

ADVENTIST REVIEW

JULY 9, 2025

- 2 NEWS OF THE GC SESSION
- 10 TUESDAY MORNING DEVOTIONAL
- 14 OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL
- 16 ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY OF AFRICA
- 20 NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US
- 22 GOOD NEWS IN A WAR ZONE
- 30 FEEDING THE 5,000
- 32 IRVING IS HOPE
- 34 EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION
- 38 UKRAINIAN UNION
- 42 SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION
- 50 SESSION ACTIONS



NEWS

DELEGATES VOTE IN FIVE NEW DIVISION PRESIDENTS CONCURRENTLY, EIGHT INCUMBENTS ARE REELECTED TO THEIR POSITIONS.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

In the July 7 afternoon business session at the sixty-second General Conference (GC) Session, in St. Louis, Missouri, United States, delegates voted to accept the recommendations of the Nominating Committee for the president positions in the 13 divisions, or major church regions, of the Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world. Delegates voted overwhelmingly to reelect the incumbents in eight regions and to elect new presidents for the other five divisions. Division presidents are also vice presidents of the GC. The five new presidents with their respective regions are highlighted below.

ABNER DE LOS SANTOS, INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION (IAD)

A former General Conference vice president from 2015 to 2025, Abner De Los Santos has been elected as president of IAD. A native of Mexico, De Los Santos began his ministry as a district pastor and later served in key administrative roles in his home country, including conference executive secretary, union executive secretary, and union president.

Before his decade of leadership as a GC vice president, De Los Santos served as one of three vice presidents of the IAD from 2010 to 2015

and previously held the role of president of the North Mexican Union.

De Los Santos has more than 39 years of denominational service. He is married to Leticia, and together they have two adult children and four grandchildren.

BARNA MAGYAROSI, INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION (EUD)

The executive secretary of the EUD since 2015, Barna Magyarosi has been elected as the new president of that church region.

Magyarosi was first elected to a leadership position in the regional Adventist Church in South Transylvania, Romania, in 2001, heading the Sabbath School Department. In 2003 he moved to the Romanian Adventist Theological institute, in Cernica, Romania, as a lecturer. In 2005 he was appointed a lecturer of Old Testament studies and became the director of the theological institute that same year.

In 2010 Magyarosi was elected head of the Education and Family Ministries departments of the EUD at the GC Session in Atlanta, Georgia. In this role he also became chair of the EUD's Biblical Research Committee. He is married to Noémi-Laura, and they have one daughter, Blanka.

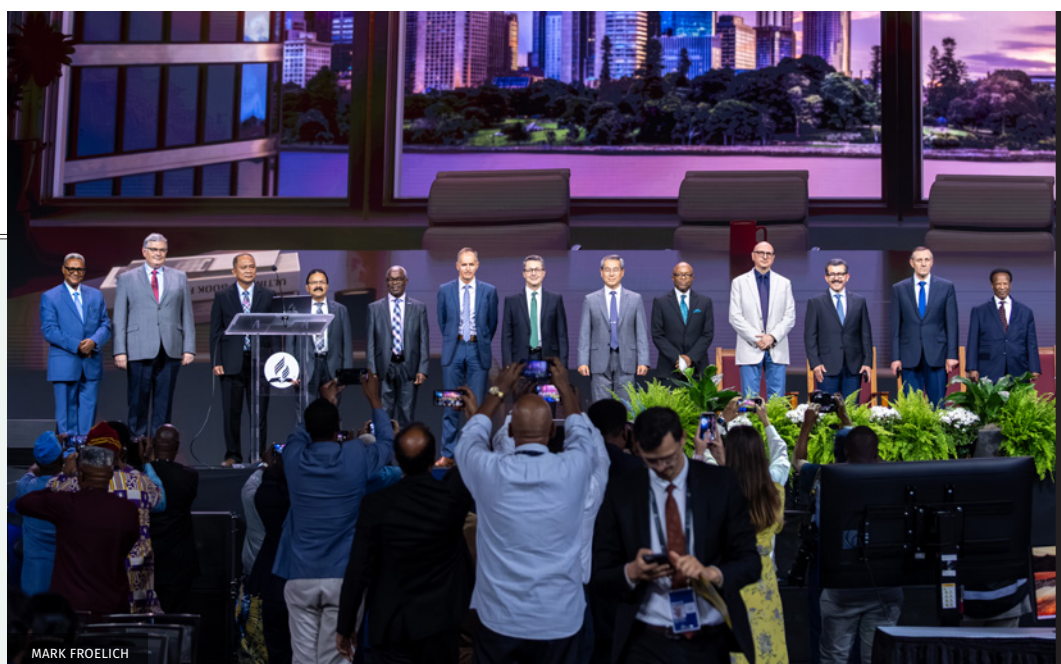
SOON GI KANG, NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION (NSD)

Soon Gi Kang was elected as the new president of the NSD for the next 2025-2030 quinquennium. Kang is the first person in the history of the division to have been elected president while serving as president of a union conference.

Born in 1965, Kang graduated with a degree in theology from Sahmyook University in South Korea and later earned a Master of Divinity degree from the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) in the Philippines. He also finished the coursework for the Doctor of Ministry degree in the same school.

Kang began his ministry in 1990 as an associate pastor at the Sahmyook Central church. Over the years he served in various churches and administrative roles, including Youth Ministries director of the East Central Korean Conference (ECKC), Ministerial secretary of the East Central Korean Conference, and Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director of the Korean Union Conference (KUC).

In 2020 he was elected president of the ECKC and later that same year became president of the KUC. During his term he promoted global mission expansion through such initiatives as the 10/40 Global Mission Project. Kang and his wife, Shin JinHee, have two children, Minseok and Minkyung.



JOHN VICTOR CHINTA, SOUTHERN ASIA DIVISION (SUD)

Delegates voted to accept the nomination of John Victor Chinta as the new president of SUD. Chinta was the executive secretary of the SUD, being elected to that position in 2022. As division secretary Chinta was in charge of not only maintaining accurate records but also supporting the church's mission and evangelism efforts, working with other leaders to ensure that the church's goals and objectives were met, serving as a liaison between the church's leadership and its members, and playing a key role in the development of the church's strategic plans.

Chinta began his service as a church pastor in the South Andhra Section in India in 1988 and later served as a department director in the same region, region director in the South Bengal region, and president of the Southeast Andhra Section. He was elected president of the East-Central India Union in Hyderabad in 2015.

BASSEY UDOH, WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION (WAD)

Bassey Udoh, president of the Eastern Nigeria Union Conference since December 2012, has been voted as the new president of the WAD.

Udoh has a degree in religion and business administration (1990), a Master of Religion in pastoral ministry (1995), and a Ph.D. in religious studies (social ethics), which he completed in 2008. He has ex-

tensive experience in Nigeria, where he served as executive secretary, Ministerial secretary, Stewardship director, and then president of what was then the Eastern Nigeria Union Mission.

As an evangelist, Udoh has conducted numerous evangelistic series across the world. He is also a chaplain colonel of Dominion Chaplain Corps International, and pro-chancellor and chair of the Governing Council of Clifford University. 🍌

INCUMBENT DIVISION PRESIDENTS

Harrington S. Akombwa, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID)

Stanley E. Arco, South American Division (SAD)

G. Alexander Bryant, North American Division (NAD)

Roger O. Caderma, Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD)

Daniel Duda, Trans-European Division (TED)

Mikhail F. Kaminskiy, Euro-Asia Division (ESD)

Blasious M. Ruguri, East-Central Africa Division (ECD)

Glenn C. Townend, South Pacific Division (SPD)

DELEGATES VOTE CHURCH MANUAL, BYLAWS AND CONSTITUTION ITEMS

THIS IS WHAT WAS DISCUSSED AND VOTED ON JULY 6 AND 7 DURING GC SESSION.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

The fifth, sixth, and seventh business meetings during the General Conference Session included discussions and motions related to the *Church Manual*. These were the first two of several sessions where *Church Manual* and Bylaws and Constitution issues are expected to be discussed and voted on, leaders explained.

On the morning of July 6, delegates voted to amend the *Church Manual* in the section dealing with the credentials and licenses of pastors and other employees. The rationale was to eliminate unnecessary repetition, church leaders explained.

Delegates also voted to amend the wording of the suggestion that each division prepare a Supplement to the *Church Manual* to include items pertaining to its region. The wording was changed to “may” to express it as a suggestion.

CHANGES TO THE CHURCH MANUAL

The *Church Manual* Committee reports proposed nonsubstantive editorial changes to the main content of the *Church Manual* to an Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee, which may give final approval, leaders explained. They added: “However, in the event the Annual Council determines by one-third vote that an

editorial change substantively alters the meaning of a passage, the proposed change must go to the General Conference Session.”

They also explained that at the final Annual Council of a quinquennium, the General Conference Executive Committee reviews all changes to the notes and coordinates the changes. “A new edition of the *Church Manual* is published after every General Conference Session,” they said. “The most recent edition should always be used.”

OTHER MOTIONS

Another motion related to a school board, specifying that the principal of the school is generally appointed secretary of the board.

A final motion on the *Church Manual* on July 6 dealt with the nominating committee and the election process. It clarifies that the nominating committee “recommends names to the church and is not responsible to elect individuals to serve.” It also specifies that the pastor/chair of the nominating committee and treasurer help determine the eligibility of nominees to hold church office.

BYLAWS AND CONSTITUTION ISSUES

Delegates discussed a motion dealing with how to calculate dele-

gate allotments for the General Conference Session based on the number of members in a particular region. The motion called to add one full year—from the second to the third year preceding the event. The rationale is that it is now taking more than a year in some places to apply for and receive a visa to travel to the United States, leaders explained. “This item is being recommended to give divisions and their delegates more time to prepare,” they said.

After discussing the item, delegates voted to refer the motion to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

A change was proposed that would allow church leaders to make significant decisions at the Spring Meeting, which a sizable number of delegates follow virtually every year. In the past, major decisions were debated and voted on only at Annual Council every fall. After discussion, it was decided to refer the item back to the Policy and Bylaws Committee.

Two more motions concerned *Adventist Review*. The first included acknowledging that the *Adventist World* magazine will cease publication, to be replaced by a world edition of *Adventist Review* beginning in August 2025. The second was a name change from *Adventist Review Ministries* to *Adventist Review*. Both motions passed.

“God has so arranged that when we work in harmony with Him in these things there will flow great spiritual blessings to us.”

DURING THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH BUSINESS MEETINGS

On July 7, delegates reconvened to discuss and vote other items related to the *Church Manual*. Leaders introduced an addition to the *Church Manual* that seeks to create a new section regarding the Membership Record that is separate from the Transferring Members section and provides more detail on the need for constant redemptive membership review.

Delegates introduced and discussed several amendments to the main motion on the Transferring Members section, and voted not to amend a number of them. They voted, however, on an amendment that removes the fact that “the pastor, the first elder, and the church board should carefully consider changes to membership status.”

Another amendment sought to clarify the function of church clerks and the process of membership transfer. The amendment added that “the church clerk should encourage those

regularly attending his/her church to request a transfer of their membership.” While deleting other sections, it added that “careful consideration should be given by the granting church and the receiving church to ensure the members in the process of being transferred are living in harmony with the fundamental teachings and related practices of the church.” The motion to amend that section of the *Church Manual* passed.

EDITORIAL CHANGES, OFFERINGS, AND STEWARDSHIP

Another amendment voted deals with members who move and don’t report it. It included only an editorial amendment to make the wording consistent, and it was passed.

Delegates also voted an amendment that seeks to express the importance of giving offerings as part of worship. “Voluntary offerings and the tithe constitute the revenue of the Lord’s work,” the *Church Manual* quotes from page 74 of Ellen G.

White’s *Acts of the Apostles*.

Another amendment voted seeks to transmit the importance of stewardship in all areas of life. Among other things, it states that “our conscientious stewardship of God’s blessings helps to build our faith. God has so arranged that when we work in harmony with Him in these things there will flow great spiritual blessings to us.”

Other items, upon the decision of the chair, were referred back to the *Church Manual* Committee to discuss some of the amendments delegates suggested.

SABBATH SCHOOL, COMMUNION OFFERING, AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Another amendment voted incorporates making disciples an important part of Sabbath School and specifies the responsibility of the Sabbath School secretary.

Regarding Communion, a voted amendment now specifies that “an offering for the poor may be taken as the congregation leaves. This offering is promoted as an addition to regular and systematic offerings.”

Another amendment passed emphasizes that “the treasurer should never comment on personal giving decisions.” Also, that “the treasurer and the pastor should never disclose individual giving records, except with consent of the giver, as required by law.”



CHRISTINA COLLARD



Young people prepare to impact St. Louis for Jesus.

NICOL BELVEDERE / AME (CC BY 4.0)

YOUTH ON A MISSION

GC SESSION VOLUNTEERS IMPACT ST. LOUIS

BETH THOMAS

Many eyes are fixed on the business sessions and elections taking place inside the Dome at America's Center, but a different kind of mission is quietly taking over the streets of St. Louis. Under the leadership of Busi Khumalo, General Conference (GC) Youth Ministries director, a dedicated team of young volunteers is making a difference—one garden, one street, and one book at a time. And they've got their work cut out for them.

This coordinated community outreach, known simply as Impact St. Louis, is a collaborative effort between the GC Youth Ministries Department and local leaders, including Tyrone Douglas, Youth and Adventist Community Services (ACS) director for the Mid-America Union Conference, and Byron Wright, Youth Ministries director for the Central States Conference.

Locally based, Wright was excited to partner with this effort. "Outreach and making the community better is really where my passion is, and so it was a no-brainer for me to get involved wherever I could," says Wright.

When asked how this project was born, Khumalo shares, "In Youth Ministries, we have an initiative called Global Youth Day [GYD], which happens once a year. This event is basically an extension of GYD. Our slogan is 'Be the Sermon.' We want our young people to be the sermon in a practical way, folding their sleeves, getting their hands dirty, getting into the gutter, and making sure they impact the lives of those who are God's people."

His team reached out to the city of St. Louis to determine how the youth could help. "They helped us identify projects," he says. "We want to put Christianity into practical terms. We want to walk the walk and talk the talk."

One of Wright's responsibilities is overseeing the garden outreach effort. Two community gardens, the Southside Wellness Center and the Fresh Starts Community Garden, are being beautified by a team of volunteers from Monday through Wednesday. City cleanup crews

are hitting the streets each day through Thursday.

Maygen Daley, a young guest from the Bahamas, was on the litter crew yesterday. "It wasn't bad; we were just cleaning up the streets. I was in a group with people from the Caribbean, so it was like being at home!"

Another group of volunteers is working with the ACS Supply Distribution Center, run by the Mid-America Union ACS team, to distribute essential items to families in need following an intense hurricane that struck the area in May.

Perhaps the most ambitious outreach project is the citywide book distribution planned for Sabbath, July 12. All the volunteers will work together to share uplifting literature downtown and around the iconic Gateway Arch.

