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What was Changed in the Fundamental Beliefs Document?

From ANN and NAD News, July 12, 2015: The official statement of the doctrines of the Adventist denomination is the Fundamental Beliefs document. It is seldom revised. So why were so many changes made at this year’s General Conference (GC) Session?

There are at least seven reasons why a denomination might consider a revision to its belief statements. It might wish to (1) Find smoother language and sentence structure. (2) Find language that is easier to translate into other languages. (3) Update terminology when the meaning or usage of language has changed. (4) Clarify language that may not clearly state where the church stands. (5) Address new situations that call for clarification. (6) Add an emphasis that was not mentioned in prior statements. (7) Change or add new statements that add to or change the meaning of the prior statements.

There were no changes in the revisions adopted last week that represent the last category. While there were no major additions (category 6), there were a few minor ones. For example, belief number 2, the doctrine of the Trinity, added the phrase, “God, who is love.” Belief number 11, entitled “Growing in Christ,” emphasizes the social dimension of biblical Christianity. Affirming the love of God and emphasizing community welfare has always been important to the Adventist denomination.

Many changes fell into the first two categories. For example, in number 17, the doctrine of spiritual gifts, a word changed from “which” to “that.” In number 25, the doctrine of the Second Coming, a phrase changed from “Christ’s coming is imminent” to “Christ’s coming is near.” This change not only has the advantage of using biblical language, but it makes for easier reading and is easier to translate.

There were also many changes under category 3, changes in the meaning of language. Belief number 7, which was labeled “The Nature of Man,” is now “The Nature of Humanity,” representing gender-inclusive language. In number 23, “Marriage and the Family,” the term “partners” was changed to “a man and a woman.” The meaning of the word “partners” with reference to marriage has changed in social usage to indicate a commitment to either same sex or opposite sex marriages. The current meaning was not prevalent in 1980 when the document was originally created. This editorial change signals that the church will remain true to the Biblical concept of marriage in spite of changes in contemporary culture.

Significant changes took place in category 4. In number 9, “The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ,” the term “bodily” was added in front of “resurrected.” We have now clarified that the resurrection of Jesus was not a continuing influence nor a spirit experience, but an actual resurrection of Christ in His total person, including His body. Although Scripture emphasizes this point, it is rejected by many theologians, who do not acknowledge the historicity of the biblical account. Thus, it was important to add the word “bodily.”

In number 18, “The Gift of Prophecy,” some felt that the prior version gave Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White authority comparable to that of the Bible. Changes were made to remove this potential ambiguity. White herself emphasizes that her authority is subject to the Scriptures. The new wording of this statement does not in any way diminish the church’s understanding of the authority of the Bible or the prophetic role of White.

In number 8, “The Great Controversy,” the previous version contained a phrase on the “worldwide” nature of the biblical flood. The intent of that statement was to represent the biblical teaching that the flood covered the entire world. It was not anticipated that “worldwide” would be reinterpreted by some who do not accept the historicity of Genesis 1-11 to mean “the then known world,” portraying a large regional flood. Thus, this GC session changed the word to “global.”
Ahead of the session, the proposed statement on Creation had resulted in considerable discussion. Some Adventists expressed concern about language in the revision that seemed to further restrict views on the age of the earth and length of the creation week. As delegates pondered this statement on Tuesday morning (July 7), Dr. Angel Rodriguez, a member of the drafting committee, stepped to the podium and affirmed that the statement on Creation was purposefully drafted to exclude any potential allowances for long-term evolutionary chronology.

Departing from literal biblical language, the revision changed the description from “In six days … “ to “In a recent six-day creation …” It also added a phrase characterizing the Sabbath as a memorial of God’s “creative work, performed and completed during six literal days that together with the Sabbath constituted the same unit of time that we call a week today.”

Paragraph 6 on the doctrine of Creation was a major reason why the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs was reviewed at this GC session. There was a concern that the previous version might have been reinterpreted by some to mean almost anything they wished on the topic of origins, including theistic evolution. In 2004 the GC executive committee produced a statement that clarified that life on this Earth began just as stated in Genesis 1 and 2.

Those who chose to reinterpret Belief number 6 maintained that the 2004 statement was not authoritative since it was not voted at a GC session. Thus, the 2004 statement was affirmed at the 2010 GC session, with the request that the substance of the action be worked into the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. The revised statement voted by this session makes it clear that God created life in six actual days, and with the addition of the Sabbath, it was a week as we know it today.

The small drafting committee was chaired by Dr. Artur Stele, director of the denomination’s Biblical Research Institute (BRI). Along with Rodriguez, the other members of the committee were Dr. Bill Knott, editor of the Adventist Review, and Dr. Gerhard Pfandl, and associate director at BRI.

Most of the revisions were minor semantic efforts to clarify the original wording or add textual support for the statements of belief. For example, the suggested revision for Fundamental Belief Number 1 on The Holy Scriptures changed the descriptive phrase for the Scriptures from "authoritative revealer of doctrines" to "definitive revealer of doctrines." Those concerned that the authority of Scripture was therefore being diminished in the statement found reassurance in another revision earlier in the paragraph which described the Holy Scriptures as “the final, authoritative, and infallible revelation” of God’s will.

Often the nuances of just one word were enough of a catalyst for active discussion among the delegates. Fundamental Belief Number 4 on The Son originally stated that Jesus became truly man. Rodriguez explained the rationale for a change: Scripture describes Jesus as becoming flesh, or in other words, human. He came to earth, not just to identify with the male gender, but with all mankind — the human race. While a few delegates actively challenged this proposed change, they eventually approved the revision that used human instead of man.

Stele reminded delegates that all revisions by the writing committee were an effort to most accurately describe each belief within the English language. Yet attention was also given to words more easily translated into other languages. An example was highlighted in the Fundamental Belief 20 on The Sabbath. The writers suggested describing the Creator as gracious instead of beneficent. Such changes for clarity and to accommodate the nuances of other languages were efficiently explained and quickly approved.

It would indeed have been a laborious process if each of the 28 statements had inspired long lines of delegates at the microphones. But, in fact, most were approved without much deliberation. But four of the revised statements garnered significant discussion in Monday’s meeting: Number 1 on The Holy Scriptures, Number 6 on Creation, Number 8 on The Great Controversy and Number 24 on Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary. These statements were sent back to the writing committee on Monday with instructions to consider additional revisions for further discussion on Tuesday.
When delegates reconvened for the Tuesday morning session, Knott addressed an undercurrent of concern about cultural influences. He assured delegates that the committee had worked hard to avoid political or cultural biases. They sought only to clarify positions in a way that Adventists around the world could fully embrace.

Yet, the revisions brought back by the committee on Tuesday were minimal. They recommended the change of one word in Fundamental Belief Number 24 on Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary. The phrase “His intercessory ministry, which was symbolized by the work of the high priest ...” was altered by replacing the word symbolized with typified. In the Fundamental Belief Number 8 on The Great Controversy the committee changed the term worldwide flood to global flood.

