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Adventist Church membership audits planned, revised figures contemplated

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Church leaders, members feel 'strain' of turbulent economy, but giving remains faithful

2012 budget reallocations free up funding for unreached region; Hope Channel now separate financial entity

Process, timetable unveiled for review of theology of ordination

Move follows action at 2010 Session to review ordination's biblical origins

Trecartin appointed president of new Greater Middle East Union Mission

Szilvasi to continue as union secretary; Iseminger replaces Trecartin as undersecretary

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8 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Mark A. Kellner, Adventist Review

The growing number of people residing in the world's cities -- more people live in cities today than in rural areas -- signifies a clarion call for urban evangelism, Pastor Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, declared October 8 during Sabbath worship at the world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.
Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson calls for urban outreach worldwide, beginning with a launch in New York City. Church officers overseeing New York and the North American Division stand on the platform following his sermon appeal Saturday, October 8, at the Adventist Church's world headquarters. [photos: Ansel Oliver]

Taking his theme from Luke 19:41-42, Wilson noted that Jesus, on His final entry to Jerusalem, wept over the city where He was to be falsely accused, tried and crucified.

"Jesus wept for the city, [and] for the people of the city," Wilson said. "He knew what was to happen in a matter of days. ... He did not become angry or resentful. He wept! He wept for the people of the city!"

From that example, Wilson said, Christians can draw the conclusion that the people of the cities are important to God and to the fulfillment of the Gospel commission to take the good news into all the world.

"Our humble goal will be to reach approximately 650 major cities of the world before the next General Conference Session in 2015 all based on the power of the Holy Spirit through revival and reformation," he said.

"God is calling us to go into the cities of the world where the laborers are few and the harvest is plentiful," Wilson told the congregation of 500 world church leaders and guests. "Are you willing to weep and work for the people of the great cities? He calls for us to proclaim His love, His righteousness, His Three Angels' messages, His warning to a dying world, and the powerful announcement of His soon second coming!"

Wilson said, "Our Biblical message to the cities will unite us as a worldwide people and guard us from isolating ourselves from society and from each other. Our message to the cities of the world is that another city is coming: the New Jerusalem, a city of safety, hope and refuge with God at its center."

In a message simultaneously broadcast by the church's Hope Channel, Wilson said Jesus has issued a call to work in urban area, reflected in the writings of the denomination's co-founder Ellen G. White: "For over a hundred years, He has been asking His people to work the cities according to His methods. The Spirit of Prophecy [her writings] is replete with instruction about the work to be done for the cities ... it is a sustainable, careful, and comprehensive work ... a work that unites every aspect of church work in its approach to reaching the multitudes of the cities and will receive God's blessing when done according to His will with a humble heart."

He then quoted from White's book, "Medical Ministry," page 304: "The work in the cities is the essential work for this time. When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed."

Wilson recalled White's account of the "beehive of activity" Adventists created in San Francisco, California, at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries. He said that such efforts can, and should, be duplicated today.
"We need strategic planning, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for every city in every country in every division around the world that will produce that 'beehive,'" Wilson said.

He added, "Everyone can contribute to the development of the work-in-progress plans including our departments and institutions. We are calling for everyone to participate -- young and old, those who live in the cities and those who live in rural areas, pastors and church members, church organizations and church institutions. Every member involved in every possible way for comprehensive urban evangelism."

Wilson issued a challenge to his audience: "Are we willing to take the determined steps to put into practice God's plans for the urban centers of the world so that a 'mighty movement' will result, or will we turn and run like Jonah?"

Asserting the authenticity of the Scriptural account, he said, "This was a real story, a real Jonah, a real fish and a real appeal by God to go to Nineveh. Don't discount this story and others in the Bible as just symbolic or allegorical. The miracles of the Bible are true and demonstrate God's authority. Believe in the authenticity of God's Holy Word and the Spirit of Prophecy. God's Word speaks to us in clear language that shows He is in control and that we are to follow His instructions and live life to the fullest."

Wilson announced that the global urban outreach would begin in New York City, where the current G.C. president began his own ministerial work, and where Ellen White had directed special attention by Adventists.

"In 2013 we will launch a very specific, comprehensive, and sustained evangelistic approach for the world beginning in New York City," he said. "We want to start with New York City since Ellen White indicated that it should be a symbol as to how the rest of the world should be worked. Since large cities are made up of many smaller communities and neighborhoods, we expect to have approximately 150 to 200 evangelistic meetings in the metropolitan New York area from June 7 to 29 in 2013. ... By God's grace, I pledge myself and Nancy to hold one of those 200 evangelistic meetings in New York City in June 2013."

Wilson concluded his message with an appeal for prayer support and workers for the urban outreach.

"I have full confidence that God will fulfill His promise as we humbly submit our plans to Him and follow His
instruction in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Let us plead with the Holy Spirit for the power to accomplish the task entrusted to us," he said. "What a day it will be when Jesus returns and we join with those who have been saved from the large cities and the rural areas to ascend with the Lord to our eventual homes for eternity."

--read the full text of Wilson's sermon HERE.

Adventist Church membership audits planned, revised figures contemplated

Accuracy, transparency are key, says church statistician

9 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Mark A. Kellner, Adventist Review

The General Conference leadership is urging the world church's divisions to carefully audit membership rolls and remove the names of those no longer active in the movement or who have passed away, said David Trim, director of archives, statistics and research at the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Silver Spring, Maryland, world headquarters.

"The stones can cry out, but so can membership statistics if we have ears to hear. [The numbers] are telling us they are not entirely accurate," Trim told delegates to the church's 2011 Annual Council meetings. "I believe that inaccuracies have not crept in through a desire to deceive, but by not keeping proper records. Have we overstated gains and understated losses?"

The proposed audits and reviews are expected to take place over the next few years, Trim said, and likely will result in a lower overall membership number than the recent claims of between 16.5 million and 17 million baptized members worldwide. Although it has been estimated by church officials that as many as 25 million to 30 million people worldwide attend Adventist worship services weekly, the church only counts as members those who have been baptized. Traditionally, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has only baptized those old enough to make a conscious decision to unite with the church, and does not baptize infants.

The call for greater scrutiny of membership statistics reflects a desire for accuracy and transparency, Trim said. As servants of God and of His church, the first need is to be open and above-board in representing its membership numbers.

"This doesn't mean that God hasn't blessed the church or is not blessing," Trim said before his report. "It's just
that we're being honest."

G. T. Ng, Adventist Church executive secretary, told Annual Council delegates on October 9, "The numbers game is not about numbers. It's about people -- souls that are lost twice. If these souls had not been lost, we would have a membership of 24 to 25 million."

Such losses may only be for a season, however. On October 7, Jairyong Lee, president of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, acknowledged the loss of tens of thousands of names from the rolls during a recent audit. However, new evangelistic efforts in China and other nations in the division have replenished those numbers, and new members are being disciple and nurtured so they remain active.

Another division president voiced support for the move: "I really want to appreciate the Secretariat for this bold move," said Paul Ratsara, president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, one of the world church's largest regions. "This is a test of accountability and transparency for all of us. I believe we really have to do this."

Organized in 1863, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is the top administrative body for the church, which is active in 203 countries and territories worldwide. The Annual Council meetings are designed to inform the movement's world leaders of current trends and needs, as well as to take actions necessary to carry forth Adventism's mission.

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**Church in Middle East now an attached field of world headquarters**

_Israel Field also transferred to direct headquarters oversight_

10 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

Top leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church voted yesterday to transfer administrative oversight of church operations in the Middle East from the church's Trans-European and Euro-Africa divisions to church headquarters.

The newly formed Greater Middle East Union Mission is home to 21 countries and more than 500 million people, and has 2,900 Adventists worshipping in 70 churches and companies.

