Ohio Conference President Responds to Pipim Rebaptism:
The quiet rebaptism of theologian Samuel Pipim continues to raise controversy in the Ohio Conference, where the event took place without apparent advice from conference leadership....

Brazil Adventists Visible in Service, Outreach During World Cup:
As millions of Brazilians and international visitors absorbed the elation and sorrow of victory and defeat, thousands of local Adventists helped conduct blood drives and advocated against international sex trafficking....

The One Project Gathers in Australia, Takes Organizational Steps:
While focusing on "The One," Jesus Christ, gatherings in Australia and New Zealand this summer and autumn are specifically addressing "Present Truth," the message for our time and today's younger adult generation....

New President for the Denomination’s Trans European Division (TED):
The election of a new TED president closely associated with his long-time predecessor, less than a year before General Conference Session, is not totally unexpected, but....

Revival - on Target?: Much is said these days about "reformation and revival." Should this, in fact, be the major message for the Church at this time, asks guest writer Werner E. Lange, from Germany....

The Heat Is on in San Antonio for 2015:
Guest opinion writer Edwin A. Schwisow says the upcoming World Church Session in San Antonio will be in many ways one of the "hottest" recent events experienced by the Church, both inside and outside the building....

Rain (Devotional):
Debbonaire Kovacs began her public communication career as a scared kid speaking at a youth rally, then moved on to "speaking anywhere for food." Through it all, she says, "Isaiah 55:9-13 has shaped my life."...
Government of Ghana Reports on Plans for New Adventist College: A new Adventist college is already accepting students as it moves through the accreditation process, expected to be completed yet this year....

100-Year-Old Volunteer Still Working for the Lord: Centenarian Vera Norman, member of the Newark, Ohio, Seventh-day Adventist Community Church, is a fixture at her local Adventist Community Services Center, to which she drives herself twice a week. But that's just a small part of her service....

God's Theater (POETRY): By coincidence, the pastor of the 100-year-old volunteer, also known as the Biker Pastor, has a poem and photograph in this week's edition: God's Theater--getting an Imax view of the world--from two wheels!....

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Ohio Conference President Responds to Pipim Rebaptism

By AT News Team, July 10, 2014

Pastor Ron Halvorsen, Jr., president of the Ohio Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, issued a statement yesterday (July 9) in response to “numerous inquiries” generated by the re-baptism of Dr. Samuel Pipim. The baptism took place at the Columbus Ghanaian Adventist Church, which is part of the Ohio Conference. The statement indicates that conference administration was not aware of the event until after it happened, the pastor who conducted the baptism is from a different conference and the pastor of the church was out of the country at the time.

The re-baptism “does not mean that Pipim is once again a Seventh-day Adventist minister,” Halvorsen wrote. “The Ohio Conference will not recognize or endorse any attempt by Pipim to resume a denominational ministry within our conference. Ohio Conference pastors have been instructed to not have Pipim preach, teach, or lead in any of our conference churches. We ask our local church leadership to refrain from inviting Pipim to preach, teach, or lead out in our churches as well.”

“A minister from the Georgia-Cumberland Conference did re-baptize Pipim on Friday evening, June 20,” the statement says. “I have been told the pastor of the church where the baptism took place was on a mission trip in Ghana during this time,” Halvorsen stated. “The Ohio Conference was unaware of this event until it was seen on Facebook several days after it took place. When I first heard that Pipim had been re-baptized, I believed it must have been in another conference because I did not recognize the name of the pastor who baptized him” because he is not one of Halvorsen’s pastoral team.

“I have been unable to personally speak with this pastor regarding the details surrounding this re-baptism and how it came about, but will be speaking with him at the first possible opportunity,” Halvorsen told his members. It is unclear why key leaders were left out of the loop in the preparations for an event that had already been the topic of considerable discussion in the neighboring Michigan Conference, where that president has also made it clear that the move was ill-advised and that a decision has already been made that Pipim will not be allowed to return to pastoral ministry or hold any leadership role in the church.

Halvorsen put the event in perspective. “What does this mean for the Ohio Conference and the Seventh-day Adventist denomination? It simply means that Samuel Pipim was re-baptized at a local church in Ohio, where I have been told he has family. It does not mean that Pipim is once again a Seventh-day Adventist minister. The Ohio Conference will not recognize or endorse any attempt by Pipim to resume a denominational ministry within our conference. Ohio Conference pastors have been instructed to not have Pipim preach, teach, or lead in any of our conference churches. We ask our local church leadership to refrain from inviting Pipim to preach, teach, or lead out in our churches as well.”

Adventist Today has previously reported on both the divisive issues related to Pipim and his sexual misconduct and abusive behavior toward women. He continues to publish books and a Web site dealing with topics of religion and Bible study.
Brazil Adventists Visible in Service, Outreach During World Cup

From ANN, July 8, 2014

During the soccer or football World Cup, thousands of Adventists in Brazil are participating in local initiatives to offer “hope” to international football fans as well as the nation’s residents during the major event. At many of the 12 stadium sites, Adventist volunteers donated blood and coordinated ongoing public blood drives. They also advocated against human trafficking and sex tourism, including distribution of a special issue of an Adventist outreach magazine about the issue.

