In a stirring one-hour message to a Generation of Youth for Christ (GYC) convention, Seventh-day Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson exhorted the church's young adults to lives of faithfulness and Christian service.

"There is no doubt in my mind that the Lord is bidding us as a people to 'go forward' with 'no turning back,'" Wilson said, referring to the theme of the five-day event that drew thousands of Adventist youth to Maryland's largest city. Shortly after the morning meeting, an estimated 5,000 -- including Wilson and his wife, Nancy --
boarded 75 buses and fanned out across metro Baltimore to witness door-to-door and invite people to enroll in Bible studies.

During the sermon, which was streamed live on the Internet and broadcast on cable and satellite channels, Wilson placed special emphasis on practical Christian living, including habits of Bible study, prayer, witnessing and reading of the writings of Ellen G. White, a pioneering co-founder of the Adventist movement.

"Among some of our church members there is a tendency to downplay or even dismiss the counsels of the Spirit of Prophecy," Wilson said, referring to White's collected works.

"We hear today that while the writings of Ellen White may have some devotional value, we should not let her 'limited 19th-century perspective' shape our 21st century understanding of Bible truth," Wilson said. "But I believe, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church firmly and unashamedly upholds, that the Spirit of Prophecy is one of God's greatest gifts to His end-time remnant people. Trust the Word of the Lord, and follow the counsel of His humble messenger, Ellen White. Let no one -- local church leader, pastor, teacher, administrator, or anyone -- turn you from that complete trust in the Spirit of Prophecy, which points to the Bible as God's authoritative Word!"

Wilson repeatedly underlined the importance of personal commitment to the truths of Scripture and the mission of the church throughout his message.

"If the Seventh-day Adventist Church is ever going to meet the Lord's ideal of being His end-time remnant, not just 'we' as a denomination, not just 'GYC' as a supporting organization, not just 'the youth' as a particular demographic, but you as an individual must get to work for Christ in service for others," Wilson said. He urged the church's young adults to serve in their local churches, teaching Sabbath school classes, making home visits to encourage members and participating in church business meetings.

"Commit yourself to personal effort, individual involvement that will help your church family finish the work that God has entrusted to it," Wilson said. "As members of GYC, ... continue to work closely with your local church, your local pastor, your local youth organization, church administrators, and your conference, union, and division youth department directors."

He added, "Never allow anyone to accuse GYC of not working with the established church organization. Become so much a part of the outreach of this Advent movement that you are understood to be part and parcel of your local church and conference. Support and nurture other youth initiatives of your local church and conference that are Bible and Spirit of Prophecy-based."

Wilson emphasized the spiritual fruits of such cooperation: "When we each allow the Holy Spirit to change us into the likeness of Jesus, we will automatically begin doing the work that Jesus has commanded of us. In this way the character of Christ will be seen in what we do, not merely in what we don't do."

Wilson, who is the father of three young adult daughters, appealed to the crowd of an estimated 7,000 to make solid moral choices in daily living: "While society bombards you with the idea that youth is a time for reckless self-indulgence, God's Word declares otherwise," Wilson said. "It is my prayer that the greatest examples of our faith and lifestyle shown to the world will be the youth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

As he invited young Adventists to come to the front of the convention center and commit to greater service for the church, Wilson shared a personal motive for wanting the Second Coming of Christ to occur soon. The recent death of Neal C. Wilson, his father and a past president of the Adventist world church, he said, has intensified his desire to see the church complete its mission.

"I long for Jesus to come even more than I ever have," Wilson said. "Two and half weeks ago, I lost my precious, 90-year-old father. He went to sleep in Jesus, awaiting His soon return. As a pastor and church leader,
my father believed in the young people of this church -- and so do I! This church was started by young people, and by God's grace, young people will play a pivotal role in fulfilling its mission."

Wilson's charge drew an enthusiastic response from many in attendance. Chevone Simmonds, a college graduate student from Milledgeville, Georgia, said it was "great to have the new president [of the world church] talk and reaffirm us. The Holy Spirit is indeed here, and has challenged me to go back and do things better."