Under the new organization, South Sudan becomes part of the church's East-Central Africa Division and the church's Southern-Asia Pacific Division will oversee the Pakistan Union. Culturally, Pakistan can better be
served by the division that also serves Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, leaders said.

The church's Euro-Asia Division will absorb Afghanistan. The world church headquarters will directly oversee the Israel Field and the new Greater Middle East Union Mission. That union mission will also include the Trans-Mediterranean territories. South Cyprus will remain in the Trans-European Division.

Despite more than 100 years of outreach to the region, data indicates that the mission of the church is moving with challenges in the region, members of the church's Greater Middle East and Mediterranean Survey Commission said in an October 9 report to Annual Council delegates.

Attaching the "high priority" Middle East region directly to world church headquarters will enable quicker implementation of projects, commission members said in the proposal. "It would make movement of personnel, funding and ideas easier across what used to be different division boundaries," they said. The realignment would also group countries together that have similar cultures.

Commission members also said the Middle East "should be the focus of the entire church," citing another advantage for moving regional leadership to oversight by world church headquarters.

Bertil Wiklander, president of the Trans-European Division, addresses the chair with his support as well as some concerns about the proposal to adjust administrative structure in the Middle East, which includes his division. Behind him, Bruno Vertallier, president of the Euro-Africa Division, waits to speak. The proposal also affected his division. The proposal later passed.

In 2010, the church tasked the commission with studying Adventist work in the Middle East, with the intent that a territorial realignment might be necessary. A study of historical, demographic and statistical evidence seems to indicate that the church grows best when overseen by a unified and geographically contiguous body, commission members said.

The Middle East is part of a region called the 10/40 Window, where two-thirds of the world's population lives, only one percent of which is Christian.

"I want you to think of the incredible challenges in the Middle East," world church President Ted N. C. Wilson told delegates. "We want to give full credit to the workers already there," he added.

Bertil Wiklander, president of the Trans-European Division said he and his team had some reservations about parts of the proposal but would fully support it if approved by the world body.

"We have personal ties to our people in this area, and we have spent much time in prayer with and for them. We have thoroughly enjoyed working in our attached fields and have poured our best time, talents and resources into it," Wiklander said.

Euro-African Division President Bruno Vertallier said that in recent years, the region has redoubled its work in
the Middle East and that the administrative shift would be considered difficult for some people.

"Our recommendation is to strongly emphasize the training of local people," Vertallier said. "We have some wonderful people working there right now and we must add to them. The great challenge will be to train more people in local fields and give them the best tools possible to meet the needs of Adventists and community members."

Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson said the move would signal that the region is a world priority for the denomination.

"The Middle East is a unique place," Wilson said. "We have to take this area of world field as a special burden. We're also grateful for what the Euro-Africa and Trans-Europe have done to foster and nurture Adventist mission in those areas of Middle East."

Adventist world church approves urban focus; New York City is first launch site

Adventist world church approves urban focus; New York City is first launch site

9 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

Top leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today endorsed a plan to evangelize the world's cities, beginning in 2013 with New York City. The vote came as a practical response to world church President Ted N. C. Wilson's call yesterday to prioritize outreach to large urban centers, where half of the world's population now lives.

Historically, rural areas have responded to the Adventist Church's message of hope more than cities, said world church Secretary G. T. Ng. "We are a church of islands and villages," he told more than 300 delegates at world church headquarters on October 9 for Annual Council business meetings.

"Urban evangelism can be overwhelming," Ng added.

An estimated 19 million people who speak some 800 languages live in New York City.

Outreach to cities weighed heavy on the minds of even the first Adventists, Ng said. Church co-founder Ellen G. White wrote that she spent many sleepless nights thinking about evangelism to big cities. "It is distressing to
think that they have been neglected for so long," she wrote.

Even today, "most of the church's resources are going outside the cities, even though most of the needs are now inside cities," said Gary Krause, director of the church's Office of Adventist Mission. Echoing a well-known statement from White, Krause said the church must follow Jesus' New Testament example of outreach -- He mingled with people, showed care and compassion and met physical needs before calling anyone to follow Him, he said.

The plan that delegates endorsed today hinges on both corporate and personal evangelism. Between 2012 and 2015, church leaders will equip pastors and lay members alike to launch outreach efforts in more than 650 of the world's major cities. To better reflect the "cultural diversity and unique character" of the church's thirteen world divisions, regional administrators will choose the outreach cities and craft an approach that will best connect with their respective communities.

Adventist evangelist Mark Finely compared the nine-page blueprint on urban evangelism to the U.S. Declaration of Independence. "This will be looked on as one of the most significant turning points within the modern-day Seventh-day Adventist Church," Finley said. "This document is more than paper; it can be a north star in modeling comprehensive care and compassion to big cities."

While delegates demonstrated collective support for the plan, several offered suggestions on how to strengthen it. Many said it should acknowledge the work of Adventist evangelists and laypeople already ministering in New York City.

Leslie N. Pollard, president of church-run Oakwood University, said such people should be recognized in the document. "We would like to see these people affirmed for sticking with the city, not abandoning it. We don't want to invalidate them because now the big boys from Washington are coming in," Pollard said.

G. Earl Knight, president of the church's Greater New York Conference, echoed Pollard's call for collaboration with those on the ground in New York City. "They know the challenges. Some who entered that battlefield got discouraged and left. Some stayed and fought the battle." Knight said. By working together, and through the world church's "insight, vision and all the resources we can find," the church can accomplish "this tremendous task," Knight said.

Other delegates questioned whether a major evangelism effort in New York City could be sustained "long after the lights go out, the speakers leave and the tent is pulled down." One suggested a lifestyle center focusing on the church's emphasis on healthy living.

"I promise you that Health Ministries is here to train, to coordinate with you, to come work with you in the
trenches to do whatever we can, because Health Ministries is a first way we can approach evangelism," said Allan Handysides, Health Ministries director for the world church.

"Every department of the General Conference will bend their backs to provide you in the field with whatever resources you feel you need to accomplish whatever you feel is most appropriate for your region," Handysides said.

Earl Knight, president of the Greater New York Conference based in Manhasset, urges the Executive Committee chair for the world church to work collaboratively during an urban mission focus with those who are already working in urban areas.

The church's educational institutions, too, can play a central role in making urban evangelism sustainable, Pollard said.

"Our schools could serve not just as havens," Pollard said, "but as mission centers." Schools could also coordinate research on which methods of urban evangelism are most effective, turning evangelists into "professors of ministry," Pollard said. Here again, he called for input from those already ministering in the city. "They have a strong sense of what works and what doesn't work."

Trevor Baker, president of the church's regional Northeastern Conference, reiterated the need for a "sustained presence" in New York City after the "onslaught of evangelism."

Ministry to New York City has been a longtime passion of Wilson's. The world church leader's 1981 New York University doctoral dissertation was "A Study of Ellen G. White's Theory of Urban Religious Work as it Relates to Seventh-day Adventist Work in New York City."

While the church's focus on urban evangelism will begin in New York City, Wilson reminded delegates of the global scope of the effort. He visited cities in Europe several times this year and told delegates he holds a "deep burden" for the region.

--Click HERE to read the document on mission to cities.
Church leaders, members feel 'strain' of turbulent economy, but giving remains faithful

2012 budget reallocations free up funding for unreached region; Hope Channel now separate financial entity

10 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

Every Sabbath last year, Seventh-day Adventist church members put an average of US$40 million into offering plates worldwide for an annual total of $2 billion.

"To me, that is a miracle," world church Undertreasurer Juan Prestol told Annual Council delegates during a treasury report at world church headquarters this morning.

"No one is forcing anyone to do this. People do it voluntarily because the Lord impresses them to give. This is a tremendous testimony," Prestol said, particularly amid today's turbulent economic climate.

