Adventist pastor in Ukraine released from detention
Litovchenko was held for 20 days

Adventist Church sets vote on women’s ordination for next July
Annual Council asks Session to consider letting divisions decide on ordination

Church membership reaches 18.1 million
But executive secretary Ng would rather talk about ‘serious loss’ of members

Church leaders urged to hire pastors, not administrators
Treasurer Lemon points to headquarters’ strict financial policy as a model to emulate

Annual Council adopts recommended edits to Fundamental Beliefs
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Suggested revisions to Adventist Church Manual include matters on discipline
Executive Committee sends edits to next July’s GC Session for consideration

Oakwood constituents back transfer to NAD
University will still get annual subsidy but will need to downgrade status of its Ellen White center

Adventist pastor in Ukraine released from detention
Sergei Litovchenko, pastor of the Horlivka Seventh-day Adventist Church in eastern Ukraine, has been released and is being reunited with his family after 20 days of detention.

Local Church and family members would like to thank Adventists and others who have prayed for his freedom throughout the ordeal.

"We are very happy to know that Pastor Litovchenko is in good health" said Garrett Caldwell, spokesman for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. "We must continue to work and pray for the safety and security of our clergy and for believers who are in any area of conflict around the world."

Litovchenko was detained on September 27 when a worship service was interrupted and worshipers were directed to disburse.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church as early as next July may decide to take a historic vote on whether to allow women to be ordained ministers.

The decision to allow for a vote was made today by the General Conference Executive Committee at the Church’s world headquarters during the 2014 Annual Council. A vote on women’s ordination could put an end to—or further prolong—a decades-old debate that has threatened to divide the denomination, according to those on both sides of the issue.

With 243 votes in favor and 44 against, and at the end of daylong deliberation, the Executive Committee agreed to place the following question on the agenda of the 2015 General Conference Session in July, which sets policy for the entire Church:
"Whereas, The unity for which Jesus prayed is vitally important to the witness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and;

"Whereas, The Seventh-day Adventist Church seeks to engage every member in its worldwide mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ among people from every nation, culture and ethnicity, and;

"Whereas, Various groups appointed by the General Conference and its divisions have carefully studied the Bible and Ellen G White writings with respect to the ordination of women and have not arrived at consensus as to whether ministerial ordination for women is unilaterally affirmed or denied, and;

"Whereas, The Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms that “God has ordained that the representatives of His Church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference Session, shall have authority”

“Therefore, The General Conference Executive Committee requests delegates in their sacred responsibility to God at the 2015 General Conference Session to respond to the following question:

"After your prayerful study on ordination from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G White, and the reports of the study commissions, and;

"After your careful consideration of what is best for the Church and the fulfillment of its mission,

"Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No”[.]

If the question about the theology of ordination is put up for vote, and passes, then leaders in each of the church’s 13 world regions may decide whether to ordain women in their territory.

The proposal voted by the Executive Committee today was brought to the assembly floor as a recommendation from the Church’s top officials and could be considered a creative way of dealing with a thorny issue by taking a neutral-leaning stance.

Some proponents of women’s ordination voted in favor of the motion but expressed strong concerns that the proposal before the Executive Committee lacked a formal recommendation for or against ordination. Proponents fear the issue will carry less weight when the question comes up at the General Conference Session that meets July 2-11 in San Antonio, Texas, United States.

“I think this body needs to give direction to the world church,” said David Weigley, president of the North American Division’s Columbia Union Conference. “We are missing a golden opportunity to give direction. Leaders lead, they give direction,” he said.

“Based on what I see from the history of this particular issue, it seems that the Annual Council has always played a very prominent role in what is passed onto the GC session,” said Heather-Dawn Small, Women’s Ministries director for the Adventist world church. “I’ve seen from the past that what this Annual Council decides influences the GC Session.”

Today’s Annual Council’s chairman, Vice President Mike Ryan, suggested that the recommendation needed to be unbiased, and that the ordination question was best suited for the
More than 20 people spoke on varying sides of the issue.

Alberto C. Gulfan Jr., president of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, said he appreciates the contribution of female evangelists, but that his region’s constituency “is not ready to move towards the ordination of women pastors.” He added: “We are also supporting this recommendation to bring this to the General Conference in Session and let the world decide on the issue once and for all.”