Ashley Kanomata, a high school senior from Lewisberg, Ohio, said Wilson's message "was very inspirational. Youth need to take a more active part in the work of the church."

And tenth-grader Heather Braman from Canby, Oregon, said of Wilson's message, "I thought it was awesome; I've never been so blessed before." A key takeaway for her, she said, was that "each person has an influence, [and] if we all work together, it's amazing what can happen."

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**Adventist Burrill, 92, likely sets marathon record**

*Great-grandmother "Glady-ator" is oldest woman to complete 26.2-mile race*

22 Dec 2010, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Ansel Oliver/ANN

Gladys Burrill says life is like a marathon. She would know -- she's 92 and believed to be the world's oldest woman to have completed an official 26.2-mile race.

Burrill finished the December 12 Honolulu Marathon, power-walking across the finish line at 9 hours, 53 minutes and 16 seconds. If her time is confirmed by the Guinness World Records company, she would surpass current record holder Jenny Wood-Allen, a Scot who completed the London Marathon at age 90, according to the company's website.

Like life, a marathon requires "perseverance, strength, courage ... you just have to keep going," Burrill said in a
recent phone interview from her condominium in Honolulu. "It's very important to think positive," she said.

Locally, she's a beloved competitor -- in 2004 the Honolulu Advertiser nicknamed her "the Glady-ator." She completed the city marathon each year from 2004 to 2007. But two consecutive un-finished attempts left some wondering if her marathon days were over.

In 2008, her husband died four days before the race. Burrill said stress and grief caused her to end her attempt just one mile short of the finish line. Last year, stomach cramps put her out at mile 16.

"I felt a lot more at peace this year," said Burrill, who walked four miles the day after the race and 10 miles two days later. She regularly walks 30 to 50 miles a week, usually with a training partner.

Her time this year might have been two minutes less -- she stopped to pray a few hundred feet from the finish line. "I thought my life would change once I crossed that line. I knew some people needed encouragement so I thought that was very important," said Burrill, who is a Seventh-day Adventist.

Burrill's son and grandson walked with her at different points during this year's competition. She has 18 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren.

Jim Barahal, president of the Honolulu Marathon, said he was astonished by Burrill's feat.

"I think it is absolutely unbelievable," Barahal told KITV News. "It is inspirational and to anyone who has an elderly parent or perhaps has lost someone to realize what she is doing at her age. It is just astonishing. What an inspiration."

Barahal and marathon organizers donated $2,500 on her behalf to the Lokahi Giving Project, which helps needy families with food and basic household necessities.

Burrill said she regularly uses her local notoriety to help such projects. "I know what it's like to go through poverty," she said.

The youngest of six kids of Finnish immigrants, her father died on her second birthday, leaving her mother to work their farm in Washington state. At age 11, she contracted polio but later recovered.

The mother of five, Burrill said she lost her son Kevin in 1985 to a brain tumor.

"I had a lot of obstacles in life, but God was always there with me," she said.

Burrill has been an airplane pilot and a mountain climber. She said she was always athletic -- as a child she ran up the hills above their farm.

Adventure and exercise have helped her deal with stress and grief throughout her life, she said. "Sometimes I go out [walking] with the weight of the world on my shoulders and come back feeling so strong and renewed."

When asked about fitness tips, she gives simple advice: "Eat healthfully and exercise. So many young people don't realize the importance of exercise. Just put one foot in front of the other."

Burrill said she's never used alcohol or tobacco and eats a healthy diet -- she's mostly vegetarian and skips dessert, she said.

Just as important, she said, is staying mentally well. "It's very important to think positive." Also, "dream about things you want to do in the future, even if they're impossible. It keeps you going."
Burrill would like to one day climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa and travel into space, but is content that neither will likely happen. She said she'll continue to encourage people and compete in charity walks.

Now on her own, Burrill divides her time between her home in Prospect, Oregon, and Honolulu, where she enjoys the weather and the lifestyle.

"People have such a great Aloha spirit here," she said.

The city mayor will honor her in a January 7 ceremony.