The mission doesn't stop when the sun sets, though!

Each evening, youth gather at the Marriott Grand Hotel for a mix of worship, mission-focused conversations, leadership advice, and social activities.

During a week filled with decision-making and *Church Manual*-shaping, these youth are reminding the church—and the city—what mission looks like on the ground. It's sweaty, gritty work. And it's exactly the kind of impact the world needs right now. 🌱



A volunteer weeds a local community garden.

NICOL BELVEDERE / AME (CC BY 4.0)

Sarafina Sikwata from East-Central Africa Division expresses concern about the language used in the *Church Manual* during the Sunday morning business session on July 6. To move a motion, make a point of order, or speak for or against a suggested change, delegates line up at the microphone and scan in using their name tag so they can be identified by the chairperson of the session. Delegates then have a two-minute time limit to get their point across.

PHOTO BY JOSEF KISSINGER



Instrumentalists share their talents during the divine service on Sabbath.

CHRISTINA COLLARD



FROM AUDITION TO APPEAL WHAT IT TAKES TO BRING MUSIC TO THE MAIN STAGE AT GC SESSION

BETH THOMAS

Music is a powerful tool to prepare hearts, settle minds, and set the tone for worship. “Music was made to serve a holy purpose, to lift the thoughts to that which is pure, noble, and elevating, and to awaken in the soul devotion and gratitude to God.” Understanding this sacred role, the music coordination team for the General Conference (GC) Session takes their responsibility seriously. And as beautiful strains of voice and instrument waft through the Dome at America’s Center, heaven draws a little nearer.

The multilayer process of music selection begins three years before the session. A team of individuals work with each of the 13 divisions and the attached fields to choose a

music coordinator for that region. The local music coordinator then solicits organizations such as universities, academies or high schools, and congregations with good musical talent to recruit musicians to send in audition materials. The division music committee then selects the music that will be presented to the GC Music Committee for final review.

The committee looks for cultural appropriateness, theological correctness, and uniqueness in such entities as children’s choirs, mission groups, or original compositions—or groups from world regions experiencing particular hardship. Gaspar Colón, a vice chair of the GC Music Committee, said, “This is part of the inspiration we look for—for people to see that even in places where life is difficult, there is a swell of praise.”

Once they have approved a piece, it is designated to the location where it will be performed: the main stage, the youth or children’s divisions, or in the Ferrara Theater, located on the ground floor of the convention center.

Approved musicians are notified with ample time to make arrangements to attend session. Often groups must raise funds and apply for visas, a process that can be time-consuming. The GC Session Music Committee provides letters

of invitation for musicians to present to their embassies, hopefully expediting the visa process.

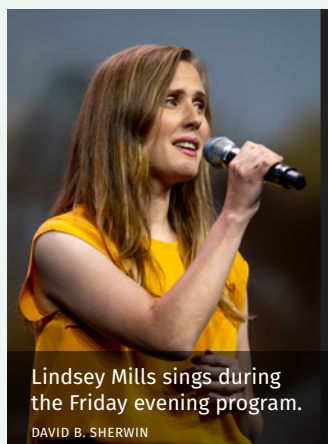
There is still another layer of process, however. The Office of General Counsel at the world church headquarters must review every song, every lyric, and every translation, as well as public domain hymns, to ensure the music falls within our legal rights to broadcast.

When musicians arrive, they check in at the main music office in the America’s Center Dome, where they receive their schedule.

First-time session attendee Lindsey Mills, a singer-songwriter from Colorado, United States, shared her original song, “A Thousand Fires,” on the main stage following Global Total Member Involvement testimonies Friday evening. She said, “As soon as you get here, you let the committee know that you’ve arrived—they need to know where their musicians are! They book rehearsal rooms and arrange sound checks for us when possible. Then, when it’s your scheduled event, you wait backstage until your performance, so you’re ready to go on.” Her excitement to share the message through music was palpable.

We can assume with confidence that each soloist, group, or instrumentalist shares the same enthusiasm as they prepare to elevate and “to awaken in the soul devotion and gratitude to God” during the sixty-second GC Session. ▀

* Ellen G. White, *Christian Education* (Battle Creek, Mich.: International Tract Society, 1894), p. 62.



Lindsey Mills sings during the Friday evening program.

DAVID B. SHERWIN

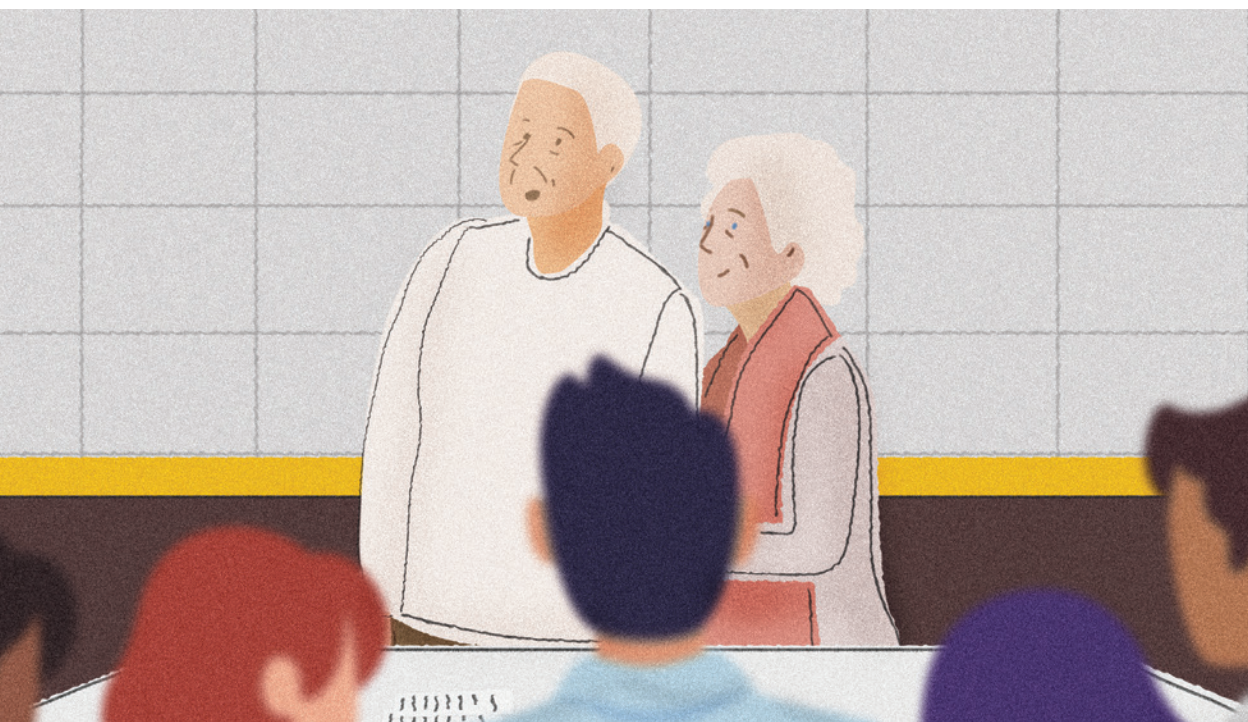
Jim and Donna

are in good health,

happily retired, and love their community. They want to pass on their legacy of giving to their grandchildren and want them to have a say in how they begin to make donations with their funds each year. They've called a family meeting to explore interests and gauge how to move forward with exciting contributions that all can see the fruit of.



To learn more about Jim and Donna's journey—
scan the QR code or visit willplan.org/JimandDonna



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THE SIGN



JOHN BRADSHAW

DEVOTIONAL
MESSAGE
PRESENTED
TUESDAY MORNING,
JULY 8, 2025

In 2013 a street vendor set up a stall in Central Park in New York City, claiming to be selling originals by the British street artist Banksy. Although Banksy, from Bristol in the west of England, is a modern-day art sensation, the paintings were being sold for US\$60, ludicrously cheap for artworks that could have been priced at tens of thousands. Banksy originals have sold for millions, yet it wasn't until midafternoon that the first painting sold—to a woman who negotiated a 50 percent discount. Then a tourist from New Zealand bought two, followed by a man from Chicago



Opposition to the Sabbath is like opposition to creation. You can't logically debate one or the other, as both are solidly biblical.

who purchased four of the supposed Banksy originals.

It turns out the pictures *were* authentic Banksys, and the people who bought them for US\$60—or less—could, if they chose to do so, sell them for as much as US\$100,000 each. The people in Central Park that day who dismissively brushed by the artworks simply didn't appreciate or understand the opportunity.

In the beginning God created. Light. The atmosphere. The ground and plants. The sun moon and stars. Birds and sea creatures. Land animals and humans, and then . . .

"And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Gen. 2:2, 3).

Like the people in Central Park who dismissed the Banksy originals as a hoax, people today walk by the Sabbath, a magnificent original created by God Himself, without realizing their opportunity.

Jesus said the Sabbath was made for the human family. When Adam and Eve came forth from the hand of God, there was no Sabbath. God made it specifically for them—and us. That makes it precious; you treasure a gift if it was made for you by

someone you know or love. It occupies a special place in your heart. God made the Sabbath with *you* in mind, giving you time away from the distractions of the world, and time close to the heart of God. You get to step back from many of your responsibilities and rest from your labors. God saw we needed this, and He knew that in keeping the Sabbath we would be reminded more vividly of Him.

Satan hates the Sabbath because it speaks of our Maker, the one who "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7). The Sabbath declares our dependence on God and acknowledges His sovereignty. Every seventh day we step back from our regular routine and enter into an experience with God different from the other six days of the week.

KEEP IT HOLY

God repeatedly underscored the importance of the Sabbath. The manna fell six days a week but not on Sabbath, because that day was different. Typically the manna would last only a day before it began to spoil, except for the manna collected on the sixth day, which lasted through the Sabbath. This all happened prior to the giving of the law on Sinai, predating the giving of the Ten Commandments.

God says to us today, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it

holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Ex. 20:8-11).

The same God said, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken" (Isa. 58:13, 14).

It must surely be time for a revival of Sabbathkeeping among God's people. Parents can make the Sabbath a joy for children. Worship services should be vital. We can't sleepwalk our way through church, inflicting lifeless preaching upon God's people. And might I make this request of preachers everywhere? Preach the Word. Lift up Jesus. Sabbath morning is for calling sinners and

saints to repentance and surrender, that they might see Jesus on the cross. The last place a person should hear a lifeless sermon is a Seventh-day Adventist church. We have set our preachers and teachers up for success with 28 fundamental beliefs, Daniel and Revelation, the three angels' messages, Calvary and an empty tomb, and Jesus' ascension to heaven. We have the blessed hope. Jesus is coming back soon! Our people should be leaving church on Sabbath morning ablaze, excited, challenged, and convicted. There ought to be fresh bread in the sanctuary every Sabbath morning.

When we sit down in a Seventh-day Adventist church on Sabbath, we're making some bold claims. We are saying that we were made in the image of God, that Jesus is our Savior, and that His Word is the rule of our faith and practice. We wouldn't be keeping the Sabbath if the Bible didn't command it. In keeping the Sabbath, we're claiming that we honor the teachings of the Bible. So let's be sure we do that. We open ourselves up to criticism when it is seen that we are keeping one while ignoring others—and that criticism is valid.

In addition to being a sign of God's creative power, the Sabbath is a sign of God's *re*-creative power, His ability to re-form in us the character of Jesus, lost because of sin. "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying:

'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you' (Ex. 31:13).

CELEBRATE THE SABBATH

That's a big claim to make: "We keep the Sabbath, and it is a sign that God sanctifies us." So how are we doing with that? We don't want to be Pharisees, of course, but we do want to have a deep sense of our responsibility before God. Sabbathkeepers should be growing spiritually, growing in holiness, and constantly reaching out after God. There's nothing casual about our love for God. There's nothing casual about Jesus sweating blood. There's nothing casual about Calvary, and there's nothing casual about what is going on right now in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary.

We don't want to be casual in our keeping of the Sabbath. It isn't just another day. It isn't a day for business. It isn't a day for eating at your favorite restaurant. We have the preparation day to take care of that. Polluting the Sabbath was responsible for a great many problems in Israel. At the same time, the Sabbath is to be full of joy. Anyone who has visited the Western Wall in Jerusalem on a Friday evening has seen the exuberance with which Jewish people welcome the Sabbath. While we aren't to be imitators of anyone, it occurred to

me, as I witnessed soldiers dancing and young men and women singing loudly and people praying, that the Sabbath should be celebrated and not simply observed, as one would the anniversary of a bombing or the overthrow of a government.

Ellen White wrote in *Early Writings* about a time God's people would "[proclaim] the Sabbath more fully."¹ She said that some would be disturbed by that, "as they could not refute the Sabbath truth."² Opposition to the Sabbath is like opposition to creation. You can't logically debate one or the other, as both are solidly biblical. Sound arguments against either one do not exist—which could either make us arrogant or fill us with awe as we consider the opportunity God has placed before us.

According to the Bible, we're approaching a time when the question of the Sabbath will be front and center. But it isn't really about the Sabbath, is it? Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). The question is love for God. And those who love God with an open heart will keep the Sabbath here on earth, and, by the grace of God, keep it one day soon in heaven. ♣

¹ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882, 1945), p. 33.

² *Ibid.*

John Bradshaw is the president of It Is Written.



ADRA

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SCAN HERE FOR ADRA'S SCHEDULE OF EVENTS!



Serving With Conviction

Supplying legal ministry to the church

KARNIK DOUKMETZIAN

For more than 80 years the Office of General Counsel (OGC) has been providing quality legal services to the General Conference, its divisions and institutions, and other denominational organizations around the world. Since the office was established in 1936, six individuals have served as general counsel. As the legal needs of the church have increased, so has the role OGC plays in providing legal services and advice to denominational entities and leadership. Retirement and reassignments at the last General Conference Session brought about some personnel changes at OGC. Currently the in-house staff of six lawyers, an immigration specialist, and three assistants provide legal services and counsel to the General Conference, its divisions, and its institutions. The work of the church in many parts of the world is complicated by laws, regulations, and issues that make it difficult to carry out the mission and spread the gospel.

In addition to OGC, many more lawyers working in division, union, conference, and institutional offices provide legal services to their local entities around the world. Lawyers employed by the church provide the necessary means and expertise to assist the church in handling legal issues, in turn allowing the mission of the church to go forward.

Each of the lawyers in OGC is committed to the church's mission, forgoing the compensation and benefits offered in the commercial marketplace or private practice to support the church with their unique talents. In addition to their legal responsibilities, some of the staff have participated, as time permits, in overseas mission or evangelistic efforts. Having a trained legal team that knows the law and intimately knows the church, its mission, its structure, and its

beliefs is most advantageous in advising and protecting the church.