Part of that $2 billion in tithes and offerings received worldwide in 2010 is the foundation for the church's 2012 budget, church leaders said. Delegates voted today to budget $166.7 million for the church's appropriations next year.

One-third of the increases in the appropriations budget will go toward outreach, ministry and leadership to the 10/40 Window. The church's Loma Linda University, South American Division and Inter-American Division were among institutions and entities to see decreased funding as the church frees up money for the largely unreached area of the world stretching from Northern Africa across the Middle East and Asia.

The reallocation, recommended in 2008 by the church's Appropriations Review Commission, recognizes growing self-sufficiency in some areas, transferring additional funds to meet needs in other regions.

"In the past, we have had a tendency to pay financial attention to regions with high membership, but many are now capable of carrying their own weight," world church Treasurer Robert E. Lemon told delegates.

The church is seeing a dramatic shift in funding as Adventist membership worldwide grows. Between 2006 and 2011, church income from outside North America nearly doubled. While tithe from North America still funds a majority of the church's world budget, the church's finances are more vulnerable to fluctuations in currency exchange rates than in previous years.
The strengthening of the U.S. dollar against many of the world's currencies has a "major effect" on the church's work worldwide, said world church Treasurer Robert E. Lemon. While a strong dollar can cramp the world church budget, regions that receive appropriations in U.S. currency now find the amount stretches further, offsetting some of the loss, Lemon said. Church financial officers deal with the opposite effect when the dollar weakens.

As the church, especially in the U.S., continues to emerge from a tenacious recession, Lemon said steady tithes and offerings are a blessing. Church members have felt the "strain" of uncertain financial times, but remain faithful, he said.

Tithe returned by members in North America is up 3.5 percent as of August 2011 compared to the same time last year, Lemon told delegates. Outside North America, tithe grew 17 percent in the same time period.

While some of that increase can be attributed to currency exchange rates, tithe in local currency has also seen "substantial increases," Lemon said said.

Likewise, mission offerings from outside North America increased 20.5 percent or $7.2 million, due to actual offering increases coupled with favorable exchange rates, Lemon said.

World church Stewardship Ministries Director Erika Puni asked the chair to consider including a line in the approved budget expressing gratitude for the work of local stewardship leaders.

Educating members in Biblical stewardship is a "crucial area" of work, said Ted N. C. Wilson. Last year, the world church leader challenged regional church leaders to hire full-time stewardship directors. "Some of you have done that, and I believe you are seeing an incredible return on that investment," Wilson said.

Responding to another delegate's question, Wilson also pledged to make the church's financial reports available to the world church in an "easy electronic format." For members back home who sacrifice to return faithful tithes and offerings, knowing how the church handles those funds is rewarding and motivating, the delegate said.

Delegates also voted today to establish the church's official television network, Hope Channel, as a separate financial entity and provide it with the appropriate working capital as of January 2012. The network is already separately incorporated.

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**Process, timetable unveiled for review of theology of ordination**

*Move follows action at 2010 Session to review ordination's biblical origins*

10 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Ansel Oliver/ANN

Church leaders today announced a timetable for the process for studying the theology of ordination over the next few years, the latest action following a [promise at last year's General Conference Session](#) to study the issue.
Artur Stele, a world church vice president and director of the Biblical Research Institute, said the process would examine the foundation of ordination as well as its implications for church practices.

Leaders announced the plan during Annual Council, a yearly business meeting of the denomination's Executive Committee.

The Biblical Research Institute at the world church headquarters will coordinate the process of studying ordination with corresponding Biblical research committees in each of the church's 13 world divisions, said church President Ted N. C. Wilson.

"This will be a very careful process," Wilson said. "We're letting you know how the world field will be involved."

Each division is asked to request their Biblical research committee to study the theology of ordination and its implications for church practices in that region.

Stele announced the timetable as follows:

In November 2013, each division committee at their 2013 year-end meetings will review the study made by their division Biblical Research Committee and recommend it to the Biblical Research Institute director for consideration by a Theology of Ordination Study Committee. The General Conference Administrative Committee will also appoint a Theology of Ordination Study Committee with appropriate division representation.

From December 2013 to June 2014, the Theology of Ordination Study Committee will analyze the materials received from the divisions and prepare a combined report.

In June 2014, the report will be reviewed by General Conference executive officers and later by with the President's Administrative Executive Council and the General Conference Administrative Committee.

In October 2014, the General Conference administration will process the report for Annual Council, which will review the report and, if needed, take any appropriate action. If voted material needs to be placed on the 2015 General Conference Session agenda, it will be processed accordingly.

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Trecartin appointed president of new Greater Middle East Union Mission
Church officials appointed Homer Trecartin to serve as president of the church's Greater Middle East Union Mission. The union was formed yesterday when Annual Council delegates voted to transfer administrative oversight of the church in the Middle East to world church headquarters. [photo: Ansel Oliver]

Seventh-day Adventist leadership today appointed world church Undersecretary Homer Trecartin to serve as president of the church's newly formed Greater Middle East Union Mission.

Trecartin has previously served as secretary-treasurer of the former Middle East Union and planning director for the world church's Office of Adventist Mission, among other positions.

Trecartin replaces Kjell Aune, who served as president of the region when it was overseen by the church's Trans-European Division. Annual Council delegates voted yesterday to make the region an attached field of world church headquarters.

"By doing this, we've set this region up as a global priority," said Gerry Karst, an Annual Council delegate and former world church vice president. "I want to appeal to this body to view it as [such] and give it the resources necessary for it to be successful," said Karst, who served as president of the church's Middle East Union in the 1980s.

Leadership also voted to reappoint Tibor Szilvasi, who will continue in his capacity as union secretary for the region.

World church Secretary G. T. Ng said church leaders will review possible candidates for the union's treasurer and announce their nomination at a later date.

Delegates voted current Associate Secretary Myron Iseminger to replace Trecartin as world church undersecretary.
Jesus was being honored on His triumphal entry to the city. He and the large crowd of people were outside of that ancient capital of Israel. As they came to the crest of the hill overlooking the city, Jesus stopped. There was Jerusalem in all its glory reflecting the light of the declining sun. The pure white marble of the temple walls and the gold-capped pillars created a dazzling sight. As Jesus looked down on the city, Luke 19:41 and 42 record His reaction and response, “Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying ‘If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from our eyes.’”

Jesus wept for the cities……for the people of the cities He knew what was to happen in a matter of days. He knew the rejection of His mission and the terrible results that would ensue.

He did not become angry or resentful. He wept! He wept for the people of the city! He wept with unutterable sadness because of the lack of responsiveness to His love. He wept for what was to become of them because of
their rejection of Him as the Messiah and the truth of His Word. How many of us are weeping with Jesus today, weeping for the cities and people of this world? How many of us are looking upon the cities of this globe with unutterable love, as Jesus did?

If ever there was a time to weep with Jesus for the cities, the suburbs, and the people of this world, it is now! For centuries, most societies had been agrarian and rural. Most people lived in the countryside and sought a livelihood from the soil. As of about three years ago, there are now more people living in the cities than in the rural areas of the world. One estimate indicates that by the year 2050, approximately 70% of the world’s projected 10 billion people will be living in the cities! Are you weeping for the cities yet? What are willing to do for the people of the cities? This burden was heavy on the heart of Christ. It is a heavy burden on my heart. I want to lay it on your heart today.

Matthew 9:35-38 records Christ’s ministry for those in the cities and the villages, “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep
having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’”

My fellow leaders of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church, God is calling us to go into the cities of the world where the laborers are few and the harvest is plentious. God is calling us to have compassion on the multitudes…….people for whom He wept, died, rose and intercedes in the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary at this very moment…….people for whom He will return in the near future at His second coming! Are you willing to weep and work for the people of the great cities? He calls for us to proclaim His love, His righteousness, His three angels’ messages, His warning to a dying world, and the powerful announcement of His soon second coming!

