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On the cover: SABBATH AT THE SESSION:
An estimated 60,000 people attend services at San Antonio’s Alamodome the final Sabbath of the General Conference Session.

Photo: Josef Kissinger
We are no longer a small people.

When this movement organized as the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863, we were a tiny group of often-marginalized believers who clung tenaciously to the truth of the seventh-day Sabbath and a belief in the literal Second Coming of Jesus. In a religious world dominated by Christian denominations that numbered adherents in the tens of millions, Seventh-day Adventists came to perceive themselves as the often-misunderstood remnant, faithful to God’s Word when others made theological compromises or sought political control. We knew in our bones that our beliefs would never make us popular. We assumed that we would always be on the margins.

But the undeniable reality made evident by the sheer scale and scope of a world gathering of Seventh-day Adventists, as happened July 2-11 in San Antonio, Texas, United States, is that God has now changed the terms of our engagement with our culture and with other faiths. More than 18 million Adventists now gather in hundreds of thousands of congregations around the globe, more broadly dispersed than any other Protestant faith, offering a truly world-class educational system and one of the largest healthcare systems on the planet. Estimates of the number of persons who now identify themselves as Seventh-day Adventists, whether formally part of a congregation or not, run to more than 25 million.

The divinely inspired audacity of our mission—to reach the entire world with the good news of Jesus—now seems plausible through the diligence of millions of witnessing members and the advances of new media technologies. Adventists are moving to the fore in government, education, science, technology, and the arts. A new cultural appreciation for the benefits of a healthy Adventist lifestyle is winning the attention of millions who may not yet appreciate the biblical foundations of our message.

We are no longer a small people. God has done this thing. Now let us have the courage and the grace to follow Him into the future He is creating for His remnant.

Wilson accepts a new five-year term with “quiet respect and humility.”

Ted N.C. Wilson
Reelected GC President in Resounding Vote
By Andrew McChesney

Delegates overwhelmingly elected incumbent General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson to another five years in office.

An estimated 85 percent of the some 2,400 delegates voted in favor of keeping Wilson in his position as leader of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference after a 37-minute discussion at the General Conference session in San Antonio, Texas, United States.

Wilson and his wife, Nancy, entered the stage to sustained applause from standing delegates and thousands of other church members in the Alamodome stadium.

“It is with very quiet respect and humility that both of us stand before you, before God,” Wilson said. “And we do accept this responsibility.”

Wilson reiterated his commitment to God and the Adventist Church and briefly outlined three goals that he would pursue in his second term: a greater emphasis on Christ and His righteousness, faithfulness, and the involvement of every church member in evangelism and witnessing.

“God intends for His people to stand faithfully, but we have to do it together,” he said.

Wilson’s election was briefly delayed after two delegates proposed returning his name to the Nominating Committee for further discussion and several other delegates called for a secret ballot on Wilson’s election. Both motions failed to receive approval.

Leaders of the Nominating Committee met separately with the two delegates to discuss their questions, which were not disclosed. Leaders of the Nominating Committee reported back to the General Conference session both times that they stood by Wilson’s nomination.

Delegates raised bright-green cards to vote. Technical issues postponed plans to debut an electronic voting system at the session.

Wilson’s reelection had strong support from many quarters. Members of the Nominating Committee, which was chosen the day before and worked both Thursday night and Friday morning to nominate a president, overwhelmingly backed Wilson, according to a person familiar with the closed-door talks.

Wilson, speaking at a 15-minute news conference immediately after his reelection, said he would seek unity in the church by emphasizing spiritual aspects of prayer and how God brings people together through mission. This focus, he said, would help fulfill Jesus’ prayer in John 17: “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may...
Humbling

“It’s A Very be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (verses 20, 21, NKJV).

Asked by the Adventist Review to identify his top priority going forward, Wilson pointed to the three goals that he had mentioned from the platform, but said that he anticipated putting the greatest energy into the third goal: getting every church member involved in evangelism and witnessing.