General Conference President Ted N. C. Wilson, who has opposed recent moves for women’s ordination that have come before Annual Council, did not express his opinion during the meeting, but indicated before the discussion that he would be willing to adjust his stance.

“If this body accepts the recommendation to place a question before the General Conference Session and that Session after prayerful consideration and review votes something,” Wilson announced, “I pledge to you I will follow what the General Conference votes. I want to ask each of you to do the same.”

The discussion over women’s ordination began more than 130 years ago, according to Church archives, and has intensified since the 1970s, especially where members are calling for change, including the United States, parts of Europe, and the South Pacific. The General Conference Sessions in 1990 and 1995 voted down proposals that would have allowed women’s ordination, and the matter has not returned to a Session agenda since then.

However, at the 2010 Session in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, a delegate from the U.S. state of Pennsylvania made a request “for the Adventist Church to develop and articulate a theology of ordination.”

That question led to a commitment from General Conference leaders to open the discussion and appoint the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, or TOSC. The 106-member committee was asked to take a profound look at ordination and provide information to help the General Conference decide how to handle the matter.

TOSC’s response was a 127-page report that was the basis for today’s discussion.

The report acknowledged that committee members—who hailed from around the world and met four times, for several days each time—were unable to come to agreement on whether to support or oppose women’s ordination.

TOSC produced three separate statements to summarize members’ viewpoints. Those positions were then explained by three different scholars in a presentation before the Executive Committee; the statements also were printed in the TOSC report.

One position, labeled Statement No. 1, said that only men could be ordained throughout the world church. Statement No. 2 said that entities responsible for hiring pastors should be able to make their own decisions on whether to ordain female ministers. Statement No. 3 said the decision should be left to the leadership “at a proper level” to determine whether ordination “may be appropriate for their area or region.”

While the theology of ordination will be placed on the General Conference Session agenda, the measure’s outcome is far from certain. The nearly 2,600 voting delegates may decide to adopt,
Membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has topped 18.1 million for the first time, but G. T. Ng, secretary of the Adventist world church, isn’t celebrating.

Ng expressed dismay about large losses.

“It’s easy to baptize them, but it’s much harder to retain them,” Ng said in an interview.

“Retention and nurture should be on the same side of the coin, but apparently baptism brings more glamour: ‘Look at how many I have baptized!’” he said. “Nurture? Who cares? There’s no glory for me.’ So we have an inherent problem: losses, serious losses. But not many people talk about it.”

Ng, however, made a point about talking about it on Sunday when he delivered a yearly membership report to the Annual Council, a major business meeting of world church leaders at the Adventist Church’s headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

Church membership has swelled by 1.5 percent to reach 18,143,745 million, up from 17,881,491 a year earlier, according to data that he presented. For the 10th year in a row, more than 1 million people joined the church—1,091,222 to be exact—but at the same time a decade-high 828,968 people were removed from the books after dying, leaving the church, or disappearing.

Some of the losses reflect an ongoing drive by local churches to audit their books to remove the names of unreachable members who have not attended worship services for some time, said David Trim, the world church’s chief archivist who compiles the data.

Without the audit, church membership would stand at 25 million today, Ng said.

Offering another difficult statistic, Ng said 31.8 million people have been baptized over the past 40 years, while 11.4 million have dropped their membership or gone missing. The figure does not include those who died.

Many of those people left because the church didn’t nurture them properly, Ng said in the interview.

In a recent example, the last Adventists who were baptized after an evangelistic series in a small village in northern India in 2005 reconverted to Hinduism in late August. The incident, which made headlines in the Indian media, raised fears among Christians that the reconversions were forced,
which is illegal in the country.

But an Adventist task force sent to the village, Asroi, found that the 33 former Adventists had received little support from church leadership since their baptisms in 2005 and at the same time had been eagerly courted by Hindu activists. Only about six people remained on the membership books when the reconversions took place.

Leaders with the church’s Southern Asia Division, which includes India, have engaged in soul-searching after the loss.

“We have to carefully nurture the newcomers and help them to be rooted in the word,” T. P. Kurian, Communication director for the Southern Asia Division, said in a recent e-mail.

Also Sunday, Ng defended the practice of counting members and said it could not be compared to an Old Testament census by Israeli King David that resulted in punishment from God. Ng said David’s actions were a display of arrogance and pride.

