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Harvard Professor Williams, Health Director Landless make case for healthful outreach, personal example

October 09, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Ansel Oliver/ANN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s 2014 Annual Council opened with an appeal for respectful diplomacy over coming discussions as well as a major call for the Church to focus on health. Leaders were implored both to establish health ministries for the community and to set their own example of healthful living.

Vice President Geoffrey Mbwana and Secretary G. T. Ng opened the seven-day meeting of the Executive Committee at the world church’s headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, before Church President Ted N. C. Wilson welcomed the several hundred present delegates.

Wilson wished church leaders God’s blessing over the next week of business sessions and spiritual meetings. “We’ve been praying earnestly that this room would be filled with a sweet spirit,” he said before reading a statement from top leaders. The statement was a strong hint regarding the planned upcoming discussion set for Tuesday, October 14 on the theology of ordination and how it relates to gender.

“We General Conference and division officers appeal to all Annual Council attendees to accept each other as brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of some differences of opinion that may be evident on certain subjects,” Wilson said, reading from the statement. “We ask for Christ-likeness and humble respect for each other in our words and activities during this Annual Council and beyond.”

From there, the evening progressed through three presentations from leading health experts, each of whom implored delegates to prioritize health-related ministry in their own regions of the world and make healthful living a personal priority.

David Williams, a professor of public health at Harvard University and an honorary associate Health Ministries director of the Adventist Church, delivered a lecture on the need for addressing underlying issues related to health, including income and racial inequalities, stress and depression.

The pinnacle example of health outreach, he said, was a mission center in Chicago established in 1893 by John Harvey Kellogg. The mission offered meals and shelter for the homeless, a clinic, a rescue center for prostitutes, a maternity home for unwed mothers and a drug re-habilitation facility. Kellogg established the center after reading the book “Ministry of Healing” by Adventist Church co-founder Ellen G. White, Williams said.

“The book ‘Ministry of Healing’ is our textbook in comprehensive [health] ministry, and we need to go back to the wonderful advice we have been given that can help us deal with challenges that we face,” Williams said.
Fred Hardinge, associate Health Ministries director for the Church, gave an overview on publicly-funded studies examining Adventists for their longevity. He said Adventists tend to live eight to 10 years longer than the general population. An avoidance of meat, especially red meat, was a key factor, he said.

Health Ministries director Dr. Peter Landless concurred, saying a plant-based diet is the preferred diet where it is available. His overall message emphasized balanced living.

“The world of science is shouting out the message to us through the most modern scientific journals, with evidence-based [examinations], that flesh foods are not good for us,” Landless told delegates. “I wish and pray that we will move to a plant-based diet, with a balanced Christ-like approach, not placing ourselves at various rungs of sanctification because of the diets we consume, but following what is the best we can do in the environments we find ourselves.”

Landless also urged leaders, who often fly on long flights and sit through long meetings, to set the example of healthful living. “How are you in yourself? Are your relationships healthy and growing?” he asked.

The meeting came to a close with British Union Conference President Ian Sweeney offering his testimony about recent lifestyle changes that brought him down to a healthier body weight. In the past two years, Sweeney said he had lost 75 pounds and received cheers for his slimmer physique when addressing a large crowd of Church members during a recent visit from President Wilson.

He decided to eat healthier food and exercise more after giving a book about health to a neighbor and realized the irony as it related to his own situation.

“I hadn’t preached a sermon on health and temperance for 15 to 17 years because it would have just been hypocrisy” Sweeney said. “The spirit impressed me that I want to reflect in my own life what I want to preach.”

Mark Finley, assistant to President Wilson, ended the meeting saying that “if the motivation for lifestyle change is anything other than honoring God with the body he has given me, that motivation is really shallow…. I would like to suggest to you that the power for lifestyle change comes from Jesus, and that as we come to him and say ‘lord, my body is yours. I want to honor you in every aspect of my life.’”

Day two of Annual Council is preamble to next year’s election, women’s ordination vote
Elephant in the room revealed, openly discussed: some won’t be re-appointed

October 10, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Ansel Oliver/ANN

Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders spent the second day of Annual Council addressing two major issues relating to next year’s General Conference Session—administrators’ own re-election and a potential vote on the theology of ordination as it relates to gender.