“We will emphasize the very core of who we are as Seventh-day Adventists,” he said.

Chad Stuart, a United States pastor blogging for Adventist Review, asked Wilson to describe his mood after his re-election. Wilson replied that he felt “humbled and overwhelmed,” adding that the election process had been “interesting.”

His wife, Nancy, was praying in the General Conference’s prayer room when she learned that her husband had been nominated for a new term. “I kind of feel the same way I felt five years ago. It’s overwhelming,” she said in an interview. Her voice wavered and tears welled up in her eyes as she spoke backstage in the Alamodome. “I’m glad we have the Lord to lean on,” she said. “It’s His power. It’s His strength. It’s His church.”

Ted Wilson, both at the news conference and on the session platform, thanked church members for praying for him and said he believed those prayers sustained him day to day.

Delegates, speaking about their hopes for the church during Wilson’s new term, voiced a similar desire to see Jesus’ return.

“I want to see the Lord come in the next five years,” said Homer Trecartin, chair of the Nominating Committee and president of the church’s Middle East and North African Union Mission. “We need to focus on mission,” he said. There are “very unentered areas of the world that need to hear the gospel.”

Richard Hart, vice chair of the Nominating Committee, said his main hope for the church was that it would “stay unified with continued diversification both with gender and race around the world.”

“My prayer for the church is one for unity of purpose rather than uniformity of action,” said Cheryl Doss, assistant secretary of the Nominating Committee and director of the church’s Institute of World Mission.

Priscilla Christo, a delegate from the Southern Asia Division, said she would like to see young people receive more recognition and church leaders put more emphasis on helping the youth.

Joel Ubani, president of the Aba East Conference in Nigeria and a delegate with the West-Central Africa Division, said Wilson had visited many young people and churches in his region during his first term and helped achieve much progress.

“We believe that with God the church will experience tremendous growth in the next five years,” he said.

Judith Fisher, a General Conference delegate, said she hoped that “as a church we become a lot more intentional.”

“Meeting God where He is, where He wants us to be, and to be able to hasten His second coming, this is what we’re all here about,” she said.

Ronald Oliver, a North American Division delegate, said he was keeping his eyes fixed upward. “My hope and dream is that the gospel will be spread farther and wider, and then the Lord will come,” he said. “With the gospel being spread more widely and in different places, and with what’s happening in the political and natural world, it seems His coming will be soon. It’s not far-fetched.”

Kimberly Luste Maran contributed to this report.
Knott: You’ve just accepted your election by the delegates to serve as president of the General Conference for another five years. I know you well enough to know that a moment like this isn’t just a professional event: it’s also a deeply spiritual moment. What does it feel like when the church in which you’ve grown up asks you to lead it for another five years?

Wilson: It’s an exceedingly challenging invitation, and one for which any person feels unprepared. No one can handle this position except by the direct leading and guidance of the Lord. So it’s a very humbling experience. And you realize, especially as you look out into the eyes and faces of delegates and church members, that this is something much larger than anything you can handle on your own. You become exceedingly sobered by the whole thought. There are three things you can do at a moment like this: you can shrink from it and feel so totally inadequate that you become immobilized, and the Lord doesn’t want that. You could become so emboldened that you have been asked to lead out that you become overconfident, and the Lord doesn’t want that either. He wants to use the talents He’s given you, but He wants you to depend wholly on Him. So in this instance I feel the weight of the office and I take it to the foot of the cross. What else could you do?

There’s a little plaque I keep in my office that I was given a long time ago. It carries a line from Prophets and Kings, page 31. “When a burden bearer desires wisdom more than he desires wealth, power, or fame, he will not be disappointed. Such a one will learn from the Great Teacher not only what to do, but how to do it in a way that will meet the divine approval.”