“When we count in the church, we have to count with humility,” he said.

The tally, he said, is simply “a report on what the Master has done.”

Ng elaborated in the interview by pointing to three of Jesus’ parables in Luke 15.

“There’s nothing wrong with counting itself,” he said. “After all, Jesus counted in the three parables, right? The woman counted her 10 coins and found one was lost. The shepherd counted only 99 sheep. The father lost a son. So there’s nothing wrong.”

Among the other statistics, Ng noted that growth was stagnating in the countries of the northern hemisphere and Australia but exploding in the southern hemisphere, especially in Central and South America, Africa, and Southern Asia. Furthermore, he said, the modest growth taking place in North America and Europe was largely coming from immigrants from the southern hemisphere.

Europe is even more challenging, he said. The Church has three divisions in Europe, a legacy of its long presence on continent, but membership is small. The Trans-European Division, which includes Britain, is the smallest of all of the church’s 13 divisions with 84,428 people.

“So the divisions wonder, ‘Where we are going?’” Ng said. “It’s so tough.”

The British Union Conference, for example, has 34,512 members, a net increase of 464 people from 34,048 a year earlier. Most of the new members were immigrants.

“What about the indigenous British?” Ng said. “I mean, they were born there. They were from there. What about them? Are we doing something for them? Those are hard questions.”

Ng said mission stories usually end on a high note and leave the impression that the work was successful. But he said the statistics present another side of the picture: much of the world hasn’t had a chance to hear about the first coming of Jesus, let alone the second coming.

He said the church has a presence in about 230 countries, but another 22 countries recognized by the United Nations remain unentered. Furthermore, a country might have a large population of Adventists but still contain major people groups without a single Adventist. In Kenya, many of the
800,000 church members primarily come from two language groups, while the other 40 language groups are largely unreached. The same is true of Thailand, where most members come from minority people groups.

“So it does not mean that once you have entered a country the work is done,” Ng said. “Far from it!”

**Church leaders urged to hire pastors, not administrators**

**Treasurer Lemon points to headquarters’ strict financial policy as a model to emulate**

*October 14, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review*

The General Conference, the top administrative body of the Adventist Church, had 282 employees in 1995.

Today it has 287, an increase of only five employees.

But the Seventh-day Adventist world church has not remained the same. Membership soared from 8.8 million to 18.1 million over those 18 years, while the number of world divisions increased from 11 to 13, the number of unions grew from 94 to 125, and the number of missions grew from 459 to 602.

General Conference treasurer Robert E. Lemon said the tight reins on the hiring of new administrators is a model for all levels of church administration, and he urged church leaders to follow the lead of the General Conference.

“The message that I have for church leaders is if they are going to be successful in having money to do work in the field, they must control the number of people they have at their conference, union and division offices,” Lemon said in an interview on the sidelines of the Annual Council, a major business meeting of church leaders in Silver Spring, Maryland.

“Adding pastors and front-line employees is what we encourage, and not just adding to administrative levels,” he said.

Lemon made the appeal to church leaders as he presented his annual treasurer’s report at the Annual Council on Monday. He also provided a snapshot of the financial state of the world church, showing that it received $2.39 billion in tithe last year, a 3.54 percent increase from $2.31 billion in 2012. Of that amount, the General Conference received nearly $150 million last year, roughly the same amount that it has gotten since 2011.

Lemon reminded the Annual Council how tight finances were for the General Conference during the early 1990s and how they had had to adjust appropriations and reduce the number of employees.
Benefits of Sound Finances

He said the General Conference has hired people as needed since then, including the director of a new Children’s Ministries department, but every addition comes at a cost to another part of the budget. If a department wants to add a staff member or a service, it has to find something to cut. To optimize costs, nearly all General Conference leaders now share administrative assistants rather than have their own.

“You go to some places and every year they are adding two or three people, but if you add two or three people here, you will have eaten up everything that we’ve got,” Lemon said. “We’ve added positions over the years, but we’ve added very, very few.” In a nod to the U.S. political system, he added: “When we have, it takes both houses of congress, the president not to veto it, and everyone to support it.”

Lemon said the main goal of the General Conference is to only maintain enough working capital to have a healthy financial operation and cover day-to-day expenses, and to allocate all excess funds at the end of the year to special projects.