“We wanted to motivate youth to donate blood … and participate with outreach actions,” said Pastor Areli Barbosa, youth director for the denomination’s South American Division. He is the overall coordinator for the initiatives.

In São Paulo, volunteers used an Adventist church near the Arena Corinthians stadium to prepare 500 meals, which they distributed along with bottled water. Adventists have also distributed more than 100,000 copies of gift books at Governador André Franco Montoro International Airport in Guarulhos and in metro stations during the World Cup activities.

In Porto Alegre in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, Adventists have distributed 60,000 trilingual pamphlets with Christian messages and information on how to connect with the Adventist denomination on the Web. Volunteers handed out the pamphlets near the Beira-Rio stadium and at other tourist attractions, including the Gasometer, Redenção Park and the Brazilian Navy Park.

Adventist youth took to the streets starting on June 14 to offer football fans hugs, words of encouragement and information. Perhaps the largest impact from the initiatives was made at the state blood center as several groups of 60 people packed the venue to donate blood. New Time Radio reported on the activities and invited listeners to join the 2,000 volunteers working on the project.

In Salvador in the northeastern state of Bahia, volunteers from the Pituba Adventist Church distributed some 2,200 copies of books at the Deputado Luis Eduardo Magalhas International Airport. Near Arena Amazonia in Manaus, a thousand Adventist volunteers distributed 50,000 copies of books from June 18 through 25.

In Rio de Janeiro, young people donated 200 units of blood on June 14. In a symbolic gesture of the cause, 4,000 people formed a large “drop” of blood on the field of Olaria Atlético Clube stadium. On the same day, 300 Adventist young people distributed books, hugs, cups of water, and information leaflets in front of the Maracana stadium. The next day, June 15, 40,000 books were delivered on the beaches of Copacabana and Leblon.

The Adventist News Network (ANN) is the official news service of the denomination and this story includes reporting by Andréa Figueiró, Andréia Raquel, Dina Karla Miranda, Felipe Lemos, Ionara Wichiheski, Jéssica Guidolin, Lucas Rocha, and Vanessa Lemes.
The One Project Gathers in Australia, Takes Organizational Steps

By Adventist Today News Team, July 10, 2014

Gatherings on both the east and west coasts of Australia are scheduled for the next two weekends around the focus on Jesus Christ as “all” for Adventists. July 18-20 the event will be based at the Fox Valley Adventist Church in the Sydney metropolitan area. July 26-27 at least 200 people will participate in the first such even in western Australia in Perth. In both cases, the capacity of the facilities resulted in registration closing in June.

The One Project has also announced its first gathering in New Zealand later this year, November 8 and 9 at the East Auckland Church. The theme will be “Present Truth” and registration has already closed because as many people as can be accommodated have already signed up.

A fifth gathering in Europe is scheduled October 24-26 in Utrecht, the Netherlands. There too, the theme will be “Present Truth.”

The Sydney event will include some innovations for One Project gatherings. A number of presenters will address the Fundamental Teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, each explaining how Jesus shines through one doctrine in just three minutes. Also, volunteer teams will reach out to the homeless and prisoners on Saturday night (July 19). The homeless ministry will go into the inner city and provide a meal for the homeless. The prison outreach volunteers will assemble care packages for the inter-denominational Prison Ministry Fellowship to give to prisoners at the time of their release. These will include basic necessities—toiletries, writing materials, bottled water and towels.

Adventist pastors, theology students and leaders of ministries are invited to an all-day meeting the Monday after the Sydney gathering with The One Project team. Labeled “Reframe,” the meeting will involve “dreaming, exploring and casting a vision” for the future of the “Jesus All” movement in Australia.

At next year’s North American gathering of The One Project in San Diego there will be a new feature. A collateral “Generation One” event on February 7 is being organized for teens age 14 through 17.

The One Project Organizes More Formally

At a meeting of The One Project board in April, after “two days of praying, planning and dreaming,” the movement’s leaders took some steps toward a more formal organization. Bylaws, an organization chart and a list of goals and projects were voted.

The mission statement of the movement was clarified with the change of one word. The purpose of The One Project is now to “celebrate the supremacy of Jesus Christ through the Adventist Church” instead of “in” the church. This evidently signifies a broader, missional focus for the initiative instead of limiting its vision to the internal life of the denomination.

A new type of activity voted at the meeting is one-day gatherings convened in collaboration with local churches. These would include both local speakers and at least one speaker from the leadership team.

Citing the value of transparency, the first-ever bylaws for the organization have been posted it The One Project web
site. So far as Adventist Today can determine, no other independent ministry and many denominational units have not been this open about their governing policies.

