Annual Meeting of the GC Executive Committee Opens in Silver Spring: Top GC officers may be ready to propose limiting the role and authority that unions have had since 1901 and to sanction those entities that favor ordaining pastors without regard to gender. *Adventist Today* reporters see the landscape set for a historic and difficult Committee process that could alter the church's balance of power as we know it....

ADRA International Appoints Australian Leader Jonathan Duffy as New CEO: The orderly appointment of a new international CEO for ADRA is seen as a useful step in helping settle the philanthropic organization after a period of internal unrest....

*Does ADRA Have a Future? What Is It?:* As a special bonus to all readers (in conjunction with our news article on the appointment of a new ADRA International director) this in-depth feature article on the history and future of ADRA (taken directly from the current issue of *Adventist Today*) is made available to all readers, for a limited time (normally available only to subscribers)....

Students Riot Against Required Chapel Attendance at Adventist University in Kenya: Adventist students often quibble with the "enforced religion" they see in compulsory chapel programs, but never has the complaint led to rioting, as it did last week in Kenya....

Association of Adventist Women: Write the GC President about Ending Discrimination in Ordination: As policy discussions regarding ordination continue, the Association of Adventist Women is urging a direct letter-writing appeal to General Conference President Ted Wilson....

Adventist Leaders Meet with Prime Minister of Albania, Announce ADRA Project among Roma: The Adventist Church was one of the earliest Protestant denominations to enter post-Communist Albania and is now focusing on the needs of the Roma, a distinctive minority struggling to keep pace with the rest of the nation....

New York City Gathering of Adventists from Grenada Marred by Bus Accident: A
number of Adventists of West Indian descent were injured in a bus accident last week while traveling from Canada to attend a large conference in Brooklyn....

**OPINION**

**Earth is a Battlefield:** Blogger Katelyn Pauls finds that the Evil One has a thousand ways to attack her, often choosing to take the offensive by accosting her loved ones back in the homeland....

**Where is God?:** Devotional blogger Debonnaire Kovacs is in good company with both Jesus and the Patriarch Job as she ponders how a good God can coexist with human misery....

**SUBSCRIBERS' BONUS FEATURE**

**Innovation Conference, 2012—Human Trafficking:** Far from the world's news headlines, sexual slavery—the acquiring, transporting, and commercial use of human beings for sexual purposes—now affects 30 million victims, mostly women and children. What steps can Adventists take to extend mercy to the victims and justice to the perpetrators? A recent Adventist-sponsored conference in Ohio studied innovative ways to fight the practice at its economic headwaters (available only to AT subscribers)....

_A Weekly Newsletter from atoday.org_

This message was sent to ahc@andrews.edu from Adventist Today, Post Office Box 1135, Sandy, OR 97055-1135.

_Edit profile / unsubscribe_ - _Forward to a friend_

---

Spam
Not spam
Forget previous vote
Thursday evening the 2012 annual meeting of the executive committee of the General Conference (GC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church opened at the denomination’s headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. It has “a packed agenda,” reported the official Adventist News Network (ANN) and there are rumors of unprecedented policy proposals and unorthodox parliamentary procedures.

The 350-member group is the governing body of the denomination between the every-five-year GC Sessions. It includes all of the union conference and union mission presidents, the GC and division officers and a limited number of pastors, educators and lay representatives.

Actions taken by union conference constituency delegates in the United States and Europe concerning the ending of gender discrimination in ordination to the gospel ministry and the opposition of the GC officers may come to a head at this meeting. Sources have told Adventist Today that the GC officers have prepared a secret recommendation to punish those conferences that have, with the approval of their union conferences as specified in the denomination’s Working Policy, recently ordained women serving as pastors and issued Ordained Minister credentials to women pastors.

Adventist Today published an article earlier this year by Gary Patterson, a retired GC officer, listing a number of items in the Working Policy that provide a framework for the actions taken against gender discrimination by constituency meetings in the North German Union Conference, the Columbia Union Conference and the Pacific Union Conference. Sources have told Adventist Today that a large package of proposed policy changes has been prepared to eradicate this framework and greatly curtail the autonomous role of the union conferences.

Many veteran observers find this astounding because (1) the union conferences were created in 1901 at the strong urging of Ellen G. White specifically to decentralize authority in the denomination; (2) the current study of the theology of ordination has been announced as an open process without a predetermined conclusion; and (3) the proposed policy changes are being kept secret. In fact, sources have told Adventist Today that it is the intention of the GC officers to ask the executive committee to vote the changes without reading the document.

“There seems to be an inordinate fear of this being done in the light of day, seen by church members,” one retired GC staff member stated. “Why are they afraid for people to read this in advance if it is a good recommendation?” There are very real questions both about the legal standing of such a procedure and its outcome. Will denominational leaders from around the world be willing to participate in such an unorthodox and perhaps unethical vote?

Another element in this decision is the fact that there are numerous variances from policy items in various places around the world. Will union presidents be willing to take the risk that such
drastic actions might be taken regarding their own policy issues? Adventist Today has been told that at least some division presidents have urged GC President Ted Wilson not to make a major issue over the actions taken about ordination.

ANN has announced that other items to be considered during the week-long meeting include a report on the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, revisions to the denomination’s official statements on homosexuality and a new policy regarding the percentage of tithe that the North American Division will share with the GC. In addition, there will be a name change for the Euro-Africa Division with headquarters in Berne, Switzerland, since all of its territory in Africa has transferred over several years to other divisions or the new Greater Middle East Union, which is attached directly to the GC. And there will be proposals for adjustments in Northern Asia-Pacific Division and in the African nation of Burundi.

The change in tithe policy comes as a recommendation from a study commission that provided an initial report to last year’s annual meeting. For many years the North American Division has contributed eight percent of the tithe turned in by members in the United States, Canada and Bermuda to the GC headquarters, while all of the other divisions contributed only two percent. The proposal is to reduce this to six percent, although the change will be slowly phased in over a period of eight years.