The Office of General Counsel proactively protects the church by advising leadership on the legal and policy implications of a wide range of policy and administrative decisions. The work of OGC covers many of the legal issues that large multinational organizations contend with, such as human resources and employment issues, contracts, corporate matters, immigration issues, intellectual property, data privacy, and litigation. Being a religious charitable organization, however, also involves unique legal issues, such as the charitable status and the General Conference group tax exemption in the United States or employment discrimination of church members because of Sabbath observance. In addition, at times the church needs to express its voice and viewpoint before the United States Supreme Court on cases that are significant to the church. In those instances OGC coordinates and prepares legal briefs submitted to the Supreme Court for their consideration.

We wish to recognize the contribution of three of our colleagues who left the OGC after the last General Conference Session. Thomas Wetmore retired after serving 38 years as associate general counsel, an endurance record that will be very difficult to tie or break. We are very grateful for Tom's service to the church in the specialized areas of tax and retirement. Our associate Josue Pierre was elected as an associate treasurer of the General Conference at the last session, and our associate Jennifer Woods accepted a position as director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty and general counsel for the Lake Union Conference.

With those departures, a new group of talented associates joined the OGC team. Following are the lawyers and specialists who currently comprise OGC's team and their respective areas of expertise:

- Deputy General Counsel Todd McFarland covers litigation, parliamentary procedure, and church-state and religious liberty litigation, and represents the General Conference in various litigation matters. A member of the OGC team since 2006, he has represented many church



Ready to Serve: (L-R, front row) Mary Ellen Winegardner, Yoko Fujioka-Mathew, Karnik Doukmetzian, AnnaGabriella Colon, Taylor Gordon; (L-R, back row) Sheryl Brodie, Ruben Gandia, Jason Tracey, Justin Baham, Todd McFarland

members who suffer employment discrimination because of their Sabbath observance.

- Associate Annagabriella Colon oversees the areas of retirement, pension, employee benefits, religious nonprofit charitable organizations tax law, and organizational structure and governance issues. Since joining the OGC team in 2021, she has also represented the General Conference (GC) and the North American Division at professional conferences, pension and tax work groups, and at government agencies.
- Associate Justin Baham joined OGC in November 2021 and oversees intellectual property issues, including trademarks and copyrights. He advises the GC and departments, Hope Channel, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), and other entities and institutions on compliance with protecting and enforcing intellectual property rights and managing licenses associated with those rights.
- Associate Ruben Gandia joined OGC in September 2022 and provides legal advice, guidance, and review to the GC, ADRA, and Hope Channel in employment law, human resources compliance, and education. He also provides general legal advice to various other GC institutions and departments.

- Associate Jason Tracey joined OGC in August 2024 and oversees contract reviews, commercial transactions, real estate, and purchasing and procurement matters for the General Conference, the North American Division, and their associated entities and institutions, as well as for ADRA.
- Sheryl Brodie has worked with OGC for the past 23 years and is our immigration specialist. She works closely with the Human Resources Office of the General Conference, the North American Division, ADRA, and other organizations to coordinate and manage temporary work authorizations and visas for employees coming from other countries.
- Karnik Doukmetzian has been general counsel since 2009. In addition to directing the overall work of the OGC, he works closely with the GC and division administrators on a wide variety of issues, including general corporate matters, commercial transactions, and legal reviews.

OGC exists to provide quality, timely, and competent legal counsel to the church, its institutions, and church leadership in this increasingly complex and litigious age. 📌

Karnik Doukmetzian is general counsel for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Strategic Commitment to Mission, Ministry, and Missiology

VINCENT INJETI

Adventist University of Africa (AUA) embarked on its noble mission in the early 2000s with the vision to become a leading postgraduate theological institution for church workers across Sub-Saharan Africa. Nestled just outside Nairobi, Kenya, AUA opened its doors in 2006 under the auspices of the General Conference (GC) and the support of three African divisions: West-Central Africa (WAD), East-Central Africa (ECD), and Southern Africa-Indian Ocean (SID). Nearly two decades later AUA continues to fulfill its mission, preparing leaders for impactful service in Africa and globally.

I WILL GO: LEADERS IN SERVICE

AUA is comprised of two schools: the Theological Seminary and the School of Postgraduate Studies, offering a total of 13 postgraduate programs in biblical and applied theology, leadership, business

administration, public health, and applied computer science. The university boasts a legacy of more than 1,000 graduates from 38 countries in Africa, actively contributing to the church's mission worldwide and furthering the I Will Go strategy.

In line with the strategic initiative of mission refocus, AUA has collaborated with the WAD to train 30 missiologists in the past year, enhancing mission outreach within the 10/40 window. Additionally, the faculty members have engaged in evangelistic efforts in the ECD and SID and plan to participate in WAD Impact 2025.

The faculty, consisting of global experts, play a crucial role in shaping the academic journey of the students, ongoing professional development of leaders and making scholarly contributions. AUA encourages rigorous research among students and faculty to enrich knowledge and benefit the community. Every staff member contributes to providing outstanding postgraduate education grounded in biblical principles, preparing competent leaders to serve the church and society.

I WILL GO: SERVING INTENTIONALLY

Designated as a model learning institution, AUA's administration, faculty, and staff have embraced technological advancements and pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of both the church and society. Innovations in educational delivery include developing online programs through our



The iconic library building speaks to the commitment to developing leaders for service.



Students from WAD work toward their Master of Arts in Missiology.

Under divine providence—and with the unwavering dedication of our leadership, faculty, students, and alumni—AUA is poised to further the mission of the church.



Doctoral leadership students attended a research conference at AUA.



AUA president, Vincent Injety, confers the first PhD in Biblical and Theological Studies to a graduate.

Open, Distance, and eLearning Centre, which facilitates access to quality education globally.

AUA has sought to train and equip the underserved groups and diverse-language speakers. Currently the university offers a Master of Divinity in French and plans to offer a Master of Divinity in Portuguese.

During this triennium the Kenyan Commission for University Education and the Adventist Accrediting Association reaffirmed AUA's accreditation status. Several scholarship programs support students' educational pursuits, ensuring they can focus on their studies without much financial burden.

I WILL GO: FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

AUA is well-positioned to meet the educational and training needs of the constituency in Africa. AUA is committed to:

- Upholding the philosophy of wholistic education.

- Addressing the global church's and continental training needs by tailoring academic programs accordingly.
- Establishing ourselves as a center of excellence in postgraduate education and research.
- Cultivating vibrant spiritual life and community engagement while honoring our African heritage.
- Under divine providence—and with the unwavering dedication of leadership, faculty, students, and alumni—AUA is poised to further the mission of the church. We praise God for the successes already achieved and for those yet to come. With God's blessing we will continue to fulfill our mission, honoring our commitment to serve and educate. 🙌

Vincent Injety is president of the Adventist University of Africa.

A Fond Farewell

BILL KNOTT

RESOURCING THE MINISTRY

It's an unusual metric by which to measure a colleague's value—but Kim Brown proved its accuracy time and again.



During my 25 years in leadership with the church's major journals, I learned to gauge a team member's contribution by how little I had to worry about the areas they managed. By that standard, Kim Brown quickly became one of the most valuable members of the *Adventist Review* team during the nearly eight years I admired her skills as the ministry's financial manager.

Kim had an exceptional grasp of our ministry's growing scope. She understood—down to the last detail—how the complex network of international payments and contracts supporting our work actually functioned. She worked tirelessly with General Conference Treasury staff to manage one of the largest departmental budgets at the church's world headquarters.

She also led the development of an annual budget that, at its peak, reached nearly US\$9 million. Kim carefully documented for both our internal team and the church leaders on our board how changes in global magazine contracts or vendor logistics would affect our bottom line. Her attention to detail was matched by her personal warmth and kindness—qualities that helped navigate moments



The 2022 GC Session *Adventist Review* Team

DAVID B. SHERWIN

of tension in a team filled with strong personalities. She was often the listening ear colleagues turned to for encouragement and renewed perspective when challenges loomed.

The millions of readers around the world who have been blessed by the ministry of *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* owe Kim Brown a deep and enduring thank-you.

TALENT TO SPARE

Job titles often obscure more than they reveal. Learning that Merle Poirier has served as operations manager for *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* for the past 12 years—and did similar work for 12 years before that—might lead readers to assume she labored quietly in the background of one of the church's largest media organizations.



The reality is quite the opposite.

During the 21 years I had the privilege of being her colleague, Merle might best be described as the "Indispensable Person," "Problem Solver Extraordinaire," or "Omni-competent Team Member." When she joined the *Adventist Review* team in 2001, we knew of her talents as a designer and newsletter editor. Year by year we discovered her deep capabilities in systems

management, logistics, operational scheduling, and institutional liaison work.

Her impressive skills as both author and editor were evident in the pages of *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World*, for which she researched and wrote major historical features, edited late-breaking stories, and helped coordinate a complex editorial and production calendar.

Merle brought both clear-eyed vision and unwavering passion to her work. No one was more loyal to the history and tradition of the *Adventist Review*—the Seventh-day Adventist Church's oldest and most influential journal—and no one better understood the global reach and diversity of *Adventist World*. When spirits flagged and the editorial team grew weary, Merle modeled the resilience and focus that kept others moving. She was the glue that held the operation together through cycles of both expansion and retrenchment, always looking for—and finding—solutions to seemingly intractable problems.

"Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates." — Proverbs 31:31

Bill Knott served at *Adventist Review/Adventist World* from 1997 to 2022, the last 16 years as executive editor. He has served as an associate director of GC Public Affairs and Religious Liberty since early 2023.



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Nothing About Us Without Us

Adventist Possibility Ministries puts inclusion at the heart of GC Session

BETH THOMAS

As thousands gather in St. Louis for the sixty-second General Conference Session, most people notice the big things—delegates casting votes, inspiring sermons, and colorful international attire. But behind the scenes a quiet and intentional effort is ensuring that everyone—regardless of physical ability—can fully participate in the global church event.

Ernesto Douglas Venn, assistant to the president for Adventist Possibility Ministries and coordinator for Adventist Deaf Ministries International, has spent the past three years working with a dedicated team to prepare for attendees with special needs.

From the very beginning, Venn and his team have followed the principle: Nothing about us without us. “I rely on the first-person experience of my team, my global team,” he explained.

PLANNING FOR THE DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING COMMUNITY

One of the most complex aspects of accessibility planning has been making sure deaf delegates and attendees feel seen and included. It’s more complicated than it sounds. “We had multiple committees. One committee worked with the deaf community to help look at the accessibility needs for sign language.” Once the unions communicated the accessibility needs of their delegates, Venn’s team went to work to provide for the different sign languages necessary.

A common misconception is that one sign language fits all. But just as there are different regional dialects for spoken languages, each nation has its own sign language—although there

are branches of sign language that are interconnected. Some, such as French and American Sign Language (ASL), have a shared history.

Multiple sign language interpreters are present in Women’s Ministries meetings, youth Sabbath School, and the general sessions inside the Dome. Online, the GC Session YouTube channel is live-streaming American Sign Language interpretation of key events, reaching more than 1,200 viewers each day.

“We set all of this up initially for one in-person delegate—Pastor Jeff Jordan, who is the only deaf Adventist pastor in North America,” Venn said. “But we’re seeing many more people connect online, and they’re sending messages thanking us. They want to know what’s going on, and they appreciate this service.”

Partnering with Adventist World Radio, the team also ensured that devices are available inside the Dome for people with hearing loss. “There’s always more to do, especially as technology improves,” Venn said. “But we’re grateful for what’s been possible this time around.”



A group of Adventist Possibility Ministries task force ambassadors with Pastor Ernesto Douglas Venn. JAMES BOKOVY

“There’s always more to do, especially as technology improves, but we’re grateful for what’s been possible this time around.”

FOR THOSE WITH VISION IMPAIRMENT

For those who are blind or have low vision, the convention center’s Americans with Disabilities Act compliance covers many physical needs. But Venn points to Juliana Santos, his cochair for the task force for those who are blind or with low vision, for deeper insight.

“I have found here in general that the city is very accessible,” she said. “The convention center does not have tactile strips or marks on the floor [for canes], however. One area that could be improved is providing a device with an audio description of the PowerPoint slides, the visual backgrounds on the main stage, and the beautiful clothing. We would benefit from that.”

Santos’ husband describes things happening on the main stage for her, but there are no general materials available in Braille—except at the Christian Record Services for the Blind booth in the exhibit hall. Having these resources would improve the experience for people with visual impairments.

NAVIGATING WITH MOBILITY NEEDS

Accessibility for wheelchair users has also been a focus. “Because St. Louis is a gracious host, provisions for accessibility are just part of the stadium. I did do a spot check, though [I have a sensitivity to this because of my mother-in-law],” Venn said.

Venn mentioned a recent moment when a delegate’s battery-operated wheelchair died on the sidewalk. “Another delegate and I helped push him back to his hotel,” he said. “That’s the kind of thing people aren’t aware of, especially with the distance between things.”

For those needing mobility support, local providers in St. Louis were vetted and included in the city’s welcome materials for attendees, as well as on the official session app.

Terry Trecartin, a member of the Adventist Possibility Ministries task force and an ambassador for wheelchair users, shared his personal experience. “Inside the convention center, the carpets are a little bit rough and my hands get tired, but I can get to all the buildings here. There



Alisa Barnes is one of seven sign language translators at the 2025 GC Session. CHRISTINA COLLARD

are elevators, and the hallways are wide. And as long as there are curb cuts in the sidewalk, I can go anywhere.” His wife, Shannon, was quick to add that all the levels of the stadium have wheelchair seating with clearly designated spots.

Adventist Possibility Ministries has partnered with Hope Channel, Adventist News Network, and *Adventist Review* to help tell the story and provide technical and media support. “We can say thank you to IT and the Hope Channel team who built an elaborate and comprehensive area for sign language livestreaming,” Venn said.

At the 2025 GC Session intentional efforts by Adventist Possibility Ministries are making a meaningful difference for attendees with different abilities. From sign language interpretation in multiple languages to mobility information, a dedicated team has worked behind the scenes to ensure that all participants can fully engage. It reflects a growing awareness within the Adventist Church that inclusion isn’t optional—it’s essential to mission. 🦋



To watch session proceedings in ASL, use this link: <https://www.gcsession.org/live/> or scan the QR code.

Good News in a War Zone

Adventist clinic serves on the front lines in Ukraine

BECKY ST. CLAIR

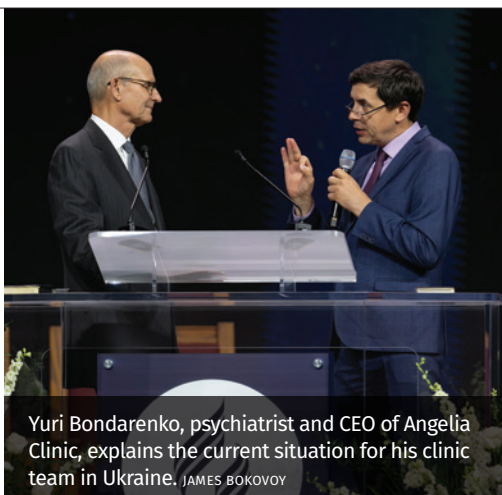
In Kyiv, Ukraine, a team of 12 medical professionals, plus receptionists and drivers, settle in for an 8- to 10-hour trip to the next day's mobile clinic site. Early the next morning they set up the semi-truck trailer offices before opening to the public at 9:00 a.m. They spend the next nine hours providing 400-plus services to approximately 120 patients, both adults and children—lung checkups, echocardiograms, ultrasounds, dental work, pediatrics, psychiatric evaluations, neurology, and general care.