I find myself in the same posture as Solomon early in his administration. Only the Lord is sufficient to carry the burdens of this role. During the last five years, I’ve seen how the Lord has intervened on many occasions, how He has orchestrated things far beyond anything I would have imagined or could have done personally. There’s a supernatural Hand in this church, and the Lord’s not going to leave it. So that’s what gives me encouragement. All of us, in whatever capacity we are asked to serve—administrator, pastor, or layperson—ought to be humbling ourselves before the Lord, pleading with Him for the latter rain, for the Holy Spirit.

When I look at the schedule you’ve kept—the amazing travel schedule you’ve kept in the last five years—I’m wondering where you’re going to find the stamina to do that for another term. Well, I don’t think I’ll travel quite as much. If my wife has anything to do with it, we won’t! Reality and reason impose certain limits. I think it will be vitally important to spend additional time in spiritual reflection to understand how the Lord wants this church to proceed. Dashing here and there may seem like progress, but with today’s technology, it’s far easier to make the needed connections electronically than it was even 10 or 15
years ago. Technology has advanced to the point where it’s possible to be in constant contact on a moment’s notice just about anywhere in the world, and I’ve learned to make full use of e-mail and texting. But you’re right: there’s a limit to what a body can handle!

Trust me, many of us will be praying that you get more sleep in the next five years! I’m joining you in that prayer!

Given the important decisions that are going to be taken at this GC session—in a very few days—on better language for the Fundamental Beliefs, on whether or not to allow divisions to make a decision to ordain women to ministry—there are likely to be persons or groups who might be disappointed with one of the decisions made here. You’ve been elected to lead the entire Seventh-day Adventist Church. What would you say to those who might be disappointed by some decision that’s made here in San Antonio?

Well, I’d point them to the fact that regardless of what decision the church makes on any number of subjects, this church is still the apple of His eye. Whatever decisions are taken, even though they may not be to your liking, there is no other place to go. This is God’s remnant church. If you don’t believe that, then you have, in your own mind, another recourse. But I don’t read anywhere in Scripture or in the Spirit of Prophecy that there will be another remnant of the remnant.

So I would appeal to anyone who is disappointed, even those who may feel dejected, that there is a much larger picture. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is going to go through, but not simply as a human organization. It’s a movement, a movement with a biblical message. That understanding helps all of us find stability for our own lives and the mission of the church. There may be times when you will continue to disagree with a decision for a long period of time, but the Spirit of Prophecy urges us that when the General Conference in session makes a decision, we need to humble ourselves before that and not persist in our own thinking and agitate.

I recognize that some people may not see that as a valid response, but dejection or disappointment can turn into bitterness if we’re not careful. We have to put the matter before the Lord and say, “Lord, help me work my way through this and see the big picture, because the mission and the ultimate salvation of people at Your soon coming are most important.”

My own experience of periodically preaching evangelistic meetings such as I recently did in Zimbabwe—preaching these incredible biblical truths—reminds me that God’s purposes for His church are always bigger than any single decision. My viewpoint on any matter, however strongly I hold it, must ultimately be yielded to the greater purposes God has for His end-time people.

I’m guessing that you’ve often had to lead committee processes that ended with decisions other than what you might have wished. Various times. And I’ve learned how important it is to look at the big picture, to remember that the Lord is in charge of the outcome.

You’ve been known in these last five years for launching a series of major initiatives—“Revival and Reformation,” “The Great Controversy Project,” “Comprehensive Health Ministry,” and “Mission to the Cities.” Should we expect more major initiatives of this kind in the next five years, or are you chiefly hoping to build momentum for those already launched?

The broad-based initiatives which have given us a strong foundation for this last quinquennium—and I take no credit because they are all from Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy—those will remain the founda-
tion. But there are three areas of focus that I hope will characterize all we do in the next five years.

The first is an emphasis on Christ and His righteousness: that’s the core of the Three Angels Messages. This message turns people back to the true worship of God, to realizing the beauty of His righteousness and the grace that covers us, and to the experience of sanctification, which is also His work, too.