In fact, the document makes it clear that The One Project is not an independent ministry, but “a denominationally supported activity … hosted at the Boulder [Colorado] Seventh-day Adventist Church” and connected to the denomination’s Rocky Mountain Conference. Officers and board members are required by the document to be members of the denomination “in good and regular standing.”

The board is defined as including the five original founders of The One Project as long as they wish to participate, Adventist clergy and “lay members” elected for defined terms at biannual meetings, and a representative from each of the denomination’s world divisions in which the project operates. The divisions currently involved are North America, South Pacific and the two European divisions.

The five founders are listed as Pastor Alex Bryan (senior pastor of the Walla Walla University Church in Washington), Pastor Japhet de Oliveira (pastor of the Boulder Church and former chaplain at Andrews University), Pastor Sam Leonor (chaplain at La Sierra University), Pastor Timothy Gillespie and Pastor Terry Swenson (both now chaplains and faculty member at Loma Linda University, although Swenson was an academy principal when the project started). Many of the other current board members are either campus chaplains at Adventist colleges and universities or pastors of local churches near Adventist institutions.

The bylaws specify an unusual executive leadership structure. There are two “co-chief executive officers” (CEOs) and a chief operating officer (COO). The One Project bylaws borrow language from the model constitution and bylaws for local conferences in the General Conference Working Policy and require that the CEOs be “ordained ministers of experience.”

The most recent One Project Newsletter received by Adventist Today promises that additional information about the new organizational steps will be posted on its web site, including an organizational chart adopted at the April meeting. “As these items are fine-tuned … we will let you know,” the newsletter stated.
Pastor Raafat Kamal has been elected president of the Seventh-day Adventists denomination’s Trans-European Division (TED). He was nominated by the TED executive committee on June 27 and confirmed by the General Conference (GC) executive committee this morning.

“I am honored to be selected for this position and I accept it with sincere gratitude,” said Kamal. “I look forward to working with the TED team, union conferences and fields, and institutional leaders to make God known among our communities in Europe and bring glory to His name. I approach this new task prayerfully.”

Kamal’s appointment follows the 19-year tenure by Dr. Bertil Wiklander, the longest serving president of the TED. He decided to retire effective the end of this month and will return to Sweden where he was born and served as president of the Adventist denomination for a number of years.

Wiklander commented, “I am delighted with the choice of my successor, Pastor Raafat Kamal. We have worked closely together for several years, and I know him as deeply committed to the church, its message and mission. He has a broad education and a wide international experience. Rarely has a division president come to his position with such deep knowledge of the division he will serve. He combines a brilliant mind with extraordinary humility. I know his great burden is to see the church grow in Europe. I will give him all my support in the future. I wish him and Heidi, his wife, God's abundant blessings.”

Kamal is 50 years of age and originally from Lebanon. He has lived and worked in England, Norway, Pakistan and Iran. He married Heidi Kamal Kendel, from Norway, a registered nurse, in 1987. The couple have two daughters.

Kamal holds university degrees in business and theology and four graduate degrees in Christian theology; educational administration and curriculum; Islamic philosophy and theology; and business administration. Kamal spent four years as an educator in Adventist schools and 18 years in church administration. He served the last seven years was assistant to the president in the TED. He also directed the TED departments of Adventist mission, public affairs and stewardship.

Pastor Ted Wilson, GC president, chaired both the meeting where Kamal was nominated and the meeting where he was confirmed. "It is a privilege to have Pastor Raafat Kamal as the new president," Wilson stated. "We welcome Pastor Kamal to the senior leadership team. … We also take this opportunity to thank Pastor Bertil Wiklander … for his many years of service and leadership."

The TED includes Adventist churches and institutions in 23 European countries with a population of 202 million people and a membership of 84,000. There are 11 union conferences and three mission fields. The TED office is located in St. Albans, United Kingdom, and outer suburb of London.

TED News is the official news service of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination's Trans European Division.
The development of a new Adventist College of Education in Ghana became a topic of inquiry in parliament last week. The deputy cabinet minister for education, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, responded to questions from law-makers as to why the institution was already operating without having finalized accreditation, according to a news release from the government.

Ablakwa assured parliament that accreditation would be finalized this fall. The college "is currently being taken through the process of getting accreditation from the National Accreditation Board," Ablakwa said. The institution admitted its first students last year and is currently being run by both the government and the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in the town of Agona in the Ashanti Region.

Ablakwa told the law-makers that the institution applied for accreditation on November 19, 2012 and its name was approved in July last year. Following the name approval, he said the institution submitted its package of information.

"Officials of the institution were invited to the National Accreditation Board Secretariat on November 25, 2013, for deliberations [and] was granted a three year Institutional Authorization [starting] December 2, 2013." A list of recommendations was sent to the institution at that time and the institution’s responses were submitted to the accreditation board early this year.