During Ted N. C. Wilson's President's Report on Thursday evening at the General Conference Session, Yuri Bondarenko, psychiatrist and CEO of Angelia Clinic, shared briefly what they are currently doing in Ukraine, and the conditions in which they are doing it.

"Two to three times per week the drones attack," Bondarenko said during the report. "[As we speak], my wife and daughters have now been in our bomb shelter for six hours. A few months ago we had a staff member killed by a drone while on an assignment. We need constant prayers and support."

The clinic, which maintains a permanent physical location in the city, has been operating for 11 years, but their services became even more critical in 2022, when Russia again invaded Ukraine. The medical team of 30 consists of mental health specialists, neurologists, general practitioners, cardiologists, traumatologists, dentists, physical therapists, gynecologists, and pharmacists.

"The situation continues to deteriorate," Bondarenko said in an interview after the Wilson report. "Our country is fighting, but it's been three years under traumatic stress. We have exhaustion and burnout, and we live in survival mode." He



Yuri Bondarenko, psychiatrist and CEO of Angelia Clinic, explains the current situation for his clinic team in Ukraine. JAMES BOKOVOY

added that more than 65 percent of Ukraine's population is in need of psychiatric care.

That 65 percent could very easily include Bondarenko and his team, considering the conditions under which they live. On mobile clinic days, groups take the trucks into villages whose proximity to the front lines mean medical care is insufficient at best, nonexistent at worst.

"One of the cities we visit regularly is located on a river," Bondarenko says. "That mile-wide river is the only thing separating that city from the enemy." The city used to have a population of more than 300,000, and is now around 40,000. "The riverside bank is a death zone," Bondarenko adds. "Drones are constantly hunting for civilians." Ukrainian military members don't wear uniforms because it's too dangerous to be identified as such, so Russian drones simply hunt for anyone.

"Usually when I am there, I stay with a friend who lives about a mile from the river," says Bondarenko. "I don't sleep well." The never-ending barrage of artillery, shells, and mines makes sleeping difficult to impossible. "It's a constant whistle and boom, hearing houses and buildings explode."

Even 20 miles beyond the front lines, which is where the clinic volunteers work most of the time, there are flying bombs no one can hear until they're just overhead. The holes they leave could hide a three-story building. "The Lord has protected us so far," Bondarenko says. "God is so good."

ALL-ROUND CARE

Sleep deprivation added to anxiety and stress is a serious challenge for mental health. Knowing this, Bondarenko goes to great lengths to protect himself

Angelia Clinic Bible workers have built a list of 2,000 contacts who want to study the Bible, and there are still 4,000 people waiting for phone calls.

and his team. As an official mental health trainer for Ukraine military chaplains, Bondarenko emphasizes the importance of self-care, including prayer, breathing techniques, time in nature, contrast (alternating-hot-and-cold) showers, and singing.

His top recommendation to maintain mental health? Hugs.

“When you give or receive a hug, you are creating dopamine and oxytocin, and decreasing cortisol levels,” he explains. “I’ve consulted for more than 20 years, and two of my standard assessment questions are: ‘Did your parents hug you often in childhood?’ and ‘Does your partner hug you frequently?’ Very often the answer to both is no.”

Recently an older woman came to the mobile clinic to see a psychiatrist and told Bondarenko she no longer wanted to live. Her home and her church had both been destroyed, and she was living in a very small room without heating. Two of her three children were living in Russia, and the third worked at a seaport under constant drone attacks. She couldn’t even speak to her children in Russia, let alone hug them.

“My mom lives in Russia, and she’s the same age as this woman,” Bondarenko says, tears in his eyes. “I told the woman I hadn’t been able to hug my mom for three years either, and asked if I could hug her. After a few minutes of hugging, she started smiling.”

Angelia Clinic works with Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) to provide a comprehensive, whole-person ministry to the people of Ukraine. A team of General Conference-supported lay Bible workers go each day to locations ADRA has recently visited to do mental and spiritual health needs assessments. Fifteen percent of respondents say yes to studying the Bible, and 70 percent say yes to having someone call them to pray.

“When our prayer workers call them, many times people cry because no one has called them for many months,” Bondarenko says. “Some of them have lost everyone and have no one left to call them. Many are experiencing depression.” One third of these phone calls have resulted in requests for Bible studies.

During the past five months alone Angelia

Clinic Bible workers have built a list of 2,000 contacts who want to study, and there are still 4,000 people waiting for phone calls for prayer.

“This is only one district of five,” Bondarenko says. “And we have only three Bible workers to conduct assessments and two prayer workers to make phone calls. We trust the Lord will provide a way for this ministry to continue.”

The name “Angelia” is a combination of the concept of an angel’s care and *euangélion*—Greek for “good news.” “Our name essentially means: ‘Good news; you will be healed,’” says Bondarenko.

Last September Bondarenko was in southern Ukraine when a drone attack wiped out several buildings near the seaport. While out looking for people to help, he met a family whose home had been destroyed—for the second time in two years. “I asked them where their home was, and the woman pointed to the empty sky above a pile of rubble. I immediately thought, *She pointed in the right direction, because we all have mansions in heaven*,” he shares. “My prayer is not to stop or finish the war; my prayer is ‘Lord, come soon.’”



Bondarenko hugs a woman missing her children in Russia after she shared with him that she no longer wanted to live. YURI BONDARENKO



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In Search of a Feast

Working behind the scenes at the General Conference Session.

EMANUEL PELOTE

I woke up hungry. Not for the oatmeal, eggs, and potatoes that would soon be served in the hotel dining room, but for something that can be served only at the banquet table of Christ. It has been a busy week, and today would be even more busy, I knew. But what I really wanted was an unambiguous moment to worship God. I knew that I had much to accomplish today, but I prayed that God would allow my service to be an act of worship. In my morning meditation the image of worship described in Revelation 4:10, 11 came to me:

"The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power.'"

I prayed, God, can You help me be a crown-caster today? May whatever I have, whatever I do, become an instrument of worship. I didn't want to be distracted by the grandeur of the meetings or the

significance of the decisions being made—but rather, by the grandeur of what God is hoping to accomplish in and through me.

Still, when you're at the General Conference Session, there's no escaping the importance of what's happening. For me, the day held two significant items that were especially important to my life and ministry: First, I was looking forward to attending my wife Karen's final presentation on the General Conference Journey Stage in the exhibit hall. Second, given my role as special assistant to the president of the East-Central Africa Division, I was anticipating the report from the Nominating Committee as to whom I would be working with beginning today. I tried not to speculate—but I couldn't stop wondering what it might mean to cast my crown down before the Lord in response to what was to come.

One event I try never to miss is the morning prayer circle hosted by the GC Communication team in the global media room. I also serve as the division's Communication director, and I love that the Communication family here at GC Session understands that we're not simply communication or media, but are doing uniquely Adventist communication and media. Grounded not in equipment and editing, but in prayer and praise.

Following prayer, we had a short meeting to review



reporting assignments for the day. Then we gathered in the media booths to listen to the morning devotional. John Bradshaw's message reminded me how hopeful and beautiful our message really is.

After the devotional I made my way to the exhibit hall to support my wife's presentation on parenting. It's always a joy to see someone using their gifts to bless others—but it's even more meaningful when that someone is the person you love. I was also blessed by the music and testimony of Olethea Phoenix dela Cruz Daquila, a gifted 15-year-old young woman from the Philippines.

For those who love mission and ministry, the exhibit hall at GC Session is a feast. It awakens a hunger for tools and ideas you didn't even know you wanted until you see them. I visited two key booths that day: the Center for Online Evangelism, which helps members make our church visible and understood online; and FARM STEW, a ministry transforming communities around the world. Both have made a real impact in the East-Central Africa Division, and it was encouraging to offer them words of support.

Later I returned to the session floor. The floor discussions have been a highlight for me—every detail presented is thoughtfully considered by delegates from around the world. Today many had clearly mastered the art of “calling the question,” helping to keep the process moving while allowing everyone's voice to be heard.

The air grew electric in the afternoon as we awaited the Nominating Committee's report on division leaders. I slipped away to the prayer room to join others who were calling on heaven to bless the church's future. This room had become familiar to me during the session—a place where I had regularly asked God to give us unity, love, and trust in His leading.

One committee member, without sharing details, expressed deep appreciation for the spirit of humility and prayer that had shaped the deliberations. I didn't ask for more. It was enough to know that the Holy Spirit had been present and active throughout.

Later that evening I attended the press conference hosted by the GC Communication Department. The GC treasurer and secretary answered



One member expressed deep appreciation for the spirit of humility and prayer that had shaped the deliberations.

questions from the media with clarity and conviction. Beyond their administrative insight, what stood out most was their frequent and natural reference to Jesus. Their words reflected both deep experience and a sincere love for God's mission.

I didn't make it to dinner that night. Instead I found a different kind of feast. I encountered several Adventist influencers and a pastor who had recently published a book on disciple-making. We talked about unity in the church, the mission before us, and how to strengthen bonds between members, pastors, and leaders. Before long we were huddled in a circle, hands on shoulders, bowed in prayer. I imagine that from a distance we may have looked like a human crown—laid down together at the feet of Jesus.

That is what GC Session reminded me of. Not just business. Not just decisions. But worship. Whatever we carry—our work, our gifts, our roles—are all best placed in His hands.

Because He is worthy. 🙌

Emanuel Pelote is attending and serving at the General Conference Session from the East-Central Africa Division, where he is special assistant to the president.

SESSION

GALLERY



Delegates from China show support from the floor. CHRISTINA COLLARD



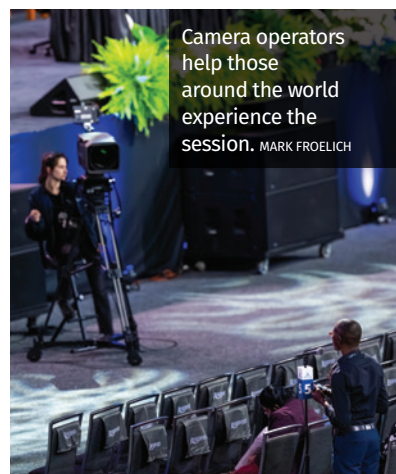
Microphones are kept busy by delegates reacting to motions on the floor. JOSEF KISSINGER



The Tsikirai family from the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division share their talents for morning worship. JAMES BOKOVY



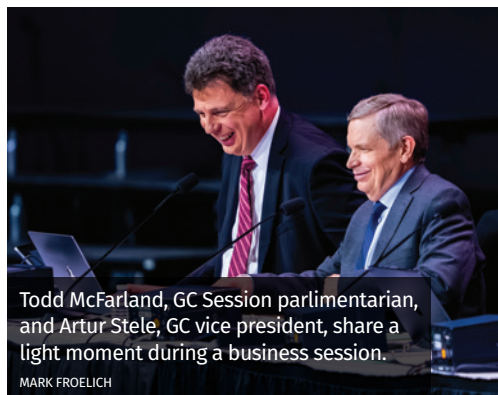
Women's Ministries meetings include a break for exercise and stretching. CHRISTINA COLLARD



Camera operators help those around the world experience the session. MARK FROELICH



John Bradshaw, director, It Is Written, is the devotional speaker each morning. MARK FROELICH



Todd McFarland, GC Session parliamentarian, and Artur Stele, GC vice president, share a light moment during a business session.

MARK FROELICH



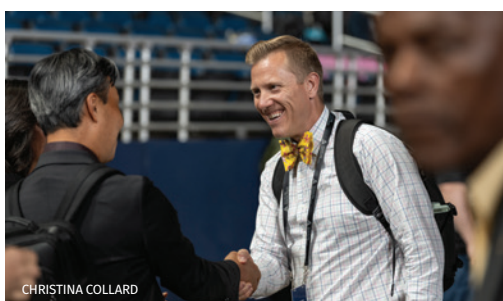
JOSEF KISSINGER



Participants in the Southern Asia Division report wore colorful saris. JOSEF KISSINGER



DAVID B. SHERWIN



CHRISTINA COLLARD

Feeding the 5,000

How the GC food service team is handling challenges of meals for a diverse crowd

BECKY ST. CLAIR

Any parent will tell you that trying to please every member of the family at every meal is close to impossible. Each person has their own preferences on flavor, cuisine, and spice level, to name a few. Here at the General Conference (GC) Session the GC food service team is trying to please is a group of approximately 5,000 people.

ONE PLATE MUST FIT ALL

"We do site checks before each GC Session, including taste tests of menu options," explains Ludi Leito, food service manager for the session, who also works for Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). "Our chef is amazing. He puts a lot of himself into his work, and it is important to him that we are pleased with the food."

The challenge comes when a meal must be mass-produced to the level of the thousands eating during the event.

"We are a tricky group," Leito says. "Because we're a global group, everyone has different ways of doing things and different ways we like our food." For example, she says, some people prefer vegan meals; others want their food spicy or salty or mild. There are many different dietary restrictions to consider, as well. One person even contacted Leito and said they were unable to eat rice, which has been a primary dish at each meal during session.

"Rice is a staple for the majority of our church members," Leito explains. She also says they don't add salt to the rice in consideration for members who may be unable to include it in their diet for any number of reasons. "It's much easier to add seasonings after it's cooked than it is to take them out."

The serving method during each meal also plays a huge role in the food experience during session.

In the past, Ludi says, plates were pre-served, and attendees simply received a plate already loaded with food, rather than serving themselves.

"We have a buffet-style serving line, and when people see or hear the word 'buffet,' I think they automatically think 'all you can eat,'" says Leito. "It's not really 'all you can eat,' based on our contract with the catering company, it's meant to be one plate of food and one water bottle per person at each meal."

THE ONE-PLATE PROBLEM

Because of the unrestricted access to plates and serving spoons, many GC Session attendees have been filling multiple plates with food and walking out with a stack of meals to share outside the meal hall.

"Many of them are taking the food to their children, for whom they didn't purchase meal tickets," Leito says. "And while we, of course, don't fault them for wanting to make sure their kids have food, those meals should be purchased ahead of time so the whole family can be included in the meal count during preparation."

Before each meal, the food service team provides the catering company with the most accurate head count they can, based on the number of meals purchased. The catering company plans for 5-10 percent more than the number provided, which is the industry standard for meal service.

"When people come through line and take more than their share of what was prepared, those further back in the line find there is nothing left when they arrive at the table," Leito explains. "This is heartbreaking to us, because we've done our best to ensure that everyone who has purchased a meal has access to the full service we're providing."