In no uncertain terms, Church officials prepared the more than 330 delegates to face the reality that they might not be asked to return to their present job. Also, longtime evangelist Mark Finley, who is an assistant to the president, highlighted how church leaders in the New Testament settled their differences to focus on mission.

Finley’s presentation was a preamble for next week when delegates are expected to discuss the matter of women’s ordination and set it as an agenda item for GC Session. While the Adventist Church has women serving as licensed ministers, the Church currently ordains only men as ministers.

The denomination has engaged in a two-year study on the theology of ordination following at least four decades of discussion, Finley said. This week’s seven-day meeting of the Executive Committee could be the last time the matter is officially deliberated before potentially being sent to July’s GC Session, which is held every five years and is the denomination’s top governing body.

This morning’s meeting began with a deep dive into the issue of elections, a “taboo subject” this isn’t typically discussed openly, leaders said.

Vice President Pardon Mwansa offered a devotional titled, “The Nominating Committee Decided to Make a Change.” His talk was a nod to next July when many in the auditorium might see their current position assigned to someone else.

Invoking lessons from Old Testament characters Daniel and Samuel, Mwansa said that a person elected to an office has replaced someone, and that it would also happen to them.

“We are called to serve and minister and not to an office or a position,” Mwansa said.

Several Church officials from various parts of the world offered case studies on how to prepare for a change in leadership, or in some situations, how to make a needed change at an administrative unit within their territory. Several delegates said a change in leadership can help both the Church and send a signal to the person being assigned to another position.

“Change brings innovation. Change ensures that we keep focused, and we might step back if we do not change,” said Maria Fraser, a lay member from the Southern Africa Union Conference. “There will be weaknesses in everyone, but the secret is for the team to synergize all their attributes and energies so that we can have the best for the Church.”
Don Livsay, president of the Lake Union Conference in the North American Division, urged his colleagues in the room to subject themselves to periodic evaluations.

“We as administrators typically would rather have a root canal than be evaluated. Therefore we don’t know where we’re hitting it right and missing it wrong,” Livsay said.

Livsay also called for evaluations to be formalized throughout the denomination, which would enhance accountability and balance in an administrator’s leadership and personal life.

“If our life falls apart because we’re not re-elected, we verify not being re-elected,” he said.

Ultimately, Secretary G. T. Ng implored delegates, who include officers of the 13 divisions and presidents of each of the 132 unions, to view their job as one of stewardship.

“If you are elected to the same position, then you will become a steward of that new position.”

Ng urged delegates to follow his custom at the end of each term by bringing a moving box into his office and thanking his administrative assistant for the time they worked together.

Each delegate lined up to receive a miniature box to remind them of Ng’s request. While delegates filed down the aisles, an organist played the hymn, “It is well with my soul,” a more-preferred song during election season, Ng said, than songs such as “I shall not be moved” or “I’m pressing on the upward way.”

Later in the morning, Finley took to the platform in a nearly one-hour speech titled “Toward unity in the body of Christ.”

The well-known evangelist addressed how leaders on both sides of the women’s ordination discussion would react if a potential vote next year at GC Session was different than their own convictions.

Finley said the issue went beyond women’s ordination and had implications on how the Church works out points of disagreement. He spent most of his time on three “flash-points” from the book of Acts that threatened unity of the early church. “Dissention deters you from mission. That’s the devil’s strategy,” he said.

The New Testament patterns for resolving differences, Finley said, included prayer, seeking biblical answers, discussing the issues, considering what is best for the church’s mission and then finally making a decision on the issue together.

At one point he paused to offer his thoughts on the need for the process to move forward.

“May I make a humble suggestion? When you’ve studied an issue for 40 years and discussed it and discussed it and discussed it, pretty soon people have pretty well made up their minds on either side of the question. Continual discussion and debate only furthers division.”

Finley said he hoped the Adventist Church, like the early church, could learn to live with the decision on a major issue because people on both sides of the debate “were committed to the same Jesus.”
“Whatever decision is ultimately made on the ordination of women, and I pray that this church make the right decision, but whatever decision is ultimately made, my prayer is that nothing but God’s unified and prophetic mission will be the central focus of our lives,” Finley said.

Delegates have the afternoon off, and Annual Council continues this evening with the first installment of the Council on Evangelism and Witness.