He is waiting for us to take up the role as the uniquely-called people of God, His remnant church fulfilling the characteristics of Revelation 12:17----those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. For over a hundred years, He, God, has been asking His people to work the cities according to His methods. The Spirit of Prophecy is replete with instruction about the work to be done for the cities of the world……..it
is a sustainable, careful, and comprehensive work…….A work that unites every aspect of church work in its approach to reaching the multitudes of the large cities and will receive God’s blessing when done according to His will with a humble heart.

One hundred one years ago, in 1910, God spoke through Ellen White to reinvigorate the work for the cities and speaks to us today in the book Medical Ministry, page 304, “There is no change in the messages that God has sent in the past. The work in the cities is the essential work for this time. When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed……..As a people we are not half awake to a sense of our necessities and to the times in which we live. Wake up the watchmen. Our first work should be to search our hearts and to become reconverted. We have no time to lose upon unimportant issues.”

This is God’s message for us today in response to revival and reformation. We are to be reconverted and to focus on the important issues God has for His remnant church to address. We are to be completely engaged in our overall quinquennial theme and mission to “Tell the World.” We are to be prepared personally and corporately by the Holy Spirit in our devotion and humble submission to the will of
God. The world around is crumbling and disintegrating-----politically, economically, socially, ecumenically, and in the natural world. I believe Jesus truly is coming again. Let us not get caught up in the devil’s trap questioning the fact that Christ’s coming is soon and thereby participate in the age-old complaint recorded by Peter in II Peter 3:3-9, “……knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation……….do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” The fact is that Jesus is coming soon! He, Himself, said three times in Revelation 22, “I am coming quickly.” Martin Luther proclaimed profound thoughts found in The Great Controversy, page 303, “‘God will not, cannot, suffer this wicked world much longer.’ ‘The great day is drawing near in which the kingdom of abominations shall be overthrown.’”

We are living at the end of time. The signs around us are ominous and God is calling each of us to be revived and
reformed through His Spirit so we can increase our work in the cities according to His plan. When that is done, we are promised that we will see “a mighty movement such as we have not witnessed.” Let us pray that the latter rain will fall in abundance as we carry out the work for the cities. God’s people are to accomplish this great task through revival, reformation and a quiet submission to the Word of God, and counsel from the Spirit of Prophecy, intense prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a willingness to obey God’s commands. Let us move forward in our work using Christ’s method as indicated in *The Ministry of Healing*, page 143, “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour

1. mingled with men as one
2. who desired their good.
3. He showed His sympathy for them,
4. ministered to their needs,
5. and won their confidence.
6. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”

Let’s follow Jesus in our personal spiritual growth and in all that we do for Him. Revival and reformation is so important and is why everything we do this quinquennium and until the Lord returns is to be laid on that foundation.
We need the Lord’s power, not our own. As Zechariah 4:6 says, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts.” The Holy Spirit’s power is vital, absolutely vital, for direct outreach to the most challenging bastions of the devil’s power----the cities. The result of personal and corporate revival and reformation through the power of the Holy Spirit is outreach and evangelism.

Recently I read a proposed article by someone who was grateful for the call for revival and reformation but wondered about outreach. Apparently, we had not successfully communicated that “evangelism” was part of the title of the revival and reformation document voted last year at the 2010 Annual Council. Revival and reformation has affected everything we are doing including our overall evangelistic theme of “Tell the World”; also the Great Controversy Project, the projects and work of our various dynamic departments of the church, our administrative activities, and our institutional activities. There should be no doubt that as a product of revival and reformation we are calling for the greatest evangelistic explosion and outreach for the urban and suburban centers of the world----comprehensive urban evangelism----“Mission to the Cities.”

In addition to reaching rural areas, much valiant work has been done to reach the cities with the three angels’
messages. We have focused on “Hope for the Big Cities,” on the 10/40 Window, and more. The dedicated regional conferences in the North American Division, their presidents, conference staffs, evangelists, pastors, and members have made unusual efforts to reach the urban centers in their territories and God has blessed. Seventh-day Adventist Church entities all over the world have given attention to the challenge of the large cities. However, the work in the cities is not easy and many times we have given uneven, sporadic, inconsistent attention to the enormous task entrusted to our church to “work the cities as God would have them worked.”

That is why, as we approach Christ’s soon coming, we are to follow God’s leading in launching an all-out evangelistic approach on the large urban and suburban centers of the world with every type of outreach possible as outlined in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

This is a comprehensive call for Mission to the Cities! The Spirit of Prophecy, God’s practical counsel for His remnant people, indicates a wide variety of outreach activities under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These approaches and programs will involve the use of centers of influence, local churches, church members, teams of young people involved in a variety of outreach initiatives, literature evangelism, small group outreach, medical missionary
work, health lectures, door-to-door missionary work, community services and social work that follow Christ’s methods, cooperating with Adventist Community Services and ADRA; integrated media evangelism, counseling centers, reading rooms or Adventist Book Centers, Bible studies by members, young people and Bible workers, child evangelism, personal evangelism and witnessing, public evangelism, and many more methods yet to be initiated by the Holy Spirit. We need pastors and lay people working together. Pastors and health professionals are to work, as indicated by the Spirit of Prophecy, in a “blended ministry.” We need denominational organizations and supporting ministries working together in soul winning for the great cities of this world. We need thousands of church members distributing Christian literature like “The Great Controversy” in the project to distribute that marvelous book to neighbors and friends during 2012 and 2013 that will alert millions of people to the times in which we live. It is the book Ellen White indicated she wished circulated more than any other she had written. It appears at this point, brothers and sisters, that over 150 million copies of the classic, abridged, revised, or children’s versions will be distributed worldwide and for this we praise the Lord! All of us are to be reading The Great Controversy this year in anticipation of sharing
it next year. Nancy and I are reading it and are thrilled! I read from it this morning.

We need everyone dedicated to a comprehensive and sustained evangelistic outreach that will replicate the urban evangelistic work being done in the city of San Francisco in the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century, which Ellen White called, interestingly, a “beehive” of activity. In the *Review and Herald* of July 5, 1906, she wrote, “During the past few years the ‘beehive’ in San Francisco has been indeed a busy one. Many lines of Christian effort have been carried forward by our brethren and sisters there. These included visiting the sick and destitute, finding homes for orphans and work for the unemployed, nursing the sick, and teaching the truth from house to house, distributing literature, and conducting classes on healthful living and the care of the sick. A school for the children has been conducted in the basement of the Laguna Street meetinghouse. For a time a workingmen's home and medical mission was maintained. On Market Street, near the city hall, there were treatment rooms, operated as a branch of the St. Helena Sanitarium. In the same locality was a health-food store. Nearer the center of the city, not far from the Call building, was conducted a vegetarian cafe, which was open six days in the week and entirely
closed on the Sabbath. Along the water front, ship mission work was carried on. At various times our ministers conducted meetings in large halls in the city. Thus the warning message was given by many.”

We need a strategic plan, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for every city in every country in every division around the world that will produce this “beehive.”

The General Conference has organized a Comprehensive Urban Evangelism Committee with dedicated leaders who are helping to make the committee come alive. Tomorrow, during the Annual Council proceedings, in the Council on Evangelism and Witness, you will hear much more about the beginning plans for “Mission to the Cities.” Everyone can contribute to the development of the work-in-progress plans including our departments and institutions. We are calling for everyone to participate----young and old……those who live in the cities and those who live in rural areas……..pastors and church members.........church organizations and church institutions.........Every member involved in every possible way for comprehensive urban evangelism---“Mission to the Cities.”