All of the initiatives that have been launched point to the restoration that the Three Angels Messages intend—restoring people back to the true worship of God, to realizing the beauty of His righteousness and the grace that covers us, and to the experience of sanctification, which is also His work, too.

The second area of focus is faithfulness. We live in a very existential culture that suggests that no loyalty can be permanent. But God calls us to increasing faithfulness to Him and to His Word. We’ll be talking about faithfulness in personal relationships, faithfulness in biblical truth, faithfulness in the study of the Word. We’ll underline faithfulness in prayer, in studying the Spirit of Prophecy, in family relationships, and in areas that I personally have a special burden for, such as Sabbath school attendance. Faithfulness is only possible when we realize our complete dependence on Christ and His righteousness.

The third thing is really critical, and that is total membership involvement—total empowerment of lay people for evangelism and witnessing, so that we don’t have only a paid professional group that does the outreach, but that the church members around the world recognize that this is our work. Ellen White makes this wonderful statement in Testimonies, volume 9, page 117: “The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those ministers and church officers.”

This is going to be one of the largest areas of emphasis in the new quinquennium—getting everybody involved. Not everyone one needs to preach an evangelistic series—though many could do that who haven’t even imagined it yet! But understanding the gift of salvation means that everyone needs to find an area in which they can become part of God’s plan for reaching the world. I saw how energizing involvement can be recently in Zimbabwe, where 20 young people from the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference came and held evangelistic meetings with ShareHim. It just changed their lives!

If you’re sharing your faith—whether by preaching, teaching, or simply talking with a neighbor—the Lord will do something dramatic for you as well. That’s why Jesus in His mercy has asked us, as a people, to get involved in outreach—because we need the new life and revival it brings as well.

You just named ShareHim, an organization that works with church members and supporting ministries for international outreach. Tell me about the role supporting ministries will play in “every member mobilization.”

Over the last five years we’ve tried to broaden the understanding as to what a supporting ministry really is, and it’s an understanding completely endorsed by the Spirit of Prophecy. I’m not talking about organizations that feed off of the church, but ones that give—to use a phrase that some people like—“added value.” True supporting ministries are exactly what they claim to be—supporting. And if they’re not supporting, then of course they are not really part of the ongoing mission of the church. Supporting ministries are made up of people who, for whatever reason, aren’t paid by the church. They find other ways in which to support themselves, but they are intently focused on the mission of the church to share with people the Three Angels Messages and that Christ is coming soon. So supporting ministries will play a vital role in all of this.

Every church, every pastor, every church member can be part of some ministry organized to reach out, not as spectators, but as highly involved participants. I’m not interested in putting guilt trips on people. I don’t want members dreading involvement as though, “Oh no, we’ve got to go hand out literature.” Just let the Lord lead you to something uniquely suited to you and still productive for His kingdom. It can be creative—it can be different from what others feel called to do—but if the Lord is in it, it will help to build up His kingdom.
As members immerse themselves in Bible truth and the inspired counsel of Ellen White, they’re going to find a depth of spiritual experience they may not have previously known.

Adventists may know about the Bible, but they don’t really know the Bible very well. That’s why we’ve launched the “Believe His Prophets” and “United in Prayer” initiatives for this new quinquennium—as an encouragement to really know the Word and the Spirit of Prophecy and find great strength and humility in prayer leading us to the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. As members immerse themselves in Bible truth and the inspired counsel of Ellen White, they’re going to find a depth of spiritual experience they may not have previously known.

The second major issue has been a concern of mine for a long time. Many Seventh-day Adventists may not understand the prophetic role of this movement in society—that the Seventh-day Adventist church is a unique organization, a prophetic people. As I’ve said before—we’re a prophetic movement, with a prophetic message, on a prophetic mission. And if members don’t understand all of that—and you, Bill, as a historian will resonate with this—they don’t understand the story of God’s miraculous leading of this movement and how He will continue leading it in the tumultuous days ahead.