Ebola deaths include 16 Adventists in West Africa

**Leader in Liberia joins Annual Council via video-conference**

*October 11, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Edwin Manuel Garcia/ANN*

The Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa has claimed the lives of 16 Seventh-day Adventists, a church official announced Saturday.

“The people are suffering,” said James Golay, president of the West Africa Union Mission, speaking from Liberia onto a video screen projected to hundreds of church leaders gathered at the denomination’s headquarters for the 2014 Annual Council.

Golay would have attended the meeting, but stayed home. Global health organizations and church officials are encouraging people to limit travel to and from West Africa over concerns about the rapidly spreading infectious disease that has killed more than 4,000 people.

Ebola was the focus of a special prayer during the council’s Sabbath morning worship led by Elder Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the denomination.

“Today we have a special opportunity on behalf of our dear brothers and sisters in West Africa, to pray that God will intercede and will halt the terrible epidemic of the Ebola crisis, Wilson told more than 400 people in the auditorium. “We ask the world church to pray today and not to stop praying.”

Wilson, who earlier in his pastoral career served nine years in West Africa, said the 33,000 Adventists in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia are facing “unbelievable difficulty.”
He then turned to the video screen where Pastor Golay explained that church members are suffering not only because some have contracted Ebola, but because of the disease’s effects on fellowship: Adventists now avoid customs such as shaking hands and hugging.

In the packed General Conference auditorium, Israel Leito, president of the Church’s in Inter-American Division, asked God to give courage to ministerial workers in West Africa.

“Father, I think of the pastors who can’t abandon their flocks, they cannot retreat from the onslaught of Ebola,” Leito prayed. “They have to continue visiting, they have to continue burying the dead, they have to continue comforting those that are sick.”

Leito concluded: “Help us to remember that we should not wait for a crisis to look for you, but that we should be connected with you at all times.”

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa is the largest and most complex Ebola outbreak since the disease was first discovered in 1976 in Central Africa, when it is believed that animals transmitted the virus to humans. The current outbreak, with an average fatality rate of about 50 percent, is believed to have started in Guinea in late December, and has spread to Sierra Leone, Liberia, and other countries.

The virus is spread among humans by direct contact, such as through broken skin or mucous membranes; blood and secretions; and contact with surfaces contaminated with such fluids.

Despite the rapid spread, Ebola is preventable with regular handwashing and the use of personal protective equipment.

Wilson said the church has responded accordingly to the crisis.

“We have many activities going on to take care of the people in West Africa, through ADRA, through our church, and we want to lift up to God today our people the population in general,” Wilson said, “and the wonderful work that is being done in the name of the Lord.”

In August, Health Ministries Director Dr. Peter Landless urged church employees and members to avoid travel to and from nations affected by the epidemic.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency reacted to the crisis with tens of thousands of dollars in supplies and equipment.

In partnership with Loma Linda University, Adventist Health International, and GlobalMedic, ADRA is providing Cooper Adventist Hospital in Monrovia City, Liberia and Liberian Ministry of Health with $92,000 in supplies, including: 60,000 vinyl gloves; 38,000 face masks; 3,200 isolation gowns and 600 disposable coveralls.

Cooper Hospital, where three people died, has closed temporarily, for a three-week quarantine period. Another medical facility in West Africa, Waterloo Adventist Hospital, also closed, after several staff members contracted the virus in the community. When Waterloo Hospital reopens it will be a government-run Ebola clinic.
In addition, ADRA in Sierra Leone is providing counseling to victims; training for staff and volunteers; and a public education campaign that includes Ebola prevention information on fliers, posters and television programming.

**Wilson says Satan trying to destroy Adventist Church**

Adventist President urges church leaders to stand by the Bible even if its teachings are scorned as politically incorrect

*October 11, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McC Chesney/Adventist Review*

Ted N. C. Wilson, leader of the Seventh-day Adventist world church, said Satan was using every means at his disposal to try to destroy the Adventist Church and neutralize its mission of proclaiming Jesus’ soon coming.

Wilson, speaking in a sermon that serves as his annual world pastoral address, said the devil’s tactics include ecumenism, charismatic worship approaches, and attacks on biblical prophetic understanding, and he said he had felt the blows personally in recent weeks with the death of a prematurely born grandson and the discovery that two other grandsons suffer serious health problems.