Pastor Wilson will be the Sabbath-morning worship speaker for the meeting. It will be broadcast on the denomination’s Hope Channel. There will also be “updates on several presidential initiatives,” according to ANN, “including the Great Controversy Project, a global distribution of the book written by church co-founder Ellen G. White and Revived by His Word, a Bible reading program.”

It is unclear what issues regarding the unity of the Adventist movement will surface during this session. Adventist Today has been told one story that may be an indicator of what is to come. Therezinha Barbalho, a young woman who is employed by the Potomac Conference as pastor of a Brazilian immigrant church in Richmond, Virginia, was recently invited by Brazil Adventist University in Sao Paulo to speak. Pastor Ertom Kohler, the president of the South American Division, contacted the university administration and forbade her to speak at any public gathering because she was from a “renegade” conference that is ordaining women pastors. She is not an ordained minister, although she is on an ordination track.

Adventist Today will publish further news about the annual meeting as information becomes available.
ADRA International Appoints Australian Leader Jonathan Duffy as New CEO

Submitted: Oct 11, 2012
By AT News Team

The board of Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) International voted Wednesday (October 10) to appoint the ADRA Australia country director, Jonathan Duffy, as the new president of the agency. His background is in public health and his record reveals a leader who encourages collaboration and innovation.

Sources have told Adventist Today that the search committee reported to the board with a ranked list of candidates that it had vetted and interviewed, in contrast to the abrupt change in leadership voted in 2010 which ended in conflict in June of this year. Pastor Geoffrey Mbwana, chairman of the board, described the process as “very transparent, very objective … one that gathered information from all levels of the organization.”

At least four other candidates were interviewed by the search committee, Adventist Today has been told. One of these was a current vice president and another was a senior staff member. The committee also talked to an Adventist who serves in a key position at World Vision. The search committee was chaired by an Adventist academic who is not a denominational employee. Adventist Today has been told that General Conference president Ted Wilson was not involved in the process.

Duffy was director of health ministry for the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church before he was appointed CEO of ADRA Australia in July 2008. He has written for the peer-reviewed *Medical Journal of Australia* and contributed to an analysis of the challenges faced by migrants in Yemen for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Relief published by IRIN.

Health promotion and community development have long been areas in which Duffy has worked. He has focused for several years on building resilience in young people, both in developed countries like Australia and in developing nations such as Fiji. In fact, ADRA Australia is one of the few national agencies in the ADRA network that has strong domestic projects, addressing the social issues of an industrial, urban society, as well as strong international development projects of the kind for which ADRA is better known.

*The Fiji Times* reported in June 2011 that Duffy was a key speaker at a symposium on youth resilience which brought together police, educators, health and corrections professionals. It was cosponsored by Fiji’s National Substance Abuse Advisory Council and ADRA. “Fiji is facing a youth crisis,” the newspaper quoted Duffy. “Modernization is eroding once strong family and community values. Creating resilient youths is about connecting them with families and other support groups, growing self-esteem and encouraging positive decision-making.” The gathering addressed the growing problems of alcoholism and drug use in the island nation and was “a first of its kind for the church in Fiji.”

The newspaper reported that Duffy was helping local leaders shape a “program designed to allow
young people [to develop] internal strength to say no to risky behaviors. “It’s more beneficial than rules and regulations,” he told a reporter. Duffy has authored a book on how communities can build youth resilience as an effective approach to preventing substance abuse, teen pregnancy, HIV-AIDS and school dropouts.

Duffy is known by Australian media because of a bicycle tour he organized with five others in 2005 to promote youth services, health and fitness. They biked 4,000 kilometers in five weeks from Perth on the west coast to Sydney on the east coast. He spoke at scores of community meetings along the way. In 2007 he organized a similar tour with seven others, cycling the length of New Zealand from Cape Reinga to Bluff. These projects had a very serious purpose. “We have had very cynical social and youth workers turn up for the town meetings,” Duffy told journalists at the time. “But I have not heard one negative thing from them about” his wholistic approach to community youth work and prevention.

Another aspect of Duffy’s record is highlighted in the role he has played on the management committee for the Australian Research Institute (ARI). This is a serious, scientific research and development organization cosponsored by the denomination’s health care and higher education institutions, as well as ADRA and the food industry that the church owns in Australia. It is involved in public health, medical, nutrition and related research activities.

The official news release from ADRA International announcing Duffy’s appointed as president describes his achievements as country director in Australia purely in terms of fund raising. His leadership has “increased donations by 138 percent, the number of donors by 201 percent and the number of new donors by 271 percent.” Adventist Today has been told by sources that over the past few months donations to ADRA have declined significantly.

Duffy was educated at some of the top universities in Australia. He has an undergraduate degree from Flinders University with majors in biology and physical education, a Graduate Certificate in Health Management from Sydney University, and a Masters in Public Health from Deakin University. He also has a teaching diploma.

Adventist Today has previously reported on the developments at ADRA over recent months. The current issue of the print edition includes an in-depth article by Monte Sahlin about the larger issues faced by the agency and the future of Adventist humanitarian work.

*Zoominfo provided research for this article.*
Does ADRA Have A Future? What Is It?

Submitted: Aug 31, 2012
By Monte Sahlin

In June the Adventist Today online news team reported internal conflict in the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). Spectrum had been nit-picking at the topic for some time in its web edition. Adventist Today discovered that Dr. Rudi Maier, the president of ADRA, had been asked by Elder Ted Wilson, General Conference (GC) president, and Elder Geoffrey Mbwana, chairman of the ADRA board, to resign. He felt they were unfairly taking sides in some staff tensions he could manage and did not appreciate the fact that at least one other GC officer who serves on the ADRA board had met with some employees of the agency to hear complaints.