Ablakwa stated that "assessment of library facilities … was done by one of the accreditation board’s library experts in December" last year. On May 7, 2014, a discussion was held with an official of the college on a number of outstanding issues, including the submission of documentation and an accreditation visit by a team from the accreditation board, as well as submission of evidence of affiliation with the University of Cape Coast.

"If the outstanding issues are dealt with, the application will be placed before the Accreditation Committee at its meeting in July or August," Ablakwa said. A final decision will be made by the Board at a scheduled meeting in September.

The Adventist denomination has operated a secondary school at Agona for many years, and has three other secondary schools in the African nation. It operates Valley View University in Accra, the first private university in the country to receive a presidential charter. It has offers degrees in business, theology, computer science, education, information technology, nursing, development studies, biomedical technology, English, math, statistics and communication. There is also an Adventist teacher training college in Asokore.
Revival - on Target?

by Werner E. Lange, July 10, 2014

He is book editor for Advent-Verlag (German Seventh-day Adventist publishing house).

My wife likes to make jam because the jars are appreciated by relatives and friends as a small gift. Pumpkin-ginger jam (with variations in other important ingredients) is a favorite. When she makes similar jams, she has to be careful to put the right label on it. The last three years nearly all initiatives for furthering spirituality in the Seventh-day Adventist church carry the label "Revival and Reformation." They are, without any doubt, important, recommendable and quite necessary when we consider the spiritual condition of many members and local churches! And it is always desirable to have more real prayer and prayer groups in gatherings and committees! But I ask myself increasingly: "Is what's on it in it?" Undoubtedly, there is something good in the initiatives, but is it really "revival" in the true sense?

Various Definitions

In the introduction to the current Sabbath School Bible Study Guide the author (a spokesperson for this initiative) writes: "Revival is an ongoing, daily experience." An overview of the Study Guide suggests that "revival" is pretty much the same as the infilling with the Holy Spirit and His outpouring.¹

The necessity of revival is oftentimes reinforced by a statement of Ellen G. White from 1887: "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs."² She defines revival as "a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death."³ In discussions about the revival initiative I found that many understand this definition in terms of "either … or … or …." But I am convinced that she wrote in typical Hebrew manner, where one clause explains or complements the other; otherwise her following definition of reformation—"Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices."⁴—would mean that every kind of reorganization is a spiritual reformation.

In the Study Guide, reformation is defined: "The term reformation simply refers to this ‘growing in grace,’” referring to 2 Peter 3:18.⁵ Frankly, the way that I see the problem is that a false label has been put on a good and necessary thing: spiritual growth. A false label on jam may not be a problem, but if it appears on a medicine bottle, the medication may be ineffective or even harmful.

Genuine revival is God’s medicine

Revival is God's medicine for spiritual lethargy, sleep or even death; it is not a basic food for daily spiritual strengthening or growth! Angel Manuel Rodríguez, former director of the Biblical Research Institute, wrote: "Revival implies a prior conversion, that we were once spiritually alive but now we are slipping toward spiritual death and in need of a revival of our spiritual life."⁶ Vance Havner wrote perceptively in a Ministry article: "When we have a vigorous daily Christian experience, revival is unnecessary, for a glowing fire does not need rekindling. But because our condition is subnormal, revival is necessary to get us back to normal. Then it has served its purpose. Revivals are not supposed to last; to try to live at revival pitch all the time would make Christians and churches abnormal."⁷

This concurs with experiences in church history. Ellen White described past revivals in the following manner: "Revivals brought deep heart-searching and humility. They were characterized by solemn, earnest appeals to the
sinner … Men and women prayed and wrestled with God for the salvation of souls … Men beheld a transformation in the lives of those who had professed the name of Jesus. The community was benefited by their influence. She understood “revival” in the same manner as famous 19th-century preachers (although she didn’t approve of all their methods for initiating a revival).

No biblical teaching about revival of churches

New Testament writers have much to say about spiritual growth and how to achieve it, but revival of Christians or a local church was a side issue. We find no examples of it and no teaching concerning it in the New Testament, because the churches were alive (although some had severe problems). It is only to the church of Sardis, near the end of the first century, that Christ mentions the necessity of revival: “I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God.” As a remedy he mentioned: “Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent (Rev. 3:1–3 NIV). For the church at Laodicea the circumstances were different: it was accused of lukewarmness; therefore the remedy was different (see vv. 15–19).

Since there is no comprehensive New Testament teaching about church revival there is always the temptation to read into it what we would like to say about revival. However, we only have Ellen White’s writings as an inspired source on revival and the experiences in church history to find the way to a revival.

William G. Johnsson cautioned in the Adventist Review: “God alone brings revival … the General Conference cannot program renewal. Nor can any conference committee. We can plan and vote programs, but only God brings life. As I look over the course of Christian history, I am amazed at the unexpected ways in which God has worked to revive His people … Church history reveals no consistent pattern for renewing the church. God has used a variety of methods.”

Nevertheless, some elements for initiating a revival seem to be quite clear.