But he urged the listening church leaders of the Annual Council, a major church business meeting, to join him in submitting to God and taking a unified stand for the distinctive, biblical beliefs of the Adventist Church, regardless of whether the teachings might be derided as unpopular or politically incorrect.

“In these perilous closing scenes of Earth’s history, remember that the devil is attempting to neutralize anything and everything we do—even at this Annual Council,” Wilson told the packed auditorium at the world church’s headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. “Through God’s power, let us be entirely respectful, Christ-like, and loving in our discussions and exchanges during this Annual Council on whatever topic we may speak.”

The Annual Council has several key issues to discuss, including whether the world church should revise some of the wording of its 28 Fundamental Beliefs and extend ordination to women. The 338 members of the Annual Council will decide whether to send those issues for a final vote next July to the General Conference session, the top governing body of the world church.

Wilson expressed gratefulness to God for bringing about a “beautiful spirit” in pre-Annual Council meetings between world church leaders. He shared an appeal from General Conference and division officers to the Annual Council delegates, asking that they remain Christ-like even if differences of opinion emerged.
“Our humble demeanor and attitudes, through God’s power, will speak volumes to those who are watching,” he said, reading the appeal. “We earnestly appeal that we do all in our power to strengthen the church and this precious Advent movement.”

Read the full text of the sermon HERE.

Wilson said Revelation 13 outlines a two-pronged satanic plan to destroy God’s last-day people: an ideological war of lies and errors that challenge the truth, and outright persecution culminating in a death decree against those who obey God’s biblical laws.

“Though large-scale persecution will certainly come, currently Satan is trying to work from the inside to weaken the church through dissension, discord, and conformity to the world,” Wilson said.

**Satan’s Destructive Tactics**

Wilson repeatedly pointed to the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G. White, co-founder of the Adventist Church, as the way to discern God’s will during the 70-minute sermon, which was punctuated with frequent “amens.” At one point he urged Annual Council delegates to make sure that they weren’t reading the Bible upside-down.

“When you read the Bible upside-down, you will get an upside-down understanding,” he said, citing an African saying that he heard on a recent trip.

He singled out the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation as undesirable, saying it clouded the themes and topics of the Bible.

“As we seek to know God’s will through a study of His Word, we must not place strange interpretations and employ interpretive gymnastics to draw out conclusions that are not evident from a plain reading of the Word,” he said.

Wilson, who has made a call for “revival and reformation” a hallmark of his presidency, listed a number of other ways that he saw the devil seeking to destroy the Adventist Church, including:

- Inspiring a belief that reformation within the church means giving up unique doctrines so that it is easier for people to become Adventists.
- Using tradition and philosophy to destroy faith in the Bible.
- Urging people to move independently of the main body of the church.
- Advancing charismatic and Pentecostal music and worship approaches that focus on church members and those leading out in services rather than on the true worship of God.
- Distracting people with secular activities such as competitive sports, the Internet, the media, financial deals, and materialism.
- Encouraging poor health habits and a lack of respect for God’s natural laws, thereby enfeebling the mind and numbing the senses.
- Stirring skepticism about the veracity of the scriptural record of the origin of life and early history.
- Spreading spiritualism.
- Promoting ecumenism, or cooperation and better understanding among Christian faiths with the unattainable goal of universal Christian unity.

Wilson strongly cautioned against associating with ecumenical groups.
“Don’t succumb to the temptation to be so cozy with other religious organizations that you fall into the devil’s trap of neutralizing your own effectiveness through unbiblical ecumenical bonds,” he said.

Adventists also should avoid inviting clergy from other faiths from preaching to Adventist churches on Sabbaths, he said.

But he stressed that it was important for Adventists to be friendly with people of all faiths, to be leaders in public affairs and religious liberty, and to share their love for Jesus with the public.

**Tragedy in the Wilson Family**

Making his message personal, Wilson, 64, told of a series of hardships that have befallen his family and that he linked to Satan’s war against the church. Wilson and his wife, Nancy, have three married daughters and eight grandchildren.

Edward, the 2-year-old son of the Wilsons’ eldest daughter is suffering numerous neurological problems after eight months of cancer treatment left him cancer-free but with antibodies that are attacking his brain, Wilson said.

“We thank God that Edward is showing some improvement with treatment, but the extent of his future recovery remains uncertain,” he said.

A second grandson, 15-month-old James born to the Wilsons’ middle daughter, has been diagnosed with a rare genetic mutation that has only been detected in two other people in the world. Three weeks ago, the youngest daughter lost her third child.