It may be surprising that such seemingly minor alterations engendered such vigorous discussion. But it was also quickly obvious to even the casual observer that the delegates took guardianship of the church’s core beliefs seriously. They have devoted extensive time to keep these 28 Fundamental Beliefs consistent with the church’s traditional biblical interpretation. In doing so, it seems the majority of delegates concurred with an earlier statement by Stele.

“Looking at all the changes,” he said, “I must say there are none that bring anything new to our beliefs. This is what we have always believed. The commission only sought to express this better and help to avoid possible misinterpretations.”

The 28 statements are an ongoing effort by the world church to succinctly describe the theological parameters of Adventist belief. The world church adopted 27 Fundamentals at its business session in 1980. The current Fundamental Belief Number 11 on Growing in Christ was added in 2005, bringing the present total to 28.

The Adventist News Network (ANN) is the official news agency of the denomination and NAD News is the bulletin of the denomination’s North American Division (NAD).
"Cross the Jordan, Don’t Retreat" Theme of Wilson’s Sabbath Sermon

By AT News Team, July 12, 2015: “We must go forward, not backward, because we are almost home! I am more convinced than ever that Jesus’ return is near, even at the door,” Pastor Ted Wilson declared in his Sabbath sermon (July 11) at the close of the denomination’s General Conference (GC) Session. More than 60,000 Adventists gathered in the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas, to hear Wilson’s theme-setting sermon after being voted a second five-year term as the denomination’s president.

The focus of the sermon was moving forward to cross the Jordan River into the promised land. Wilson retold the story of Moses and Joshua during this pivotal transition in the history of God’s people in the Old Testament, drawing a parallel with the Adventist movement today. He urged Adventists around the world to unite in the mission of Christ.

Wilson asked why Adventists, who have believed fervently in the soon return of Jesus for 160 years are still here. “For some time, Jesus has longed to come back. We have no more time prophecies. Those ended in 1844 with the beginning of the investigative judgment. At this very moment, Christ is ministering for us in the most holy place of a real sanctuary in heaven. He wants to pour out the latter rain of the Holy Spirit upon His people to finish His work on this earth. He longs for us to humble ourselves before Him and lean completely upon His everlasting arms. He wants us to share His good news of salvation that we are saved by grace,” he said.

Mirroring the passing of the torch from Moses to Joshua in the Bible story, Wilson shared how his own father and grandfather—both leaders in the Adventist denomination—had influenced and encouraged him. To honor them, Wilson had their Bibles on the podium along with his own Bible. His grandfather served as president of the North American Division (NAD) and the Southern Asia Division, and his father as president of the Columbia Union Conference, the NAD and the GC.

Wilson stressed the importance of reading the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, often referred to as “the Spirit of Prophecy,” and emphasized interpreting the “plain reading” or “plain language” of Scripture. “If you haven’t read much from either one for a while, pick up the Bible and read it. Pick up Steps to Christ, The Desire of Ages, The Ministry of Healing, The Great Controversy, Patriarchs and Prophets, the Testimonies or any other Spirit of Prophecy book and read it. See what God will do for your heart and life.” He continued, “As Seventh-day Adventists, we fully accept the Bible as God’s inspired Word. We understand the Spirit of Prophecy to be the lesser light, inspired by that same heavenly inspiration that leads to the greater light, the Bible.”

Continuing to highlight the importance of the Bible, Wilson declared, “God’s Word is sure and foundational.” Echoing a topic delegates had debated earlier in the week—the doctrine of creation—Wilson stated, “Yes, God actually created this world recently in six, literal, consecutive days and rested on the seventh-day Sabbath and asks us to do the same as an eternal sign of our allegiance to Him.” He went on to list other stories from the Bible, stressing that “God’s Word is accurate and true and can be understood just as it reads.”

Repeatedly, Wilson exhorted listeners to not retreat but to press on. For courage to move ahead toward the “Jordan River and the promised land,” he said Christians need to remember how God has led in the past.
Wilson listed dangers that he hopes Adventists will not move to—legalism, mysticism, superficiality, meaningless emotionalism, worldly or unbiblical contemporary ideas about theology, carelessness in Christian living, skepticism, higher criticism, fanaticism, and formalism. The audience enthusiastically applauded this warning.

Instead, Adventists should focus on positive efforts, Wilson said, not only the mechanics of the church—the focus of the GC Session—but private and public witness. “Become involved in the greatest evangelistic and mission outreach possible—take time to read and pray about the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist strategic plan, Reach the World.” He continued, “I appeal to all our administrators, pastors and lay people everywhere, become involved in personal and especially public evangelism even if you think it won’t work where you live. Adapt your methods, but reach out. Evangelism is not dead! It is more alive than ever before!”

In addition to a verbal witness, Wilson also highlighted efforts to show practical compassion for people in need. “Thank God for the work of ADRA,” he declared. He also encouraged Adventists to “always show interest in groups with special needs. Take time for those in special situations with whom you can share Christ.” Furthermore, Wilson instructed the audience to use “comprehensive health ministry in reaching people in … cities and in the rural areas.”

In summary, Wilson stressed that in order to reach the world with the message of Christ’s return, Adventists should read both the Bible and Ellen White, and participate in personal and public outreach which includes providing health care and community development. Wilson concluded his remarks with the exhortation, “Reach the world with the extraordinary good news of ultimate victory through the blood and grace of our Creator, Redeemer, High Priest, Coming King and Best Friend, Jesus Christ! Arise! Shine! Jesus is coming.”

It was a quite traditional Adventist sermon which warmed the hearts of many from around the world. Adventist ministers have been preaching that the Second Coming of Jesus is “at the door” from the very beginning of the denomination. Ellen White believed and wrote many times that “the end is near.” Seven generations of Adventists have been born, lived, and died. Ellen White passed to her rest 100 years ago this summer.

Adventist preachers are in good company in their proclamation of a “soon return.” They are simply concurring with the views of New Testament writers who believed Jesus would soon return—at least within their lifetimes. More than 2,000 years have and gone since those writers lived, and the “end” is still in the future. This reality is the basis of much of the anxiety and spiritual dissonance felt by Adventist believers.

Almost no one, particularly the president of the denomination, wants to look squarely at the problem of the delay, although it permeates the feelings of second and subsequent generations of Adventists. Perhaps it is too much to ask Wilson to rethink what “soon” means to 21st-century Adventist Christians. The question is not an easy one to ask, and it is even more difficult to conceive of good answers. So, the easy thing to do is to cling to the past. Which leads to the conflicts that were so clearly expressed all week during this 60th GC Session.

Atlantic Union College Will Reopen this Fall Without Accreditation

By AT News Team, July 13, 2015: Atlantic Union College (AUC), the oldest Adventist institution of higher education located in the outer suburbs of Boston (Massachusetts), has announced that it will again offer classes starting August 24 this year. It closed four years ago because it lost accreditation after mounting financial problems and loss of enrollment.

The college has been approved to offer two bachelor’s degrees by the higher education department of Massachusetts, one in health science and the other in religion, according to the Telegram and Gazette in Worcester. It also plans to offer non-degree certificate programs in office management, bookkeeping and English as Second Language (ESL), the newspaper reported.