Conditions for a church revival

Repentance and confession of sins are necessary conditions for a revival in a local church. Ellen White wrote in her foundational article about revival: “It is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer … Let us confess and forsake every sin, that the way of the Lord may be prepared, that He may come into our assemblies and impart His rich grace. The world, the flesh, and the devil must be overcome.” Ellen White envisioned foremostly concerted prayer: “The church must arouse to action. The Spirit of God can never come in until she prepares the way. There should be earnest searching of heart. There should be united, persevering prayer, and through faith a claiming of the promises of God.”

Combined prayer is necessary because the spirit of revival should be “contagious.” This is not the case with merely private prayer. Only prolonged prayer leads to genuine repentance, confession of sins, and renewed dedication to Christ and leads others, who witness it in the prayer group, to that same experience.

A personal experience

I have experienced this on a youth vacation. We were some 50 young people from Hamburg on a three-week vacation organized by the conference after having driven to the newly built Adventist boarding academy near the Tyrifjord (a big lake) in Norway. On a Sabbath afternoon we decided to do some street evangelism (that was the time of the Jesus People movement, which had spread to Hamburg, too). We went to the lakeshore, sang some songs in English, and Peter Joseit, then a young pastor (later an evangelist and ministerial secretary in Australia), proceeded to preach, but nobody listened. Somewhat discouraged we returned home. Afterwards a little prayer group met and a spirit of prayer broke out. The participants told others and invited them along. The prayer circle grew and new groups were built. Sins were confessed, lives were dedicated (anew) to Christ. At the end of the week there were only a few
who didn't participate.

The result of this revival was remarkable. During the week we had been in Oslo (about 35 miles south) and had seen the quarter where the students lived. We wanted to witness to them. Since we had only two cars, we prayed for cars, and people whom we didn’t know gave us their keys. The whole group met before we went to Oslo. Personal prayer requests were written on a billboard. We prayed earnestly for God’s help. Half of the group went to Oslo; the other half continued to pray.

Once again we sang songs in English; the young people listened, and we talked to them. There on the spot some of them gave their hearts to Jesus! We went aside to pray with them and asked for their addresses so that the Norwegian youth who had come with us could contact them.

It was late in the night when we drove back. The others were still praying for us! When the last car arrived, the prayer-marathon ended; we related our experiences and rejoiced in God.

Back in our home churches we told the members about our experiences. They were moved, but the revival didn’t continue. We thought that a continued revival would happen automatically, but back then we (and our leaders) didn’t know about the necessity to wrestle in prayer for repentance and revival.

The responsibility of pastors
Ellen White stressed the role of pastors and leaders in initiating a revival, but she had a special task for them that is not pleasant. She wrote in her Review article: "The people must be taught not to be satisfied with a form of godliness without the spirit and power … Let the church arise, and repent of her backslidings before God. Let the watchmen awake, and give the trumpet a certain sound. It is a definite warning that we have to proclaim. God commands His servants, ‘Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins’ (Isaiah 58:1).”

Vance Havner concurs: “It is going to take some robust and rugged preaching to sound this trumpet blast. Are we afraid to call the Church to repentance? Is popularity too precious to risk? … Are we unwilling to offend church members who give checks to the church while they live for the world, the flesh, and the devil? True revival is no bargain-counter proposition; the price is high for the preacher who preaches it and the people who respond. So we politely dodge it … If what we need comes, it may put to shame our pet projects, the programs that we set up on our own and then ask God to bless.” Strong words, but isn't he right? Real repentance is always a necessity in any church situation that needs correcting, as the messages to the churches in Revelation show, even if the church doesn't need a revival (see Rev. 2:4–5, 14–16; 3:1–3, 15–19).

Ellen White counseled on the use of camp meetings for initiating revivals: “At our camp meetings there are far too few revival efforts made. There is too little seeking of the Lord. Revival services should be carried from the beginning to the close of the meeting. The most determined efforts should be made to arouse the people … At the close of every meeting, decisions should be called for.” Then she gave specific counsel on how to work for unbelievers and the backslidden. The right kind of revival meetings are needed.

Differentiation is needed
In addressing the needs and problems of members and churches we have to differentiate carefully, analyze the spiritual problem(s) carefully and ask ourselves: What is the remedy—real heart (not merely head) conversion and new birth, reconversion, correction of false doctrines, a better understanding of salvation and the righteousness of Christ, church revival or a new infilling with the power of the Spirit for witnessing? There is not one spiritual medicine for all cases. If we apply the wrong one, it will have no effect and it can even do harm!

The website of the initiative “Revival and Reformation” describes many prayer groups, successful small group ministries, blessed evangelistic efforts, new churches on fire, and people being revived. But with maybe one exception, I didn’t find examples of any revived local churches that had been spiritually dead! As editors of the German Adventist Publishing House, we asked directors in our division and at the General...
Conference, but they couldn't give us examples either. If the recipe is not correct or vital ingredients are missing (sugar is not enough), the jam won't taste good. If the medicine is not the right one for a disease it cannot help. Prayer is not enough; Bible study is not enough. We must carefully analyze the condition of the church, compare it with the churches in the New Testament and in Revelation, and recognize which of Christ's counsels apply.