A special meeting of the ADRA board was hurriedly convened on June 24 and, after hearing from Maier, it voted to fire him. The Adventist Review has reported that the internal conflicts went back to early 2011, when there was a reduction-in-force of “16 employees out of a workforce of 88.” Maier, with a PhD in international development from American University and 20 years as a faculty member at Andrews University, as well as long service in ADRA at several levels, was particularly incensed that one of the reasons given for why he should resign was that he was “too German.” That seems an ethnic slight, clearly not acceptable in the multicultural diversity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He points out that weeks before, Wilson affirmed his “good, creative thinking” in an email and expressed support for plans for the future. I should also state clearly that no one has alleged anything negative about Maier’s integrity.

What is going on here? Is this any way for an organization to behave that manages $75 million in grants and donations? Is this any way for an Adventist organization to function? A number of former employees have told me that for years ADRA has had a relational problem among its staff housed at the GC headquarters in Silver Spring. It is also true that the agency is facing significant turbulence in its strategic environment, including issues that will likely force major changes in the way it operates. Internal conflict in an organization is often a symptom of larger pressures from outside, and that is the most probable explanation for this incident.

What Is ADRA, and Why Does It Exist?
ADRA is listed in the SDA Yearbook as the only “agency” in the denomination, a category different from local churches, institutions, and other organizations. Legally it is a public charity, separately incorporated from the GC Corporation, with its own tax-exempt status. It raises money from the general public and receives millions of dollars in government grants. Its mission is to combat famine, poverty, disease, and illiteracy around the globe. It is an agency of the Adventist movement working in the larger, secular context of humanitarian activities. It is one of the Adventist faith’s major contributions to the wider world.

What is also true—and this is where the story gets complicated—is that ADRA is not one organization. The latest annual report lists 134 countries with an ADRA organization, each of which is legally constituted under local law and separate from the American organization. Of
these, 25 are focused on getting grants and raising funds to export overseas, and 109 are focused on implementing projects and delivering services to those in need. ADRA is about the transfer of wealth and technology from the “have” countries to the “have-not” countries, although a growing number of countries involve both kinds of activities.

ADRA is a network of organizations with no legal ownership connections or central authority, held together only by faithbased commitments to humanitarian action and a myriad of specific agreements of various types related to specific programs. In the last year of record, there were 1,095 such programs scattered around the world, with more than 20 million of the poor looking to them for food, shelter, medical care, education, and other assistance. The projects involved about $130 million in donations and gifts-in-kind and connected 6,442 employees as well as uncounted volunteers and informal workers.

This is no longer your grandma’s Dorcas Society, with a few of the church ladies on Tuesday morning stitching quilts and operating a community food pantry. But it has the same roots—going back more than 150 years—and the same instincts. Here is where another complication surfaces. Many of the clergy, who are asked to chair ADRA’s boards, have no education in social work or community development or even nonprofit management. Many tend to think about “the mission of the remnant church” narrowly, as primarily about membership recruitment, and maybe communication. They don’t really see what teaching women in Bangladesh how to create informal credit unions and start small businesses has to do with “winning souls,” especially when the GC has committed to not mix humanitarian work with proselytism.

Ellen White makes a paradigmatic statement that “Christ’s method” starts with “mingling” in the world outside the church “as one who desired their good” and moves on to showing compassion and meeting human need before gaining trust, and only “then” extending an invitation to follow Jesus. Despite this, and in addition to her repeated instruction on “disinterested benevolence,” there are still Adventists who don’t get it. The Adventist Today website received response to its June news reports about ADRA from people who asked, “Why are we involved in this at all?” Clearly, some have failed to learn this important aspect of the Adventist message.

Christ’s parable of the Good Samaritan teaches that God expects us to be part of humanity and to respond with compassion to human predicaments, not just to “take care of our own.” Perhaps more sermons need to point out that in Matthew 25, Jesus pictures the final judgment as turning on how we respond to poverty, disease, and social injustice. He identifies himself with the alien, the prisoner, the sick, and the hungry. And this is a passage that starts with the disciples asking (at the beginning of the previous chapter), “What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?” This passage is not some generic, Christian sentiment. It is aimed squarely at Adventists.

New Realities for ADRA
The context within which ADRA works in the United States has changed in recent years, due to politics and the economy. The government has less money to invest in foreign aid, and it has more pressures to use its foreign aid money to support political goals instead of humanitarian needs. There is also a reduced number of government workers involved. Consequently, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and others involved in funding
the kind of projects that ADRA does are pushing for organizations like ADRA to work more collaboratively and more efficiently. Today more grants are being given in larger amounts to coalitions of agencies than in the past, when smaller grants were given to a number of organizations. In other words, it is not as easy as it once was for ADRA to chip in to a current trend and ask for a relatively modest grant to do one of what will be dozens or scores of projects all similar in nature. This means greater competition among the agencies seeking grants, and the government’s “solution” is to tell the competing agencies to work together.

ADRA has rarely had a “lead agency” role in a larger program involving the collaboration of several agencies. In fact, Adventists are not naturally inclined to work this way. We usually want to have our own show and make our own decisions and not be beholden to outsiders. I sometimes think it is because we don’t learn to dance as earlitenens; we are not good at operating in close quarters with others without stepping on toes. Yet, that is precisely the skill that current conditions demand of ADRA. USAID wants the organizations working on the same issue in the same country—for example, clean water in Somalia—to work together. This may mean that ADRA needs to collaborate in a joint program with World Vision, Save the Children, and Catholic Relief and Development. Church leaders in some countries are horrified to see this happen. We want to be good neighbors but not get too close, and the world works that way less and less.