Almost every week, the Adventist Review and Adventist World team gets news of church members who are being persecuted for following Bible truth. What would you say to Adventists who are in difficult places right now, where they can’t openly practice their faith or share the truths to which God has led them? God calls us in whatever situation we’re in to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit. Those beautiful characteristics will automatically make you a witness, even if you can’t openly speak about God’s last-day message. The Lord will help you to know best how to impact people’s lives—and people will notice the difference. They’ll come and ask you why you are kind, gentle, and patient. The Lord can help each us find creative ways to bring out His truth, even if we can’t always speak openly about it.

The church is moving quickly into areas where there’s potential for great opposition from other religions and some governments. I find myself often thinking and praying for believers who are sometimes just struggling to hold on to their faith. I hope they will know that there are a lot of people—millions, in fact—who are remembering them in their prayers. Everywhere I go, I try to remind our members that if you feel like you’re in a small little corner somewhere and not very connected, don’t forget that you are an integral part of the world family of Seventh-day Adventists. Faithful people are lifting you up in prayer every day to heaven, and heaven is listening, acting, and protecting. Whether you’re in the most liberty-loving country in the world or one of the most restrictive, that connection with heaven will help you when you feel discouraged or isolated. You’re part of a universal family, for all God’s angels are also right there with you.

I know God is working on the hearts of many around the world for the last, great, final cry. As I view what is happening in so many situations around the globe, I see that the end of time is upon us. The Lord is coming soon! God is working in an unusual way, and the latter rain is about to fall. What a privilege to be part of His Advent movement at this time in history.

So look to the Lord at every moment. Lift up Christ, His Word, His righteousness, His sanctuary service, His saving power in the great controversy, His Three Angels’ Messages, His health message, His last-day mission to the world, and His soon second coming. Be of good courage, for as our 2015 General Conference Session theme so beautifully proclaimed, “Arise! Shine! Jesus Is Coming!”

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At moments like this, an interviewer typically asks a newly elected leader, “What’s the biggest issue facing the Adventist church today?” What do you think that biggest issue is? Well, I think there are two issues, actually. One is the enormous attempt by society—and I believe, by the devil—to neutralize Scripture, and even the knowledge of Scripture. Even in an Adventist context, many
Delegates turned down a motion that would have allowed each division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to decide for itself whether to ordain women to the gospel ministry in its territory.

By a margin of 1,381-977, with five abstentions, delegates by secret ballot ended a five-year process characterized by vigorous and sometimes acrimonious debate.

General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson appealed to church members to unite in the mission of the church after the vote at the 2015 General Conference session.

“Now is the time to unify under the bloodstained banner of Jesus Christ and His power, not our power,” Wilson said after the ballots were counted on tables at the front of the Alamodome. “Now is the time to unify in our mission as Christ’s church.”

Wilson thanked delegates for the “careful and prayerful manner in which they carried themselves and addressed the subject” during six hours of discussion.

A secret ballot system was used that General Conference officers said offered the most fair and secure voting process possible. “We have tried to be transparent, honest, and thoughtful, and to ensure the privacy of the vote to the best of our ability,” said Nancy Lamoreaux, chief information officer for the General Conference and organizer of the logistics for Wednesday’s vote.

The ballots were printed on paper, cut to the size of a half sheet of letter paper, and divided in half. One half contained the word “Yes,” printed in five languages, and the other the word “No,” also in five languages. The languages are English, Spanish, French, German, and Portuguese.

The secret balloting system was prepared well in advance of the General Conference session as a backup in case an electronic voting system didn’t work, said undersecretary Myron Iseminger, whose sector oversees voting at GC Sessions. The e-voting system, which debuted at the GC session, proved problematic, and delegates voted on Sunday to no longer use it.

“From the beginning we had a backup plan in case the electronic ballots didn’t work,” Iseminger said.

