Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters
October 18, 2011

The ANN news bulletin is a weekly recap of stories published since the previous week's bulletin. To see news, commentaries, photos and reader comments as they are published, visit news.adventist.org.

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'Spirited debate marks major discussion of women's roles in leadership

A request to allow commissioned ministers in the North American and Trans-European divisions -- those who have not been formally ordained as Seventh-day Adventist pastors -- to serve as conference presidents sparked
more than six hours of debate October 11, 2011, during the world church's Annual Council.

Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson says he is against the request of the North American Division to allow commissioned ministers to serve as conference presidents. NAD President Dan Jackson, left, and NAD Secretary G. Alex Bryant, center, sit nearby. [photos by Ansel Oliver]

In the end, the controversial measure was defeated by a written ballot vote of 167 to 117. The 50-vote margin defeating the NAD proposal also effectively ended the TED request, which would have permitted commissioned ministers to head church unions as well as conferences.

Noting a need for experienced leadership within the North American division's conferences, Dan Jackson, NAD president, said, "We believe the position of a president of a conference should be open to treasurers, to finance officers, to secretaries who are not ordained, to those who carry a commissioned minister's credential, but are not on an ordination track, including women."

Jackson added, "This is not a request for women's ordination. ... We are talking about governance and leadership."

Bertil Wiklander, Trans-European division president, voiced his division's request for a similar variance: "We need your help to allow all our members in outreach. Opening doors for women in leadership would strengthen growth of the church in Europe," he said, noting the Adventist Church "in the Trans-European Division faces an extraordinary mission challenge where people are extremely resistant to the gospel and joining a church is an exception rather than the norm in these countries."

Adventist Church President Ted N.C. Wilson took the rare step of relinquishing the chair during the morning session to speak in opposition to the NAD proposal.

"My thoughts and convictions are just those," Wilson said in introducing his comments. "They are not the collective decision" of the General Conference's administrative committee, known as ADCOM.

Bassey E. O. Udoh, president of the East Nigeria Union Mission, addresses the Executive Committee chair regarding the North American Division's request to allow commissioned ministers to serve as conference presidents. Two delegates wait their turn at an audience microphone in another aisle.
Wilson said he objected to the proposal on several grounds: First, he said, "the church is an ecclesiastical body, which is organized for the church. Leadership has been based, in the past, on trained leadership, on spiritual leadership." He said he wasn't suggesting commissioned ministers were not trained or not spiritual, but he did note a difference in those who are ordained: "According to scriptural injunction and our own history, we have a particular mode which we have followed in terms of top spiritual leadership."

Second, Wilson noted, since only ordained ministers can unite congregations and ordain local church elders and deacons, there was a question of a commissioned minister fulfilling all the tasks of a conference leader.

Third, he said, "whatever we vote, will have some impact on the world church. We have taken the position in the past that ordination is recognized around the world. We are not here in the U.S. as the American Seventh-day Adventist Church; we are, rather, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in America, in Germany, in Congo, in Brazil, in the Philippines."

Wim Altink, Netherlands Union president, noted the objections that many Adventist leaders from other parts of the world might have to the proposal. However, he pleaded for understanding: "It is not that we from our division want to impose this to other divisions," he said. "Have room and respect for certain fields in the world where this would be a great blessing. It will be a great impetus for mission in our fields."

Uganda Union Mission director John B.D. Kakembo was among those voicing concern on that very point: He said he was troubled that "when we say that if we don't do this, we will be seen as people who are discriminating."

Baltic Union president Valdis Zilgalvis spoke in support of the variance: "Women in the early Christian church were recognized" as ministers, he said. "In fourth century, women were pushed away from ministry at the altar, and you know which church did that. ... I agree the leader should be trained, but I don't see a difference between the genders."

Paul Ratsara, president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean division, urged caution in the process: "Definitely this topic is a very sensitive one," he said. "It is very hard for me to stand here when I think of the request of my dear colleagues from this [North American] Division. ... We need to agree on that first: is this negotiable, is this something we can say, 'You can do it, no problem?'"

Retired Adventist Church president Jan Paulsen underlined the complexities in cultural approaches to leadership: "If we say to the NAD 'You may not go this way,' please keep in mind, not only for this issue, but for other issues, what do we do with a situation that may develop that is in breech of what we decide. Some of
you know very well in the name of democracy and in some Western settings, leaders may not have full control over a delegation that comes to a session," he said. "I would be profoundly troubled," he added, "if the church in one particular country found itself in a situation at variance with the church."