By God’s grace, we need to revive, as our strategic planning vice president, Mike Ryan, likes to say, “a culture
of involvement.” Let’s dedicate our lives, energies, talents, resources, and time to finishing God’s work through His power so we can go home! *Christian Service*, page 83, indicates, “I was shown God’s people waiting for some change to take place, ---a compelling power to take hold of them. But they will be disappointed, for they are wrong. They must act; they must take hold of the work themselves, and earnestly cry to God for a true knowledge of the work.” Let’s pray for “a true knowledge of the work” and guidance in initiating the greatest approach to reaching the cities of the world with the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14.

Our “Mission to the Cities” must be based on Biblical principles and Spirit of Prophecy counsel. This approach includes the profound and heavenly-inspired plan outlined by Ellen White which shows an “in-out” approach to the cities. Let me explain: Inside the cities we are to have “centers of influence” which can include churches, health clinics and centers, reading rooms, vegetarian restaurants, community centers, etc. Outside of the cities we are to have “outpost centers” which include training centers for evangelistic workers, lifestyle health centers, and places for urban evangelistic workers to live or at least to visit to be refreshed in a country setting close to God’s second book of nature.
Are we willing to take the determined steps to put into practice God’s plans for the urban centers of the world so that a “mighty movement” will result or, will we turn and run like Jonah? Do you sometimes feel like that hesitant prophet who found himself in the belly of the whale after resisting God’s call to preach to that city?

This was a real story, a real Jonah, a real fish and a real appeal by God to go to Nineveh. Don’t discount this story and others in the Bible as just symbolic or allegorical. The miracles of the Bible are true and demonstrate God’s authority. Believe in the authenticity of the Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy. God’s Word speaks to us in clear language that shows He is in control and that we are to follow His instructions and live life to the fullest. Let us participate in "Revived by His Word," as outlined last night.

*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, page 113, indicates, “Let us give more time to the study of the Bible. We do not understand the word as we should…..When we as a people understand what this book means to us, there will be seen among us a great revival.” God’s Word is foundational for all that we accept, believe and stand for as truth and for revival and reformation.

Unfortunately, Jonah didn’t fully accept God’s Word because of fear. But he quickly learned to cry to the Lord
“out of the belly of Sheol” as recorded in Jonah 2:2 and God heard his voice. God will do the same for us when we cry to Him for help with “Mission to the Cities”—our mission to the Ninevehs of our day. We, along with Jonah can say as recorded in Jonah 2:6-7, “……..You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple.” Brothers and sisters, when we get afraid and hesitate in our “Mission to the Cities,” remember the Lord and plead with Him in prayer to open the way before us. God will point us in the direction of the urban centers of the world as He did when Jonah 2:10 records that, “…..the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.” The Lord then charged Jonah the second time to go to the city and proclaim the message of salvation indicating in Jonah 3:2-3, “’Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.’ So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord.” The results of Jonah’s preaching, blessed by the Holy Spirit, were extensive and heart-changing. The city repented. Of course, the preacher, Jonah, still had not learned his lesson of compassion for the people of the city and felt hurt that God did not destroy the city as he had predicted. Jonah even became despondent over a plant that withered and died, showing more pity on the plant than on the
people of the city. I want to challenge us today……where is our pity? On the city or on ourselves? God spoke directly to Jonah and speaks to us today in Jonah 4:11, “And should I not pity Ninevah, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left…….” Today, God is calling the Seventh-day Adventist Church to bring spiritual discernment to the millions of people in the cities of the world as represented by that great city, Nineveh.

What message and understanding of Scripture will we bring to the cities of this world? What power will drive “Mission to the Cities?” The power is not in human beings, in committees, in policies, in presidents, in officers or department directors…….the power and truth presented is in the Word of God, in the Spirit of Prophecy, in earnest prayer, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The truth, presented to the cities, will portray Christ and His eternal, saving love and the plan of salvation. It will show that an all-knowing God, the Father, God, the Son and God, the Holy Spirit have existed from eternity and into all eternity. It will lift up Christ’s righteousness, His three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, and His soon second coming. It will point people to the true worship of God and the keeping of His commandments including the
precious fourth commandment as an eternal sign of loyalty----the seventh-day Sabbath, the capstone of His creative power on this earth in six, literal days. Recently, the small 60-member, rural Andrews, North Carolina, Seventh-day Adventist church decided to organize a “Sabbath Celebration.” They invited community people and Seventh-day Adventists. About 1400 people showed up, including some community guests. The sacredness and rest of the Sabbath is vitally important to the people of the cities. Our Advent message will point to the mortality of our lives and warn people about mystical beliefs and spiritualism. It will bring new life through an emphasis on healthful principles and health reform. It will share the magnificent sanctuary message pointing to the Lamb of Calvary and our High Priest who is interceding for us during the investigative judgment in the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary.

It will portray the unique calling of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as God’s humble, remnant people who proclaim with love a prophetic warning message as we unselfishly serve others. It will shield us from ecumenism and give us the power to proclaim the distinctive, historicist, prophetic messages of Daniel and Revelation. Our Biblical message to the cities will unite us as a worldwide people and guard us from isolating ourselves
from society and from each other. Our message to the cities of the world is that another city is coming…….the New Jerusalem, a city of safety, hope and refuge with God at its center. The real answer to all the woes and afflictions and difficulties of today’s earthly cities is the soon second coming of Jesus Christ!

God is calling us to work the cities without delay. Listen to counsel from the Spirit of Prophecy on this great cry for comprehensive urban evangelism and the use of medical missionary work in our approach to the cities:

“It is in the cities of the nations that the gospel worker finds the greatest impenitence and the greatest need…….and what God’s servants do to warn and prepare men for the day of judgment, must be done quickly. The conditions that face Christian workers in the great cities, constitute a solemn appeal for untiring effort in behalf of the millions living within the shadow of impending doom.” Evangelism, page 25.

“As a people we need to hasten the work in the cities, which has been hindered for lack of workers and means and a spirit of consecration. At this time, the people of God need…….to humble their minds, and to be attentive to the will of the Lord, working with earnest desire to do
that which God has shown must be done to warn the cities…….” *Evangelism*, page 30.

“Again and again I am instructed to present to our churches the work that should be done in our large cities…..Often we have been told that our cities are to hear the message, but how slow we are to heed the instruction. I saw One standing on a high platform with arms extended. He turned and pointed in every direction, saying, ‘A world perishing in ignorance of God’s holy law, and Seventh-day Adventists are asleep.’ ” *Evangelism*, page 32.

“...I appeal to our brethren who have heard the message for many years. It is time to wake up the watchmen.......The burden of the needs of our cities has rested so heavily upon me that it has sometimes seemed that I should die. May the Lord give wisdom to our brethren, that they may know how to carry forward the work in harmony with the will of the Lord.......The cities must be worked. The millions living in these congested centers are to hear the third angel’s message.” *Evangelism*, pp 34-35.

“...Get the young men and women in the churches to work.....Combine medical missionary work with the proclamation of the third angel’s message......Send out
into the churches workers who will live the principles of health reform.” *A Call to Medical Evangelism*, page 17.

“During the night of February 27 (1910), a representation was given me in which the unworked cities were presented before me as a living reality, and I was plainly instructed that there should be a decided change from past methods of working……I urged that companies be organized and diligently trained to labor in our important cities. These workers should labor two and two, and from time to time all should meet together to related their experiences, to pray and to plan how to reach the people quickly……” *A Call to Medical Evangelism*, page 13-14.

“Henceforth medical missionary work is to be carried forward with an earnestness with which it has never yet been carried. This work is the door through which the truth is to find entrance to the large cities.” *A Call to Medical Evangelism*, page 17.

“How shall we reveal Christ? I know of no better way……than to take hold of the medical missionary work in connection with the ministry……The gospel and the medical missionary work are to advance together. The gospel is to be bound up with the principles of true health reform.” *A Call to Medical Evangelism*, pp 41-42.
“No line is to be drawn between the genuine medical missionary work and the gospel ministry. These two must blend. They are to be joined in an inseparable union even as the hand is joined to the body.” A Call to Medical Evangelism, page 44.

