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January 05, 2015 | Phoenix, Arizona, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review with reporting by Seth Shaffer

Scores of Adventist young people visited tens of thousands of homes across Phoenix, Arizona, United States, on Friday, January 2 as they accepted a challenge
from their leader, GYC president Natasha Nebblett, to "rattle the world."

The teens and young adults made the annual outing during a five-day conference of GYC, or "Generation. Youth. Christ," which is themed “At the Cross” and runs through January 4 at the Phoenix Convention Center.

Friday’s initiative to share religious literature in more than 30,000 homes followed a first-time effort on the eve of the annual convention that saw a smaller group of about 200 young people visit more than 70,000 homes.

Opening the conference, Nebblett said that living a Christian life encompasses more than merely claiming a Christian identity: it means living "a life that rattles the world."

She noted that the term “Christian” was first coined in Syria in the first century but there is no known Adventist presence in the country today.

Adventist young people are caught in a spiritual warfare between Jesus and Satan, Nebblett said, adding that GYC members who participated in the home visits before the conference's opening had encountered Phoenix residents who spoke of seeing demons.

“What will it take for the world to take notice of Jesus?” Nebblett said.

For the world to start taking notice, she said, young Adventists must allow Christ to be fully in charge of their lives. But, she said, this is not something that young people can do through their own power.

“We cannot crucify ourselves,” she said.

Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Adventist world church, struck a similar note in a speech on the evening of January 1, urging the young people to remain faithful to Jesus.

“God is looking for faithfulness in us ‘At the Cross’ and in our daily lives for He is faithful to us,” Wilson said. “He is our role model and our Savior. Through Christ’s righteousness and grace we can be faithful because He is faithful.”

“At the Cross” is the 12th annual conference organized by GYC, which was formed in 2002 by a group of college students determined to pray, study the Bible and share Jesus more boldly. Daily attendance is expected to swell to more than 5,000 people by the time of Sabbath worship services on January 3.

Attendees range in age from 14 to the late 80s, but most are teens and college-age Adventists.

A new plank in this year’s conference was the initiative that involved 180 young people gathering in Phoenix a week before the conference started to make house-to-house contacts.

Taylor Hinkle, GYC’s vice president of evangelism and a student at Southwestern Adventist University, said the change was introduced after evangelist Mark Finley made an appeal at last year’s conference in Orlando, Florida, for GYC attendees to be handed the tools they needed to replicate the outreach in their home churches.
Hinkle also said he was personally motivated by a statement from Adventist Church co-founder Ellen White, who said: “House-to-house labor, searching for souls, hunting for the lost sheep, is the most essential work that can be done” (1MR, page 14).

For the pre-conference outreach, attendees who had never before engaged in literature evangelism were trained by experienced peers and then sent out to the streets of Phoenix. Taylor estimated that the young people knocked on 70,000 to 80,000 doors.

Hundreds of attendees hopped on dozens of buses on Friday afternoon to knock on another 30,000 to 40,000 doors, meaning GYC members visited a total of more than 100,000 homes at this year’s conference. Attendees on Friday also visited people in hospitals and nursing homes.

Friday’s program mirrored similar major outreach events organized at previous conferences.

Every GYC conference is packed with speeches and seminars aimed at inspiring the attendees and training them to share Jesus in new ways. New seminars this year include “Creation, Agriculture, and Evangelism,” presented by Paul Dysinger, owner of an organic farm in Tennessee; and Aimee Smith, manager of Good News Farm at Great Lakes Adventist Academy, and “Relentless Prayer” by Paul Ratsara, president of the Southern-Africa Indian Ocean Division. Ratsara has been a frequent participant at GYC conferences for the last five years, and his son and new daughter-in-law serve on GYC’s executive committee.

Wilson, meanwhile, called on GYC attendees to follow the lead of Nehemiah, who rebuilt Jerusalem’s walls in Old Testament times, and leave the conference wholly committed to following God’s Word and His direction.

