseeing 10 missions and conferences covering the entire Mindanao archipelago, with a total land area of 97,530 square kilometers (37,656 square miles). Now with the territory divided into two unions—each managing five missions and conferences—we are better equipped to empower our leaders, workers, and members for greater mission impact.”

The Southeastern Philippine Union Mission will contain 14 of the 28 provinces in Mindanao, one of the country’s three main island groups.

“It is so humbling and deeply inspiring to see the Southeastern Philippine Union Mission now recognized as a union mission,” said Rhoen P. Catolico, director of Communication and Public Affairs and Religious Liberty and Adventist Media for the Southeastern Philippine Union Mission. “We feel honored and energized, knowing that God has led us to this milestone.”

When unions were first established in the late 1890s, their purpose was to help the church mobilize and meet the local needs of mission. That role has not changed, and according to Pastor Fiedacan, these new unions hope to continue “reaching the unreached and preparing hearts for Christ’s return.”

Second Business Meeting

SESSION ACTIONS

62nd General Conference Session, St Louis, Missouri, July 4, 9:30 a.m.

ADOPTION OF SESSION AGENDAS

VOTED, To cease debate and vote on the motion to reconsider the failed motion on the item, Adoption of Session Agendas.

ADOPTION OF SESSION AGENDAS

VOTED, To not reconsider the failed motion to amend the General Conference Session agenda to add to the agenda a review and discussion of the 2015 General Conference Administrative Committee statement on immunization, specifically its claim about peer reviewed scientific literature in addition to the Bible and writings of Ellen G White.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

VOTED, To accept the report of the General Conference Secretary, Erton C Kohler, as attached to the official copy of the minutes.

Guillermo E Biaggi, Chair
Karen J Porter, Secretary
Hensley M Mooroooven, Actions Editor
Tamara K Boward, Recording Secretary

Third Business Meeting

SESSION ACTIONS

62nd General Conference Session, St Louis, Missouri, July 4, 2025, 2:00 p.m.

TREASURER'S REPORT

VOTED, To accept the report of the General Conference Treasurer, Paul H Douglas, as attached to the official copy of the minutes.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S OPINION AND CERTIFICATION

VOTED, To accept the independent auditor's reports on the Combined Financial Statements of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists as of December 31, 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, and 2020; so rendered by the accounting firm of Maner Costerisan, PC.

Thomas L Lemon, Chair
Elbert Kuhn, Secretary
Hensley M Mooroooven, Actions Editor
Marietta R Fowler, Recording Secretary

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT #1

VOTED, To approve the following partial report of the Nominating Committee presented by John Wesley V Taylor, Chair (GC); Ella S Simmons, Vice-chair (GC); Magdiel E Perez Schulz, Secretary (GC); and Mae-Lyna Beaubrun-Fleury, Assistant Secretary (NAD):

General Conference
President: Erton C Kohler

Fourth Business Meeting

SESSION ACTIONS

62nd General Conference Session, St Louis, Missouri, July 6, 2025, 9:30 a.m.

A DIVINELY APPOINTED MINISTRY- CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

VOTED, To cease debate and vote on the motion to amend the item, A Divinely Appointment Ministry - *Church Manual* Amendment.

A DIVINELY APPOINTED MINISTRY CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

VOTED, To not amend the motion, A Divinely Appointed Ministry - *Church Manual* Amendment, by adding "conduct baptisms" on line 26 following "ordain elders."

A DIVINELY APPOINTED MINISTRY - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

Upon the decision of the chair, the request to refer the item, A Divinely Appointed Ministry - *Church Manual* Amendment, back to the *Church Manual* Committee was accepted.

CREDENTIALS AND LICENSES- CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

VOTED, To cease debate on and vote on the item, Credentials and Licenses - *Church Manual* Amendment.

CREDENTIALS AND LICENSES - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

RATIONALE: This amendment aims to eliminate unnecessary repetition as the information in this deleted paragraph is also found on page 126 of the *Church Manual* under the section, Authorized Speakers. This clarifies the distinction between denominational employees and local church leaders who do not hold credentials.

VOTED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 4, Pastor and Other Church Employees, pages 35 and 36, Credentials and Licenses, to read as follows:

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Credentials and Licenses

God's work is to be jealously safeguarded by responsible leaders from the local church to the General Conference. Official credentials and licenses are issued to all authorized full-time Church employees and are granted by controlling committees for limited periods.

In a local conference, the committee confers authority upon individuals to represent the Church as pastors and gospel workers. This authority is represented by the granting of credentials and licenses, which are written commissions, properly dated and signed by the officers of the conference. The authority thus conveyed is not personal or inherent in the individual but is inherent in the granting body, which may recall the credentials for cause at any time. Credentials and licenses granted employees are not their personal property and must be returned when employment is terminated or at the request of the organization that issued them.

No one should be allowed to speak to any congregation unless he/she has been invited by the church in harmony with guidelines given by the conference. It is recognized, however, that there are times when congregations may be addressed by government officials or civic leaders; but all unauthorized persons shall not be given access to the pulpit. (See pp. 126-127.)

Expired Credentials and Licenses—Credentials and licenses are granted
- No change

Retired Employees—Retired employees deserve honor and consideration
- No change

Former Pastors Without Credentials—Individuals previously ordained as
- No change

Audrey E Andersson, Chair
Claude J Richli, Secretary
Hensley M Mooroooven, Actions Editor
Tendani P Severance, Recording Secretary



CHRISTINA COLLARD

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