Another kind of problem that USAID’s new approach creates is that it may bring together an alliance of agencies across a broad geography that crosses the internal division and union lines within the denomination. If ADRA is to participate in this kind funding and activity, it may have to work across territorial lines within the denomination in a way in which church leaders are not accustomed.

Since World War II, the U.S. government has favored a strategy of putting foreign relief funds into the hands of U.S.-based organizations that work internationally. That is changing now. USAID wants to fund grassroots organizations in the countries where the needs are. It wants to make investments that help to build civic infrastructure in developing nations. For example, ADRA is training leaders for community organizations in Yemen these days. However, ADRA offices in many of the developing countries often do not qualify for grants of this type because they do not have a “deep” enough structure into local communities.

ADRA may actually get contracts to help build civic organizations that have no connection with the Adventist Church. Again, church leaders in that country do not understand. Yet this situation may exist, in part, because the Adventist Church is behind in training local leaders to understand how to work with civic organizations in their communities and how to understand this as part of God’s intention.

Internal coalition-building is just as important to ADRA as developing collaborations with other agencies. ADRA offices in some countries were “too small” to win grants until they learned to work together and use partnerships with other ADRA organizations. ADRA is now being forced to use its “worldwide network” in order to survive. It has been something more like window decoration in the past, and now it is a life-and-death reality.
Some of ADRA’s own strategic planning documents show that the reduction-in-force last year, which became so controversial, occurred in part because the kinds of specialists that ADRA needs in order to collaborate successfully and win grants has changed. Emergency food programs are giving way to environmental, civil society, and appropriate technology projects. Collaboration also increases the demand for what staff can bring to table in terms of both grassroots experience and professional education. A missionary who never went to dental school but learned to pull teeth out of necessity is no longer an approach to healthcare that donor organizations will touch. Neither are they willing to work with “development tourists” who have spent a few weeks here and there in the aftermath of a disaster. They will work only with people who have years of residence in developing countries, a knowledge of local systems, and established relationships with local players, as well as relevant graduate degrees.

Please do not get me wrong; ADRA has good people with much to contribute. In fact, a startling number have been hired away by other international development agencies. But it is difficult to quickly come by very experienced and capable workers at just the right moment. “We lack a strong bench,” one veteran explained to me. “We need to nurture a larger number of Adventists who make a career in development and feel good about working for ADRA, at least part of their careers.” I still often hear someone explaining that Adventists are encouraged to become preachers, doctors, and teachers. I almost never hear social worker, development specialist, or community organizer included in the traditional list. If ADRA is to have a strong future, more of our young people must hear roles of this kind included in the list. And that includes business developer, agriculturalist, and public health specialist.

The Changing World of International Philanthropy
ADRA has been raising money for “disaster and famine relief” since the 1950s. In fact, the annual offering in May each year is the largest single offering among Adventists in North America. That alone should tell the denomination’s leaders something about priorities in the pews. A 1989 survey of church members, conducted by the Pacific Union Conference, found that 86 percent agreed with the statement: “My church should do something about the social problems in our community.” A 2010 survey in a Midwest conference found that 97 percent agreed with the statement: “The Adventist Church ought to do more about poverty and unemployment.”

According to a strategic planning document, ADRA has developed about 30,000 regular donors. Most of the agency’s workers think these are largely Adventists. There are an estimated 350,000 Adventist households in the United States. That means that about 9 percent of church members are regular supporters of ADRA, not counting those who give through the offering envelope in their local church. Some think this should be a higher percentage, but I have been told by executives in other international organizations that they would gladly rent ADRA’s list if they were permitted to do so. They see that as an exceptional response rate.

ADRA must keep a strong support base in the pews if it is to survive. These funds provide the required “matching” percentages to leverage larger grants. The process of informing and keeping in touch with donors also helps to educate church members about the issues and needs that ADRA is dealing with. Prayer support can be more powerful than checks.
The track record with grants from foundations and corporation giving programs is much weaker for ADRA. Maier told me that one of the areas of internal conflict during the last couple of years revolved around people brought in because they had experience obtaining funds from this sector. Others felt threatened. The new potential donor organizations are interested in different kinds of projects than ADRA staff members have experience with.

USAID has also switched some of its funding from grants to contracts. What this means is that ADRA is hired to implement a USAID program. It is no longer an ADRA program, and sometimes the agency cannot even use its own name, such as in a project in South Sudan. When the ADRA board was informed of these new requirements, it was reluctant and approved only small steps in this new direction.

The sources of money outside the denomination that ADRA has learned to tap are moving away or drying up. ADRA needs to learn to get money from new sources, or it will find itself with only its individual donor base, which provides roughly a fifth of its income. And a tight economy is not a good season in which to learn to find and open up new sources of income.

Change Is Not Easy
The Adventist movement has a rich heritage of innovation. Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, the founding leader of Adventist healthcare in the 19th century, had a profound impact on the diet of average persons in America, Australia, and other places. He shaped many aspects of medicine today. H.M.S. Richards led in innovations in Adventist evangelism, starting in the 1920s. The television ministry started by William and Virginia Fagal in the 1950s still has a larger impact on secular audiences than almost any other Christian broadcast. Ellen White’s crucial role as a young woman claiming a ministry of leadership in the infant Adventist movement, the prophetic office, was surely innovative. Throughout her long career, she was the mother of innovation again and again. Even near the end of her life, when “the Brethren” voted not to start another sanitarium in southern California, she gave John Burden some money she had borrowed privately and told him to go ahead and start Loma Linda anyhow.

Has the Adventist Church lost the capacity to innovate? I have watched the Working Policy book grow to about twice the number of pages it had when I first became aware of it in the 1970s. Are we smothering ourselves in red tape? Are we creating a corporate culture that values conformity over risk-taking and tradition over experimentation? What will that do to our cause?