“In your faithfulness to God in 2015, with one hand do the work of God and in the other hand hold the Word of God, your weapon of heavenly authority,” Wilson said in his speech. “Lean completely on the Lord in your faithful service saying, along with those who worked on the wall of Jerusalem, ‘Our God will fight for us.’”

‘Faithfulness to God in the Last Days’

The transcript of President Ted N. C. Wilson’s speech at the GYC annual convention

January 05, 2015 | Phoenix, Arizona, United States | ANN staff

The following is a transcript of the Thursday night plenary session address that Adventist Church leader Ted N. C. Wilson gave at GYC’s annual convention themed “At the Cross” in Phoenix, Arizona, United States, on January 1, 2015.

January 1 is usually filled with promise for the new year—people making resolutions and thinking about improved lives and opportunities. The slate is clean for something new.

Much of that continues to be true this evening in Phoenix, but the immediate future is not necessarily rosy. From a prophet perspective, it will get worse before it gets better. But when it does get better, it will be the best! Having just passed through the world’s celebration of the first advent, it is imperative as Seventh-day Adventists—young and older—with a clear prophetic
perspective to thrill with the realization that the second advent of Christ is approaching. Jesus is coming soon!

Observing world events, we immediately recognize that Matthew 24 and Revelation 13 are being fulfilled as we sit here tonight. So many things point to a rapid fulfillment of prophetic messages about Earth’s history. The minutes of the clock counting down to midnight at Times Square last night with the traditional Waterford crystal lighted ball descending as it does every year to usher in the new year is nothing compared to the final symbolic minutes of this Earth’s prophetic clock ticking down to the midnight hour of Earth’s history.

The end of time is upon us. The world is in disarray. No one can solve the insurmountable problems facing countries and people groups. Unrest, butchery and treachery are all around. We better understand Luke 21:26 when it recounts “men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things, which are coming on the Earth.” Even though a recent poll in the United States indicated more optimism for 2015 than for 2014, there are signs of uncertainty all around us.

Social trends continue to defy biblical truth and heavenly principles. For those who are carefully observant, even the very recent ecumenical trends are astounding pointing to the fulfillment of Revelation 13:3. The King James Version eloquently states that “all the world wondered after the beast.”

So, although a report last week indicated that the economy is improving, that there is a hiring boom, that stocks are surging, that oil prices are plunging, that auto sales are up, and that interest rates are dropping even more, one has to ask the question, “On what solid financial foundation is any of this built, and how long will it last?” I am generally an eternal optimist, but I have concluded that we are entering the final scenario of Earth’s history with unusual events continuing to occur on every hand and developments to take place that will defy human logic.

Be faithful to Jesus, His Word, and His church

So, on this first day of 2015, God is calling each of us at GYC and all God’s remnant people around this globe to be faithful to Him in every way through our connection and communion with Him every day. Being revived and reformed in Him “At the Cross.” It is only through connecting to the Vine that we can be fruitful and faithful in this age of unfaithfulness.

We are called to faithfulness—faithfulness to Christ, to His Holy Word, to His church and prophetic movement, to His biblical plan for the family, to His sanctuary message, to public and personal witnessing for Him, to belief in and use of the Spirit of Prophecy, to the proclamation of His three angels’ messages, to Christian stewardship, to living the Christian life, to Christian humanitarian service, and to sharing the promise of Christ’s soon return. God is looking for faithfulness in us “At the Cross” and in our daily lives for He is faithful to us. He is our role model and our Savior. Through Christ’s righteousness and grace we can be faithful because He is faithful.

David declared in Psalm 40:10, “I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation.” David also verified in Psalm 119:86 that all of God’s commandments are faithful. Jeremiah testified in Lamentations 3:22-23 that “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed. Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” Paul proclaimed in Hebrews 10:23, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” John declared the Word
of God to be faithful in Revelation 21:5 saying, “Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’”

What a privilege to place ourselves in the hands of One who is faithful knowing that whatever may happen to us that God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness as 1 John 1:9 declares. Whatever we face in 2015, we can rely on God’s faithfulness to ultimately bring us home to His eternal kingdom when Christ returns. By God’s grace, I hope that many of us through the grace of Jesus and faithfulness to Him will see Him coming in the clouds of glory without seeing death. Be faithful because He is faithful!