Recently I spoke to a member of the Revival and Reformation Committee at the General Conference and voiced my concerns. He fully agreed with my assessment as presented here, and told me that the same concerns have already been voiced in the committee. That's good to hear! Reframing and respecification are urgently needed if we don't want to miss real revival—and not continue to offend those faithful members who are spiritually alive!


2Review and Herald, March 22, 1887; cited in Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 121 (see Study Guide, p. 6.).

3Review and Herald, February 25, 1902; cited ibid., 128.


5Study Guide, p. 72 (for August 24, 2013)


11Review and Herald, March 22, 1887; cited in Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 121, 123.

12Ibid, p. 126.

13 Ibid, pp. 122, 126.

14 Vance Havner, op. cit., p. 16.

15 Revival efforts,” Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, pp. 64f.

16 For conversion and reconversion, see Morris Venden, The Miracle of Conversion, Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press,
2009.


22 Often the church at Bergamo, Italy, is mentioned, but it is not an example of a spiritually dead church experiencing a revival. See http://www.revivalandreformation.org/content_series/11/entries/1.

23 It is interesting to note that Ellen White never mentioned Bible study as a means for revival. Renewed Bible study is more an outcome of revival.
The Heat Is on in San Antonio for 2015

July 10, 2014

San Antonio, the hottest summertime city in the United States, is a poster child for the perils of climate extremes. Red now colors the rising coastal tides on the eroding Gulf shorelines, as area reservoirs fall to some of their lowest recorded levels.

That’s fearful knowledge for those of us who have family members living in San Antonio or as Adventists who wonder why a deliberate choice was made to conduct a world session during the hottest days of the hottest month in the most arid major city in the United States. Otherwise, San Antonio’s summer climate is a worthy gathering ground for Adventists who fervently believe that this world, as it is becoming today, is no longer a fitting home for the human race....

The Heat Is on in the Church

But while questions of logistics are important, of greater import is that the General Conference Session (July 2-12, 2015) is fast lining up as a case study in climate change within the Adventist Church. Internal heat is on and tides are rising. Members right, left, and center share an unprecedented level of concern regarding the Church’s future and are mystified by the strange and idiosyncratic responses by Church administrators to a number of concerns (decisions chronicled and thoughtfully analyzed by Adventist Today). Pressure for women’s ordination from a sizable portion of the Church’s territory has finally broken through the dam of delay and demureness. There is no going back, it seems, and those who may try to turn back San Antonio’s sundial will find the situation far hotter than they ever deemed possible.

In the untimely closing of “The Record Keeper,” we see what truly must be a new record in heated administrative reaction against its own earlier decisions. Why, after so much quality time and effort, was this evangelistic film project terminated (rather than tested and polished further)? If it possessed so little potential by the time production ended, what happened to strip away the original virtues in the early script? The story and the story behind the story are emerging and will indeed be told without bias or self-interest by the free Adventist press. Count on it.

The heat is rising so quickly, and tides are now so high over these and other troubling issues, that Adventist Today has been told of serious concerns that the current GC administration may prove to be a one-term proposition—something unprecedented in modern times. Clearly, San Antonio is a defining moment for the Church, even as San Antonio’s most famous church, the Alamo, was definitive 160 years ago in the history of North America. Eight generations have passed since the Adventist Church came into being during those years of turmoil with Mexico and the future of slavery. We have reached a point of serious reckoning about the future of our Church.

A Historical Reckoning

Historians tell us that about every 80 years (four generations), an organization faces a new reckoning, marked by the passing of those who knew the founders personally.
The Adventist Church passed its first 80-year point (1851-1931) a few years after the death of Ellen White. Now the Church faces the conclusion of its second 80-year span (1931-2011). Gone are the aged Adventists who remember those days in the 1930s, when the Church decided to move in a direction of conservative Protestantism on matters of infallibility both in Scripture and in the writings of Mrs. White. **We are faced again, in 2015, with an 80-year benchmark of reckoning.**

**Internal heat is on, and tides are rising, and making sense of the data is one of the greatest challenges of our time.** Eighty years ago great secrecy attended the discussion of vital issues of that time, contributing in significant ways to what is in fact a sundering of Adventism into at least four major factions (Historic, Traditional, Evangelical, and Progressive). In the pages of *Adventist Today* and on its Web we now possess an information and analytical resource that attracts articulate members of each of these elements of our Church—elements that for 80 years have tried either to ignore each other’s existence or to use each other as fighting foils.