The board of trustees decided recently that the college likely would not get accreditation renewed until it began offering classes, the newspaper said. AUC had applied to be accredited by an international association of Christian schools but was refused because Adventists do not believe in the traditional notion of hell; that God works a miracle to keep unrepentant sinners alive so He can torture them forever.

“My level of confidence is high,” it quoted Dr. Avis D. Hendrickson, the new president of AUC, who has been dean of students at Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport, Connecticut. She is a member of Hunts Point Adventist Church in the Bronx, New York City.

So far about 40 students have submitted applications, the newspaper reported Chris Tulloch, AUC public relations coordinator, as saying. Hendrickson told the newspaper her hope is to enroll about 200 for the coming school year. The college is accepting students with at least a 2.2 grade point average in secondary school or a GED score of 2,700 or higher, stated registrar Issumael Nzamutuma.

“By 1993, with 82 percent of its students receiving financial aid, the college’s debt hit $6.2 million, forcing it to reach into its endowment funds until those too were exhausted,” reported the Metro West edition of the Daily News. In 1995, AUC had an $11 million debt and the following year negotiated a merger with Andrews University, but this was turned down by the AUC board. In 1998 the regional accrediting body (New England Association of Schools and Colleges, NEASC) after a campus visit issued 28 citations of weaknesses that needed to be changed. In 2001 it issued a warning and in 2003 put AUC on probation. In 2010 AUC lost its accreditation as of July 2011.

During the four years when the college was shut down, the Atlantic Union Conference paid off most of its debt, which puts it in a better financial position. But the lack of accreditation means that students cannot get Federal loans or grants. In an attempt to make up for this, AUC is charging only $18,000 in tuition for the next school year, about $6,000 less than in the past.

The college is seeking students from Massachusetts who are interested in a Christian college experience, not just the traditional market restricted to Adventist families. It is hiring mostly adjunct faculty to reduce the cost of operation. AUC is one of 14 Adventist colleges and universities in North America.
How Advindicate Became an Exhibitor at GC Session

By AT News Team, updated July 21, 2015: At least two organizations from North America applied to have space in the exhibit hall in San Antonio during the General Conference (GC) Session and were turned down by the denomination’s North American Division (NAD). For one of these the NAD decision was overturned by someone in GC “administration,” sources have told Adventist Today.

The two applicants were web sites that advocate very conservative viewpoints on issues that were discussed at the GC Session: Advindicate.com and OrdinationTruth.com. The group whose request had been initially denied and then accepted was the Advindicate.com organization.

Advindicate publishes commentary that it describes as “a Christ-centered, Bible-based, Seventh-day Adventist perspective on current events and issues within the church.” It was launched in February 2012 because the founders felt that the Adventist Review is “incapable of dealing with controversial issues due to church-associated politics,” and Spectrum and Adventist Today are “antagonistic toward fundamental Adventist beliefs.” (Decidedly not true in the case of Adventist Today.)

The primary editors of Advindicate are a young couple who live in California, Shane and Mary Hilde. He has an English degree from La Sierra University and is a public high school teacher. She has a degree in journalism from the University of Oregon and works with international mission projects. The president of Advindicate is Gerry Wagoner, a roofing contractor who is an elder of the local Adventist church in Piqua, an outer suburb of Dayton, Ohio. He is an adult convert to the Adventist faith from a German Baptist background.

Advindicate is an independent ministry, a tax-exempt charity in the United States. It is most well known for launching attacks on La Sierra University for “teaching evolution,” a charge that was investigated at length by the NAD education department and the Adventist accrediting body. In general, the charge has proven groundless, although the resulting controversy did cost some university employees their jobs.

OrdinationTruth.com is a web site operated by the Council of Adventist Pastors, a private group that is not incorporated or otherwise structured, so far as Adventist Today could determine from public records. The web site states that it includes men “who cannot conscientiously support as an appropriate practice Women's Ordination in the present situation.” It appears to advocate an approach along the lines of “male headship” theology and states that “the ordination of women to positions of primary spiritual leadership in the church is unbiblical.” A group of 56 Adventist ministers are listed as members of the group, including three widely visible advocates against women’s ordination; Pastor Doug Batchelor, a pastor in Sacramento, California, who also directs the Amazing Facts television ministry; Pastor Stephen Bohr, a pastor in Fresno, California; and Dr. Ingo Sorke, a theology professor at Southwestern Adventist University.

On May 29, 2015, a video was placed on YouTube on behalf of Advindicate. It stated: “Surprisingly, the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists has denied Advindicate.com and OrdinationTruth.com ministries from booth access at the General Conference Session, 2015. Why? It seems as though it is because they stand for the already voted position of the world church.” A representative of Advindicate has told Adventist Today that the organization did not produce or upload the video.

The standard practice of the GC has been to require the approval of the division in which a prospective exhibitor is located. According to a source in the NAD staff, the original decision of NAD administration was made on the basis of the belief that the only reason that the two independent ministries wished to be exhibitors was to enable them to distribute materials advocating one side of the question before the delegates on ordaining women pastors. The
The initial NAD decision was not based on the fact they oppose women's ordination. Rather, it was based on the understanding that they would be single-issue exhibitors.

The denomination has never had exhibitors at a GC Session who were there simply to advocate on behalf of an issue that the delegates were being asked to vote on. Traditionally, Adventists have had a consensus that “politics” should be kept out of GC Sessions.

According to David Read and Shane Hilde of Advindicate, no representative of their organization contacted any GC administrator requesting that the NAD decision be overturned. They said they did not know why GC “administration” directed the NAD to grant Advindicate exhibit space.

Advindicate was not included on the list of Exhibitors posted in the entrance to the exhibit hall, although its name did appear on the map of exhibitors on the GC Session website. This may indicate that the decision to give the organization exhibit space was made late in the process of preparing for the session.

An individual connected to the Advindicate video posted a comment on YouTube asking, “Why can't Ted Wilson pull rank and say, ‘Give them booths’?” This could suggest one interpretation of what happened, at least in the case of Advindicate. Regardless of who made the decision or how it was arrived at, the precedent has been set that issue advocacy organizations can be exhibitors at GC sessions.
Young Adults Worship and Serve in “Mission Impact: San Antonio”

By Stefani Leeper and Suzanne Ocsai, July 12, 2015: Young adults who attended the recent General Conference (GC) session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in San Antonio, Texas, were able to attend daily meetings specifically for them. The worship and community service activities—together called Mission Impact—were hosted by the North American Division (NAD) Youth Department and was the official youth program of the GC Youth Department during the General Conference Session.

For the first ten days of July, Mission Impact worked with the purpose of “igniting a global community of leaders to first and foremost follow Jesus Christ and to use the unique gifts and abilities God has given them to share His love” in a global context, said pastor Ben Lundquist, one of the event’s coordinators. “It is a platform to be a catalyst for a community to change the world in the name of Jesus.”

Impact enables young people to act as the hands of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, explained James Black, director of Youth Ministries for the Adventist Church in North America. It helps them to touch others in the community.

Impact San Antonio, as the program is also called, is a platform targeted at youth aged 18 to 35, and its aim is to help young adults recognize that they have a calling in the story of the redemption of Jesus Christ.