Those practices have allowed the General Conference to absorb the shock waves of the 2008-09 global financial crisis and is helping it withstand the constant fluctuations of foreign currencies today, he said.

It also has meant that the General Conference has been able to provide substantial sums of money for special projects, including ongoing initiatives to share Jesus in the 10/40 Window, a territory covering North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Lemon said spending in the 10/40 Window is now comparable to the size of a division’s budget.

He called on church leaders from around the world to become more effective by practicing financial discipline. “If you want your organizations to have the ability to respond immediately like we do with special projects, you can’t just add employees,” he said.

Cutting North American Division’s Tithe

Lemon, who will retire next year, said the General Conference’s improved financial footing has allowed it to adjust its financial relationship with the North American Division, which for years has contributed a much higher percentage of tithe to the world budget of the General Conference than other divisions.

Lemon praised the North American Division for its generosity. “The world has plowed the North American Division’s field for a long time,” he told the Annual Council.

The North American Division, which once contributed 10.72 percent of its tithe, now gives 7 percent and will give 6 percent by 2020. The change, which started in 2001, has provided the North American Division with a combined $267 million to spend on its own projects.

Over the years, the amount of tithe contributed by other divisions to the General Conference has grown to 2 percent from the previous 1 percent.

Last year, 50 percent of tithe and mission offerings received by the General Conference came from the North American Division, and the other 50 percent came from the rest of the world.
The General Conference’s biggest single outlay last year was $80 million in appropriations to divisions and institutions. Other major expenses included $23 million for inter-division missionaries and $44 million for General Conference staff and programs.

Separately, Annual Council delegates on Monday approved a recommendation from the treasury to support a request from the North American Division to explore the idea of moving its headquarters out of the General Conference building. If the division chooses to move, the General Conference will provide $3 million to assist with the transition. If the relocation is outside the greater Washington area, where the General Conference has its headquarters, the division would need additional approval from General Conference leadership.

“This should never be treated as an initiative to get them out of the building. Quite the opposite,” Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Adventist world church, told Annual Council delegates after the vote.

North American Division leaders will discuss the possible move at their annual year-end business meeting in November.

**Annual Council adopts recommended edits to Fundamental Beliefs**

*Belief on Creation could be changed to emphasize six ‘literal’ days*

October 13, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Edwin Manuel Garcia/ANN

A policy body of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on Monday voted to adjust the language of a key fundamental belief to emphasize that creation was a “recent” event that took place during “six literal days.”

The decision by representatives of the church’s 13 world divisions meeting at the 2014 Annual Council agreed with top Church officials who are growing concerned about what they claim is a misinterpretation of the creation account within the denomination.

The church’s official stance on creation—known as Fundamental Belief No. 6—currently states, in part, “In six days the Lord made ‘the heaven and the earth’ and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week.”

The proposed section of the revised belief, to be sent to delegates of the church’s official governing body for a vote next year, now reads: “In a recent six-day creation the Lord made ‘the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them’ and rested on the seventh day.”

Church leadership insisted on inserting the word “recent” to establish the biblical belief that creation occurred thousands of years ago, as opposed to the conflicting belief of evolutionists who insist earth is at least 4 billion years old. The phrase “six literal days” is significant to church leaders because it conveys that each day of creation lasted one literal day.
Church leaders were concerned that if Seventh-day Adventist members adopt the position that creation was not a six-day literal event, they’ll abandon the denomination’s central belief about the Sabbath being a 24-hour period of rest.

The vote was 179 to 15, with 5 abstentions, to adopt the recommendations of the Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee, which first met in 2011.

The move to clarify the church’s position comes at a time when an increasing number of Adventists, including some in the denomination’s academic institutions, are subscribing to theistic evolution, a view that acknowledges God and science are responsible for creation.

General Conference President Ted N. C. Wilson has made it a priority to affirm the literal, six-day creation.

He clearly expressed his viewpoint in a major speech to more than 400 Bible and Science teachers, and other denominational workers, in Nevada, United States, two months ago.

Quoting from the Bible and the writings of Church co-founder Ellen G. White, Wilson urged the audience to “hold firmly to a literal recent creation and absolutely reject theistic and general evolutionary theory.”