As we unfold and develop together plans for working the cities through the Holy Spirit’s leading, keep in mind that there are many cities that Ellen White talked about but there is one in particular with symbolic importance……..New York City. It represents the world since it has so many nationalities and languages. It is like a mini United Nations. It is a great center of finance, banking, trade, art, transportation, fashion, advertising, and media.

Evangelism, page 384, says, “Those who bear the burden of the work in Greater New York should have the help of the best workers that can be secured. Here let a center for God’s work be made, and let all that is done be a symbol of the work the Lord desires to see done in the world…."

Much work has been done in New York, but we have yet to see that city become “a symbol of the work the Lord desires to see done in the world.”
When I was a college student, I appealed to several conferences to sponsor me to the seminary including the Greater New York Conference. My father told me if I really wanted a challenge I should go to Greater New York. By God’s grace, it worked out and changed my life forever. I had the wonderful and challenging opportunity to pastor and serve in evangelism in the metropolitan New York area for seven years. A few months ago, I visited with Elder Lloyd Reile, now about 95 years old, who as conference president, called me to work in the Greater New York Conference. He and his wife were a strong encouragement to me in my work in that challenging city of New York. Thank the Lord for our retirees and pioneers.

Some people love New York and others hate it. Graffiti I saw in New York captures the challenge of living and working in the large cities of the world. It said, “Concrete jungle: A hard life.” There are many good and bad things about New York, like any big city, but the people are there……people who need Christ and the hope of the Advent message. Since that time, I have always had a strong burden for the cities and New York City in particular. So much is yet to be done.

Selected passages from *Evangelism*, pages 385-389, indicate, “Our manner of working must be after God’s order. The work that is done for God in our large cities
must not be according to man’s devising.....Your work in New York has been started in right lines. You are to make in New York a center for missionary effort, from which work can be carried forward successfully. The Lord desires this center to be a training school for workers, and nothing is to be allowed to interrupt the work......We need a sanitarium and a school in the vicinity of New York City, and the longer the delay in the securing of these, the more difficult it will become.....It would be well to secure a place as a home for our mission workers outside the city.......To start medical missionary work in New York will be the best thing that you can do......In New York there are many who are ripe for the harvest......You should feel a decided responsibility for the work of New York City.....God wants the work to go forward in New York. There ought to be thousands of Sabbathkeepers in that place, and there would be if the work were carried on as it should be.”

I want every administrator here and around the world to feel a heavy burden for the cities. God will bless our evangelism plans for the cities as we allow the Holy Spirit to lead in those plans and follow Biblical and Spirit of Prophecy counsel. It is the reason for revival and reformation......for intense prayer......for humility before the Lord. Let us never ignore God’s pleading with us about the work for the cities.
According to the biography of Ellen White by her grandson, Arthur White, as recorded in Volume 6 of that series, Ellen White placed the burden of New York and the cities before church leaders on June 11, 1909. She earnestly appealed for unprecedented activity to evangelize the cities. Later she wrote that, "Some of you did not understand the message that I bore, and may never understand it."--Letter 32, 1910. In September, 1909, Testimonies for the Church, volume 9, contained a section entitled "The Work in the Cities" which we will read next week in Annual Council. She said, "Behold the cities and their need of the gospel." 9T 97. Ellen White’s strong burden would not go away. She sent messages to Elder A G Daniells, the General Conference president, asking for more action. The General Conference allocated some funds to city evangelism and to New York City. However, Elder Daniells wrote about the difficulty getting qualified workers for the cities and didn’t engage in the work with full focus.

Ellen White was frustrated with the lack of enthusiasm and indicated that something had to be done. She complained that the leaders were not caring for the unworked cities as they should.

Shortly after laying some modest plans for the cities, Elder Daniells was in California and went to Elmshaven, Ellen
White's home, to report to her about a reasonable effort for the cities that would encourage Ellen White. However, she refused to see him! The messenger of the Lord refused to see the president of the General Conference, sending word to him that when the president of the General Conference was ready to carry out the work that needed to be done, then she would talk with him. Elder Daniells realized the church had not measured up to what God wanted to see done in the cities. He then wrote a humble and contrite letter to Ellen White. He finally received a message from her indicating that, "When the president of the General Conference is converted, he will know what to do with the messages God has sent him." *Biography, Vol 6, p 224.*

The message Ellen White had given on June 15, 1910, declared, “I am charged with a message to you both that you need to humble your hearts before God. Neither Elder Prescott nor Elder Daniells is prepared to direct the work of the General Conference, for in some things they have dishonored the Lord God of Israel. High, pure devotion to God is required of men placed in your position. I am to tell you that neither of you is prepared to discern with clear eyesight that which is needed now……The work in the cities has not yet been carried forward as it should be. Had the president of the General Conference been
thoroughly aroused, he might have seen the situation. But he has not understood the message that God has given.” *Biography, Vol 6, p 225.*

Elder Daniells thought he was doing something for the work in the cities but it was not what God wanted. He was shaken with the messages from the Lord. The General Conference finally established a special committee of seventeen people to work on plans for the cities. They released Elder Daniells for one year from his normal duties as General Conference president to give evangelism leadership for the cities as GC president. He went to New York City for evangelism and finally fulfilled what God had intended for him to do in evangelistic work for the cities which helped launch a new day in Seventh-day Adventist city evangelism.

As president of the General Conference today, I do not want to be accused by the Lord of dishonoring Him by ignoring the cities. I humble myself before Him and ask that I might be completely converted to God’s plans for the people of the cities. Today, along with me, I want you to share that great burden of Jesus for the people of the cities. I have had in my office ever since I worked in New York City, the powerful picture of “Christ of the City.” Since New York, it has hung in my offices in Abidjan, Silver Spring, Moscow, Hagerstown, in Silver Spring again,
and now in my current office. I also have the same picture facing me every day as I sit at my home desk. Let our hearts cry out to God on behalf of the millions in the cities of the world----in your division, in your union, in your conference, in your mission or in your field. As leaders, never ignore our great task using every means possible for our “Mission to the cities.”

Tomorrow morning, during the Council of Evangelism and Witness, we will present the unprecedented “Mission to the Cities.” Of course, our church is currently doing many good things in the cities of the world, but in the year 2013 we will launch a very specific, comprehensive, sustained evangelistic approach for the world beginning in New York City. We are calling, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, for a comprehensive approach that will continue until Jesus comes.......not a hit and run approach to evangelism, but a long-term, sustained, Spirit-filled approach. We want to start with New York City since Ellen White indicated that it should be a symbol as to how the rest of the world should be worked. Since large cities are made up of many smaller communities and neighborhoods, we expect to have approximately 150-200 evangelistic meetings in the metropolitan New York area from June 7-29, 2013. Many preparatory outreach activities by church members will take place in a
comprehensive manner that will lead up to the June 2013 evangelistic meetings. We are working closely with the North American Division, Atlantic Union, Columbia Union, Greater New York Conference, Northeastern Conference, New Jersey Conference and the Allegheny East Conference in the detailed planning for the evangelistic meetings in New York.

I want to invite the presidents and spouses of those four conferences in the New York area and the two union presidents and their spouses to come to the platform. I want you to pray for:

Pastor and Mrs Earl Knight of the Greater New York Conference

Pastor and Mrs Trevor Baker of the Northeastern Conference

Pastor and Mrs Jose Cortes of the New Jersey Conference

Pastor and Mrs Charles Cheatham of the Allegheny East Conference

Pastor and Mrs Don King of the Atlantic Union

[And we will also pray for] Pastor and Mrs Dave Weigley of the Columbia Union [,who unfortunately could not be with us today.]
I’m going to ask Pastor and Mrs Dan Jackson to come forward as Pastor Jackson prays for these leaders and their territories in the task ahead in New York City. Then I want to make an appeal for you to help these leaders and those they represent in that great territory of metropolitan New York.