The catering staff and volunteers at the scanning tables and exits do their best to remind those at the serving tables that there is only one plate of food allowed per person, and direct them to where they can purchase meal tickets, but that interaction can sometimes be difficult.

"Most of our volunteers are high school students wanting to help out while they're here with their parents," Leito says. "They are an incredible group of kids, and I couldn't have asked for anyone better,

Approximately 5,000 people are served at each meal during the GC Session. JOSEF KISSINGER



but I have also told them not to sacrifice their body, peace of mind, or Christianity by confronting anyone. Some people can become quite aggressive when we remind them of the one-plate limit.”

REFINING THE SYSTEM

To rectify the situation, session management, food service, and catering leaders have begun managing portions by having staff serve the entrées. This limits the amount of food each person takes, and ensures that those further back in line are assured a meal, as well. Additionally, they have shifted the layout of the tables, a simple change with significant impact.

“Before, we started with the salads, then worked our way down to the entrée, breads, and desserts,” Leito says. “We have now moved the featured entrée to the end of the table, so that by the time people get there, the real estate available on their plate for the entrée is much less than it was where the entrée used to sit, near the front of the table.”

Every day, Leito takes notes on what works and what doesn’t, feedback received at each meal, and comments from the staff. These notes are used to “tweak the system” in effort to make each meal experience better.

“Food is so important to people, and we want them to have a positive experience here,” Leito comments. “We want them to get what they’re paying for, and to enjoy what they’re eating.”

NOT JUST A MEAL

Every little change is working toward the expected large crowd coming through the lunch line on

Sabbath, Leito says. So while they work hard to ensure a positive experience throughout the session, they really want to end on a hugely positive note.

Each year, GC attendees receive a post-event survey, which includes questions about meals. The feedback received from these surveys is used to make plans for food at the next GC Session. “We try to build upon the menus every time,” Leito says. “We tweak them, change them, remove meals that weren’t well received, keep ones that were, and we definitely use recommendations from the surveys as we plan.”

Leito adds that making meals happen during GC Session is not a simple “night-before” thing. Individuals from session management to catering staff are involved in the multiple steps of the process. “It’s not thrown together last-minute,” she says. “There is a lot of thought and consideration that goes into all of this, and we have a lot of demographics to take into account as we plan. Trying to please everyone isn’t easy, but we do our best to make the majority as happy as possible.”

So will the popular burgers be back this year? Unfortunately not, Leito says. “We did not expect those to be the hit they were, so I definitely wish we could bring them back. But I’ve taken note for the future, for sure!”

Food is important, and ensuring that a group of thousands is fed sufficiently is, unfortunately, not quite as simple as blessing a basket of five loaves of bread and two fish. Feeding the thousands at GC may not be a miracle, but thanks to careful planning, daily adjustments, and a lot of heart, it comes pretty close. ▀

IRVING IS **HOPE**

HANNAH DREWIECK

HOPE CHANNEL
EVENING DEVOTIONAL
MESSAGE PRESENTED
TUESDAY, JULY 8, 2025

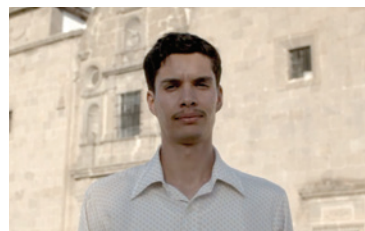
In a small town in Mexico, Irving's days used to begin before sunrise. He would slip out early to ring the bells at the Catholic church and help prepare for morning Mass. Faith was woven into his routine. He often thought about becoming a priest. It seemed like a natural path.

But as he got older, quiet questions began to arise. These questions were developing, not out of anger or rebellion, but out of a sense of restlessness. He began wondering about the Bible, about purpose, about what would come next. Was this the path God had chosen for him, or just the one into which he had grown?



He found himself in an in-between season. He hadn't left the old life entirely, but he couldn't go back to it either.

Those questions lingered until his uncle invited him to a small Bible study group. Irving joined, unsure of what he'd find. What he discovered surprised him—especially the message of the Sabbath. At first it felt like learning a new language. The shift wasn't easy. He didn't walk away from everything he knew.



Instead, he began observing the Sabbath quietly, carving out time for prayer and study even when work made full observance difficult.

He found himself in an in-between season. He hadn't left the old life entirely, but he couldn't go back to it either. Still, he trusted God to meet him in the middle. "Wherever God allowed me to be," he would later say, "I also trusted He would take care of me."

That trust deepened when he was offered a new job—one that gave him Sabbaths off. For Irving, it wasn't just a better schedule; it was confirmation. The moment felt clear. It was time to take the next step. He decided to be baptized.

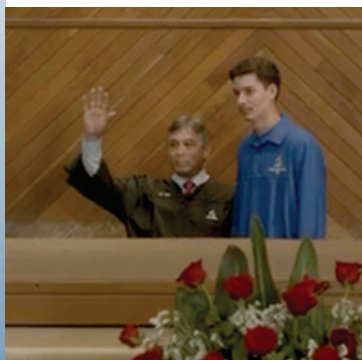
Irving gently shared the news with his family. He wasn't trying to persuade them or prove anything. He just wanted them to know. He hoped they would come, but he understood that they might not. His decision wasn't dependent on anyone else. It was personal.

The baptism took place in a quiet, sacred moment. Irving stepped into the water with calm assurance, not looking for attention, just choosing to follow where God had led him.

His mother wasn't there. And today that weighs heavily on her. She carries sadness over missing the moment. But even in her absence

something began to shift. The love she has for her son—and the strength of his quiet commitment—made an impact. God used Irving's transformation to stir something in his family.

Irving didn't just make a decision. He became a witness. He became hope. And if we too are willing to be witnesses, we can become hope. 🍀



Hannah Drewieck is the communication coordinator for Hope Channel International.

EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION REPORT

God's Faithfulness and Our Impact





The church in the East-Central Africa Division (ECD) is deeply committed to urgently finishing the work of reaching our nations for Christ in preparation for His imminent return. The ECD encompasses 12 countries, with a combined population in 2025 of more than a half billion people. These countries include: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. By 2030 the population of this division is expected to rise by approximately 75 million. In just 25 years, by 2050, the population of the ECD region will surpass 1 billion souls!

Half of the ECD territory consists of high-priority nations for mission that are considered part of the 10/40 window territory. These nations—Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and the self-governing island of Zanzibar—are all experiencing rapid population growth. Our 10/40 window population is projected to rise by 40 million to 265 million people by 2030 and will continue to grow to nearly 350 million by 2050. While the growth of these nations and urban centers presents significant challenges, it also presents an incredible opportunity for God to work. Within these 10/40 window nations God has faithfully answered our prayers by giving the church 10,000 baptisms among these majority non-Christian faith communities since 2022. As we continue to pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we believe that God will do extraordinary things in this growing territory, reaching millions of new souls for Christ across the 10/40 window.

Indeed, God has shown remarkable faithfulness to His people in the East-Central Africa Division by blessing the church with more than 1 million baptisms since the start of 2023. Today the church in ECD is home to more than 5.7 million members, with more than 90 percent of them remaining faithfully engaged in the church long-term.



A DIVINE STRATEGY TO REACH NATIONS: FROM SPECTATORS TO DISCIPLE-MAKERS

Given the explosive growth of urban centers and the rapid population increases, traditional public evangelism alone could not keep pace. If the reach of the three angels' messages does not significantly expand, we anticipate more than 1 billion unreached people living in ECD territories by 2050. This rapid growth of cities and populations across the region led the division to develop a bold strategy for evangelism, known as ECD Evangelistic Impact 2025 (EEI2025). Aligned with the Reach the World: I Will Go strategy of the world church, EEI2025 is an urgent call for Total Member Involvement. Members are being called to transition from being passive spectators to becoming active disciple-makers, so that the everlasting gospel is rapidly preached to all nations as a witness for Christ.

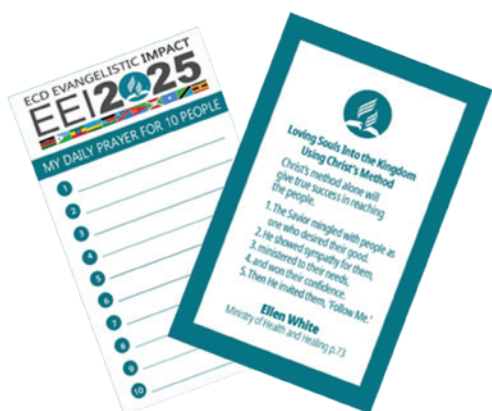
EEI2025 was built around six major campaigns designed to create opportunities for members to win souls for Christ within their spheres of influence. As with all great movements of God, the foundation for EEI2025 was a call to prayer.

PRAYER IMPACT

The ECD called on every member and family to identify at least 10 individuals—relatives, neighbors, friends, and colleagues—whom they would pray for and then witness to using Christ's method. The division created prayer cards for members to list the names of these 10 people and commit to praying for them daily. On the back of the card was a reminder of the steps of Christ's method for reaching people.

God also led the ECD to focus on personal revival among the faithful. The In Discipleship

EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION REPORT CONTINUED



ministry was invited to train thousands of church leaders, pastors, elders, and key lay leaders across several unions within the division in personal discipleship and disciple-making skills. The Adventist Messengers (adventistmessengers.org) ministry was also launched to drive Total Member Involvement through a digital outreach strategy. Through this ministry, members have been given a platform to rally to the mission of the church and to unite their efforts with those of ministers and officers of the church. Through this initiative the ECD is raising an army of at least 1 million members who are being rightly trained to work together so that millions of unreached souls online can be reached for Christ.



HOPE FOR AFRICA: A NEW VISION FOR SATELLITE EVANGELISM

Rather than focusing solely on large venues, the Hope for Africa campaign leveraged the power of social media to deliver world-class evangelistic programs that members could easily share with

friends, neighbors, and colleagues. These programs were streamed online and translated in multiple languages, making the gospel messages easy for members to share. This new approach enabled the program to be shared in more than 20,000 homes, offices, churches, and public venues, resulting in 200,000 baptisms across the division.

The HopeFor.Africa website was created by the ECD with the strong support of the Center for Online Evangelism to inspire, equip, and empower members to reach the world using Christ's method style evangelism online for Christ.

FAMILY IMPACT: EMPOWERING FAMILIES AS DISCIPLE-MAKERS

The ECD called on every Adventist family to prayerfully and intentionally minister to other families as disciple-makers. When one Adventist family heard the call, they began praying daily for relatives they hoped to reach for Christ. They visited their relatives together, prayed, and sought to meet their needs. The kindness was welcomed, and soon both families were worshipping and studying the Bible together. During the Family Impact harvest campaign this disciple-making family invited their relatives to attend the family themed evangelistic meetings. The entire family of seven accepted the truth and were baptized. Through this initiative the Family Impact campaign led to more than 185,000 baptisms across the division!

HOMECOMING IMPACT: REACHING THE "HOME" COMMUNITY

The Homecoming Impact campaign reframed the traditional concept of public evangelistic outreach, calling not only pastors but every believer around the world to be ready to stand and preach the gospel of Christ first in their "home" communities, and then to the ends of the earth.

One local elder decided to take a very personal approach to sharing his faith in the community. Armed only with prayer and a Bible, he took time off from work and started visiting homes one by

one over a period of two weeks to minister to all who welcomed him. As a result, more than 300 souls were touched for Christ and baptized!

Demonstrating that the Adventist missionary spirit is still alive 150 years after J. N. Andrews sailed to Europe, hundreds of leaders from around the world joined the ECD Homecoming Impact campaign. General Conference leaders, including Pastor Ted Wilson—who preached in Juba, South Sudan—were among them. Officers, pastors, missionaries, and departmental leaders from every level of the church came to bless communities across the ECD.

One of the overseas church members who accepted the call to come and preach in one of the nearly 7,000 sites in the ECD insisted on coming to share her faith despite warnings that she was too ill to travel and preach. Dozens were baptized and received new life as a result of her efforts, and the faithful Adventist missionary was miraculously healed of her ailment as she risked everything to serve the Lord!

All told, more than 130,000 souls were added to the kingdom of God through the witness of thousands of believers who gave their best for the kingdom during the Homecoming Impact campaign!

YOUTH IMPACT: ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

The Youth Impact campaign inspired youth and young adults to share Christ's message on campuses, in communities, and online. As they witnessed to their classmates on campuses and in their communities, more than 1,000 young people also led public evangelistic sites in their communities. Their efforts resulted in more than 85,000 baptisms for the kingdom of God!

CHILDREN'S IMPACT: DISCIPLING THE NEXT GENERATION

The Children's Impact campaign called attention to the vital role of discipling our children. The Children's Impact campaign served as an awakening for the church to the reality that if we do not

call our own children and their friends to make a willing, understanding commitment to Christ, then we will have no basis on which to stand against the enemy of their souls when he uses all of his deceptive charm to warmly welcome them to worship the things of this world. In one example of how members impacted their communities through this campaign, one woman determined to become a disciple-maker despite not knowing how to read. She began ministering to the children in her community and their families by purchasing food and clothes for those who were in need. As she shared the gospel with the families she met, her young son would read the Bible texts for her. Dozens were brought to the faith as a result of this ministry. More than 40,000 souls were won to Christ in this way.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Through these efforts God has used the members of the church to reach more than 1 million souls for Christ in just two years. Along with this growth in numbers, the ECD has seen an increase in maturity, developing numerous centers of influence, including radio stations, hospitals, media centers, and schools.

Financially, the ECD has become a strong net contributor to the global church. The division has also been entrusted with the responsibility of expanding the gospel work in Sudan, one of the most challenging regions within the 10/40 window.

THE WAY FORWARD

The way ahead for the East-Central Africa Division is clear. Through fervent prayer and a member-led movement of disciple-makers, we will complete the work in this territory. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).

Visit eccdadventist.org or evangelisticimpact.org to learn more about ECD Evangelistic Impact 2025 and beyond. ♣

UKRAINIAN UNION REPORT

Unshaken

We are deeply grateful to the Lord for His mercy and protection! The war with Russia has been going on for more than three years now, and in these difficult times we are sincerely grateful for the prayers and tireless support of the family of God around the world for the church in Ukraine. The ministers and church members, united by a common faith, continuously carry the light of the gospel, because by saving human lives we testify to the imminent coming of Christ. The Lord is always with us; He extends His helping hand to everyone. Every heart should hear this message of hope!

The Ukrainian Union Conference had 38,407 church members at the beginning of 2025. There are 727 congregations, 191 groups, eight conferences, five institutions, five medical sanitariums, two medical centers, and 24 schools. During the three years of the war, 2022-2024, 2,784 people joined the church through baptism and 157 through profession of faith.

Unfortunately, 1,702 church members emigrated, transferring their membership outside Ukraine, making the number of church members outside Ukraine 6,220. In these difficult, exhausting, sometimes unbearable, and dangerous conditions caused by the war, the Adventist Church sacrificially and devotedly continues to fulfill the mission of Christ, which we briefly reflect in this bulletin.