ADRA has been thrust into a time of great change in the context in which it works. These are not changes that ADRA sought. They are changes that are now forced upon the organization. Some have told me that they would rather see ADRA go out of business than to change. Is its role in Christ’s mission so unimportant that we should sacrifice it simply in order to avoid the discomfort of learning news ways? I think not. I believe that God does not approve such thinking.

The ADRA board was told over a year ago in a report from its president: “(1) If we want to maintain our role as a development and relief agency, we have to learn to understand the reality and the changing world in which we operate. (2) In order to ensure that ADRA will remain a vital force in the mission and ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we have to respond
to the changes in a timely and prudent way. (3) We have to develop a strategy which will help us to become stronger as well as more adapted to these changes.”

A 12-page document titled “Advancing Excellence in Development: Positioning ADRA for the Future” details the elements of a strategic plan. It was presented to the board in October 2011. I have not been told by any of the many individuals I have talked to in preparation for writing this article that there was significant opposition to the document. Most told me that they believe the board accepted it. I have not seen the official minutes.

The plan outlines eight steps for change at ADRA, with detailed action points listed for each step.

Step one addresses ADRA’s need for missional clarity, rooted in Scripture and focused on Christian values. Action points included holding “a number of conferences and study groups to develop a set of clear biblical concept papers” and asking some of the denomination’s best preachers to preach “biblical truths about social responsibility.”

Step two “is to create an environment of collaboration” in ADRA. One action point has already been put in place: a vice president for “network relations.” Another action point was to establish a “coordination committee” with the division and regional ADRA directors. ADRA directors from the 134 national ADRA organizations need more opportunities to meet, share, and find projects to collaborate on. That does not happen often enough now, in part because outside donors will usually not pay for this kind of meeting. The denomination has to pay for this if it is important.

Step three is “to develop a strategy ... to deal with global emergency issues.” ADRA must be able to act more quickly as conditions change and opportunities arise. It cannot wait for proposals to filter in from the front lines and then go through a variety of processes. It needs to be able to “flatten” the network and immediately bring together essential players.

Step four is to build the human resources capacity of the agency. ADRA has done much to provide educational opportunities for its workers. In fact, one ADRA worker told me: “Maybe we’ve been too successful. Maybe that is why some of our staff have taken jobs elsewhere.” Yet, it must continue to enrich and upgrade the knowledge and skills of its workers around the globe.

Step five is to “develop relevant programming.” This includes regular assessment to find new kinds of programs that are needed, theological reflection on the kind of programming that should be part of ADRA, and particular attention to how to build “civil society” or grassroots organizations in developing countries. This must involve more than just what ADRA does; it must involve training church leaders, or ADRA will drift further away from the denomination.

Step six is to invest more staff time in dialogue with other development organizations and professionals to keep track of best practices and emerging issues. Step seven is to increase staff accountability and career planning, and step eight is to increase training for ADRA workers. These last three all relate to rolling out a change process within the organization.
Did the Plan Go Far Enough?
It is impossible to know if it was the process of change that stirred things up among the ADRA staff or if it was entirely some out-of-control personality clash. I have listened to individuals strongly advocate both explanations. I do know that change is upsetting in any organization, and especially among Adventists. When outside pressures are creating the need for change and the picture is complicated, that tends to create even more anxiety in a group. Anxiety, even among adults, plays out in strange ways.

At the risk of creating even more anxiety among my friends at ADRA, I must be honest and say that I don’t see in this plan a need to go to the lengths that things went in June. (If you disagree with me, I would love to hear from you.) It appears to me that ADRA needs a new leader who will stir things up even more than this document suggests. All of the board members and the entire staff need to spend two solid weeks in small groups brainstorming: What are the issues? What do we need to do?

They need to listen to some hard-to-hear input from people capable of providing a fresh, outside assessment. They need to spend some quality time together in prayer.

I have a lot of respect for Elder Robert Rawson, the interim administrator. He is a man of wisdom, a good listener, and one who brings calm to a meeting. He also has “no dog in this fight” except his fundamental commitment to the church and Christ’s mission. He will give ADRA a solid chance to regroup and reclaim its future.

Nonetheless, the issues will not simply go away. They must be faced and responded to creatively. I believe that God wants ADRA to succeed and that he wants many more young professionals around the world to devote themselves to the ministry of compassion and community transformation.

Monte Sahlin served as the ADRA director for the North American Division from 1987 to 1998. He is a minister in the Ohio Conference and an adjunct faculty member in the MA program in urban studies at the Tony Campolo Graduate School at Eastern University, teaching courses in community development and community organizing.

1 See the statement on “Proselytism” at www.adventist.org.
2 Ellen White, The Ministry of Healing, p. 143.
Students Riot Against Required Chapel Attendance at Adventist University in Kenya

Submitted: Oct 9, 2012
By AT News Team

Last week students set fire to two men’s dormitories and battled with police when they were informed that they must attend church at least 70 percent of the time in order to graduate from the Adventist University of Eastern Africa-Baraton, according to reports in The Star. Property damage was valued as at least $25,000 and “several students were injured while eight others were arrested, the Nairobi daily stated.

The newspaper called it a “night long orgy of violence” which required police from three law enforcement units to quell. Rioting students “looted the institution’s supermarket” and six men from the community who attempted to come on campus and join the fracas were arrested for being drunk and disorderly.

The university is operated by the East-Central Africa Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and has an enrollment of nearly 2,000 according to the denomination’s most recent Annual Statistical Report. About half the students are church members. In August, a Kenyan High Court ordered the institution to allow a student to graduate who had been expelled for refusing to attend church.

Last week there was “an abortive meeting with female students in which the dean wanted to enforce church attendance as a graduation criteria.” Then the deputy vice chancellor for academic affairs, Dr. Joel Yoyo, posted a memo announcing a “new rule [which] requires a student to score more than 70 percent church attendance at the university chapel to qualify for graduation.” It is unclear if the Kenyan journalists know the difference between Sabbath church attendance and weekly chapel events.