Wilson, who opened the morning session with an appeal for church members to abide by the vote’s outcome, underscored both then and after the vote that decisions made by the General Conference in session carry the highest authority in the Adventist Church.

The daylong discussions, which began at 9:30 a.m. and broke for a two-hour lunch at noon, stopped nearly a dozen times for prayer. Participants engaged in silent prayer, one-on-one prayer, and group prayer. Scores more Session attendees packed special prayer rooms organized by the General Conference’s Ministerial Association and Women’s Ministries departments.

Both Wilson and Michael L. Ryan, a retiring general vice president of the General Conference who chaired Wednesday’s discussions, voiced delight at the “sweet spirit” that permeated the proceedings.

Ryan made sure proper meeting decorum was followed, chiding attendees several times for applauding during the discussions. Delegates had earlier
agreed to refrain from applause in an effort to keep emotions under control. Ryan, who announced the final vote results, admonished a group of Alamodome attendees who broke into applause at the outcome. “There is nothing triumphal about this,” he said. “There are no winners or losers.” Erton Köhler, South American Division president, echoed Ryan’s sentiment that this was not a political contest. “My expectation for the church is not to have winners or losers, but that each one may feel the decision as God’s and may make it his or her own,” he told the Adventist Review. “May everyone have the humility to acknowledge that God can manifest His will in a way that differs from personal opinion.” Jerry Page, Ministerial Association director, also spoke of humility. “If we take time in prayer, humble confession, repentance, and service for others, we can move forward instead of spinning around and going backward because of the conflicts,” he said. Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, education department director, said she hoped delegates would show respect toward each other. “My hope and wish is for forbearance on behalf of our brothers and sisters who face ministry challenges in ministry that differ from ours around the world,” she said. “Forbearance is a grace that can only come from God, not to hold one another hostage or abandon the body when something offends us.”

A total of 2,363 ballots were cast in the vote on a motion prepared by senior General Conference officers and division presidents and approved at the 2014 Annual Council, a business meeting of world church leaders. The motion read in full: “After your prayerful study on ordination from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the reports of the study commissions, and after your careful consideration of what is best for the church and the fulfillment of its mission, is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No.”

A total of 40 delegates—20 who supported and 20 who opposed the motion—took to microphones to express their positions on the motion. Discussion was stopped 35 times by delegates who wished to make “points of order,” objections to how some aspect of the proceedings was being carried out. Partway through the afternoon proceedings, Ryan invited Jan Paulsen, a former president of the General Conference, to make a statement. Paulsen urged delegates to vote “yes,” saying it was a matter of trust. He said church members had to trust that their counterparts in other divisions knew better what their local churches needed. Ryan also invited Wilson to make a statement. Wilson did not recommend a “yes” or “no” vote, saying only, “My views are rather well known and I believe them to be biblically based.”

Wednesday’s proceedings began with an agreement from the delegates to end discussion for a vote at 4:30 p.m. to begin the voting process. As the time approached, a number of delegates urged Ryan to extend the discussions, but Ryan declared the requests out of order. General Conference executive secretary G. T. Ng indicated during Wednesday’s discussions that the General Conference hoped for full compliance from all church entities. “We are one church,” Ng said. Sandra Blackmar and Michael Campbell contributed to this report.
Construction will soon be underway on the new Emeril Lagasse Foundation Kitchen House and Culinary Garden at Orlando Junior Academy (OJA), thanks to generous contributions by the Emeril Lagasse Foundation and Florida Hospital for Children.

Designed in partnership with Midtown Architecture Studio and HuntonBrady Architects, the 3,000-square-foot, environmentally sustainable Kitchen House will be on East King Street, across from the OJA campus. With a large veranda opening onto a 2,000-square-foot garden, the new facility will include a state-of-the-art teaching kitchen with four cooking stations. The entryway will be a reception area and retail store that will sell products such as jams and pickles made by the students.