**Moving Forward**

To that end, *Adventist Today* is moving forward aggressively, conscious that we are not a wealthy organization but that our resources lie in the investment we have made in our seasoned readers and the younger set coming aboard. The other day I was talking to one of our young-adult readers with limited income, and asked if she would permit me to send her a complimentary subscription. She refused, and I asked her why. Said she, **“When I like something as much as I like Adventist Today, I believe I should pay for it. We want it in our home, and we’re willing to pay the freight.”**

We’re now preparing to provide special coverage of this momentous time in the history of our Church (more about that in a future letter.) As other magazines **decline precipitously in circulation,** *Adventist Today* remains consistent, in part **because we continue to improve and expand our coverage,** without increasing our cover price. **Our Website traffic has grown immensely and now includes thousands of readers around the world,** as well as **North America.** This winning combination has been made possible by strong donated support since last General Conference Session, when this era of dangerous opportunity for the Church began in earnest. Now as the Church faces a crucial historical divide in its history, we need the independent Adventist press more than ever to chronicle and make sense of a witheringly complex situation that will set the course for the next 80 years.

This is an opportunity to respond strongly as we face a once-in-a-century coming together of forces in the Church that will to a considerable degree lock in elements that will remain with us into our grandchildren’s old age. A special investment in *Adventist Today* is more important today than at any time before in our 21-year history, not because we need or deserve special help, but because the investment now is so vital to the Church as it wrestles with these issues.

To that end our reporting staff is expanding as we begin to establish contact points in our colleges and universities and use the skills of gifted student writers as well as seasoned professionals in the Adventist ambit to cover not only the Americas, but the world field.

Like the weather itself, our Church is a complex collage of many ideas, many influences, many voices. Insight, wisdom, and knowledge are needed to understand it and adapt to changing times. For moments like this the Free Press was created, and functions at its very best....

As the economy continues to show signs of life, and as we move toward San Antonio in 2015, consider making an online gift that reflects the audacious challenges we all face ahead in our Church, or don’t hesitate to phone me, Ed Schwisow, to discuss larger pledges and contributions over the next few months leading up to the Session.... Our phone number in the Pacific Time Zone) is 503 826-8600. Thank-you for your support now, and as we journey toward San Antonio.
Rain

by Debbonnaire Kovacs
Submitted July 9, 2014

This week, one of the lectionary passages is a longtime favorite of mine: Isaiah 55:9-13. It occurred to me that I had already written a devotional passage about it, in my 2002 book, Gardens of the Soul: Cultivating a Devotional Life with God. So I looked it up and here offer it as an excerpt. Interestingly, the Living Word is still living, and as I read this now, I realize how apropos it is to this week, when I am nervously moving out in faith to engage some promotional expertise in an attempt to widen the reach of my writing and speaking ministry. I am grateful to God for the reminder! I hope it blesses you, too. This is taken from pages 59, 60 of the book, which is now out of print and available only from me—email if you’re interested.

Here’s a “rain” story from my younger days. Those who know me will find this shocking, but I was an agonizingly shy child. Away from home, I never spoke unless spoken to, and not comfortably then. So imagine my horror one Sabbath to discover that the previous week my class at church had taken advantage of my absence to choose me as a speaker at an upcoming youth rally! To this day I don’t know why. I suspect because they couldn’t get enough willing volunteers!

I was fourteen years old, possibly the most fragile age in the human life span. I lived in Seattle, and the rally would be held in a large coliseum. It was expected there would be thousands in attendance. I was so upset I cried right in class in front of everybody, which was the next worse thing after death. But they wouldn’t let me off the hook. “I know you can do it,” said my teacher.

When I got home, I decided to enlist my mother. She would tell them I didn’t have to do it. But my own mother betrayed me. She, too, thought I could do it. In fact, she thought that the point wasn’t even what I could or couldn’t do. “The words aren’t yours, they’re God’s,” she told me. And she showed me this passage: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it’ “ (Isaiah 55:9-11).

“So you see,” said Mother, “it’s God’s Word, and it’s entirely His responsibility how people receive it or whether they listen or what it accomplishes. All you have to do is present it the very best you can.”

“All?” I wailed. “That’s the hard part! I just can’t! I’ll be too scared!”

Mother went on to the rest of the passage: “ ‘For you will go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands’ “ (verse 12).

“That’s the part of the promise that is for you,” said Mother. “God will lead you forth onto that platform with peace. I’ll be praying and claiming that promise for you.”

So I was stuck. I read the mini-sermon provided for me and began to be intrigued. I thought I would have liked to write my own sermon. There were 2,000 people in front of me when I spoke. At least one of them was praying for me to be
led forth in peace. Probably my teacher was too. Probably the whole church was! I shook like a leaf. I thought I would fall down. I also preached God's Word. It was pretty cool, actually—after it was over.

Three years later, I volunteered to speak in a youth week of prayer. I got to write my own sermon that time. I've been speaking ever since. And that passage has gotten me through some times very much tougher than that one. So you see why it's a favorite with me, especially the last verse. “Instead of the thorn bush [which I often expect] the cypress will come up; and instead of the nettle [ditto] the myrtle will come up; and it will be a memorial to the Lord, for an everlasting sign which will not be cut off.’” (verse 13).