Nepthali J. Manez, president of the North Philippines Union, opposed the measure, saying, "If this is approved, I would encounter a lot of difficulties. If we grant this motion, at least from the way I assess my constituency, it would give me a lot of problems." He urged that delegates "wait at least a year" before moving forward.

West African Union president James M. Golay also expressed his concerns, saying, "The church is God's church. I don't want for the issue to divide us."

Golay said he had "read scripture," but did not "see it. It's not in the church manual or in the policy book. If this is going to be a new policy, we need to consult heavily."

Perhaps the most impassioned advocate of the afternoon was Dr. Ella Smith Simmons, the first woman elected a general vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church.

Reflecting on one speaker's comment that the push for a variance was a form of salesmanship to lead towards women's ordination, Simmons said, "I was not born into the Adventist Church, but the Adventist Church presented itself to me in a certain way. I hope I am not a victim of 'bait and switch.'"

And in responding to the comments of some African delegates who opposed the motion, she said she was "deeply disturbed and concerned. Are your memories so short that you do not remember when you were oppressed in your own land? And that those who oppressed used the Bible to uphold this oppression?"

Simmons added, "We talk about unity. What is this unity? I've heard something described that is not unity, it is uniformity. ... What we are describing is uniformity that is more akin to the bondage that grows out of mind control."

Another world church vice president, Armando Miranda, opposed the measure, saying that while he had "profound respect" for the requests from TED and NAD, "I have [a] concern this issue will create more problems than solutions."

After the vote and the failure of the NAD motion, Jackson reminded the council that he still considered himself as a brother to all the delegates, regardless of how they voted. He appreciated the frank discussions that were held, he said.

"As Christians unity does not mean that I cannot disagree. I can disagree with you, but still love you as my brother," Jackson said.

Wiklander said "we understand that the decision is 'no' to our request as well. We shall go home and pray."

He added, "My deepest concern is with the many, many young people in Europe who grow up in an egalitarian society -- of which many of you here have no idea what it is like -- where they are taught from their first hours that men and women are equal; it is very hard for them. We are losing many young people who feel that this is a matter of justice."

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Communication at core of effective governance, church financial
officers say

Voted document stresses transparency, accountability among Adventist leadership

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

Open communication lies at the core of effective governance, Paul Douglas told delegates at Seventh-day Adventist world church headquarters this week for Annual Council business meetings.

Douglas, who directs the church's auditing service, is among church financial officers continuing their call for increased transparency and accountability among Adventist leadership worldwide.

"As a Christian organization, there is a greater expectation for each person -- but particularly leaders -- to demonstrate exemplary behavior in financial matters, ensuring that they conform to Biblical principles, legal parameters, professional standards and denominational policies," Douglas said.

Douglas and world church Treasurer Robert E. Lemon first presented a collaborative document called "Transparency and Accountability in Financial Reporting" earlier this year. Yesterday, Annual Council delegates took the next step to promote and model its framework back home by voting to receive the document.

The document encourages church officials worldwide to foster a better culture of leadership, outlining what it calls the "credibility cycle." Accountable leadership and transparent auditing builds greater trust among all church stakeholders. Practically, it means members feel confident returning tithes and offerings because they see that funds are handled judiciously.

The document is the product of a taskforce comprised of Lemon, Douglas, North America Division Treasurer Tom Evans and Robyn W. Kajiura, associate director for the world church auditing service. Initially, the document responded directly to then unresolved audit findings. It's now meant to apply broadly to the Adventist Church's organizational culture.

"Transparency and accountability encompasses much more than just financial activities," said Adventist President Ted N. C. Wilson. The document includes a message from the world church leader, calling for a "high level of integrity" to inspire "confidence in leadership."

Also included in the document are thoughts from world church Secretary G. T. Ng, who said "transparency must remain the default position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church."
At Adventist business meetings earlier this year, church financial officials asked delegates to suggest ways leadership worldwide can foster an environment of transparency. Their ideas are listed in the document delegates reviewed October 12.

"Set a personal example," one delegate said. "Ensure openness," another said. "Diminish the risk of people being afraid to talk just because of organizational structure or lack of communication channels."