Chef Kevin Fonzo of K Restaurant in College Park, Florida, has been the mainstay behind the project since 2011. He will oversee the Kitchen House and Culinary Garden’s teaching and cooking operations along with Sarah Cahill, a certified raw food chef who has worked with Fonzo on the project since its inception.

Fonzo began his work at OJA seven years ago by providing healthful and delicious school lunches to the approximately 200 OJA students, which led to the “edible schoolyard” and a cooking class. He now teaches a full day of classes once a week, incorporating the school’s curriculum into culinary lessons by teaching elements of math and science through food and cooking. His students are involved in each step of the process, from planting to harvest, then cooking the foods they grow, including practical, hands-on culinary experience. OJA’s new Kitchen House and Culinary Garden is expected to open in the spring of 2016.

—Ken Langdon, reprinted with permission from Edible Orlando and Florida Focus

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It’s Sabbath at the Adventist church in Washington, New Hampshire. One reason it’s special is that on the way to the church you pass a New Hampshire Historic Marker that proclaims Washington as the birthplace of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Another reason Sabbath there is special is that the church is so quiet and peaceful—it is located deep in the woods and is accessible only by a narrow dirt road. There are other things about the church that make it special: the Adventists you meet from other states and countries who have come to see the birthplace of their faith; the rounded plaster ceiling of the church and its ideal acoustics; the cemetery beside the church that holds the resting places of several Adventist pioneers.

But the thing that really makes Sabbath at the Washington church special is a sense of connection.

Sitting in the hard wooden pews, with their straight backs, you marvel at the thought that Adventist pioneers sat in these same benches. Looking down at the broad-board pine floor held in place by old square nails, you marvel again that the floor was trod by Adventist pioneers.

From the weathered pulpit to the old glass in the windows to the original 1863 Daniel and Revelation chart on the wall, everything in the church gives a very real feeling of connection to the pioneers that started a movement that now numbers some 18 million members.

On August 1, 2015, the Washington church had its annual meeting, featuring Jonathan Duffy of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) as its speaker. The church was full, and an overflow audience sat outside in camp chairs. Kenneth Brummel, volunteer site director, gave a report on the state of the church, the need for repairing headstones and monuments in the cemetery next to the church, and the progress on the near-completed construction of a screened pavilion to accommodate the church’s many visitors, both Adventist and non-Adventist.

But the highlight of the day was a walk of the Sabbath Trail. The one-mile trail through the woods is punctuated by 31 stone waymarks that give the history of the Sabbath through the ages, and tell why the Sabbath of the Bible is still God’s Sabbath. The church building provides a connection to those who have gone before, but the Sabbath Trail does much more than that: it compellingly tells visitors about a central reason the Seventh-day Adventist movement exists.

If you are looking for peace, for connection, and for a reminder of why the Adventist movement exists, consider visiting the Washington, New Hampshire, church.

Consult the schedule and other information on the church’s Web site—www.firstadventistchurch.org.
It Is Written
Is Streaming the Truth to Your Screen

By Scott Steward, communications coordinator for Revelation Today: The Mysteries Revealed

This year It Is Written celebrates the 20-year anniversary of NET ’95 with a new evangelistic series. Beginning October 9, It Is Written will broadcast Revelation Today: The Mysteries Revealed, with speaker/director John Bradshaw live from Chattanooga, Tennessee.

This series is revolutionary. Like NET ’95, every church can host the series live. But this time, no satellite dishes are needed, just an Internet connection or television.

“Twenty years ago It Is Written pioneered the use of satellite technology in evangelism to impact tens of thousands for Jesus Christ,” said Mark Finley, former speaker/director for the ministry. “I am delighted that It Is Written is still on the cutting edge of evangelistic innovation and pray that every church will get involved in the upcoming evangelistic initiative.”

What makes this event such a breakthrough? In a word: access. It all starts with an app for your computer, tablet, or smartphone, an Internet connection, or television, and an invitation to friends. The new multifunctional smartphone app and live streaming Web site will allow millions of people to watch anytime, anywhere—and connect with local churches, or each other, for further conversations, study, or baptism.