Morning and evening Impact programs were held in the Marriott Rivercenter across from the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, which was used as an exhibit hall during the GC session. Speakers included Tara VinCross, Sam Leonor, David Asscherick, Raewyn Hankins, Rebecca Davis, Tricia Wynn, Eddie Hypolite and Jose Rojas.

The programs began with worship music performed by various Christian artists, including Aussie Billy Otto, Lola Moore and Juniper. Praise music was followed by life messages—sermons sometimes combined with Bible study—by various pastors (yes, that’s gender inclusive). Impact also featured a four-night drama production of the Great Controversy.

The general message of the programs is that everyone has a calling and a purpose in Christ. These callings can be in the church, and they can even be in spreading the gospel of Christ through the liberal arts. Explained Lundquist, “God has gifted you as young adults. You have a calling, and as a church we want to support and surround you to really live out the calling God has for your life.”

The real inspiration for the youth in discovering and nurturing their calling came in the afternoon when they were able to do hands-on mission work in the city of San Antonio. In a series of 15 community projects, youth were enabled to flood the streets, working with hundreds of community service organizations and various churches already active in community outreach. “It’s like a combined week of summer camp, short-term mission project, and camp meeting experience all put together in one,” summarized Lundquist. “You really can live out the calling Jesus has for you; you can make an impact.”

Sabbath Sofa (July 7, 2015)
The Sabbath Sofa, a concept that began in England under the Trans-European Division (TED), made its American debut in downtown San Antonio as part of Impact San Antonio. Sam Gungaloo and Ana Costescu, self-described “faces” of the Sabbath Sofa project, made guest appearances.

The Sabbath Sofa, explained Gungaloo, began with a team of 3 pastors: himself, Vili Costescu and Sam Neves. In the never ending rush of London, “we needed to find a way to engage the public; we needed to offer them something that could transform their lives,” said Gungaloo. The answer that they found is the Sabbath. “What we’re doing is presenting it in a more palatable way for the public to enjoy the message for themselves.”

Youth involved with Impact held signs asking people to take a seat. When passersby would take the opportunity to rest on the sofa, Impact participants would start by asking their guests if they would like to have 24 hours in a week, say from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, to rest. (Who wouldn’t?) In this way, the guests were introduced to the principles of the Sabbath, a less direct approach that may be less likely to turn off listening ears.

“Success is measured by all those who sit on the sofa,” Ana Costescu stated in a personal interview. “We ask them, ‘Is this something you would be interested in? Would you like this in your life? Do you need this?’ and they all say ‘yes.’ Everybody needs the Sabbath.”

The Sabbath Sofa “was the beginning of one woman’s journey to getting to know God. She changed her job and stopped working on the Sabbath,” related TED’s Katie Allen, who was covering media on the project.

“That’s why we do this,” concluded Costescu.

**One Year in Mission (July 5, 2015)**

One Year in Mission, a youth leadership program, offered 45-minute training events to wrap up Impact’s morning sessions. The four-day process, lasting from July 6 to 9, provided Impact delegates and other youth with mission training. The activities were led by 13 of 14 delegates, the representative of the Middle East and North Africa Division unable to attend.

One Year in Mission was implemented by the General Conference Youth Department and is geared to get youth involved in missionary work by building missionaries in local fields. Each division has one delegate in the program, and these representatives traveled to New York and stayed there for six months to see what youth missions looks like today in terms of life lessons and leadership skills.

After the time spent in New York, the delegates then returned to their home countries in order to implement and replicate what they learned in New York. The program consists of 4 phases: (1) New York; (2) target cities in each division; (3) a union program; and (4) a conference program.

The title is somewhat misleading because One Year in Mission is not about giving a year to mission work; it is about building a lifestyle, Anthony Stanyer, one of the 13 attending delegates, explained to Adventist Today. This lifestyle...
is built through three major components: community service, friendship or care groups (wording determined by location), and communication, including social media outreach.

Care, or friendship groups, are implemented in areas that are not necessarily Adventist and are currently based within busy cities, although they are not limited to those areas. The exact mission work depends on the context of the culture. In Vietnam, the care group shares Jesus and the gospel through music.

"To be mission leaders in their respective contexts, they need to first know what they are passionate about, and through that passion evolves a response to God’s love in sharing His love in a practical way," Stanyer elaborated. "It’s about empowering youth to be an independent leader to cater to the needs of the community in a positive way," he concluded. "They are bridging the gaps between Jesus and people…even between religious affiliations like Adventism and Islam."

To learn more about One Year in Mission and to view a summary of the workshops conducted at the 2015 General Conference, visit Impact's blog.[1]

The Haystack (June 9, 2015)

On June 9 at San Antonio’s Sunset Station, in its first General Conference participation, The Haystack served up approximately 1,100 haystacks in an attempt to break the Guinness World Record for the world’s largest potluck, reported The Haystack TV over social media. While the count was just short of the required minimum of 1,275 to break the record, the event demonstrated that everyone can literally bring something to the table.

Working with Impact and partnered with Young Adult Life and Adventist Christian Fellowship (of the North American Division), The Haystack attempts to reach young adults through social media and to be the “Buzzfeed of the Adventist world,” claimed Pastor Zach Payne, who also contributes to The Haystack.

Stefani Leeper and Suzanne Ocsai are both members of the team of journalists that covered the General Conference Session for Adventist Today. Leeper is a journalism student at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, and Ocsai is a published author, living in Chattanooga, Tennessee, preparing to pursue graduate work in journalism.

Related Article

Juniper: A Promise of Restoration (Suzanne Ocsai, July 11, 2015)

Adventist Family Life Professionals Gather at Andrews University this Weekend

From News Release, July 14, 2015: Hundreds of professionals who focus on families will be attending the Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice starting Thursday evening (July 16) on the campus of Andrews University near South Bend, Indiana. The annual meeting brings together family counselors, social workers, educators and staff from the denomination’s Family Ministries Department.

Dr. Stanley Scott, a research professor of psychology and co-director of the Center for Marital and Family Studies at the University of Denver, will be the keynote speaker. His research focuses on the prevent of marital distress and divorce, commitment and couple development in romantic relationships, cohabitation dynamics and their role in relationships and family outcomes. His research has been funded by the National Institutes of Mental Health and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Scott has been a guest on Mad About Marriage, the television program produced by Faith For Today for outreach on secular channels. He has published many articles in professional journals and is the author of several practical books, including *A Lasting Promise: The Christian Guide to Fighting for Your Marriage* (2014) and *The Power of Commitment: A Guide to Active, Lifelong Love* (2005). He played a key role in developing the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) for the United States Army to prevent marital conflict and related problems among Army personnel and their families.

Also speaking will be Pastor and Mrs. Roger Hernandez, who are staff members for the denomination’s Southern Union Conference. In addition, there will be many workshops and seminars through Sabbath afternoon (July 18). The group will worship together in the seminary chapel on Sabbath morning.

There is a registration fee with a discounted rate for members of the Adventist Association of Family Life Professionals. In addition to the association, other cosponsors of the event include the university, AdventSource, and the Family Ministries Departments of both the General Conference and its North American Division.