“After the premature delivery at four months, she held the perfectly formed little boy in her hand,” Wilson said. “When the Lord returns, Catherine’s little son will be placed in her arms, and he will grow up in heaven.”

He said, however, that the devil would not succeed in any efforts to neutralize his family’s witness.

“In the last year or so, the devil has attempted to neutralize every one of our three precious daughters, their families and us as parents. But he will not succeed. God is in control. He will be victorious. The faith of my daughters and their families and all of us is strong in the Lord,” he said, drawing loud “amens” from the audience.

**'We Are All in This Together'**

Wilson cautioned that no one listening to the sermon in the main auditorium of the General Conference building was exempt from the devil’s attacks.

“We are all in this together,” he said. “There are many in this room who are going through far worse situations.”

Looking beyond internal church issues, Wilson said Satan was attacking the church on other fronts as well, including the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and violence in Iraq, Syria, and Ukraine.
Despite the difficulties, Wilson called on the delegates to boldly proclaim the distinctive message of the Adventist Church.

“Stay away from anything that will undermine our message or cloud our distinctive beliefs,” he said. “Don’t be tempted by the devil to blend in with the crowd or be politically correct. Don’t proclaim a generic Christianity or a ‘cheap-grace Christ’ that does not point to the distinctive Biblical truths to be declared worldwide, the very reason for which the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized.”

The church leaders stood when Wilson concluded with an appeal to join him in submitting to God’s power and asking for protection from the devil’s attacks.

“Our only future hope is in our personal connection with Christ,” Wilson said. “Our hope as God’s people, your hope and my hope, is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”

**Surfer pastor, clinics, literature outreach are evangelism highlights this year**

**Annual Council delegates hear creative projects during Council on Evangelism and Witness**

*October 11, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Edwin Manuel Garcia/ANN*

Church representatives from across the globe on Saturday shared their region’s most successful and unique initiatives to reach non-believers in the world’s largest cities—ranging from a pastor who witnesses on his surfboard, to a health clinic attended by thousands.

The initiatives were part of the Council on Evangelism and Witness report presented to delegates of the 2014 Seventh-day Adventist Annual Council.

Many of the evangelism efforts included a common theme from the past year: How to spread the gospel in cities and metropolitan areas populated with millions of unbelievers.

“We have huge, huge challenges in our divisional territory, but we strongly believe this is the Lord’s work,” said Jairong Lee, president of the Northern-Asia Pacific Division. The Asian continent, he said, has 60 percent of the world’s population, yet it’s only 4 percent Christian.

In the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, home to cities such as Cape Town and Luanda, the church hosted evangelism programs at 1,682 sites, and 500 of those were led by children, some as young as six years old. As a result, 686 new churches were planted, and high-ranking government officials began to embrace the health message.
Representatives from the United States told about efforts on both coasts, including the large-scale NY13 effort in New York, and a major health ministry in California.

NY13, a multifaceted outreach effort, resulted in 64 new church companies in New York City. A similar effort will extend into the Southern New England Conference and Northeastern Conference next year for an initiative called Compassion Boston.

North American Division President Dan Jackson, in a video presentation, summarized Bridges to our Community, a 3-day health fair in San Francisco and Oakland, two cities in California, United States, connected by a well-traversed bridge. The health fair served nearly 3,000 people and drew volunteers from across the country.

Planning is now underway for health evangelism in the Southwestern Union of the United States in preparation of the 2015 General Conference Session which will be held in San Antonio, Texas.

The Southern Asia Division has emphasized outreach by encouraging laypeople to take two to three months to become literature evangelists in their own neighborhoods.

In South America, a novel effort features a surfer-turned pastor who spreads the gospel on a beach in the São Paulo state of Brazil, hosting studies while lying on his surfboard—reading from a waterproof Bible.

Not all evangelism efforts involved in-person outreach. In Romania, Norel Iacob, editor of Semnel Timpului, that country’s Signs of the Times magazine, explained the best way to reach a mainstream audience is to “write about the most important news stories and events from a Biblical perspective.” The magazine’s website, he said, has become extremely popular, and among its readers is a former president of Romania.