Wilson’s position is supported by the Biblical Research Institute (BRI), a General Conference think tank that promotes the study and practice of Adventist theology and lifestyle.

The BRI maintains that the church’s identity will be at risk if Fundamental Belief No. 6 does not emphasize the literal, six-day creation. Should theistic evolution become more widely accepted, the BRI stated in a report, “we will be in danger of losing the biblical foundation for the Sabbath and our understanding of salvation.”

The protocol to modify the fundamental belief on creation is a long process that began in 2010 in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, by delegates of the 59th General Conference Session who voted to make the changes. The Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee was appointed to evaluate and merge the proposal with the 2004 Statement on Affirmation of Creation and seek input from church members around the world before advancing its recommendation to the Annual Council delegates. The committee is led by Artur Stele, a General Conference vice president and head of the BRI.

Relatively few of the 330 delegates meeting at church headquarters commented on the proposal.

Church historian David Trim cautioned that the proposal, which includes wording that establishes the six literal days, together with the Sabbath, “constituted a week as we experience it today,” could be subject to differing interpretations.

Shirley Chang, a North American Division delegate, said adding the word “recent” seemed out of context.

Former Trans-European Division President Bertil Wiklander took issue with the insertion of the word “historical” to describe the creation account. He said the church is better off with the original statement, because the revised belief “could take the meaning that the account belongs to history.”
The topic of creation was among the most-discussed part of an agenda item Sunday and Monday that recommended modifications to the 28 beliefs.

The Adventist Church first adopted 27 Fundamental Beliefs in 1980 under then President Neal Wilson, who said revisions would be needed periodically. In 2005, the Church added the 28th “Growing in Christ.”

In this week’s proposal, none of the beliefs were changed substantially.

The belief of Marriage and the Family for the first time acknowledges that unmarried people are valued too: God “embraces both single and married persons.”

The section on Christian Behavior previously suggested that godly people act in harmony “with the principles of heaven.” It now reads that they act in harmony, “with biblical principles in all aspects of personal and social life.”

Most of the modifications were edits, such as deleting redundancies, adopting more inclusive language, erasing “men of God” and replacing with “persons of God,” fixing punctuation, and scrapping “marriage partners” in favor of “a man and a woman.”

The proposed revisions to the Fundamental Beliefs will be considered by delegates of the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, for adoption into official Church policy.

**Suggested revisions to Adventist Church Manual include matters on discipline**

**Executive Committee sends edits to next July’s GC Session for consideration**

*October 16, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Edwin Manuel Garcia/ANN*

Delegates at the 2014 General Conference Annual Council this week agreed to amend some chapters of the Church Manual, including adding new details to further specify the reasons that members can face discipline.

The 13 reasons for which members can be disciplined—such as disloyalty to the church and physical violence—did not change. But the section that deals most closely with extramarital relationships was expanded to include details on specific definitions relating to sexual conduct.

The current wording on that section states that members can be disciplined for “violation of the seventh commandment of the law of God as it relates to the marriage institution, the Christian home and biblical standards of moral conduct.”

The Church Manual revision committee proposed to replace that statement with the following:
“Violation of the commandment of the law of God, which reads, ‘You shall not commit adultery’ (Ex. 20:14, Matt. 5:28), as it relates to the marriage institution and the Christian home, biblical standards of moral conduct, and any act of sexual intimacy outside of a marriage relationship and/or non-consensual acts of sexual conduct within a marriage whether those acts are legal or illegal. Such acts include but are not limited to child sexual abuse, including abuse of the vulnerable. Marriage is defined as a public, lawfully binding, monogamous, heterosexual relationship between one man and one woman.”

Delegates overwhelmingly adopted the recommended changes yesterday. The revisions will be forwarded as a proposal to be voted on at the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, United States.

Many of the modifications to the Church Manual were minor edits.

In one chapter, the outdated word “ordinance” was removed from the description of the communion, foot-washing ceremony and baptism. Another chapter added the word “discipleship” to emphasize that local churches should be more mission-minded to its members and the community.

A new section was added to recommend that church boards have a “mission-driven, broadly-based” finance committee or similar structure to review the budget process.

In addition, references to Adventist Youth Society, also known as AYS, were deleted and replaced with Adventist Youth Ministries, or AYM.