Your faithfulness is essential to God’s proclamation to the universe. Because of His faithfulness, He has followers who are faithful, His ambassadors to the world. Solomon declares in Proverbs 13:17 that “a faithful ambassador brings health.” Be an ambassador for Christ in 2015 as you bring physical, mental, social, and spiritual health. Share Christ’s righteousness and His comprehensive health ministry as you engage in His plans for mission to the cities and every place on this Earth during 2015. God promises in Proverbs 28:20 that “A faithful man shall abound with blessings.” Luke 16:10 declares that “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.” Paul explains in I Corinthians 4:2, “Moreover it is required … that a man be found faithful.”

**Follow Nehemiah’s example**

One of the most poignant examples of faithfulness in the line of duty is that of Nehemiah, a faithful man of God serving in the palace of the Persian king. In fact, Nehemiah is mentioned in the GYC mission statement. Nehemiah 1:4 records that when Nehemiah heard about the broken-down wall of Jerusalem he “sat down and wept.” He then turned his pleading heart to the Lord in prayer. A

As you face the challenges of 2015 and beyond, be fervent in prayer pleading with the Lord for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit so that we can figuratively repair God’s wall today with Holy Spirit power. Verse 11 records Nehemiah as saying, “O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant.”

Nehemiah received permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall. Three days after arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah finally challenged the Jewish nation saying in chapter 2:17, “Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach.” Their response was “Let us rise up and build” (verse 18).

But beware of the “downers” of today represented by Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem who laughed and despised Nehemiah. Take courage from God and join with Nehemiah in saying, “The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build” (verse 20). The construction began and came up to half the height of the intended wall because “the people had a mind to work” (4:6).

However, when Sanballat, Tobiah and the enemies of God heard of the progress they made plans to attack. Nehemiah pled with the Lord through prayer and then positioned the people saying, “Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses” (4:14). They divided the task of defense and construction so that all participated. In fact, chapter 4, verse 17 indicates that “those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon.”

In your faithfulness to God in 2015, with one hand do the work of God and in the other hand hold the Word of God, your weapon of heavenly authority. Lean completely on the Lord in your faithful
service saying, along with those who worked on the wall of Jerusalem, “Our God will fight for us” (verse 20). So persistent, undeterred and faithful were Nehemiah and his colleagues in pursuing God’s work that they did not even take off their clothes except to wash them. Well, I’m not quite suggesting that, but work in that same spirit with one mind of faithfulness to God’s request that we proclaim the three angels’ messages with Holy Spirit power.

“Testimonies for the Church,” Vol. 9, page 19, says, “In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. … They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.”

But Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem did not give up. Beware of those who will try to dissuade you of your great task as young Seventh-day Adventists “on the wall” in 2015 just before Christ’s coming. The enemies sent a message to Nehemiah asking to meet them in the plain of Ono. Now, if Nehemiah had spoken English, you might have heard him saying, “Oh no, I’m not going to meet in Ono because I know you are just trying to distract me from my heaven-born work.” Nehemiah sent back a powerful message in chapter 6, verse 3, saying, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.”

When the Sanballats, Tobiahs and Geshems of this world tempt you to distraction, tell them, “We are doing God’s work—a great work—and we will not come down!”

Nehemiah prayed in verse 9, “O God, strengthen my hands.” Young people of GYC, ask God to strengthen your hands and do His great work in faithfulness to Him.

God will reward your faithfulness as He did Nehemiah’s. Verses 15 and 16 of chapter 6 record, “So the wall was finished … and it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.”

When God shows His mighty hand in your work of faithfulness, give Him all the glory and people will see that He is working through you as young people of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

“Prophets and Kings,” page 645, says, “Like Nehemiah, God’s people are neither to fear nor to despise their enemies. Putting their trust in God, they are to go steadily forward, doing His work with unselfishness, and committing to His providence the cause for which they stand.”