MINISTRY TO OTHERS

Support Nearby, a new all-Ukrainian initiative of the church, aimed to make each local church a “sanctuary” of wholeness, healing, and grace for people traumatized by war and life. The project is based on Christ’s method alone: mingling with people, serving with compassion, and gaining their trust.

Ukrainian Ministerial Association secretary Kostiantyn Tepfer shares that the ministry of pastors and their families has increased in the



past three years. Pastors began a new ministry to evacuate people from dangerous frontline towns and villages. While transporting people under fire, they discovered the power of prayer and faith in practice. Many hours spent

on the road turned into practical evangelistic programs. As they returned, the pastors transported thousands of tons of humanitarian aid.

Pastors’ wives, who remained at the ministry site, helped people on the ground. Up to 3,000 loaves of bread were distributed daily in the church building. We were excited by the opportunity to conduct various evangelistic and social programs. These efforts helped Ukrainian pastors baptize more than 1,000 people every year.

In the context of the war, Ministerial Spouses Association director Olena Nosova has had a ministry focused on certain areas to support



pastors’ families by helping pastors’ wives in recovering and self-regulating

during times of uncertainty; training pastors’ wives for missionary service; and supporting pastors’ children by engaging them in Bible study and the Spirit of Prophecy through specific programs, quizzes, and quests.

Roman Prodaniuk, Adventist Mission director, reports that despite the difficult circumstances of the war, the church in Ukraine did not stop serving. Adventists took people out of the war zone and housed, fed, counseled, and preached the three



angels’ messages to them. Although congregations were smaller because of members fleeing the country, our buildings





were filled with new people seeking support from the people of God. We held evangelistic programs under fire in the basements of the church buildings. The evangelistic programs have not stopped for three years now, and people are growing spiritually and entering into a covenant with God.

CHILDREN'S, FAMILY, YOUTH, AND WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

The war years were a test for the children of Ukraine. Children's Ministries director Maryna Tepfer reports there was much grief, loss, and



terrible things that children should not know or see. God's church and parents do a great deal to ensure that children

believe, pray, and laugh. Despite the constant danger, the Lord protected us and helped us hold Vacation Bible Schools and camp meetings for refugee children. We prayed with the children, sang psalms, and studied the Bible. We constantly provide physical and emotional assistance to those living on the front lines.

With God's help and the support of the global church, we have been able to actively serve the children of Ukraine for the past three years, despite many leaders and children moving abroad. Club Ministry coordinator Maksym Buha shares that the union organized a Ukrainian Pathfinder Camporee, as well as more than 20 field schools to train leaders, and summer and winter camps for the children of military personnel and families affected by war. We also actively participated in the Bible Experience. With God's help and the church's support, we continue to serve in our country, giving hope and support to those who need it.

"We are living in difficult times, but despite this, we do not give up. The main goal of our youth ministry is to support young people spiritually and provide them with all the opportunities for spiritual growth," states Youth Ministries leader Ivan



Romaniuk. "We also create conditions and organize events where they can meet, share experiences, and support each other. The two years of COVID and three years of war have significantly distanced us from each other, but thanks to

God's help, we were able to hold large-scale events three times a year that brought the youth of Ukraine together. Each church became a center of influence, and new youth projects have been born during the war. All of this showed that for God, difficult circumstances have never been an obstacle to doing mission when there are people full of the Spirit and determination."

Vitalii and Liudmyla Kryvoi, Adventist Family Ministries coleaders, report that many Ukrainian families lost their homes and were forced to move.



Some families are separated by distance, building their relationships in difficult conditions. Unfortunately, some

families have lost loved ones. But despite all the challenges, Adventist families are united in fulfilling Jesus' commission. Prayer meetings, family programs, and family marathons have helped families to look forward with faith and trust their lives to the Lord.

The Women's Ministries Department organized three-day "Women of Hope" retreats, which were held in each of the eight conferences to provide spiritual, physical, and psychological support. The



department also created a Telegram channel "Women's Ministry in Ukraine" to strengthen communication with

UKRAINIAN UNION REPORT CONTINUED

1,960 Women's Ministries leaders and active sisters of local churches.

The reality of church life and ministry in Ukraine during the past three years has been challenging, reports Vitalii Kryvoi, union treasurer, but it has been a joy to see the words of Ephesians 2:4 fulfilled: "God . . . is rich in mercy . . ." It was thanks to Him that we were blessed to receive everything we needed for "life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). Only the Lord gave strength to everyone for daily work, and His love opened our hearts to be faithful to Him in tithes and sacrifices in gratitude for God's protection and defense. It was thanks to His mercy that we gratefully felt the prayer and financial support from brothers and sisters from all over the world, which demonstrated in practice that the love of Christ unites us.

DEPARTMENTS SERVING OTHERS

ADRA Ukraine. ADRA Ukraine proved to be a powerful force in the context of the full-scale war in Ukraine. During the past three years, Leonid



Rutkovskyi reports that the organization, with the support of international donors, has become a lifeline for the most vulnerable

populations, including internally displaced persons, senior citizens, orphans, and veterans. The organization helps children from orphanages and shelters, hospital patients, large families, those who have lost their homes, and other people who have found themselves in difficult situations as a result of the war.



Education. The war brought great challenges to educational institutions in Ukraine. The Adventist college in Bucha was occupied for

a certain period, with active fighting around it. There were regular rocket attacks and power

outages throughout Ukraine. School students had to be in a bomb shelter at every air-raid alarm. But thanks to God, the Adventist college suffered only minor damage, and all students were evacuated in time. In addition, during the war, new schools were established, new school buildings were constructed, and the number of students in Adventist schools grew to exceed prewar levels, reports director Kostiantyn Kampen.



Angelia Adventist Clinic. Yurii Bondarenko, director, reports that despite the war in Ukraine, Angelia Adventist Clinic contin-

ues to fight for every suffering soul. During these difficult years of war, our mobile clinics have visited 200-plus locations, cared for 16,000 souls, and provided nearly 52,000 services. In Kyiv the Angelia clinic has treated more than 10,000 patients and provided medical treatment to hundreds of war victims in the hospital, restoring their physical, mental, and spiritual health. We have not given up, and will continue to fight for every soul entrusted to us by God as long as possible. The Lord heals through our weakness, showing His almighty power.



Chaplaincy Ministry.

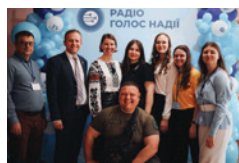
More than 170 pastors and church members are actively involved in chaplaincy ministry as volunteers led by Serhii

Lutskyiy. Our chaplains support the military and their families by visiting hospitals, providing spiritual and emotional support to wounded soldiers, praying for their recovery, and helping with transportation. They are also there for those who are experiencing a loss; they support the families of the deceased, organize funeral services, share the pain of loss, and help them find hope.

Prayer Ministry. During the war, prayer ministry became an invisible but powerful shield for the church and people of Ukraine. Led by Tetiana



teers working in the war zone. For the first time in the history of Ukraine, a National Day of Prayer was introduced on February 24, 2025, symbolizing unity and hope. The Back to the Altar initiative has become a movement that has united all departments of the church and directed them to revive personal, family, and church worship.



Hope Media Group.

Under the leadership of Maksym Krupskiyi, Hope Media Group is a unique missionary organization that unites Hope TV channel, Voice of Hope radio (AWR branch), Bible School, and Contact Center. Starting with the Bible School, founded in the early 1990s, the mission project has developed into a powerful organization, with seven production studios in different parts of Ukraine. Today it is through these media tools that the Lord touches hearts, comforts, changes lives, and encourages us to serve our neighbors. During the war we continue to broadcast around the clock, expanding our audience despite the difficult circumstances. Support this ministry by using the QR code.



Music Ministry. This special outreach of the church, headed by Olena Nosova and Yuliia Kampen, provides three main areas of support. Inside the church they provide organization, mobilization, and improvement of ministry in times of

Rutkovska, daily prayer chains united believers in a continuous request to God for protection, peace, and healing, as well as offering prayers for soldiers, refugees, and those who have lost loved ones. Prayer groups actively support pastors and volun-



testimony to God's grace for those affected by the war, including displaced persons, families of those liable for military service, and families of the dead. The ministry also organizes concert programs to raise funds for the military who need help at the front lines, as well as orphans and the hospitalized. Finally, they have compiled *Songs of Praise and Worship*, a new collection in Ukrainian, which includes 650 songs (scan the QR code to listen).



Source of Life Publishing House. During the war and up to the present, the publishing department, in collaboration with the publishing house, has continued to work toward its mission of publishing necessary literature. Director Viacheslav Kulaha shares that the publishing house has printed 380,220 copies of *Steps to Christ*; 100,000 copies of the *To Hope Again* magazine, by Mark Finley; 88,000 copies of the *Jesus Cares About You* magazine; 60,400 copies of *I Will Not Forsake You*; 5,600 copies of the Teen Bible; and 570,000 copies of *The Great Controversy*. We are grateful to God for the opportunity to sow "seeds of hope."

Our secretary, Volodymyr Velechuk, concludes that despite the difficult circumstances of war, migration of church members, challenges with personnel for ministry, tests of faith, etc., the church continues to fulfill the mission of Christ and respond to His call of "Surely I am coming quickly!" with "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). 🕊

SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION REPORT

Empowered by the Spirit



A teacher and her students at Mountain View Adventist College in Sydney, Australia

The Seventh-day Adventist Church dreams of God reproducing the dramatic growth of the early church through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and becoming a multiplying, disciple-making movement. Since the previous General Conference (GC) Session in St. Louis in 2022, the South Pacific Division (SPD) has had a taste of this divine outpouring of the Spirit. Among the 47 million people in our territory, one in every 55 people is now a Seventh-day Adventist. During this period we've seen 263,414 people commit to Jesus through baptism. As a result, our membership has grown to 854,497 and continues to rise. We give God all the glory for what He is doing in our midst.

GARDENING FOR CHRIST

Papua New Guinea for Christ was where God showed His extraordinary presence, triggering a movement across our division. Originally con-

ceived in 2016 at the request of the General Conference, the Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM) was invited to host a Total Member Involvement (TMI) reaping event in early 2020. The PNGUM and SPD planned and worked toward that event. In the lead-up the church in PNG began to fast and pray twice a week. Local missions developed their members into disciple-makers. Training in simple methods to share faith and build community was held all over the country. Discovery Bible Reading groups became popular. Lay leaders learned to read the Bible in stories and chapters, and ask questions that engaged families and workmates in the message of Scripture.

One of the most significant features of this preparation phase was the widespread adoption of what is known in PNG as "the gardening model of evangelism," based on the parable in Mark 4:3-20. This follows the basic life principle that we



reap what we sow. If you want to harvest a big crop, there is a process of preparing the soil, sowing the seed, cultivating the plants, harvesting the crop, and then multiplying the harvest. *Preparing the soil* refers to any activity that opens a person's heart to receiving God's Word. This includes listening, supporting health and education, ministering to those who are disabled, and offering welfare services, including food and clothing. ADRA was helpful in this phase, especially through village water supply projects.

Sowing the seed is sharing the gospel, telling the story of Jesus, reading the Bible, and allowing its message to bring about life change. GLOW tracts, *Signs* magazines, and other literature were widely distributed. Adventist World Radio (AWR) taught WhatsApp evangelism. *Cultivating the crop* saw people learning to read the Bible themselves, praying, and growing in their relationship with God while navigating trials and temptations with support from their community.

The harvest came through public evangelistic meetings, which were planned to happen in early 2020 but were stopped by the COVID pandemic. The pandemic, however, could not stop the church growing. When churches were closed, thousands of Discovery Bible Reading groups were formed and became the basis of 10,000 new house groups and churches being established. Some of these groups have now grown to 800 people. The harvest was eventually held from April 27 to May 12, 2024, at 2,300 sites around the country. The level of commitment was extraordinary. People used their holidays to participate. Some gave up their jobs for a year to help prepare. Businesspeople donated fuel, food, accommodation, and transport for guest presenters. Such sacrifices were made across the country.

The PNG church did not need to invite the rest of the world to participate, but I am so glad they did. From across the South Pacific Division, 230 preachers (pastors, evangelists, teachers, and others) traveled to PNG to participate. It did not matter if someone was preaching for the first time

Sowing the seed is sharing the gospel, telling the story of Jesus, reading the Bible, and allowing its message to bring about life change.

or was a seasoned public evangelist, whether leaning conservative or liberal, young or old, male or female—God moved powerfully wherever His Word was preached. The unity was evident at every level—GC, SPD, PNGUM, local missions/conferences, and local churches all working in harmony. In many places, messages delivered in English were heard by people in their own languages. There were miracles—those with disabilities walked, blind individuals could see, illnesses disappeared, demons were cast out. Hundreds of thousands sat through rain to hear the messages. And the greatest miracle of all—lives were transformed by the thousands. All who were involved knew we were experiencing something special. The local disciples and churches did not expect such an amazing response.

PNG for Christ was a God experience, and the impact extended beyond PNG. The preachers from Fiji, Samoa, New Zealand, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Australia, and beyond went home with amazing stories, igniting a desire for God to do the same thing in their countries. The strategic focus of the



SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION REPORT CONTINUED

SPD for the next quinquennium is to help each region prepare for such wonderful blessings from the Lord. We also thank God for the preachers from North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa who returned home from PNG with a new vision for their own territories.

Many churches in PNG more than doubled their membership because of PNG for Christ. This has created urgent needs—but the kind we rejoice in. The SPD has allocated funding for thousands of World Changer Bibles and Godpods for the new disciples of Jesus. The SPD and GC have provided funds for roofing iron for new church buildings. Ongoing training in discipleship, biblical teaching, and leadership development continues. A special focus on stewardship is helping people gain life skills—trades, agriculture, business—and understand the importance of putting God first. Tens of thousands of people are being trained in these programs. Local pastors, elders, and leaders continue their sacrificial service, nurturing and developing the new disciples.

GROWTH BEYOND

Beyond PNG, growth is being seen across the SPD, particularly in Adventist education. Our schools have grown from 81,871 students in 2022 to 91,250 currently. In each union, schools contribute at least 10 percent of baptisms. Teachers are dedicated to preserving and promoting Adventist identity. A special Abide Bible, created by the Australian Union, has been given to all staff in Adventist schools around the SPD, and is now being used for staff, family, and class worships. School chaplaincy is also growing in reach and impact.

Our tertiary institutions continue to flourish. Pacific Adventist University in PNG has grown from 1,300 to 1,700 students, and its graduates serve in government and public service roles across the Pacific. Fulton Adventist University College (Fiji) has increased enrollments from 900 to 1,301, and Sonoma Adventist College (PNG) from 579 to 731.