Many delegates called for increased leadership training, underscoring the idea that leaders should be "stewards" of their positions.

"We need to change the culture and the way we do business," one said. "We cannot assume that those who are spiritual are also ethical and moral. There needs to be proper training."

The document is set for distribution in each of the church's 13 world divisions, where it can be translated in local languages, Lemon said.

"We intended to make the document similar in size to the Bible study guide, so you'll review it every day," Douglas said.

Currently, the document is undergoing a final revision to include suggestions from delegates. It will be available in January, Douglas said.

Indianapolis Returns as 2020 Adventist General Conference Session Location

Thirty years after last hosting, Indiana's capital celebrates 'quality' convention

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

Thirty years after its last stint at hosting a Seventh-day Adventist Church world business session, Indianapolis, capital of the state of Indiana, will welcome the 61st General Conference Session in 2020. The Lucas Oil Stadium, home of the Indianapolis Colts football team, and the Indianapolis Convention Center, will host the event.
Leonard Hoops, president of the Indianapolis Convention and Visitors Association, makes his pitch to Annual Council delegates on October 12, 2011, for the 2020 General Conference Session to be held in Indianapolis. A total of four cities were asked to bid and only two came to present to the Executive Committee. Delegates chose Indianapolis over Atlanta, the other bidding city.

"It's important to have groups that are quality people come into Indianapolis," declared Leonard Hoops, president and chief executive of the Indianapolis Convention and Visitors Association. He led a delegation of Hoosiers, as the state's people are known, in making an earnest presentation before delegates to the 2011 Annual Council at the movement's Silver Spring, Maryland, headquarters.

Hoops, a Presbyterian, was born in Trinidad and said he has Seventh-day Adventist relatives, including an aunt who is a church member. "I know enough about Adventists to be dangerous," he quipped.

The convention is expected to bring approximately $45 million in revenue to Indianapolis, a 372 square-mile city with a 2011 metro area population of 1.7 million. It is the 34th largest metropolitan area in the United States, according to the federal Office of Management and Budget.

A similar team from Atlanta, Georgia, site of the 2010 GC Session, also presented and asked for delegates for a repeat visit.

After world sessions in Utrecht, Netherlands (1995) and Toronto, Canada (2000), the last two General Conference sessions have been in the United States -- St. Louis (2005) and Atlanta (2010). The 2015 General Conference Session will also be in the U.S., in San Antonio, Texas, July 2-11. According to Sherri Clemmer, the world church's top meeting planner, several factors come into play in recommending that the 2020 General Conference session again be held in a U.S. city.

To have a successful GC Session, she said, it's important to have a stadium staff that is fluent in English; a location where food safety can be assured; a nearby airport large enough to handle delegate travel; hotels close to the convention venue, and an enclosed stadium with seating for 70,000 adjacent to a convention center. Very few venues can meet all those requirements, Clemmer said, and they tend to be in the United States.

The session, held once every five years, is expected to draw as many as 100,000 people on the peak convention days, as well as approximately 3,500 voting delegates, their family members, church employees and others during the event, in which world leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are elected and policies are decided.

A "Parade of Nations," in which Adventists march in national costume, carrying their country's flags, is seen as a highlight of the meetings. These meetings also usually feature service projects in the local community,
cultural and musical events for the public, as well as outreach programs offering educational services on health and other matters.

Combining business with a general celebration of Adventism, the 2020 convention will have both official business meetings and exhibits for Adventists and those interested in the church. It is anticipated that the convention will also operate, for the 11-day duration, as the largest vegetarian restaurant in North America, feeding tens of thousands of meat-free meals.

Adventist Pastor Van Hurst, president of the Indiana Conference, was on stage with the convention bureau staff, holding one of a number of multi-lingual placards asking for a "Return to Indiana." Hurst, who said he is excited about the Session's return, prefaced the Indianapolis presentation with a prayer.

For Hoops, divine intervention may well have been a factor: "We have tried for the Session in 2005, 2010 and 2015 - this is the first time we've got it." Indeed, the "Circle City," as Indianapolis is also known, was a losing finalist for the 2015 selection, which was made at the 2006 Annual Council.