**Adventist young people, you are chosen!**

So GYC, I challenge you as we march into 2015 and face the last days of Earth’s history, to stand faithfully for God. Accept God’s plea in Revelation 2:10, “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Take Christ’s words seriously in Revelation 3:11, “Behold I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.” Realize that you are the inheritors of God’s great commission to proclaim the truth to the final generation and that as Revelation 17: 14 says, “The Lamb will overcome them, for He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”

Young people of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, you are chosen and, by God’s grace, you will be faithful! Stand “At the Cross” and then testify to His goodness. Stand firm for God’s truth and proclaim His Word. Young people, as Nehemiah and a host of others were, God is calling you to be faithful! You are personally important and critical to the last proclamation of the three angels’
messages. I am counting on you, your church is counting on you and most of all, God is counting on you.

Recently I read a marvelous portion from “Testimonies for the Church,” Vol. 9, pages 101 to 103 relative to our faithfulness to God and the task entrusted to us. Read that entire section when you have time. However, let me share short portions with you. Ellen White indicated, “Recently in the night season I was awakened from sleep and given a view of the sufferings of Christ for men. His sacrifice, the mockery and derision He received at the hands of wicked men, His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, His betrayal and crucifixion—all were vividly portrayed before me.

“I saw Christ in the midst of a large company of people. He was seeking to impress their minds with His teachings. But He was despised and rejected by them. Men were heaping upon Him abuse and shame. My distress was very great as I looked upon the scene. I pleaded with God: ‘What is to be done with this congregation? Will none give up their exalted opinions of self and seek the Lord as little children? Will none break their hearts before God in repentance and confession?’ …

“Three times the Savior prayed: ‘Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.’ It was here that the destiny of a lost world trembled in the balance. Should He refuse to drink the cup, the result would be eternal ruin to the human race. But an angel from heaven strengthened the Son of God to accept the cup and drink its bitter woe.

“How few there are who realize that all this was borne for them individually! … As I have thought of that cup trembling in the hands of Christ; as I have realized that He might have refused to drink, and left the world to perish in its sin, I have pledged that every energy of my life should be devoted to the work of winning souls to Him.

“Christ came to the Earth to suffer and die, that, through the exercise of faith in Him and the appropriation of His merits, we might become laborers together with God. It was the Savior’s purpose that after He ascended to heaven to become man’s intercessor, His followers should carry on the work that He had begun. … There are some who are willing to go to the ends of the Earth in order to carry the light of truth to men, but God demands that every soul who knows the truth shall seek to win others to the love of the truth. If we are not willing to make special sacrifices in order to save souls that are ready to perish, how can we be counted worthy to enter into the city of God?

“There is an individual work to be done for each one of us. I know there are many who are placing themselves in right relation to Christ, whose one thought is to bring the message of present truth before the people of the world. They stand continually ready to offer their services. But my heart aches when I see so many who are satisfied with a cheap experience, an experience that costs them but little. Their lives say that for them Christ has died in vain.”

Seventh-day Adventist young people, on this first day of the new year, don’t let Christ have died in vain “At the Cross.” Are you willing to come to the cross and be faithful to Him, His Word, and His Advent movement? If you are, would you stand with me right now in faithfulness to Christ?
W. Augustus Cheatham, former vice president of Loma Linda University, dies of brain cancer

Cheatham also was a federal appointee under U.S. President Jimmy Carter

January 05, 2015 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

W. Augustus Cheatham, an education official in the administration of U.S. President Jimmy Carter who went on to become the longest-serving vice president at Loma Linda University, has died after an eight-year battle with brain cancer. He was 72.

Cheatham, who was known to friends as Gus, died peacefully at home in Redlands, California, at 3:40 a.m. on Monday, December 22, said his brother, Charles L. Cheatham, former president of the Adventist Church’s Allegheny East Conference.

"Memorial services will be planned and announced," Cheatham said in a brief e-mail to friends. "Keep us in your prayers."