Mamarapha, the Indigenous Bible College for Australia, reaches 230 communities scattered across the country. The Omaura School of Ministry (PNG) is producing hundreds of grassroots pastors with little formal education but strong spiritual grounding. Avondale University is now ranked as Australia's number-one university for employment outcomes and student learning and care. Its nursing course is the best in the country. Across all our educational institutions the focus remains on spiritual growth, character development, service to others, and commitment to God's mission.

Radio ministry continues to be one of our most effective outreach tools. In Australia, Faith FM is a network of small low-powered community radio stations. The Australian Union with Adventist World Radio (AWR) have seen Faith FM's audience grow to 2.8 million listeners each month, with 28 percent coming from Hindu, Muslim, and Jewish backgrounds, and 30 percent being under the age of 30. Presenters host community dinners in broadcast areas, helping people to grow in faith and commitment to Jesus. Most countries in the South Pacific also have effective radio ministries, reaching and nurturing isolated and unreached communities.



One of the thousands of 10,000 Toes volunteers doing a free health check to help reduce type 2 diabetes.



International and local pastors baptize in the sea near Arawa, Bougainville, during PNG for Christ.

This year we are commemorating a century since Nevill Westwood, the first person to circumnavigate Australia by car, completed his journey. Nevill, a Seventh-day Adventist literature evangelist, and a friend left Perth, Western Australia, on August 4, 1925, in a 1923 Citroen 5CV and arrived back 147 days later. This year two church-led ministries are retracing Nevill's journey, stopping at many of the places he visited. This has encouraged community engagement, with 269 churches and 90 public evangelism programs. A book has been published, and literature evangelists are selling this alongside their regular life-changing and God-filled books.

The Trans Pacific Union has followed the gardening cycle of evangelism, combined with a yearly focus based on the GC "I Will Go" strategy—"I will go to my family" (2022), "neighbor" (2023), "workplace" (2024), and "to the ends of the earth" (2025). This year the union has trained and sent 47 volunteer missionaries to Timor Leste and West Indonesia under the Mission Refocus strategy. The SPD is committed to sending more missionaries to our partner Southern Asia-Pacific Division. PNGUM is partnering with the East Indonesia Union, Australia with the Southeastern Asia Union, and New Zealand with the Malaysia Union. God's message will indeed go to the ends of the earth.

The New Zealand Pacific Union has supported church planting and public evangelism in New Caledonia amid ongoing racial tension in the country. In French Polynesia growth continues through media and evangelism. In New Zealand (and the Cook Islands) Hope Channel on free-to-air TV receives approximately 100,000 viewers per month. The viewers are being connected with other digital ministries, and some are coming to church. The union's Digital Discipleship Conference had 230 participants.

Adventist Media supports the disciple-making movement through radio, television, and digital media. The annual Digital Discipleship training events throughout the SPD are equipping people to share our message in effective ways online. The Sabbath Gift initiative has seen 1.4 million hits, with 38,000 people searching the website for Sabbath information. Mums at the Table, a digital ministry that shares parenting tips for mothers, has developed into a face-to-face ministry. There are currently 19 Mums at the Table meet-up groups across Australia and New Zealand, with some of the mothers and children now being involved in Sabbath School, Adventurers, Pathfinders, and church.

Health Ministries continues to grow rapidly. The 10,000 Toes Campaign, focused on turning the tide on type 2 diabetes and other lifestyle

SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION REPORT CONTINUED



Preaching during one of the 2,300 sites for PNG for Christ

diseases in the South Pacific, ran a Mega Health clinic with AWR in Mount Hagen before PNG for Christ. A voluntary program, 10,000 Toes has now trained 13,000 representatives in 13 countries of the Pacific. The volunteers provide basic health assessments and run intervention programs following the Adventist health message. Many villages and towns have become open to the Adventist message after people have experienced life-changing results through new health habits.

In New Zealand and Australia, ELIA Wellness promotes wholistic health through its focus on seven dimensions of wellness—emotionally thriving, physically energized, socially connected, vocationally enriched, spiritually empowered, intellectually engaged, and environmentally attuned. Together with 10,000 Toes, they have established 137 wellness hubs that have run 7,000 wellness programs across the Pacific. ELIA's Lifestyle Medicine Center at Sydney Adventist Hospital (SAH) runs research-backed intervention programs. The SAH (affectionately known as the San) continues to train health professionals through partnerships with Avondale University (nurses) and the Australian National University (doctors). The San has a strong chaplaincy teach-

ing and training program and ministry. The Sanitarium Health and Wellbeing group continues to produce healthy nutritional meals—2.7 billion serves of food globally each year, with 2.1 billion of that in the South Pacific. The group is changing lives every day through whole-person health. The Sanitarium group is very active in support of community and church projects. They are major donors to school breakfast programs in Australia and New Zealand. People who connect with our movement know that their health can improve.

To fuel the missionary movement, the SPD has allocated 20 percent of its budget to strategic projects during the past decade. There is also a leadership academy helping leaders to grow spiritually and gain skills in change management and disciple-making.

There is much more that we can share about what God is doing through His people in the SPD. This is but a snapshot of the blessings we have received from Him. The SPD may be small, but we are delighted to be a part of God's global end-time movement, working together to fulfill the mission in every part of the world. ▀





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Fifth Business Meeting

SESSION ACTIONS (ADDITIONAL ITEM)

62nd General Conference Session, St Louis, Missouri, July 6, 2025, 2:00 p.m.

MAKING CHANGES (WHY A CHURCH MANUAL?) - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

VOTED, To amend, Making Changes (Why a *Church Manual*?) - *Church Manual* Amendment by adding “may” prior to “prepare a Supplement” on line 23 as follows:

In 1948, recognizing that local conditions sometimes call for special actions, the General Conference Executive Committee voted that “each division, including the North American Division of the world field, prepare each division of the world field may prepare a ‘Supplement’ to the new *Church Manual* not in any way modifying it but containing such additional matter as is applicable to the conditions and circumstances prevailing in the division; the manuscripts for these Supplements to be submitted to the General Conference Committee for endorsement before being printed.”—*Autumn Council Actions*, 1948, p. 19.

MAKING CHANGES (WHY A CHURCH MANUAL?) - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

RATIONALE: This provision allows the inclusion of detailed information specific to all world division to be included in the *Church Manual*, without specifying the inclusion of the North American Division.

VOTED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 1, Why a *Church Manual*?, pages 18-19, Making Changes, to read as follows:

Making Changes

The General Conference through the years voted important changes concerning the *Church Manual*. Realizing the importance of conducting the worldwide work of the Church “decently and in order,” the 1946 General Conference Session voted that “all changes or revisions of policy that are to be made in the *Manual* shall be authorized by the General Conference Session.”—*General Conference Report*, No. 8, p. 197 (June 14, 1946).

In 1948, recognizing that local conditions sometimes call for special actions, the General Conference Executive Committee voted that “each division, including the North American Division of the world field, prepare each division of the world field may prepare a ‘Supplement’ to the new *Church Manual* not in any way modifying it but containing such additional matter as is applicable to the conditions and circumstances prevailing in the division; the manuscripts for these Supplements to be submitted to the General Conference Committee for endorsement before being printed.”—*Autumn Council Actions*, 1948, p. 19.

The 2000 General Conference Session authorized the reclassification of some existing *Church Manual* material into the Notes section as guidance and examples rather than mandatory material, material and approved the process for making changes. Changes in the *Church Manual*, except for the notes and editorial changes, can be made only by action of a General Conference Session, where delegates of the world church Church have voice and vote. If a local church, conference, or union conference/mission wishes to propose a *Church Manual* revision, it should submit its proposal to the next constituent level for counsel and study. If that level approves the proposal, it submits the suggested revision to the next level for additional evaluation. If the various levels approve the proposal, it eventually comes before the General Conference *Church Manual* Committee, which considers all recommendations. If the *Church Manual* Committee approves a revision, it prepares it for presentation at an Annual Council and/or General Conference Session.

Revision of a note follows the same procedure. The General Conference Executive Committee may approve changes to the notes at any Annual Council.

The *Church Manual* Committee reports proposed nonsubstantive editorial changes to the main content of the *Church Manual* to an Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee, which may give final approval. However, in the event the Annual Council determines by one-third vote that an editorial change substantively alters the meaning of a passage, the proposed change must go to the General Conference Session.

At the final Annual Council of a quinquennium, the General Conference Executive Committee reviews all changes to the notes and coordinates the changes with any proposed amendments to the main content of the *Church Manual*.

A new edition of the *Church Manual* is published after every General Conference Session. The most recent edition should always be used. This edition incorporates amendments made at the postponed 2020 General Conference Session, which took place in 2022.

Geoffrey G Mbwana, Chair
Claude J Richli, Secretary
Hensley M Mooroooven, Actions Editor
Nichole N Miles, Recording Secretary

Seventh Business Meeting

SESSION ACTIONS

62nd General Conference Session, St Louis, Missouri, July 7, 2025, 2:00 p.m.

MEMBERS MOVING AWAY AND NOT REPORTING - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

RATIONALE: This editorial amendment provides clarity and make the wording consistent with section on Redemptive Membership Review (see 406-25G5a).

VOTED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 8, Discipline, pages 71-72, Members Moving Away and Not Reporting, to read

as follows:

Members Moving Away and Not Reporting—When members move, they should inform the clerk or elder of their new address. While remaining members of that church, they should report and send their tithe and offerings at least quarterly. If, however, members move without leaving a forwarding address and make no effort to contact or report to the church, and the church cannot

locate them for at least two years, then the church may certify that it has tried without success to locate the members and the members may be removed by a vote of the church. The clerk should record in the membership record: “Whereabouts Location unknown. Voted to designate as missing.”

FINANCE - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

VOTED, To cease debate and vote on the motion to amend the item, Finance - *Church Manual* Amendment.

FINANCE - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

VOTED, To amend the item, Finance - *Church Manual* Amendment, by retaining lines 40-43 on page 58 which read as follows:

“God has made the proclamation of the gospel dependent upon the labors and the gifts of His people. Voluntary offerings and the tithe constitute the revenue of the Lord’s work. Of the means entrusted to man, God claims a certain portion—the tenth. He leaves all free to say whether or not they will give more than this.”—AA 74

FINANCE - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

RATIONALE: This amendment expresses the importance of giving offerings as part of worship.

VOTED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 12, Finance, pages 141-147, to read as follows:

Finance

The biblical plan for the support of the work of God is by the tithes and offerings of His people. The Lord says, “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house” (Mal. 3:10). The Church has followed this plan from its earliest days.

The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy present a beautiful picture of giving as a part of worship. “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Cor. 9:7-8).

“The system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth—that God is the source of every blessing to His creatures, and that to Him man’s gratitude is due for the good gifts of His providence.”—PP 525.

“Tithes and offerings for God are an acknowledgment of His claim on us by creation, and they are also an acknowledgment of His claim by redemption. Because all our power is derived from Christ, these offerings are to flow from us to God. They are to keep ever before us the claim of redemption, the greatest of all claims, and the one that involves every other.”—6T 479.

“The tithe is sacred, reserved by God for Himself. It is to be brought into His treasury to be used to sustain the gospel laborers in their work.”—9T 249.

“He has given His people a plan for raising sums sufficient to make the enterprise self-sustaining. God’s plan in the tithing system is beautiful in its simplicity and equality. All may take hold of it in faith and courage, for it is divine in its origin. In it are combined simplicity and utility. . . . Every man, woman, and youth may become a treasurer for the Lord and may be an agent to meet the demands upon the treasury. Says the apostle: ‘Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.’”—3T 388, 389.

“God has made the proclamation of the gospel dependent upon the labors and the gifts of His people. Voluntary offerings and the tithe constitute the revenue of the Lord’s work. Of the means entrusted to man, God claims a certain portion—the tenth. He leaves all free to say whether or not they will give more than this.”—AA 74.

“Besides the tithe the Lord demands the first fruits of all our increase. These He has reserved in order that His work in the earth may be amply sustained. . . . If all would pay a faithful tithe and devote to the Lord the first fruits of their increase, there would be a full supply of funds for His work.”—6T 384.

“This matter of giving is not left to impulse. God has given us definite instruction in regard to it. He has specified tithes and offerings as the measure of our obligation. And He desires us to give regularly and systematically. . . . After the tithe is set apart, let gifts and offerings be apportioned, ‘as God hath prospered you.’”—RH, May 9, 1893.

“God has given special direction as to the use of the tithe. He does not design that His work shall be crippled for want of means. . . . The portion that God has reserved for Himself is not to be diverted to any other purpose than that which He has specified. Let none feel at liberty to retain their tithe, to use according to their own judgment. They are not to use it for themselves in an emergency, nor to apply it as they see fit, even in what they may regard as the Lord’s work.”—9T 247.

“If we love Jesus, we shall love to live for Him, to present our thank offerings to Him, to labor for Him.”—COL 49.

“Our heavenly Father did not originate the plan of systematic benevolence to enrich Himself, but to be a great blessing to man. He saw that this system of beneficence was just what man needed.”—3T 405.

Stewardship [See 407-25GSb]

Tithe [See 407-25GSc]

Offerings [See 407-25GSd]

General Financial Counsel [See 407-25GSe and 408-25GS]

STEWARDSHIP - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

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

STEWARDSHIP - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

RATIONALE: This amendment expresses the importance of stewardship in all areas of life.

VOTED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 12, Finance, page 142, Stewardship, to read as follows:

Stewardship

Christians are God’s stewards, entrusted with His goods blessings and, as His partners, responsible to manage them in harmony with His guidelines and principles. The divine counsel is that as His stewards, we are to “be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2) and live according to His will as we worship Him with our whole lives (Rom. 12:1-3, Gen. 12:2-3). Stewardship covers every aspect of Christian life and experience, including the stewardship of our means. (1 Cor. 4:2). Though the question of stewardship covers many aspects of Christian life and experience, without doubt the stewardship of our means is vitally important. It concerns the entire Church family and involves our recognition of the sovereignty of God, His ownership of all things, and the bestowal of His grace upon our hearts.

While this aspect of Christian stewardship concerns our material possessions, it nevertheless reacts upon defines our Christian experience. The Lord requires certain things of us, in order that He may do certain things for us. Our yielding obedience to what our heavenly Father requires places this phase of stewardship upon a high spiritual plane. He does not arbitrarily demand either that we serve Him or that we recognize Him with our gifts. But He in all areas of our lives, God invites us to obey His word and then trust His promises. Our conscientious stewardship of God’s blessings helps to build our faith. God has so arranged that when we work in harmony with Him in these things there will flow great spiritual blessings to us, to our own hearts great spiritual blessings.

"God desires all His stewards to be exact in following divine arrangements. They are not to offset the Lord's plans by performing some deed of charity or giving some gift or some offering when or how they, the human agents, shall see fit. It is a very poor policy for men to seek to improve on God's plan, and invent a makeshift, averaging up their good impulses on this and that occasion, and offsetting them against God's requirements. God calls upon all to give their influence to His own arrangement."—9T 248.