New administrative region in Brazil recognizes growth, financial independence

Region home to almost 340,000 Adventists

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

Top Seventh-day Adventist world church leadership today voted to split the Northeast Brazil Union Mission into two administrative bodies -- the Northeast Brazil Union Mission and East Brazil Union Mission.
The move recognizes burgeoning membership and impeccable handling of finances in the region, church leaders said. It comes on the heels of a similar realignment of the church's administrative structure in Brazil last year.

The former Northeast Brazil Union Mission is home to almost 340,000 Adventists and a growing network of churches and church-run schools. Membership there has more than doubled since the union was established in 1996. As of July this year, the church in the region welcomed more than 20,000 new believers, or about 3,000 accessions per month.

"This region for us has a strong potential for growth," said South American Division President Erton Kohler. "The people there are very receptive. We believe that a new union there can give strong support to our church in the region and help fulfill the mission."

The newly formed Northeast and East Brazil union missions will each begin in 2013 with more than 100 percent of ideal working capital, said world church Undertreasurer Juan Prestol. Neither region is saddled with debt, he added, and both are in "exceptional" financial condition.

The Adventist Church in Brazil has undergone numerous administrative realignments since it was organized in the country in 1895. Church leadership regularly reorganize church administrative structure to accommodate membership growth. Most recently, delegates at last year's General Conference Session voted to recognize the split of the former North Brazil Union Mission into two entities, creating the Northwest Brazil Union Mission.

"We praise the Lord for the dynamic growth in South America and especially in this region of Brazil," world church President Ted N. C. Wilson told Annual Council delegates.

Also today, church leaders voted to rename the current East Brazil Union Conference. To avoid confusion with the newly formed East Brazil Union Mission, the region is now called the Southeast Brazil Union Conference.

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**Guam-Micronesia Mission now part of North American Division**

*Administrative oversight shifts from Southern Asia-Pacific Division*

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

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Guam-Micronesia Mission, an administrative region comprising islands in
the western Pacific Ocean, will now report to the denomination's North American Division.

Southern Asia-Pacific Division President Alberto Gulfan addresses the chair of Annual Council regrading the shift of the Guam-Micronesia Mission to the North American Division, whose president, Dan Jackson, sits nearby. [photo: Ansel Oliver]

The shift, approved by the denomination's Executive Committee this morning, moves oversight of the region from the church's Southern Asia-Pacific Division, which is based in the Philippines.

The mission region includes the United States territories of Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands and Palau.

"Over the years there has been discussion whether it would fit better elsewhere," said world church Undersecretary Myron Iseminger. "Regulations are U.S.-oriented and many employees come from North America."

The region is home to roughly 4,500 Adventist Church members. The Adventist Church there also operates numerous elementary and secondary schools, which are staffed largely by student missionaries.

North American Division President Dan Jackson welcomed the move. "We are always happy to cooperate with the world church, and we will embrace the peoples and the ministry of the Guam-Micronesia Mission," he said.

Southern Asia-Pacific Division President Alberto Gulfan confirmed that his executive committee had made several requests to shift oversight of Guam-Micronesia.

"We loved serving Guam-Micronesia over the past years, but we have some challenges and we are very happy and grateful to the leadership of the North American Division ... for their willingness," Gulfan said. "I believe this is God's timing."

Southern Asia-Pacific acquired administrative oversight of the denomination's operations in Pakistan in a territorial realignment on Sunday.
Remembrance: Follett, 79, was an Adventist Church vice president

Helped lay groundwork for TV ministry now called Hope Channel

11 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Megan Brauner/ANN

Philip Stanley Follett, 79, a former vice president for the Seventh-day Adventist world church, died in his hometown of Collegedale, Tennessee on October 7. He had battled cancer, family members said.

As an Adventist Church vice president, Philip Follett helped develop leadership systems in the church's then 12 world administrative regions. He died October 7 at age 79. [photo courtesy GC Archives]

As vice president from 1992 to 2000, Follett oversaw leadership development systems for the church's then 12 world divisions.

His daughter, Lorraine Ball, said her father had a gift for "seeing the big picture" that made him a sounding board for the many young people he mentored throughout his life.

Born March 15, 1932, Follett served as a pastor and conference secretary in Southern California from 1953 to 1967. He also served as president for the Ohio, Chesapeake and Northern California Conferences before he was elected president of the Atlantic Union in 1986.

Follett earned his undergraduate degree from La Sierra University, his master's degree from Andrews University and was later awarded an honorary doctorate from Atlantic Union College.