The Star has stated that student leaders “complained of poor diet, misadministration and general neglect of the university by the administration.” Also that students said there was “bias and selective justice in handling discipline cases, which divided the students between Adventists and non-Adventists,” according to the newspaper.

The day after the riot, some 1,200 students threatened to boycott classes and the university arranged for the release eight students who were arrested. Miriam Mwita, vice chancellor and primary operating officer of the university, met with students and apologized for the “inhumane” way the grievances were handled. She “told the tense meeting that a new chapter of dialogue needs to be opened … stressing that the Christian virtues on which the institution is anchored will be upheld.” She “said the new controversial rule [that] triggered the riots would not be implemented,” The Star reported.

The university is located about 200 miles northwest of Nairobi near the small town of Eldoret. It has a faculty of 204, according to the most recent Annual Statistical Report, of which 159 or 78 percent are Adventist Church members.
Association of Adventist Women: Write the GC President about Ending Discrimination in Ordination

Submitted: Oct 9, 2012

Last Sabbath (October 6) Pastor Dwight Nelson, senior pastor of Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University, spoke on the issues related to extending to women ordination to the gospel ministry. He ended with a call to action and the Association of Adventist Women (AAW), meeting that evening in business session, voted to invite Seventh-day Adventist laity to be heard on the issue of unity through a letter-writing campaign after the model of Amnesty International.

“It is hoped that a mountain of personalized envelopes will remind leadership that the church is made up of individual members, of whom over 60 percent are women,” the AAW call stated. “Therefore, we will have no unity without equality.”

“Please join the Association of Adventist Women in expressing support and solidarity for ordination equality by writing a letter with the following message to General Conference President Ted Wilson.” It is particularly important to send your letter this week if you would like to be heard before the Annual Council of the GC executive committee,

“Dear Elder Wilson:
In this season of debate about equity in our church, I am praying for you and other leaders. I believe that there can be no unity in our church without equality, and that the Spirit is calling women in these last days, as prophesied in Acts 2, to proclaim the Word as ordained gospel ministers. Thank you for listening.
“Respectfully,
“Your name
“Your home church

“Please hand write this message, in these words or your own, and send it by mail (preferably in a colorful and/or unusually large-sized or shaped envelope) … to: President Ted Wilson, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.”

“We wish to convey to Pastor Wilson that there is a mighty throng of individual church members whose voice should be heard on this matter. We hope that personal, hand-written notes of different sizes, shapes and colors may help create a symbolic mountain to convey this message.”

This article was made available to Adventist Today through the cooperation of Spectrum.
Adventist Leaders Meet with Prime Minister of Albania, Announce ADRA Project among Roma

Submitted: Oct 9, 2012
By TED News

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) branch in Albania has set up a center for literacy and health education among the largely marginalized Roma population. Opening ceremonies included two officials from the government of Albania, Filloreta Kodra from the labor ministry and Ardian Came from the education ministry. Later in the day, the ADRA country director, Beatrice Kastrati, and church administrators from the Adriatic Union Conference (AUC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the denomination’s Albanian Mission (ALM), met with the nation’s prime minister, Sali Berisha, who expressed his deep appreciation for what ADRA has done on behalf of the Albanian people.

ADRA was the first international nonprofit organization to start projects in post-communist Albania. The ADRA leader who coordinated this initiative was Pastor John Arthur, who was decorated in 1994 with the country's highest medal, The Mother Teresa Order.

Funding for the center located in Fushe-Kruje, 25 km from the capital city of Tirana, has been provided by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and ADRA Austria. Florian Raunig, the ambassador of Austria, was present for the opening ceremonies, as was Erik Tintrup, deputy ambassador of Germany. Kastrati also welcomed other important stakeholders in the project such as the United Nations Development Program, Amarodrom, Terre des Hommes, and Save the Children.

In her welcoming remarks, Kastrati expressed her deep appreciation on behalf of Roma women, men and youth who desperately need literacy and social integration into the wider society. She shared the story birth of the project in 2009 when an elderly Roma woman asked ADRA to teach her reading and writing so she could sign a contract.

Ambassador Raunig expressed appreciation for ADRA. He stressed that European Union (EU) integration commences inside the country from the bottom up, building peace within the community before integrating into society, and then society integrating into the world.

Deputy Minister Came pointed out in his remarks that the integration of Roma children into the public schools is a goal the Albanian government has been working towards for many years. He emphasized the key role of women, especially mothers in child rearing. He assured ADRA of continuing support and cooperation in part of the Ministry of Education.

"ADRA Albania is well-known to the Ministry of Labor through many years of service to the vulnerable communities and we look forward to many years of cooperation in the future," said Deputy Minster Kodra. She commended ADRA’s efforts to prepare Roma adults for vocational training courses offered by the government and promised cooperation in the creation of needs assessments of the Roma communities.
Erinda Toska, the project director, listed the problems Roma people face, such as poverty, disease, confinement of women, unemployment and presented the results of the pilot project and the action steps towards the new center. In this center, Roma women, men, and teenagers will have the opportunity to receive training as well as participate in groups on healthy lifestyle, early marriage, family planning, sexually-transmitting diseases, employment and education.

On behalf of the Adventist Church and ADRA's board, Pastor Bistrovic expressed the Church's appreciation and support for such humanitarian initiatives. "Our mission is to serve others in the community, especially catering to those who are underprivileged and discriminated against," said Pastor Bistrovic.

When the church leaders met with Prime Minister Berisha later that day, Pastor Bistrovic gave him greetings from Pastor Bertil Wiklander, president of the Trans-European Division, who visited Albania earlier this year to mark 20 years of an official Adventist Church organization in the country. He stated "the Church does not exist to serve itself, but rather to serve and address the needs of the local community."