TITHE - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

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

OFFERINGS - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

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

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY - CHURCH MANUAL ADDITION

Upon the decision of the chair, the request to refer item, Transparency and Accountability - *Church Manual* Addition, back to the *Church Manual* Committee was accepted.

TO COOPERATE WITH THE CONFERENCE (ELDERS) - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

RATIONALE: This amendment expresses the need for local church officers and pastors to support the division offering plan.

VOTED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 9, Local Church Officers and Organizations, page 81, To Cooperate With the Conference (Elders), to read as follows:

To Cooperate With the Conference—The pastor, elders, and all officers should cooperate with conference officers and departmental directors in carrying out approved plans. They should inform the church about the offering plan adopted by the division for their territory and of all regular and special offerings, promote all the programs and activities of the church, and encourage all officers to support conference plans and policies.

Elders should work closely with the treasurer and see that all conference funds are remitted promptly to the conference treasurer at the time established by the conference. Elders should see that the clerk's report is sent promptly to the conference secretary at the close of each quarter.

Elders should regard all correspondence from the conference office as important. Letters calling for announcements should be presented at the proper time.

In the absence of the pastor, the first elder (see pp. 120-121) should see that the church elects delegates to conference sessions and that the clerk sends the names of delegates to the conference office.

TREASURER - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

RATIONALE: This amendment transfers the information on Sabbath School Offerings from the section on Sabbath School (see 407-25GSI) to this section on the Treasurer, and adds information on how this offering is allocated in different division Offering Plans.

VOTED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 9, Local Church Officers and Organizations, pages 88-91, Treasurer, to read as follows:

Treasurer

Because of the important functions of the treasurer, it is wise to choose one who can be elected to a new term of office to provide continuity in record keeping and reporting. Large churches may elect assistant treasurers as needed.

The treasurer can greatly encourage faithfulness in the returning of tithe and deepen the spirit of liberality on the part of the members. A word of counsel given in the spirit of the Master will help members to render faithfully to God His own in tithes and offerings, even in a time of financial stringency.

Treasurer the Custodian of All Funds—The treasurer is the custodian - No change

Conference Funds—Conference funds, which include tithe, all regular - No change

Sabbath School Offerings—Any offering collected during Sabbath School should be accurately recorded by the Sabbath School secretary, who will pass them on to the treasurer as soon as possible. Extension division offerings should be added to the offering regularly collected during Sabbath School.

In territories that have adopted the Combined Offering Plan, these offerings should be distributed according to the formula voted by the division for that Offering Plan. As part of the promotion of any offering collected during Sabbath School in those territories, the givers should be informed that part of their offerings will fund the quarterly world mission projects sponsored by the General Conference.

All Sabbath School offerings in territories that use the Calendar of Offerings Plan, and the Personal Giving Plan are for the support of the mission fields and are to be passed on in their entirety to the conference. These funds include the regular weekly Sabbath School offering, the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, Mission Investment, and Birthday-Thank Offering. These Mission funds will then be distributed by the conference according to policy. No mission funds may be retained by the church or conference.

In territories that have adopted the Personal Giving Plan or the Calendar of Offerings Plan, these mission funds are transmitted to the conference office as outlined in the section above ("Conference Funds"). The regular church budget should make provision for Sabbath School expenses, as for other ministries or departments of the church.

Sabbath School Funds—All Sabbath School offerings are to be passed over weekly to the treasurer by the Sabbath School secretary-treasurer, the treasurer keeping a careful record of all such offerings. These mission funds are transmitted to the conference office as outlined in the previous paragraph. Sabbath School expense funds are held in trust, subject to the orders of the Sabbath School council (See pp. 103-104.), to meet the routine expenses of the Sabbath School.

Local Church Funds—Local church funds include church - No change

Funds of Auxiliary Organizations—Auxiliary organization funds - No change

Safeguarding the Purpose of Funds—All offerings and gifts contributed by individuals for a specific fund or purpose, under all three offering plans, Funds—When an offering is taken for worldwide missions or for any general or local enterprise, all money placed in the offering plate (unless otherwise indicated by the donor) shall be counted as part of that particular offering. All offerings and gifts contributed by individuals for a specific fund or purpose must be used for that purpose. Neither the treasurer nor the board has the authority to divert any funds from the objective for which they were given.

The funds of auxiliary organizations, often donations given for specific purposes, are raised for that special part of the church's work for which the auxiliary organization is established. Such funds are held in trust by the treasurer, and they too may not be borrowed or in any way diverted by the treasurer or the board from the objective for which they were raised.

When an auxiliary organization is discontinued, the church in a regular business meeting may take action indicating the dispo-



CHRISTINA COLLARD

sition of any balance of funds in the account of the organization.

Money for Personal Literature Orders—Money for personal orders - No change

Proper Method for Payment of Money by Members—The treasurer - No change

Receipts to Members—Receipts should be issued promptly for all - No change

Proper Method of Remitting Funds to the Conference—In sending - No change

Preservation of Financial Documents—Financial - No change

Books Should Be Audited—The conference - No change

Relations With Members Confidential—The treasurer should [See 409-25GS]

WORLD HEALTH MINISTRIES SABBATH OFFERING - CHURCH MANUAL DELETION

RATIONALE: This section is being removed since this offering is no longer collected.

VOTED, To delete the *Church Manual*, Chapter 9, Local Church Officers and Organizations, pages 100-101, World Health Ministries Sabbath Offering, which reads as follows:

World Health Ministries Sabbath Offering—The entire World Health Ministries Sabbath Offering is sent to the conference to be distributed according to policy. Upon the church's request to the conference, up to 25 percent of the offering received in the church may revert to the church for health ministries programs.

SABBATH SCHOOL - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

RATIONALE: This amendment incorporates making disciples as an important part of Sabbath School and specifies the responsibility of the Sabbath School secretary. The details regarding Sabbath School Offerings are being moved to the section on the Treasurer (see 407-25GSg).

VOTED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 9, Local Church Officers and Organizations, pages 103-106, Sabbath School, to read as follows:

Sabbath School

The Sabbath School, the primary religious education program of the Church, has four purposes: study of the Scripture, fellowship, community outreach, and world mission emphasis. The General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department distributes the Sabbath School Bible study guide for all age levels,

provides designs for Sabbath School programming within the context of the various world division cultures, provides resources and training systems for Sabbath School teachers, and promotes world mission Sabbath School offerings. Because it incorporates the core spiritual elements of Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and mission, Sabbath School is an essential part of the church's strategy for making disciples.

"The Sabbath school is an important branch of the missionary work, not only because it gives to young and old a knowledge of God's Word, but because it awakens in them a love for its sacred truths, and a desire to study them for themselves; above all, it teaches them to regulate their lives by its holy teachings."—CSW 10, 11.

"The Sabbath school, if rightly conducted, is one of God's great instrumentalities to bring souls to a knowledge of the truth."—CSW 115.

Officers of the Sabbath School Council—The church elects - No change

Sabbath School Superintendent and Other Sabbath School Officers—The superintendent is the leading officer of the Sabbath School and should begin planning for its smooth and effective operation as soon as elected. The superintendent should support the plans and emphases of the conference Sabbath School department and should implement decisions of the Sabbath School council concerning the operation of the Sabbath School. The church may elect one or more assistant superintendents.

The secretary should complete the quarterly report on the appropriate form immediately after the last Sabbath of the quarter and mail it before the deadline to the conference Sabbath School and personal ministries directors. The secretary also should place a copy in the secretary's permanent file, give copies to the superintendent and the pastor, and present it at the business meeting. In addition, any offering collected during Sabbath School should be accurately recorded by the Sabbath School secretary, who will pass them on to the treasurer as soon as possible. (See p. 88.)

The investment secretary promotes the investment plan for mission support in all Sabbath School divisions and keeps all members informed as the program progresses.

The Vacation Bible School (VBS) director leads in organizing, promoting, and launching community evangelism through the annual VBS. The church may assign this responsibility to the children's ministries coordinator.

The council may appoint a music director for the Sabbath School in consultation with division leaders. As an expression of worship, music should glorify God. Singers and other musicians should be as carefully selected as are the leaders for other parts of the Sabbath School service and should be measured by the same standards. (See pp. 101, 155, 157.) The council also may appoint pianists and organists for the divisions.

Sabbath School Division Leaders—The church board elects a leader - No change

Sabbath School Teachers—The Sabbath School council chooses - No change

Sabbath School Offerings—The Sabbath School secretary should accurately record Sabbath School offerings and pass them on to the treasurer as soon as possible. Extension division offerings should be added to the regular Sabbath School offerings. Many Sabbath Schools take offerings for Sabbath School expense. With the exception of that expense fund, all Sabbath School offerings are for the support of the mission fields and are to be passed on in their entirety by the treasurer to the conference. These funds include the regular weekly Sabbath School offering, the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, Sabbath School Investment, and Birthday Thank Offering. Each is to be identified as a separate fund in the financial system of the church. Mission funds are distributed according to policy. No mission funds may be retained by the church or conference.

The Sabbath School expense offering and the mission offering, where the calendar of offerings is being used, shall not be taken as one offering and divided according to an agreed-upon formula or percentage. The offerings may be taken as combined offering where the church is operating under a division-approved combined offering plan.

Resources—For Sabbath School and personal ministries - No change

CONDUCTING THE COMMUNION SERVICE - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

VOTED, To cease debate and vote on the motion to amend the item, Conducting the Communion Service - *Church Manual* Amendment.

CONDUCTING THE COMMUNION SERVICE - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

VOTED, To not amend the item, Conducting the Communion Service - *Church Manual* Amendment, by replacing “may be” with “must” on line 33, page 73.

CONDUCTING THE COMMUNION SERVICE - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

VOTED, To cease debate and vote on the motion to amend the item, Conducting the Communion Service - *Church Manual* Amendment.

CONDUCTING THE COMMUNION SERVICE - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

VOTED, To not amend the item, Conducting the Communion Service - *Church Manual* Amendment, by removing “This offering is promoted as an addition to regular and systematic offerings” from lines 33-34 on page 71.

CONDUCTING THE COMMUNION SERVICE - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

VOTED, To cease debate and vote on the item, Conducting the Communion Service - *Church Manual* Amendment.

CONDUCTING THE COMMUNION SERVICE - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

RATIONALE: This amendment explains that any offering taken following the Communion service would be as an addition to

regular and systematic offerings.

VOTED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 11, Services and Other Meetings, pages 131-132, Conducting the Communion Service, to read as follows:

Conducting the Communion Service—Length of Service—Time is not the most significant factor in the communion service. However, attendance can be improved and the spiritual impact increased by (1) eliminating extraneous items from the worship service on this high day, (2) avoiding delays before and after foot-washing, and (3) having the deaconesses arrange the emblems on the communion table well beforehand.

Preliminaries—The introductory portion of the service should be brief, including only short announcements, a hymn, prayer, offering, and a short sermon before separating for the foot-washing and returning for the Lord’s Supper.

Foot-Washing—Each church should have a plan for meeting the needs of its members for the foot-washing service. (See Notes, #5, p. 188.)

Bread and Wine—Following the foot-washing, the congregation comes together once again to partake of the bread and the wine. (See Notes, #6, pp. 188-189.)

Celebration—Communion should always be a solemn, never somber, experience. Wrongs have been righted, sins have been forgiven, and faith has been reaffirmed. It is a time for celebration. Let the music be bright and joyous. The service should end on a high note, such as with a musical feature or congregational singing, followed by dismissal.

An offering for the poor is often may be taken as the congregation leaves. This offering is promoted as an addition to regular and systematic offerings.

After the service the deacons and deaconesses clear the table, collect the utensils, and respectfully dispose of any remaining emblems. In no case should these emblems be consumed or returned to common use.

REGULATION OF SOLICITING FUNDS - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

RATIONALE: The paragraph being removed is relevant to international service employees, rather than local church activities, and is unnecessary since the main point is covered in the first paragraph.

VOTED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 12, Finance, page 145 and 146, Regulation of Soliciting Funds, to read as follows:

Regulation of Soliciting Funds—The following are regulations for soliciting funds:

1. No conference, church, or institution, without special counsel and arrangement, shall plan work requiring solicitation of funds from outside its territory. Any solicitation within its territory shall be in harmony with local, union, division, and General Conference policies. No authority is granted to denominational employees representing special interests in one part of the field to solicit help in any other part of the field or in any other conference without arrangement with and written authorization from conference officers where the fund-raising would take place.

2. The following principles protect churches from unauthorized, fraudulent, and undenominational solicitation:

- a. Pastors and officers shall not grant the privilege of the pulpit to persons for fund-raising who have not been recognized or recommended by the conference. (See pp. 126-127.) No permission shall be granted to solicit funds either publicly or privately without such recognition.

- b. All funds contributed for any cause in response to appeals shall be passed through regular church channels.

- c. Conference and church officers shall take such steps as

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may be necessary to prevent unauthorized or illegal public solicitation.

3. No campaign other than the Annual Appeal (Ingathering or equivalent appeal), which involves using Appeal literature and containers with authorized Appeal labels, shall be conducted for the solicitation of money for either home or overseas mission work. Unions and conferences should prevent violations of this regulation.

4. Interdivision employees visiting their home churches or otherwise communicating with their home bases are asked to solicit funds only for enterprises included in the budget of appropriations, working in cooperation with churches and conferences to raise the funds required to meet the appropriations on which our world mission work depends. All such funds shall be passed through regular channels.

RELATIONS WITH MEMBERS CONFIDENTIAL - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

VOTED, To cease debate and vote on the item, Relations with Members Confidential - *Church Manual* Amendment.

RELATIONS WITH MEMBERS CONFIDENTIAL - CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT

RATIONALE: This amendment expresses the need for confidentiality regarding the giving practices of members.

VOTED, To amend the *Church Manual*, Chapter 9, Local Church Officers and Organizations, page 91, Relations With Members Confidential, to read as follows:

Relations With Members Confidential—The treasurer should always remember that relations with individual members are strictly confidential. The treasurer should never comment on personal giving decisions are strictly confidential. The treasurer and the pastor should never disclose individual giving records, except with consent of the giver, as required by law, as needed to audit or review the church's financial records, or as needed for the nominating committee process (see p. 118), the tithe returned by any member or on the income or anything concerning it except to those who share the responsibility of the work. Great harm may be caused by failure to observe this rule.

USE OF "DISCIPLESHIP" - CHURCH MANUAL DIRECTIVE

VOTED, To cease debate and vote on the item, Use of "Discipleship" - *Church Manual* Directive.

USE OF "DISCIPLESHIP" - CHURCH MANUAL DIRECTIVE

RATIONALE: This amendment intends to highlight the idea of active disciple-making and its evangelistic engagement.

VOTED, To approve a directive to amend the *Church Manual*, by replacing "discipleship" with "disciple-making" or "making disciples," where appropriate.

Artur A Stele, Chair
Gary D Krause, Secretary
Hensley M Mooroooven, Actions Editor
Marietta R Fowler, Recording Secretary

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT #7

VOTED, To approve the following partial report of the Nominating Committee:

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