*More information about the conference is available by Email at acfrp@andrews.edu.*
Reflections on San Antonio

By Caleb Rosado, July 20, 2015, Revised: The decision on the ordination of women made on July 8, 2015 at the 60th General Conference Session at San Antonio, made it very clear that there is no “one” Seventh-day Adventist Church but several. The church in North America is very different from the church in Latin America, which is different from the church in Europe, and this one in term differs from the church in Africa, which also differs from the one in Australia. These various churches visibly manifested their differences when it came to the vote on the ordination issue.

The decision was not based on theology, nor the leading of the Spirit, nor the will of God no matter how many “Amens” where shouts; because God is not that confused, emotional, irrational, divisive, or anthropomorphic. The decision was based on culture and societal influences, pure and simple. By culture I mean the socially organized way of life of a people. And what holds that culture together are the operational value systems of that given culture. Thus, the operational values of North America, Europe and Australia are far different from the operational value systems of Latin America and Africa. And while we praise God for the exponential growth taking place in Africa and in Latin America, many in these areas of the world also adhere to a more traditional and patriarchal form of societal structures. These cultural and social structures also impact their reading and interpretation of Scripture. Just like the more egalitarian expression of society and culture in North America, Europe and Australia also influences many in their reading and interpretation of Scripture.

None of us come to the Word with a tabula rasa mindset. If that were the case then the Four Gospels should be identical, but they are not. Ellen G. White made that very clear: “The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers." What she is saying here is that culture and social dynamics played an influential part in the writing of Scripture, and thus, by extension, its interpretation. Melville J. Herskovits, cultural anthropologist, explains the basic principle of cultural influence on human thinking: “Judgments are based on experience, and experience is interpreted by each individual in terms of his/her own enculturation."

What all this means is that the largest body of members, with the largest number of delegates, with their traditional and patriarchal system of values, determined the outcome of the vote. People merely voted their way of life since their way of life influenced their view of God and interpretation of Scripture. Now it is important to keep in mind that with 41% of the delegates voting in favor of the motion to allow the Divisions to decide the question of the ordination of women, not everyone in Africa and Latin America voted against it. And then again, not all the delegates of North America, Europe and Australia voted in favor. There were dissenters in all the sectors, for patriarchal vs. egalitarian expressions of culture and readings of God’s Word are not exclusive to these respective fields. Yet the method chosen to carry out the vote predetermined the outcome. And as long as this method is used the outcome will always be the same, whether the vote was taken in 1995 at Utrecht or twenty years later in San Antonio, or twenty years from now who-knows-where.

In a time period when the Supreme Court of the United States finally approved what the American people had already accepted, same-sex marriage in all 50 states, when the Confederate flag – a symbol of racism and slavery – has finally come down from state capitols, when the possibility of a woman finally being President of the United States becomes a reality, the church is still the last bastion of sexism in the world. To focus on evangelism now as a solution to all the problems facing the church, comes across as a cruel joke. Who wants to join a sexist church? If the issue had been that only white males could be ordained to the Gospel ministry, the outcry would have echoed all the way from Paducah to Timbuktu (or as the Bible says, “from Dan to Beersheba), since the church is now more
sensitive to racism then to sexism.

In the days following San Antonio, I predict that the church will experience a mass exodus of its membership, especially from North America, Europe and Australia, just like happened after Utrecht, but now even on a larger scale. And instead of being the “lead institution” in society – the institution from which all the other institutions get their cues for operation – the church will become more and more irrelevant to members in the three areas supporting ordination. Growth will continue to take place exponentially in Latin America and Africa, and the browning of Adventism will continue to increase.

I also foresee a split taking place in Adventism just like what happened with the Southern Baptists over the issue of gender roles, and two factions will emerge: A progressive element arising out of North America, Europe and Australia; and a more traditional element fueled by the growth of the church in Africa and in Latin America. San Antonio will more then likely go down in SDA church history as the church’s Kadesh-Barnea and 1888 moment, when the majority rejected the minority report, and will continue to wander with a theology based on culture. But the Spirit will continue to pour out on the church’s sons and daughters as God raises a whole new generation that will move the church forward with an inclusive vision, values, and mission.

*Dr. Caleb Rosado has been a university professor for over 30 years. He now lives in Dubois, Wyoming, and is semi-retired but continues to teach online* (http://www.rosado.net). *He as the founding pastor of All Nations Adventist Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He is the author of* *What Is God Like?* (1988, Review & Herald Publishing Association), *Broken Walls: Race, Sex, Culture* (1989, Pacific Press), and *Women, Church, God: A socio-biblical study* (1990, Loma Linda University Press). *Email: crosado@dteworld.com.*
A Retired Pastor’s Response to the 2015 GC Session Actions

by Lawrence Downing, July 14, 2015: The actions taken at the recent GC session generated a wide variety of responses. There are people who view the voted actions as evidence that the church is finally aligned with God's will. Others read the same actions and conclude the church is no longer a good fit for them. Still others take a wait-and-see attitude. As a retired pastor with more than four decades under my belt, I am grateful I carry the “Retired” label. When a majority of the GC delegates voted NO on the motion to allow each division to decide whether to ordain women, the task of adding new members to the church, retaining present members and impacting younger people took on imposing challenge. Add to this action the requirement that a “true” Adventist, as defined by the Fundamental Beliefs, holds to a short-earth chronology and believes that creation took place in six literal 24-hour days and the challenge exponentially increases. The statement that marriage is between one man and one woman will alienate another segment of our population.

Now that the revised 2015 Fundamental Beliefs document has taken on an official life of its own, men and women who pastor local congregations question their place in the Adventist church. Competent, dedicated pastors are giving thoughtful attention to whether they should pursue other careers. Sure, write these off as those who are among the “Sifted,” as in “The Sifting Time.” Foolish talk! The church will pay a heavy price if we lose even one person as a consequence of voted actions that lack clear biblical authority and violate fundamental human freedoms. It would be well to consider this: In the graduate program of a school of business, I taught that one of the fundamental roles of management is to be certain that those who represent the company are sold on the product. If the salespeople do not think they offer a superior product, trouble awaits. I believe there is ample evidence that the men and women who represent the Adventist church are not proud of the recent actions their church took and a significant number do not believe they are part of a superior organization. If this is correct, trouble awaits.

Put yourself in the position of the minister who has kept up on developments in cosmology, geology, anthropology, theology and other sciences. Now he or she is to deny the findings that are reported in respectable science and religious journals? Is the pastor to ignore what she or he believes? Be less-than-truthful and affirm what is not believed? Or is the pastor to address current understandings and support and guide parishioners as they seek to reconcile biblical teachings with contemporary issues? The Fundamental Belief document thwarts the last option, an option that some might suggest is the best of the three.