(Pastor Jackson prays)

Please stay on the platform as we now make an appeal for the world field to help New York City be the symbol as to how God wants the rest of the world to be worked.

Let us pledge ourselves to pray for these leaders, their pastors, church workers, and church members. By God’s grace, I pledge myself and Nancy to hold one of those 200 evangelistic meetings in New York City in June 2013.

We have worked with the thirteen division presidents to send expert evangelists from their divisions to New York City to join us in holding meetings. Many of my fellow GC officers and colleagues will be holding some of these evangelistic meetings. Many from the Atlantic and Columbia unions including local pastors in the New York area will be actively involved. Pastor Mark Finley will lead an evangelistic field school of evangelism during those meetings. By God’s grace, there will be a marvelous
harvest of souls in metropolitan New York and a continued, sustained evangelistic work.

This is only the beginning. Evangelists from the various divisions who will have been with us in New York will return to their home divisions to hold evangelistic series and field schools of evangelism for union and conference workers in a division-selected major city. Unions will then select a city to hold a major evangelistic series and field school. Then each conference or local field will select and hold an evangelistic series and field school in a major city. Our humble goal, by God's grace, will be to reach approximately 650 major cities of the world before the next General Conference Session in 2015, all based on the power of the Holy Spirit through revival and reformation. The 777 prayer initiate should focus our attention on the incredible Mission to the Cities. Please pray like never before for God’s work in the great cities of the world. We are powerless except as we rely on our Chief Urban Evangelist who, as He looked over Jerusalem, wept!

How many of you as God’s leaders in this wonderful Advent movement assembled at this 2011 Annual Council are willing to accept the challenge of a sustained, comprehensive urban evangelistic outreach -----“Mission to the Cities?”
Prayerfully decide in your mind as you listen to the appeal of the people of the cities that Karla Buckley will share in this special song entitled “Lonely Voices.” After she sings one stanza, I’m going to ask you to take a stand for “Mission to the Cities.” (Karla sings one stanza)

Division presidents, are you willing to stand with your spouses in support of this huge burden the Lord has placed on the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

Division officers and spouses, will you stand for Mission to the Cities?

My fellow GC officers and spouses are you willing to stand?

Our GC departmental directors, staffs and spouses are you willing to stand?

Union presidents, officers and spouses, are you willing to stand and take this challenge to your great territories?

Institutional leaders, pastors, teachers, young people, lay members, spouses, everyone ..........are you willing to stand and participate in Mission to the Cities?

Remember that “When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed.” I have full confidence that God will fulfill His promise as we
humbly submit our plans to Him and follow His instruction in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Let us plead with the Holy Spirit for the power to accomplish the task entrusted to us. What a day it will be when Jesus returns and we join with those who have been saved from the large cities and the rural areas to ascend with the Lord to our eventual homes for eternity-----homes in the New Jerusalem and homes in the country in the new earth. Let us dedicate ourselves to God’s comprehensive plans for “Mission to the Cities.”

Karla, sing the last stanza as we consecrate ourselves to the Lord.

Now, I want you to turn to the one next to you and in prayer seal your commitment to Christ and His plea to us for the “Mission to the Cities.” When you are finished, please remain standing for our closing prayer.
The world’s cities present a formidable challenge for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. More than half of the world’s population lives in cities with approximately 200,000 people moving from rural communities to urban communities every day, globally. This is around 70 million per year, or 130 every minute. (www.worldchanging.com)

“In 2008, for the first time, the world’s population was evenly split between urban and rural areas.” (www.Population Reference Bureau, 2010) “Fewer than 30% of the world’s 2.5 billion people lived in cities in 1950. By 2050 almost 70% of the world’s estimated 10 billion people will do so according to the United Nations.” (Christianity Today, Urban Urgency, August, 2010)

For decades faithful Seventh-day Adventists have been living in and effectively sharing their faith in many of the world’s great cities. This initiative Mission to the Cities strongly affirms the work that these consecrated administrators, pastors, and lay people have done and are doing for Christ in urban areas. It will help nurture existing outreach activities and strengthen what God is already doing through His people. Nevertheless, in spite of our diligent efforts, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a relatively small presence in most of the world’s major cities. Our impact in the world’s great population centers is far less than our Lord’s desire for His Church. Mission is deeply embedded within the heart of God. He is, “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). He is a God who desires all “to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:4). His heart of divine compassion is broken over lost people. The New Testament Church caught Christ’s vision of reaching people in the cities and planted churches in Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Rome and throughout the Mediterranean world.
DIVINE COUNSEL

Jesus loves cities because He loves people and cities are where most people live. The Gospels describe Jesus relentless passion to reach people living in the cities of His day.

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered like sheep having no shepherd.

Then He said to His disciples, “the harvest is truly plenteous but the laborers are few, therefore pray the Lord of harvest to send laborers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:35-38)

Underlying Jesus evangelistic strategy to reach the multitudes was caring compassion. What He taught He lived. Christ’s method was simply meeting needs in the Father’s name and sharing the Father’s love and truth in a broken, hurting first century world. (Ministry of Healing, page 143) His first Century strategy has not changed in the 21st Century.

The Holy Spirit moved repeatedly upon Ellen G White’s mind regarding the need to develop broad, visionary plans to reach the teeming multitudes living in the cities. Here are two of her most significant statements regarding our work in the cities.

“There is no change in the messages that God has sent in the past. The work in the cities is the essential work for this time. When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed.”—Medical Ministry, page 304

“The importance of making our way in the great cities is still kept before me. For many years the Lord has been urging upon us this duty, and yet we see but comparatively little accomplished in our great centers of population. If we do not take up this work in a determined manner, Satan will multiply difficulties which will not be easy to surmount. We are far behind in doing the work that should have been done in these long-neglected
cities. The work will now be more difficult than it would have been a few years ago. But if we take up the work in the name of the Lord, barriers will be broken down, and decided victories will be ours.”—CME 14

**APPLYING DIVINE COUNSEL**

Ellen G White’s divinely inspired view of ministry in the cities includes comprehensive urban evangelism integrating physical, mental, social and spiritual outreach approaches to model the ministry of Jesus. It envisions pastors and laity united in mission, departments and ministries cooperating together, church-based lay training schools, city centers and rural training retreats working in unison to impact the city for Jesus. It includes the involvement of every entity and church member in an all out visionary strategy to reach as many people as possible.

The proposal in this document includes a comprehensive and sustained approach to reaching people living in the cities including fostering spiritual revival, establishing friendships, building relationships, personal witnessing, health ministry, youth ministry, community service, home groups, literature distribution, centers of influence, ministry to the impaired and disadvantaged, media outreach, public evangelism, and church planting. It includes all of our medical and educational institutions. It envisions the active involvement of every segment of the Church including administrators, departmental directors, pastors, educators, health workers, chaplains, literature evangelists, and most importantly lay people. It encourages every church member living in the world’s cities and those living around the cities to become actively involved in sharing their faith. It urges each member of the World Church to earnestly pray for God’s Spirit to awaken a spiritual interest in the hearts of people living in these large metropolitan centers and create receptivity for God’s last day message.

We cannot be content when tens of millions of people in the cities do not know Christ and are totally unaware of His last day message to the world. Yet the task of reaching the teeming multitudes in the cities is beyond our capacity to accomplish. No carefully crafted strategy will accomplish God’s goal. Only as the Holy Spirit gives life to our plans and empowers our actions will they be effective. Spiritual renewal is at the heart of all we do. Revival is paramount for “Only the work accomplished with
much prayer, and sanctified by the merit of Christ, will in the end prove to have been efficient for good” (DA 362). The call to reach the cities is personal. It is a call to a deeper experience with Christ ourselves and a call to earnest intercession as well as comprehensive planning and implementation. It is built completely on the foundation of revival and reformation for it is only going to be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit.