Prime Minister Berisha expressed his gratitude to the Adventist Church for its contribution towards religious liberty, and pointed out that "respect towards others' religion is one of the most fundamental values of the Albanian civilization." Furthermore, Dr Berisha emphasised that "religious tolerance and co-existence has been passed on from one generation to the next, despite various attempts from occupiers to use Albania's religious diversity as a tool of discordance, or from the former communist regime which tried to wipe religious faith of from the national consciousness."

Pastor Leo España, president of the Albania mission, mentioned that the Adventist Church has roots in Albania that go back to the 1930s when Daniel Lewis, a pharmacist from Boston returned to his native land to share the Advent message. Following World War II, Lewis was imprisoned by the communist regime and died there. One of Lewis' Bible students, Meropi Gjika, waited four decades to be baptized. He said that Meropi's last wish was to have a church near central Tirana, he presented a letter of request to the Prime Minister, appealing for assistance in securing permission to build a multi-purpose community center that would also house the Central Tirana Adventist congregation.

The Prime Minister pledged his full support for this project and affirmed that a church that caters to the spiritual, social and health needs of the community would be most welcome. Berisha also expressed the support of the Albanian government on initiatives of the Adventist Church and ADRA in areas such as inter-faith dialogue, culture and social solidarity.

The Adriatic Union Conference includes the nations of Croatia and Slovenia as well as Albania. There are about 4,000 Adventists among a total population of 9.7 million. The Albanian Mission has three local churches and 350 members among a population of 3.2 million. There an estimated 120,000 to 150,000 of the Roma people, sometimes disrespectfully called “gypsies,” in Albania, according to the journal Politeia published in Europe.
This story is based on reporting from tedNews and Julian Kastrati.
New York City Gathering of Adventists from Grenada Marred by Bus Accident

Submitted: Oct 8, 2012
By AT News Team

At 7:45 a.m. Sabbath (October 6) a bus from Toronto carrying 57 Adventists to an event in Brooklyn tipped over on an exit ramp from Interstate 80 near Wayne, New Jersey. A total of 23 passengers, including two children, were taken to the hospital, according to the Montreal Gazette. Three were still in hospital as of Sunday in “fair condition,” said Liz Asani, a representative for Saint Joseph’s Healthcare System.

It was Thanksgiving Weekend in Canada and the group was looking forward to seeing old friends and enjoying shopping on Sunday. More than 20 were members of the Grenada Toronto Community Network, reported the Toronto Sun. “Over a thousand West Indians primarily Grenadians attended the 29th annual convention of the Grenada New York Adventist Organization at the Wingate High School Auditorium,” said a news release from the organization.

Pastor Anderson Felix from the Crochou Seventh-day Adventist Church in Grenada was the featured speaker. Crofton Calliste, the president of the organization, presented future plans, including a medical mission trip to Grenada in 2014. The evening activities included games and old Grenadian folk music.

Caribbean immigrants regularly charter busses for shopping trips to the United States, Maria Meyers, president of the Spice Islands Association and Grenada Day Association in Toronto, told the Toronto Sun. The majority of Adventist Church members in Toronto, Montreal and New York City are immigrants from the West Indies, as reported in a number of demographic studies.

One of the three bus passengers who remained in the hospital on Sunday was a citizen of Grenada and Consul General Derrick James made personal contact. The injured person was identified by the consulate as Christa Bell-Francios, age 51, a resident of Toronto.

Officials of the U.S. Federal Motor Safety Carrier Safety Administration are investigating the accident. The bus driver “told police he had been cut off by another driver just prior to the crash,” stated the Montreal Gazette. The Quebec newspaper also reported that the trip had been organized by Cynthia’s Bus Tours in Toronto which had rented the bus from Max 2000 Charter Services, and that “online records with the U.S. Department of Transportation … show that [the] company … had ‘no current operating authority’ in the United States. Both companies list the same Toronto address and phone number.”
Earth is a Battlefield

Submitted: Oct 11, 2012
By Katelyn Pauls

Earth is a battlefield. Soldiers run through abandoned villages, kicking in doors, always alert for the enemy lurking on the other side. Families are torn apart, children are orphaned and starving and friends betray friends. These soldiers, exhausted and weak, must keep strong because the lives of their comrades are at stake.

Earth is a battlefield. Soldiers move through towns that seem void of all hope, helping people find the courage to begin to break down the walls they’ve built to protect their hearts. These soldiers witness families torn apart and show them the One who can mend. They see starving, orphaned children and give all they can to help, trusting the One who made these children to keep providing for them. These soldiers, exhausted and weak, keep carrying on because the very souls of their comrades are at stake. They hover outside those walls, talking encouragingly to the ones inside while the long, hard work of demolition goes on, and then they rejoice with their new friends when they break free at last!

As Christians, we are in a spiritual war. The devil knows we have the truth and he is trying to stop us from spreading it. The Bible says, in 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour.” He will do anything he can to stop us. And Satan doesn’t fight fair.

Most people think that missionaries are on the front lines, fighting in the most heated battles against Satan. But based on my experience, I don’t think we can limit the devil to one simple tactic. Currently, I’m serving as a student missionary in Thailand. I haven’t fought the devil on my turf here. But I know that Satan doesn’t want me here. The group that I’m with is very close and we all support each other very strongly. I think that the devil saw that and decided to take the easy way out. He does know us all so well and he knows where our weak spot is.

In the past two weeks, every single one of us missionaries has received some bad news from home. The jobs and health of our friends and families have been threatened. Many deaths have occurred. Not a single one of us has been left untouched. I find that it’s much harder to concentrate on God’s work here when my family is being threatened at home. I find that I just wish I could be with my family and help them solve all of their problems. And I’m positive the devil knows that.