Follett first hired Juan Prestol, now world church undertreasurer, as a union treasurer. Prestol remembers him as "one of the best administrative leaders the church has had."

"Because of him, I'm a better man, a better leader, and better Christian," Prestol said.

Seventh-day Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson remembers Follett as a great source of encouragement for church members. Wilson said Follett's "untiring efforts for media development at a
formative period some years ago greatly helped Hope Channel become what it is today."

After his retirement, Follett worked as president for LifeTalk Radio, located in Simi Valley, California, until 2008, and part-time in various capacities until 2011.

Follett was preceded in death by his wife Bernardine DeFehr Follett in 1985. He is survived by two adult children, Lorraine (Scott) Ball and David Follett, two grandchildren, Jonathan and Jessica Ball, and a sister, Barbara Connel.

A memorial service will be held on Sabbath, October 15, at 3 p.m. in the Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists with Southern Adventist University President Gordon Bietz officiating.

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**In Cayman Islands, Adventist pastors offer at-risk youth alternative to drugs, gangs**

*Community mentorship program responds to recent rise in violent crime; Nation's premier offers public support*

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

Seventh-day Adventist Church pastors in the Cayman Islands are trading suits for jeans and sermon helps for dominos.

They aren't shirking responsibility. Ministers in the Caribbean nation are mentoring young people in the community who are vulnerable to drug abuse and gang involvement.

The Cayman Islands has seen a sharp and "unprecedented" rise in violent crime this year, said Dannie Clarke, president of the Adventist Church in the country. He and his pastoral team have observed more young people turning toward a life of crime, baited by the sense of belonging and quick money that gangs promise. Absentee parents and few positive influences only worsen the situation, he said.

"We want to be there to support them, to put a hand on their shoulders," said Dannie Clarke, Adventist Church president for the Cayman Islands. For some churches, that means offering young people sports and social programs.

"We want to be personally connected to these guys before they reach a place where they consider doing
something that can have catastrophic consequences," he said.

Through a community prayer and mentorship program launched last month, Adventists are offering an alternative to gang involvement. Pastors hold community meetings and prayer rallies once a week, where they offer counseling and support to young people "on the fringes," Clarke said. They pray for the community, law enforcement members, perpetrators and victims, and their respective families.

The pastors have observed that many young people who join gangs are really seeking "someone to respect them and validate them," Shian O'Conner told Cayman 27 news recently.

O'Conner, a pastor certified in counseling, helps monitor the group's efforts, ensuring that each pastor follows counseling best practices, Clarke said. The pastors meet weekly for ongoing training.

Many young people reluctant to talk to the police or other authority figures find it less threatening to speak in confidence with a pastor, Clark said.

Affected young people are already opening up. One even helped solve a string of murders. Another passed a note to Clark after a recent community meeting. "It just said, 'Please give me a call. They have my name on a hit list and I want to talk to somebody because I fear for my life,'" he said.

The church is working with the police department to provide a place where young people can request protection or aid cases in safety and confidence, Clark said. Pastors won't share any information without the young person's expressed permission, he added.

The pastors' efforts got a boost last week when Cayman Islands Premier McKeeva Bush and several members of the country's cabinet and legislature attended the community meeting and prayer rally. Regional leaders of other Christian denominations have also showed support for the project by helping lead out in community prayer.

"What started as just a prayer initiative has mushroomed into much more than that," Clarke said.

Ultimately, Clarke and his team of pastors hope to garner even broader community support. "We want to empower people in the community to catch the spark and put in place an infrastructure for sustainable growth and development."

Clarke is now asking community leaders to create a registry of at-risk youth who could use a big brother or sister.

"We must know our people. We must look out when one person's child is hurting or vulnerable," Clarke said. "Many times, it's not that these youth don't want to get involved in positive things. They just may not have the opportunity or the right influences."

The pastors' ministry mirrors Christ's example in the New Testament, said Leonard Johnson, president for the church's Atlantic Caribbean Union, which overseas the Adventist church in the Cayman Islands.

"[Christ] catered to the social, mental and physical needs of men, as opposed to just the spiritual. The church today must continue to represent Christ in each pocket of society, letting the world know that we care," Johnson said.

To watch a live stream of this week's prayer rally in the Cayman Islands, visit caymanconference.org on
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