IMPLEMENTING DIVINE COUNSEL: THE PLAN

This plan envisions comprehensive evangelism initiatives in over 650 of the world’s major cities from 2012-2015 beginning in New York City. Why New York? It is one of the most populous and influential centers in the world. The New York City Metropolitan Area’s population is the United States’ largest, estimated at nearly 19 million people distributed over 6,720 square miles. New York exerts a significant impact upon global commerce, finance, media, art, fashion, research, technology, education, and entertainment. As many as 800 languages are spoken in New York, making it the most linguistically diverse city in the world. It is the home of the United Nations. The nations of the world look to and are represented in New York City. If we reach the people of New York we reach the cultures of the world.

Speaking of New York City, the messenger of the Lord declares, “This work should be continued in the power of the same Spirit that led to its establishment. Those who bear the burden of the work in Greater New York should have the help of the best workers that can be secured. Here let a center for God’s work be made, and let all that is done be a symbol of the work the Lord desires to see done in the world.”—7T 137

The General Conference, the North American Division, the Atlantic Union, the Columbia Union, the Greater New York Conference, the Northeastern Conference, the New Jersey Conference, and the Allegheny East Conference are cooperating to develop visionary, comprehensive evangelistic strategies for New York City including plans for fostering spiritual revival, equipping church members, broad-based, multi-faceted community outreach, personal and public evangelism, church planting and nurturing new converts on a sustained basis. It is imperative that we inspire and equip church members to be actively involved in a sustained and
ongoing evangelistic approach that does not culminate with a major public evangelistic meeting. A continuous emphasis on urban evangelism under the guidance of the Holy Spirit will constantly reach more people for the kingdom.

A major focus of “Mission to the Cities” is conducting 150-200 evangelistic meetings in New York City targeting varied ethnic and language groups in June of 2013. World Divisions will be invited to send some of their best evangelistic workers to participate in this massive outreach which will be a culmination of intense ongoing and sustained preparation and seed-sowing evangelistic activities. As indicated, these activities will continue after the June 2013 evangelistic outreach. During the June 2013 evangelistic outreach, an International Field School of Urban Evangelism focusing on all aspects of city mission and outreach will be conducted for the local and overseas evangelists during the evangelistic series.

As part of the overall plan for this quinquennium, in the very near future each of the thirteen World Divisions will choose a city within their Division territory based on the timetable included in the Addendum of this document and develop comprehensive strategies to reach the people in their designated city. Division leadership will need to consider strategies which are applicable and sustainable in their respective Divisions. Master plans to reach these large urban areas, as well as budgets, will need to be put in place.

The target goal is for each Division to conduct their major evangelistic reaping campaigns targeted at one city in their division by early 2014.

As part of the overall plan, each of the nearly 130 Unions, in the near future and in conjunction with their division leadership, will choose a city within their Union Territory and will develop comprehensive strategies to reach the people in their designated city. Strategies will be formulated and action plans implemented in harmony with the cultural diversity and unique character of each Union. Research and discussion will take place with those who have been engaged in urban evangelism. The goal is for each Union to conduct a major evangelistic reaping series in their target cities during the last quarter of 2014.
Again, as part of the overall plan, each of the over 500 Conferences/Missions/Fields will choose a city within their Conference and will develop comprehensive strategies to reach the people in their designated city. Conference/Mission/Fields administration along with local pastors will develop plans that reach both their chosen city and also their local churches for a comprehensive evangelistic initiative in 2015 just before the General Conference Session in San Antonio.

To accomplish an initiative this large will involve administrators, departmental directors, pastors, and lay people. It will involve churches and institutions, conference and supporting ministries, adults and youth, men and women, children—all of us. This is much more than 650 evangelistic meetings in major cities. Although there is a strong reaping component, this initiative is an all-inclusive comprehensive strategy urging every entity of the Church to place priority on mission and reaching lost people, especially in the urban centers of population on a sustained and ongoing basis.

**A DIVINE APPEAL AND PERSONAL COMMITMENT**

God’s heart is broken over lost people in the world’s cities and large metropolitan areas. It will take extraordinary vision and faith to put these plans into action but can we do any less than our Lord asks of us? Can we be content when tens of millions in the cities are totally unaware of Jesus and His love? Can we be satisfied with our current growth rates when the majority of earth’s population is unaware of God’s special truths and three angels’ messages in this critical hour of earth’s history? May our hearts beat with His in participating with Him in His mission to reach the cities. May the burden of His heart be the burden of our hearts. With eyes divinely anointed may we look beyond what is to what can be and what will be. May we by faith catch the vision and see tens of thousands of Seventh-day Adventists actively involved in witness, mission and making disciples for the Master. May each department be focused on mission. May every church be alive with the spirit of mission and thousands of new churches be planted in the world’s major cities and tens of thousands of new believers rejoicing in the glorious hope of the three angels’ messages. Remember that “When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed” (MM 304). God has promised the mighty movement. He will fulfill His promise as we humbly submit to Him, laying our plans at His feet, following His
instruction in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, and plead with the Holy Spirit for the power to accomplish the task entrusted to us by heaven itself. We enthusiastically anticipate Christ’s soon second coming when thousands upon thousands of saved people from the large cities and the rural areas will ascend together to meet the Lord in the air and be taken to our homes in the New Jerusalem, the ultimate city and safe haven for God’s people throughout eternity. Let us dedicate ourselves to God’s comprehensive plans for “Mission to the Cities.”
ADDENDUM: SUGGESTED TIMETABLE

October 2011 — Annual Council Presentation – Mission To the Cities–Comprehensive Urban Evangelism

November 2011 — Division Year End Meetings Presentation – Mission to the Cities

Evangelism Symposium at the General Conference

April 2012 — Division Target Cities presented at GC Spring Council

May 2012 — Mission to the Cities launched in the 13 Division target cities. Comprehensive strategies and action plans developed

October 2012 — Union Target Cities presented at Annual Council

November 2012 — Union Target Cities presented at Year End Meetings

April 2013 — Mission to the Cities launched in Union Target Cities. Comprehensive strategies and action plans developed

June 2013 — New York City evangelistic meetings in 150-200 sites coordinated by the North American Division with General Conference President, Ted N.C. Wilson, and participation by GC, Division, Union, Conference, pastors, and church members June 7-29.

— International Field School of Comprehensive Urban Evangelism for local and world participants

— New York City initiative continues following meetings/seminars/events
October 2013 — Mission to the Cities Division-wide Reports
Presented at Annual Council

— Division-wide evangelistic meetings launched in the 13 World Divisions between November 2013 and April 2014

April 2014 — Mission to the Cities reports of Division-wide Meetings presented at Spring Council

September-December 2014 — Mission to the Cities Evangelistic meetings Begin in 130 Unions between September and December. They will vary in both the length of the meetings and the exact time they begin due to local factors.

October 2014 — Mission to the Cities Union Reports at Annual Council

November 2014 — Mission to the Cities Division and Union Reports presented at Year End Meetings

— Union presidents present reports of Conference-wide Mission to the Cities initiatives

January- July 2015— Comprehensive evangelistic approaches in one major city in each of our 500 plus Conferences.

Although this proposal focuses on the larger urban areas, its principles can be applied to every church in the world field. We encourage each church to be actively involved in mission and ministry sharing Jesus with lost people everywhere. Mission to the Cities is part of the General Conference Tell the World initiative which includes Reach Up, Reach Out, and Reach Across. From January to July 2015 we encourage every congregation to participate in some form of evangelistic outreach.