Before I came to Thailand, I knew that I would be facing some challenges while out in the “mission field.” I didn’t plan on my year as a servant being easy. Even the Bible says, in II Timothy 2:3, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” It’s what good soldiers do, go through hard times. But I was ready in my mind to be attacked personally by the devil. I had my group of friends and we were ready for the attacks he would throw at us. But I didn’t expect him to go under the table and behind my back and attack my loved ones that I thought I left safely at home.
Many people think that only the missionaries are on the front lines. They think they are on the home front, supporting the warriors, in no danger themselves. I warn you, be careful. This whole earth is a battlefield. Keep your eyes open and watch your back! Satan knows the quickest way to weaken a warrior is to threaten his family. He doesn’t want us to carry out God’s work here in Thailand. Help us please! Don’t let the enemy catch you off guard!

“Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Ephesians 6:11,12
Where is God?

Submitted: Oct 11, 2012
By Debbonaire Kovacs

The lectionary is particularly interesting this week—Job 23 and Psalm 22 side by side. In Job 23, Job wails, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his dwelling! I would lay my case before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn what he would answer me, and understand what he would say to me. Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?” And Psalm 22 presages Jesus wailing the same question from the cross, the fulcrum of human, perhaps of universal history: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

There is no human who, at some point, has not been (or will not be) in this spot. I particularly remember one night some years ago, standing outside by the burn barrel, watching flames leap into the darkness. I said despairingly, “God, if a human being promised to take care of me, to be with me always, to never forsake me and to ‘make all that my hand does prosper,’ and then acted as invisible as you are acting right now, I would leave that person. I would refuse to be a friend or to trust that person ever again!”

Can you remember a time, perhaps many times, when you have wept over this seeming contradiction?

Job, in his desolation, having lost more than I ever have, from wealth to health to children (the worst loss possible to a human, I verily believe), takes a deep, wavering breath and continues with a faith that just can’t let go, “No; but he would give heed to me. There an upright person could reason with him, and I should be acquitted forever by my judge.” No matter how unbearable everything was, Job couldn’t not believe in the ultimate trustworthiness of his God, though the journey through darkness continued for a long time before being resolved—not by the answers to his questions, but by the reassurance that God really was there and listening.

Jesus, having lost more than any of us can even begin to imagine—

----take a minute to try----

—went straight to “Into your hands I commit my spirit.” Even less than Job could Jesus imagine a world in which his Father actively abandoned him, no matter what things looked and felt like.

So, with the weight of that history behind me, but not with so much dignity or poetry, or even so much faith and trust, I looked skyward beside my burn barrel and yelled, “You can’t make me not believe in you!!” And then whispered, “I’m with Peter. Where else would we go?”

I hold to that, still. Where else is there? No matter what.
Innovation Conference, 2012—Human Trafficking

Submitted: Oct 11, 2012
By Debbonnaire Kovacs

The eighth National Conference on Innovation, offered by a group called Seventh-day Adventist Partners In Innovation (www.sdapartnersininnovation.org) and sponsored by the Ohio Conference and Columbia Union among others, was as great a blessing as ever. About 250 attendees were challenged, inspired, and commissioned by not only the presentations, but also the intentional and topic-oriented table talk that went on between and as part of the sessions.

There were three main topics: human trafficking, loss of young people from religious systems, and reconciliation. These each deserve and will get a story of their own over the next three weeks. Here is Installment One.

The conference began Sunday evening, October 7, with a presentation that was, frankly, horrifying. Mark Wexler, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Not For Sale, a movement to re-abolish slavery, spoke on the issue of human trafficking. [www.notforsalecampaign.org] It is likely that most attendees knew that human trafficking is an issue of growing concern; there are multiplying movements to raise awareness, to educate, and to rescue victims of this horrific practice. However, the sheer numbers were shocking. The trafficking of human flesh is a $33 billion per year industry. There are approximately 30 million slaves in the world now—in numbers, that’s more than at any time in human history. It is the second leading crime, having passed arms trading a few years ago, and is poised to pass drug trafficking and become number one.

Wexler pointed out that Micah 6:8 calls us to both mercy and justice. As he put it, “Ministries of mercy deal with the symptoms of brokenness. Ministries of justice deal with systems of brokenness.” Not For Sale’s goal is to do both. In other words, NFS does not only seek to rescue the people, mostly women and children, who are slaves now, but also to “go upstream” and seek to change the conditions that keep populations vulnerable.

For example, in Madre de Dios, Peru, most of the street children (used for sex and begging, some as young as 5 and 6 years old) have been taken from Amazon tribes. NFS went into the jungle to find out how these communities, who live in the most resource-rich area on the planet and were totally self-sufficient until Europeans broke in upon them, can be helped to restart an economy that will make use of the skills and resources they have, so that they are not so steeped in poverty and hopelessness that they send their children to the cities thinking they will have a better life.

They have made inroads, and you can learn much more on their website, but here are two things you can do right now:
1. If you are in the Ohio area, you might like to attend or at least donate to the October 20 event, “Free to Laugh; Laugh to Free,” which is raising funds for www.thedaughterproject.org to build shelters for rescued Toledo slaves. (Toledo, according to Pastor Mike Fortune, is the highest per capita and fourth in our nation for childhood sex slavery!)
2. Not For Sale has created a 55-point grading system for the state department. Smartphone users can go to www.notforsalecampaign.org/mobile/ and download the free app. This enables you to scan bar codes of products you buy (or are considering buying) and learn the grade (A-F) that company’s efforts to stop forced labor in their supply chain has earned. Wexler says realistically, “There is no such thing as slavery-free. But there can be a zero-tolerance position that vows to deal with it when it is discovered.”

One more detail: It isn’t always as you think. Amsterdam, for example, (like other cities) promotes itself as a city with a “healthy sex industry.” But when NFS workers asked the police, they said, “At least 80% of the women are in debt bondage.”

Slavery is in every city. Do you know what’s happening in yours?