What is the appropriate pastoral response to an action that violates his/her moral values and the spirit and practice that he or she believes is consistent with the teachings and actions of the Christ she or he serves? For many pastors, the denial of ordination to women colleagues is immoral and is inconsistent with basic Christian values! The GC actions on these matters, I believe, erects an unnecessary barrier that inhibits pastoral fulfillment, growth and satisfaction; challenges membership retention and diminishes the number of potential new converts who might otherwise be attracted to the Adventist message. If the GC administrative team have as their objectives the disruption of life in the local parish, the alienation of thoughtful men and women, both among pastor and people in the pew, and the suppression of moral values, they have successfully implemented an effective plan that has high probability for success. And these are the same people who have time and again assured pastors “We are here to help you!” If what they have done is help, then dole out the obstructions! Time will tell how the final chapter plays out.
New Movement to Prohibit Non-Jewish, Uncircumcised Gentile Clergy, from Ordination at Next General Conference Session in 2020

by Stephen Ferguson, July 16, 2015:  Like many Adventists, I was disappointed by the recent vote at the General Conference Session in San Antonio 2015, which resulted in a “no” decision to the following resolution concerning women’s ordination: “Is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No.”

It seems the majority of the Adventist world believes my female minister friends don’t deserve full equality with their male counterparts. Now let’s be honest. Those who oppose women’s ordination raise a number of very sincere and plausible biblical arguments.

They rightly point out there were no female Levite priests in the Old Testament Sanctuary. They rightly point out Jesus only ever chose male apostles. They rightly point to texts about the right of men to rule over women as a question of God-given headship. They rightly explain that those texts suggesting equality between male and female are only talking about equality of salvation in Christ – not equality for leadership roles. They rightly point out that references in the New Testament to female leaders are somewhat inconclusive, such as the Apostle Junia (a female name). They rightly conclude by pointing to an absence of ‘Thus saith the Lord’ that would positively authorise the ordination of female ministers.

I have to say in the past I never quite accepted these arguments. However, the majority of the world Church has voted, so perhaps those arguments do in fact represent the biblical truth – or at least the ‘present truth’. It has though on reflection made me question whether the majority who voted “no” are reading the Bible consistently, rather than being hypocrites risking God’s judgment. Nonetheless, I have faith in our delegates and I’m quite sure that wouldn’t be the case.

In particular, the more I think about it, the more I am convinced that if women cannot be ordained as female clergy, then neither can uncircumcised Gentile men. Both the Old Testament and New Testament are, after all, far more concerned with the distinction between Jews and Gentiles than between males and females. As far as scripture is concerned, we might be focusing on the gnat and missing the proverbial camel. Just think about it logically and apply the same principles espoused by opponents of women’s ordination to the question of uncircumcised Gentile clergy.

For example, there were no uncircumcised Gentiles priests in the ancient Sanctuary. Women were not allowed into the Holy Place either, but at least they had the Court of Women, which was further inside. Non-Jewish men were stuck the furthest away in the Court of the Gentiles. Similarly, in New Testament times women may have been segregated as to their spot inside the synagogue, but at least they were allowed inside – unlike Gentile believers who often had to look in through a grill in the wall.

Jesus also chose no uncircumcised Gentiles to lead His Church. Presumably if He intended for there to be uncircumcised Gentiles in leadership He would have chosen at least one. In fact, there is a greater case for women apostles than Gentile ones, given women were at least in Jesus’ inner circle. Jesus did at least appear first to women, who in being the first to tell others about the resurrection of Jesus (literally the good news or gospel), made
them the first apostles (if we take the original Greek idea of apostleship being ‘to be sent forth’).

There also isn’t much evidence for uncircumcised Gentile leadership in the New Testament either. Someone will of course mention the uncircumcised Titus, the sole potential example, but his standing and circumstance is as inconclusive as Junia’s. Yes, there are some vague biblical passages where Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders, but that doesn’t necessarily mean Titus was an apostle himself. Likewise, just because Samuel anointed David didn’t make Samuel a king. As opponents of women’s ordination like to point out, you can’t develop an entire theology for a new innovative practice based on scant evidence from the Bible.

Finally, some will point to the biblical principle of male headship over females. Possibly true, but weren’t Jews equally chosen by God as leaders over non-Jews? Doesn’t Paul even acknowledge in Romans 11 the continued place for those remnant Jewish-Christians, as having a superior and more natural place than those Gentile-Christians merely grafted in as wild shoots?

As the husband has God-given authority over the wife in the Church (and not it seems just in the home, according to women’s ordination opponents), doesn’t the Jew likewise have God-given authority over the Gentile believer? As Paul tells us men have natural authority over women because man was made first, so too doesn’t Genesis 10 tells us Shem (the ancestor of Israel, hence the concept of an ‘anti-Semite’ being a hater of Jews) was the oldest son of Noah?

Sure there can be exceptions, such as the way God made Ellen White an exception from those gender restrictions about male authority. Likewise, God can invoke exceptions to the first-born principle, such as appointing Jacob over Esau, or giving the priesthood to the tribe of Levi rather than first-born. But the Bible clearly shows a principle of first-made headship. It applies not just in gender relations of male over female, but in racial relations of Jew over Gentile. That is, if we argue for such headship principles applying to the New Testament Church.

Otherwise, how can we claim the doctrine of headship but not Jewish dispensationalism? How can we claim equality of race but not gender? Again, it would seem we need to read the Bible consistently. If gender was not abolished in terms of Christian leadership, then how can we say it still applies in the case of gender? And I haven’t even mentioned the third trifecta of Christian equality found in Galatians 3, which is equality of status – that proverbial slave versus free.

With these thoughts of consistency in mind, today I am launching a new movement to have all uncircumcised Gentile clergy stripped of their ordinations, and a new prohibition imposed on any new candidates for ordination who are not both Jewish and circumcised. I am hoping to have this motion placed on the next agenda of the General Conference Session in 2020, in Indianapolis in five years’ time.

Naturally I am expecting all those who opposed women’s ordination to support me. Otherwise, that would potentially make those who recently voted “no” a bunch of hypocrites, and I have complete confidence that is not the case. As the current vote against the ordination of female pastors was easily defeated, I am likewise expecting some pretty smooth sailing for my proposed motion.

I do expect some opposition, though – mostly annoying liberal types. Some of these theological hippies will no doubt say it is madness to disenfranchise such a huge number of current and potential future candidates from the professional ministry. I understand that sentiment, but we have after all just disenfranchised over 50% of our current recruitment pool on the basis of gender.

The Church of Jesus’ day and the original apostles was a predominantly Jewish one. It was led by Jewish men who were circumcised. We cannot let the fact that today almost all Christians are Gentiles change the way we read the Bible strictly in its original context. Otherwise, we might as well say the feminist movement in the last fifty years can change the way we read the Bible. We either apply its original 1st-century context, without any room for cultural divergence, or we don’t.
What really matters instead is upholding a strict and literal reading of the Bible, prohibiting anyone from a position of Church leadership unless there is a clear ‘Thus saith the Lord’. And there is no such proof text positively authorising the ordination of uncircumcised Gentiles as members of the clergy, just as there is scant support for the positive ordination of women ministers.

In conclusion, my fellow Adventists, we can’t afford any more of these Korah-like rebellions. It doesn’t matter that most of our current male clergy won’t make the cut. There is a greater principle of truth at stake here. Men might feel called by the Holy Spirit to Christian ministry, but they should have thought of that before being born a non-Jew. I know many have said something similar to our female ministers, who make the ridiculous claim that they are called by God. In both cases, it seems the lack of appropriate genitalia trumps any supposed calling by the Holy Spirit.