Leaders in East-Central Africa have focused on public outreach by talented youth staging concerts on the streets of large cities, which draws huge interest from passersby, said Blasious Ruguri, the regional president. People stop to listen, he said, then inquire about who the singers are. “Then the young singers share a book like ‘Steps to Christ’, ‘the Great Controversy’, ‘Desire of Ages’, and become friends,” he said, referring to titles authored by Adventist Church co-founder Ellen G. White.

Recent campaigns in that region have led to nearly 34,000 baptisms and 104 new churches in places such as Rwanda, Tanzania and Burundi.

Outreach in Ireland centered around filling people’s needs in their neighborhoods, said Janos Kovas-Biro, evangelism coordinator for the division in Northern Europe. “We found out there were family needs, financial needs, health needs, and intellectual needs, and also needs in taking care of children.”

In between the evangelism presentations, Mark Finley, assistant to the General Conference president, used an anecdote to encourage regional leaders to keep the faith.

Holding an old, brown Bible, Finley told of a small group meeting 70 years ago in Bucaramanga, Colombia, when assassins entered the home to kill the Adventists. A husband and wife were targeted. After the husband was killed, the wife took their son to a window and handed him off to someone else. The wife was then killed.
When the boy grew into a man in his 70s he became curious about his past and went to an evangelistic campaign featuring Robert Costa of the “Escrito Está” television program. The man got baptized.

Also in attendance at that campaign was the son of the killer, and he has since been baptized.

The men have pledged to persuade their own families to join the Adventist church. That initial group of 15 Adventists meeting in the home in Bucaramanga has blossomed into a church community that is 20,000 strong in the region, said Finley, who told the story while clutching the blood-stained Bible that belonged to the man’s parents 70 years ago.

Researchers Hopkins, McBride, Randall given Adventist Health Ministries Medal of Distinction

Trio has promoted prevention of at-risk behaviors through healthy relationships

October 09, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Ansel Oliver/ANN

Three Seventh-day Adventist health experts were awarded the denomination’s Health Ministries Medal of Distinction for their ongoing research and promotion of healthy relationships to prevent at-risk behaviors.

Andrews University professors Dr. Gary Hopkins and Duane McBride were presented the award yesterday during a meeting of the Institute of Prevention of Addictions board at the denomination’s world headquarters. Child psychologist Kiti Freier Randall was unable to attend and will receive her award later this year.

Adventist Health Ministries Director Dr. Peter Landless said the trio’s research over the past decade has made a “tremendous contribution” to the Church and society. Through papers and scholarly journal articles, all three have promoted the importance of healthy relationships for reducing at-risk behaviors in young people as well as a stabilizing influence for older people.

“They have been giants in leading in this field,” said Dr. Peter Landless, Health Ministries director of the Adventist world church. “They bring meaningful and added credibility to the methods of ministry and prevention.”

Upon receiving the award, Duane McBride, executive director of the Institute for the Prevention of Addictions and chair of the Behavioral Sciences Department at Andrews University, said he was grateful for the impact his work has made.

“I feel very honored to have the work I’ve been doing my whole life recognized,” McBride said.
McBride said some of his most prominent research focused on the importance of family meals, saying they provide important bonding between kids and their parents. Kids who ate more meals with their families were likely to have lower rates of drug, alcohol and tobacco use.

Dr. Gary Hopkins, associate director for the Institute for the Prevention of Addictions, research professor of behavioral sciences at Andrews and adjunct assistant professor of public health at Loma Linda University, said he appreciated the award and was also surprised to receive it.

Hopkins was likely the first to study the correlation between community service and drug use. Research found that youth who engaged in community service were less likely to abuse drugs or become pregnant as a teenager. “There’s something about when kids focus less on themselves and more on helping others,” he said. His research has been published in numerous journals, including the American Journal of Public Health and the Journal of Preventive Medicine.

Kiti Freier Randall, a private-practice clinician and professor in the departments of Pediatrics and Public Health at Loma Linda University, said she felt honored to receive the award. “I am so privileged to be provided the opportunity to share the ‘Relationships and Well-being’ message with my global church family,” she said.

Her primary area of research and clinical work is with children who have experienced trauma due to drug-endangered environments. Her research has demonstrated that regardless of the pathway to risk, healthy relationships are the answer to boosting resiliency and well-being.

“We were created to have a relationship with God,” Randall said. “It has been rewarding to see the field of social sciences and medicine further validate this.”