But the proposed amendments that drew the most attention from delegates sought to: Tighten the wording on who is allowed to address the congregation from the pulpit; clearly define that a marriage is between a “man and a woman” as opposed to the former wording, “husband and wife”; and identify the reasons for discipline on grounds of sexual immorality.

Some delegates protested the removal of the words “seventh commandment” from the discipline section and others said the section needed to be more specific, such as including a passage to deal with “inappropriate texting.”

The proposal on “unauthorized speakers” sought to remove details about who other than credentialed ministers can have speak from the pulpit. The proposal also suggested omitting a line that states that pastors who have been “removed from the ministry” shouldn’t be able to preach.

The new wording states: “Only speakers worthy of confidence will be invited to the pulpit by the church in harmony with guidelines given by the conference. Individuals who have been removed from membership or designing persons who have no authority from the church, should not be given access to the pulpit.”

Delegate Chester Clark questioned why the committee would want to adopt a position that “simply seems to be shifting from one policy that’s applied around the world to having different standards or different guidelines maybe in every conference.”

Harald Wollan, secretary of the Church Manual Committee, explained that the change would allow churches to adhere to the manual. “The majority of laypeople are not issued credentials,” Wollan said, “so what has been practiced is actually against the Church Manual and we wanted to have something in the Church Manual that actually can be followed.”
Oakwood constituents back transfer to NAD

University will still get annual subsidy but will need to downgrade status of its Ellen White center

October 15, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

Constituents easily approved the transfer of Oakwood University from the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s General Conference to its North American Division in a move that won’t affect the amount of church money that it gets every year but will lead to a downgrade of its Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office.

Constituents supported the switch in a 129-1 vote on Wednesday, the last day of the Annual Council, a major church business meeting at the General Conference’s headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. A subsequent vote to amend the university’s bylaws passed 114-0. Neither vote had any abstentions.

The transfer earlier was endorsed by the board of trustees at the Huntsville, Alabama-based university and by the General Conference, which oversees the Adventist world church. Wednesday’s decision clears the way for a final vote by the North American Division in a few weeks.

“Welcome home to your home division,” Daniel R. Jackson, president of the North American Division, told the meeting on Wednesday.

Administrators at Oakwood, a traditionally black school for North Americans, initiated the conversation to transfer to the North American Division after deciding that it made sense to align more closely with the division where its target students live.

The General Conference has sponsored the school since Adventist Church pioneer Ellen G. White co-founded it in 1896. Without the General Conference, the school likely wouldn’t have survived the troubled racial history of the U.S. South.

University president Leslie N. Pollard praised White’s influence on Oakwood.

“If there is anyone close to being a saint in the African-American community, it is Ellen White,” he said at the constituency meeting.

Ella Simmons, a General Conference vice president who has actively worked with Oakwood on the transfer, said ahead of the vote that she believed White would have approved of the plan. She said she had a passage from White’s book Ministry of Healing that applied to the situation.

Reading a list of questions on what an engaged couple should ask before marriage, she said: “Let the questions be raised, ‘Will this union help me heavenward? Will it increase my love for God? And will it enlarge my sphere of usefulness in this life?’ If these reflections present no drawback,
then in the fear of God move forward” Healing (p. 356).

The transfer will lead to the downgrade of the university’s Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office, a depository of White documents and other historical materials from the main office at the General Conference headquarters. Only General Conference-sponsored schools are allowed to have the higher status, and the Oakwood facility will be renamed a White Estate research center.

Jackson said the only impact of the change would be on the sign outside the center’s door.

“Nothing is going to change—just the name,” he said in an interview after the vote.

Jackson also said that the size of the university’s subsidy would stay the same but come from the North American Division rather than the General Conference.

The General Conference has earmarked $1.28 million for the university in 2015, a 2 percent increase from 2014, according to General Conference financial statements released at the Annual Council. The North American Division will deduct that amount from the money that it sends to the General Conference and give it to the university, Jackson said.

Oakwood is in good financial health, said Pollard, who last month opened a university-owned franchise, Edible Arrangements, in a bid to cut student tuition. Oakwood is the first Adventist school to own a franchise.

Pollard said 10 percent of the university’s $50 million annual budget comes from North American Division institutions.

General Conference Treasurer Robert E. Lemon concurred with Pollard’s financial assessment.

“Oakwood University is in a very, very good financial position,” he said.