But don’t fret. We'll still have Clifford Goldstein and Doug Batchelor, who are both Jewish-Adventists.
by Andy Hanson, July 13, 2015: “Would you join an organization that promotes the notion that women are in any way inferior to men ‘in the eyes of God’?” That was a question put to me when I heard that the Adventist Church, in General Conference session, voted that women cannot be ordained. My answer was an emphatic, “No!”

My response reflects my belief that this decree violates women’s basic human rights. Jimmy Carter makes the following argument:

"Our overall commitment at the Carter Center is to promote human rights, and knowing the world as I do, I can tell you without any equivocation that the number one abuse of human rights on Earth is, strangely, not addressed quite often, is the abuse of women and girls."

"There are a couple of reasons for this that I’ll mention to begin with. First of all is the misinterpretation of religious scriptures, holy scriptures, in the Bible, Old Testament, New Testament, Quran and so forth, and these have been misinterpreted by men who are now in the ascendant positions in the synagogues and the churches and in the mosques. And they interpret these rules to make sure that women are ordinarily relegated to a secondary position compared to men in the eyes of God."

"This is a very serious problem…Scripts are misinterpreted to keep men in an ascendant position. That is an all-pervasive problem, because men can exert that power and if an abusive husband or an employer, for instance, wants to cheat women, they can say that if women are not equal in the eyes of God, why should I treat them as equals myself? Why should I pay them equal pay for doing the same kind of work? *"

For this reason alone, the Adventist Church should support the ordination of women in every country in the world. And churchmen in any country who oppose that idea should be reassigned. No GC claim that violates the human rights of women can speak with “the highest authority under God.” **

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**GC Working Policy:

3. Highest Organization.

“B 10 20 General Conference and its Divisions

The General Conference is the highest organization in the administration of the worldwide work of the Church, and
is authorized by its Constitution to create subordinate organizations to promote specific interests in various sections of the world; it is therefore understood that all subordinate organizations and institutions throughout the world will recognize the General Conference in session as the highest authority under God.

B 15 10 Adherence to Policy Required — 1. The General Conference Working Policy shall be strictly adhered to by all organizations in every part of the world field. The work in every organization shall be administered in full harmony with the policies of the General Conference and of the divisions respectively. No departure from these policies shall be made without prior approval from the General Conference Executive Committee…

God’s Covenant with You

Adapted by Debbonnaire Kovacs, posted July 15, 2015

Adapted from Psalm 89:20-30; 32-37

“I have found [your name here] my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed you.

My hand will hold you fast and my arm will make you strong.

No enemy shall deceive you, nor any wicked person, thing, idea, or place bring you down.

I will crush your sins and temptations before you, and strike down those inner confusions and falsehoods that tempt you to hate yourself.

My faithfulness and love shall be with you, and you shall be victorious through my Name.

I shall make your dominion extend from your heart to your mind to your actions.

You will say to me, ‘You are my Father/Mother/Maker/Friend [insert your favorite term], my God, and the rock of my salvation.’

I will give you my Firstborn Who is higher than the kings of the earth.

I will keep my love for you forever, and my covenant will stand firm for you.

I will establish your eternal life forever and your security in me as the days of heaven.”

…I will not take my love from you, nor let my faithfulness prove false.

I will not break my covenant, nor change what has gone out of my lips.

Once for all I have sworn by my holiness: ‘I will not lie to [your name].

Your life and faith shall endure forever and your peace as the sun before me;

It shall stand fast forevermore like the moon,
the abiding witness in the sky.
Juniper: A Promise of Restoration

By Suzanne Ocsai, July 11, 2015: As Jodelis Matos and Patrick Ranalla, of the duet Juniper, take the stage to perform at IMPACT San Antonio—the young adult programming during the 60th General Conference Session (GC)—their soft-spoken voices and gentle personalities welcome you as they introduce themselves and their first song. However, as soon as they begin to sing, the moment explodes like dynamite; they are, simply, powerful.

With intense emotion and passion, their voices carry throughout the hall, eyes closed and hands lifted high, you’re carried along with them on a river of commanding praise.

The kind of emotion and passion Juniper sings with is the kind that is earned only from knowing personally the suffering a soul endures through long dark nights while waiting desperately for morning’s first glimpses of restoring light. And theirs is just that—a story of restoration and redemption.

Before agreeing to co-found Juniper, Patrick spent several years struggling spiritually.

“For a long time I was really numb and in a melodramatic phase in my spirituality and not really sure what I wanted to do,” said Patrick.

Tiffany Ranalla, Patrick’s wife, wasn’t sure what to do during this time either. She sought out pastors and others she trusted to get their advice.

“When some people encouraged me to stay,” she said, “and some people that had talked to him knew what a dark place he was in and did not think he would recover. [They] told me that if I wanted a Christian husband that they didn’t think he would be that again. So I really handed my faith over at that point and said, I’m going to continue to raise my kids, continue to go to church, and he can follow me or he can not follow me.”

While she decided to stay, the hardest thing for Tiffany to reconcile was her husband’s loss of faith in God.

“I just continued to pray that he would come back around because it wasn’t as if he was a bad person or he changed who he was or he wasn’t a good man,” she said. “It was the aspect of him just not believing anymore and having no faith left. I wanted him to come with us to heaven. And that was hard to think about the fact that if something ever happened to him that we would not see him again.”

During this time Patrick was feeling God pulling him back even when he tried to ignore the tug. It seemed like every time he would pick up his guitar to play or write a song, it was Christian music and lyrics that came to mind. He couldn’t figure out why this was happening; all he knew was that he couldn’t escape those moments.

“I would forget about what I was doing at that time,” said Patrick, “and then I would eventually stop myself, cause I’m
like, ‘wait a second, this is not what I want to do.’"

At the same time Jodelis was also struggling through her own valley of shadows. “There were dark and painful
times,” said Jodelis, “particularly in the last few years when I would be so broken by what I was going through—circumstances that led to [my] divorce—but my God was right there. And many times in that brokenness He gave me a song and with that song He would give me exactly what I needed in that moment.”

She started writing down the songs as well as performing at church and various events. The music became her healing. After a performance one day, Tiffany walked up to her and said, “You need to sing with my husband.”

That was the beginning of Juniper.

Just as their own personal lives went through intense ups and downs, their music ministry did as well. Tiffany, who has since become Juniper’s manager, and Jodelis could sense Patrick’s resistance to the idea of committing to the group.

“There were many times in the beginning when I wanted to pull away from doing it,” said Patrick. “I didn’t think music was what was in store for me. I didn’t want to do that music. I didn’t want to put myself out there. I didn’t want to be vulnerable again to the possibilities.”

But little by little, Patrick began coming back. Tiffany saw the prayers for her husband being answered with every venue he performed. One day Tiffany drove over to Jodelis’s house and shared with her just how much Juniper meant to them.

“We’ve decided to put school to the side,” said Tiffany. “I can see that [Juniper] is good because it brought my husband back to me.”