W. Augustus Cheatham was first diagnosed with a brain tumor while working as vice president for public affairs and marketing at Loma Linda University Adventist Health Sciences Center, the parent company of the university and its affiliates. He experienced symptoms that caused him to seek medical assistance in January 2007.

Cheatham immediately underwent surgery to remove a small brain tumor and, putting his Christian faith and marketing skills on display, used the experience to praise both God and the quality of care at Loma Linda University Medical Center.

"The surgery was a great success and my physicians expect me to recover fully," Cheatham said in a statement released shortly after the surgery. "The prayers on my behalf are evident in the speedy recovery that has already been my privilege."

But the tumor returned, and Cheatham retired from the university in September 2007 after a record 22 years in the position.

"Though his illness slowed him down, we kept up our friendship, shared meals whenever we could, and had many opportunities to talk politics: national and church," said Ray Tetz, a longtime friend and president of Mind Over Media, a strategic communications company in Silver Spring, Maryland.

"He cared deeply about what is happening in our nation and always wanted to know the latest in church politics as well," Tetz said in a tribute on his Facebook page. "The last time I saw him
earlier in the fall, his capacity for speech was nearly gone, but he still wanted to talk, and he was still filled with grace and gratitude.”

**Thurgood Marshall a Memorable Experience**

Wilbert Augustus Cheatham, who was born on February 14, 1942, completed his undergraduate work in 1965 at Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University) in Takoma Park, Maryland, and went on to receive a master’s degree in social work at Howard University in Washington D.C.

Cheatham coordinated community services for public schools in Prince George’s County, Maryland, from 1966 to 1970 before entering 16 years of government service, including appointments as chief of western operations in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; its deputy assistant secretary; and deputy director of its Office for Civil Rights—a position for which he was recommended by Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Joseph Califano and approved by President Jimmy Carter, according to biographical information on Loma Linda University’s website.

“Having the oath of office administered by associate Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall was one of Mr. Cheatham’s most memorable experiences,” Loma Linda University said in a July 2007 statement announcing that it was awarding Cheatham with its Distinguished University Service Award.

Upon leaving government service in 1982, Cheatham became principal and business manager of Adventist-operated Pine Forge Academy in Pennsylvania for three years. During that time, enrollment increased 170 percent, from 110 to 285 students; a new campus church was constructed; and funds were raised for a new gymnasium, the academy’s alumni association said this week.

“Mr. Cheatham held many prestigious positions and has a long list of accomplishments and awards. Today we honor the husband, father, brother, uncle, cousin, friend, leader and man of God, ‘Gus,’ as he was affectionately called by all who knew and loved him,” said Sonya Sampson, president of the National Pine Forge Academy Alumni Association.

“We pray for peace and comfort to the family and all those who are touched by this great loss,” she said in a statement.

In 1985, Cheatham joined Loma Linda University and left a lasting impact on its methods of communication.

“His professional legacy includes an institutional brand identity that applies to all forms of university communication—print and electronic; and a notable model of university special-events planning and execution,” the university said in the 2007 statement.

**An Influential Mentor**

Cheatham is survived by his wife of 51 years, Ida; three children; and seven grandchildren.

Tetz said he would remember Cheatham as an influential mentor who gave him much-needed advice when he embarked on a career in communications after working as youth director of the Southern California Conference in 1986.
“He taught me so much,” Tetz said. “When I started my own company, Gus called and gave us a project on the first day we opened our doors, and we worked together on dozens of assignments until his illness forced his retirement from Loma Linda in 2007.”

He added: “We were honored to be invited to produce a retrospective video on his life and career, and it was shown at the banquet marking his retirement.”

One of Cheatham’s favorite recording artists, Wintley Phipps, also sang at Cheatham’s banquet.

“Gus loved to hear Wintley Phipps sing, and ‘Lift Every Voice’ was one of his favorites,” Tetz said. “‘God of our weary years, God of our silent tears’—the lyrics are more fitting tonight than ever. He rests in Jesus.”