That passage, and the seasons of my life that it represents, are everlasting memorials to the Lord for me. God's Word has rained into my life and watered and refreshed me, making me grow—which is always pretty cool. But sometimes only after it's over!
When we read about the difficulties that come along with aging, one of the items mentioned most frequently is feeling useless, as if there is nothing important left to do, or that the aging person is able to do. One of the suggestions often put forward is volunteering. Obviously, the ways in which a person could volunteer will be dependent upon their health and strength, but there is often something even the feeblest and frailest can do. My grandmother, bedridden and speechless for three years after a major stroke, spent those years in prayer.

Centenarian Vera Norman, of Newark, OH, would tell you that following a faithful vegetarian diet and the biblical health rules will keep you strong enough to do much more than that. She is, according to her pastor, Tom Hughes, “quite militant about sharing that.” Of course there are those vegetarians who could tell her that there are other factors at work and vegetarianism is not infallible, but for Norman, who turned 100 on May 21, it works.

She still drives herself everywhere, and volunteering is crucial to what she does. Every Tuesday and Thursday morning, she spends a few hours at the Carousel Thrift Shop at the Adventist Community Services Center in her town. According to an article in the Newark Advocate on May 31, 2014, “Norman works in a small room in the thrift shop where clients can receive free items such as vitamins, body soap, toothpaste and other hygiene products. Her job is to help clients find the items they need and to tell them how many they are able to take. It’s easy work, but it’s a job she said she loves.

“ ‘I just like the work and I like to get out of the house,’ Norman said. ‘I’ve really enjoyed it, and I’ve met a lot of people.’ ”

It wasn’t always this way. When the church first set up its community center, which provides a thrift shop, clothes closet, and food pantry, Norman wasn’t interested. But people already knew her heart for service, and kept “pestering” her to get involved. Finally, in 1989, at the young age of 72, she agreed to become a volunteer. Now she’s a fixture, and will be there even if it means, as it once did, paying for her broken garage door to be fixed so she can get her car out and get to work.

Schmaine Meadows, director of ACS, was quoted in the article as saying, “She’s a great example for the people in the community and at our church. She definitely has a good work ethic. She’s always here and raring to go.”
Pastor Hughes told *Adventist Today* that Norman’s life shows in the church in many more ways than that. She is known as a green thumb and helps with gardening at the church, as well as being sure there is a centerpiece of flowers in the foyer and on the communion table every week. She has a greenhouse, in which she grows “hundreds of different cacti and all kinds of flowers all year long. Every lady in the church looks up to Vera and thinks of her as an example. She wouldn’t call herself a mentor, but she’s supportive, helpful, always there to help with whatever needs to be done. A lot of young people look up to her. She has especially had a major impact on a young woman who works at the center.”

Quoting from the news article, “Frances Ohde, clothing manager at the center, said she doesn’t think Norman has ever missed a service at church and that all the younger children love her like their own grandmothers.”

More than that, Hughes reported that once when the church was trying to have an evangelistic series and didn’t have enough funds, they needed to match conference funds. “Nobody else could, so Vera did,” said Hughes. “And as a result of that series, we baptized eighteen souls.”

Hughes himself is known as the “Biker Pastor” and for the liberality of his views on worship, praise, and the leadership of women. He told AT that when he first came to pastor the Newark Seventh-day Adventist Community Church, Norman was among those who looked askance at the new praise songs and some of the other innovations he brought. Some people were openly critical. Not Norman. “She used to be kind of one of these stickler Adventists; everybody had to follow all the rules and do everything just right,” Hughes said. “At first she didn’t like the modern praise music I was doing. I wanted to lighten the atmosphere and make things a little less about rules and more about praising God. She sat back and watched for six months and then said this was okay and she was behind me 100 percent.”

Hughes (and it seems most church members would agree) calls Vera Norman “awesome,” and “a joy.” We cannot improve on the final sentence of the Newark *Advocate* article: “She is loved by all of the clients who come in, and when she’s not here, they miss her dearly,” [Meadows] said. “When she’s gone, it’s going to leave a big hole.”

[www.newarksdachurch.org](http://www.newarksdachurch.org) [The landing page looks the same as other Adventist church websites, but click on the sidebar to find such things as sermon videos and Bible Biker information.]
Most people see the world through a windshield
Motorcyclists see God's IMAX Theater
They are IN the picture!

We're heading to Colorado
An IMAX view of the Rockies
Clean air, massive mountains
Tall trees and blue sky
Vision so clear and broad  
Beauty and grandeur to behold  
God's creation rolls by  
Mile after mile we see  

To see the world this way  
The freedom of the wind blowing through your hair  
Why do I do such a dangerous thing?  

If I have to explain,  
You wouldn't understand!  
Fly like an eagle,  
And get an IMAX view of the World!

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