For Juniper, being invited to perform at the GC was simply one more in a long stream of affirmations from God to the promise of restoration He’s bringing to their own lives and the lives of others through their music.

“For me, Juniper definitely restored my faith,” said Patrick. “Just because of where I came from . . . it had been a while [since] I had been truly faithful, truly open to the promises of God. Because I wasn’t looking to make a big difference and shoot here to today, San Antonio, Impact, 2015, it’s just like this is what we’ve been called to do. It is purposeful and my faith is stronger than ever.”
Nothing In My Hands, Chapter Nine

By Del Starr, a pseudonym, all rights reserved.

There's No Place like Home

Gary and Dianne were concerned on the trip back to the United States. They were to land in South Carolina and Grace was to land at New York. Grace was not the easiest person in the world to get along with and already her visit had been fraught with arguments and temper tantrums. Gary and Dianne had left their car in Germany for it was on its last legs and not worth bringing back to the United States. This meant that upon their arrival in South Carolina, they would have to find and purchase a car large enough to transport three children, three adults, a dog, and a cat cross country. They wished that their flight had been to New Jersey which would have been closer to Grace’s point of entry and easier to make arrangements if they were not able to find a car before Grace’s arrival.

When the plane first touched down in the United States, it was in New Jersey. Gary and Dianne had been unaware of this stop and upon landing, claimed their luggage, etc. When the plane took off for South Carolina, Gary, Dianne and the children were not on it. Several times they were paged but they ignored the page and headed for the Army base nearby.

Gary reported in and his orders were changed to show New Jersey as the point of arrival. Then Gary and Dianne began looking for a car. It was not an easy job. They found cars that were too expensive, too old, too small, and ever so many other “too” things. They could not find just the right car for them. Grace’s arrival was scheduled the next day and still they had no car.

The next morning Dianne called the airlines in New York upon which Grace would arrive and asked them to give her mother a message saying, “Have not found car. Take base cab service to New Jersey base.” And they resumed car hunting.

About two hours before Grace was to arrive in New York, they found the perfect car, a Ford station wagon. They arranged for its purchase, piled Janetta, Brian, and Brad into the car, and headed for New York. They arrived about ten minutes after the plane had been scheduled to arrive and Dianne searched and searched for Grace. She was paged, she was prayed about but no Grace.

Finally, in desperation, Gary and Dianne climbed back in the car and went back to New Jersey in hopes that Grace had received the message Dianne had left for her and had gone on to New Jersey by herself. If she had received the message, she would at least know that they were in New Jersey and would be able to contact them there. With heavy hearts they pulled through the gates of the base and around to the Guest House. On a bench in front of the Guest House sat Grace. Gary and Dianne sent silent prayers of gratitude heavenward.

They then learned that Grace had been given a message which read, “Have not found car, find your own way to base in New Jersey.” It took a while for Grace to believe that they were telling the truth when they told her that this was not exactly the message that Dianne had left for her. Grace was terribly upset but Gary and Dianne were so grateful to God for hearing their prayers that they hardly noticed Grace’s disposition.

Another night was spent in New Jersey and after a good rest, the family, along with the dog and cat, now loaded into the Ford station wagon to proceed to California.

Grace was not happy riding in the back seat with the children, though a play area had been set up for them behind the back seat. The children would lean over Grandma’s shoulder and bother her. Not very far into the trip, when
Gary and Dianne stopped, Grace purchased a fly swatter and from then on, whenever the children would bother her, she would swat them with the fly swatter. The children weren’t happy with the arrangement either, but Gary and Dianne determined to keep things as calm as possible, for the trip was to be a long one.

The first stop was at Gary's parents' home in Missouri and a glorious reunion took place. Grace met Gary’s parents for the first time and liked them but sensed the love there was between Gary’s mom and Dianne and was jealous of it. She once more began picking at Dianne until another argument began.

Grace, as was her norm, left the house and “went for a walk." She was unfamiliar with the territory, however, and soon found herself lost. She walked for hours. Dianne was not terribly concerned because Grace had acted this way many times during the times that they had lived together. Late in the evening, Grace finally found her way back, but she had worn pedal pushers and the bottom of her legs had been exposed to the glaring sunlight. Grace now suffered from sunburn on both legs. It did not portend to be an easy journey as they continued to the West Coast.

“Dutch,” the dachshund, had been put into his new home in the kennel and “Pops,” Gary’s stepfather, was very excited about the prospect of having new blood in the area. He spent a great deal of time with the dog admiring and settling him. He was a very good-looking dog, perfect for stud.

The day before Gary and Dianne were to leave Missouri to head for Iowa, Pops came into the house and asked, “Did you know that dog has been neutered?” That, of course, ended the prospect of the dog staying in Missouri and when Gary and Dianne loaded the car, Dutch was loaded also.

Gary’s mom grew a beautiful garden and tomatoes were ripe and in abundance. She picked a nice lot of them and packed them for Gary and Dianne to take with them.

Gary and Dianne needed to take care of some business in Colorado Springs, where they had resided before the transfer to Germany, so they headed there next. The business took a couple of days and the tomatoes kept getting riper and riper. They had eaten some but were afraid that the rest would go to waste before they could eat them. The family checked into a motel and fed the children, then Gary went to the store to buy a loaf of bread and some “Miracle Whip” to make tomato sandwiches. Of course the children wanted tomato sandwiches also but Gary and Dianne knew that they would string tomato all over the motel and decided it was best to not let them share.

Dianne had some rock candy in the car and she brought that in and began doling it out to the children who were just as happy as could be; but the thought crossed Dianne’s mind of the Bible verse, “Who of you, if your child asks for bread, would give him a stone instead?”

Business finished, the family headed for Gary’s sister’s home in Iowa, where they spent the next few days. The children had cousins to play with as Gary’s sister had children the same ages as Gary and Dianne’s.

One evening Gary’s brother in law cooked barbecue chicken on the outdoor grill. It smelled so good and tasted good also, when they had a chance to eat it. But Grace went to Dianne and said with a sneer, “I sure hope he didn’t use beer to make that barbecue sauce; some people do, you know.” Dianne reassured her that she was certain he did not. It proved later to be a false assurance but Grace never knew the difference and the alcoholic content had cooked out.

The family then headed for Seattle to take Grace to her home. Secretly, Dianne thought, “Finally!” The children also were much more relaxed when Grace was no longer traveling with them and the family sang songs and played games as they traveled to the valley of Oregon where George still lived with his new wife.

Dianne was so glad to see George. He had always seemed like her own father and she hugged and hugged him until he finally gently pushed her away from him and said, “Let's go get some dinner.”

The time went altogether too quickly and Gary and Dianne had to leave so they would be able to spend some time...
with Donald, Dianne's father, and his family. They arrived in time to go camping with them which was a new experience for the children. They got to enjoy the boat that Donald had purchased for the family with some of the money the family had realized upon Robby's death. Dianne couldn't help but think of Robby every time she looked at the boat but she realized that Donald had made a good choice, to give the family something that they all could enjoy in memory of Robby.

From Donald's home, the family proceeded to the Presidio of San Francisco and Gary reported for duty.