“The app will allow your church or home group to watch the program live or on demand, and will facilitate live interaction with featured guest experts,” Bradshaw explained. “For example, I may interview an archaeologist via an online video chat during the program. You or your guests could then tweet or text us a question in the middle of my interview, and receive an answer during the program.”

The free app will be available for Apple and Android this fall. It Is Written is offering live training for churches (or individuals) who wish to participate in this groundbreaking experience on Thursday, September 10, 2015.

“Imagine this,” Bradshaw said. “A person is seeking God’s truth for his or her life. Searching online, this soul comes across It Is Written. Then, because of the prompting of the Holy Spirit, that person clicks on the Revelation Today: The Mysteries Revealed link and downloads the app to learn more. Soon they are taking Bible lessons, connecting with a local church—maybe even yours—and gaining their desperately-needed salvation.”

Revelation Today: The Mysteries Revealed will stream to the world nightly, except Sundays and Thursdays, from Chattanooga, Tennessee, from October 9 to 31 online and on Hope Channel. In addition, the series will also be transmitted in high definition, free of charge, to any TV network or station who wishes to air it anywhere in the world.

“This is such an important and exciting time for revitalizing the church’s evangelistic efforts, and we hope every congregation, and possibly every member, will utilize these resources to stream the program and offer local hospitality. All you need is an Internet connection and a screen of any size,” Bradshaw added.

Visit revelationtoday.com to learn more about Revelation Today: The Mysteries Revealed. Sign up for the live webinar at itiswritten.com/connect.
For more than 35 years several Adventist organizations under the auspices of family ministries have sponsored an annual event to celebrate and educate North American Division (NAD) constituencies about the importance of ministry to families in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Andrews University hosted the annual Family Life International Conference under the leadership of John and Millie Youngberg, which has evolved into the Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice (ACFRP), now in its third year and with a growing attendance and participation.

Keynote speaker for the seminar held July 16-18 was Scott Stanley, a research professor and codirector of the Center for Marital and Family Studies at the University of Denver. Along with Howard Markman and colleagues, he has been involved in the research, development, and refinement of the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) for more than 25 years. Stanley has authored or coauthored various books, including *Fighting for Your Marriage* and *The Power of Commitment*. He is a founder of PREP and coauthor of *Within Our Reach*, an experiential-based curriculum for couples, and *Within My Reach*, an experiential-based curriculum for individuals.

The Sabbath keynote speakers were Roger and Kathy Hernandez, who focused on this year’s theme, “Family Memories: Leaving a Spiritual Legacy.” Roger and Kathy are the ministerial and evangelism director and coordinator, respectively, for the Southern Union Conference. There were 12 seminars, six on family...
research and six on practical application for those involved in working with families.

Two special awards were presented during this year’s conference as well. Jeanne and Ray Hartwell received the NAD Family Ministries Distinguished Service Award. Ray is president of the Pennsylvania Conference, and Jeanne is family ministries director and associate director of the conference’s ministerial association.

Monte Sahlin received the GC Spaulding Distinguished Service Medallion. The author of 24 books and 117 research monographs, Sahlin directed and wrote reports on two major studies of Adventist family life: “A New Generation of Adventist Families” and “Adventist Families in North America.” Sahlin entered the ministry in 1970 and worked full-time as an Adventist minister until he retired in early 2014.

While this event is planned to attract Doctor of Ministry students who have chosen an emphasis in family ministry, and M.A. and Ph.D. students in religious education who choose either the family life or children’s ministry emphasis, it also attracts faculty and students from throughout the campus community, and family ministry leaders and church members from throughout the world.

The fourth annual ACFRP will take place at Andrews University on July 21-23, 2016. Keynote speakers will include David Olson, professor emeritus, family social science, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota, and founder and CEO of PREPARE/ENRICH. Olson developed the PREPARE/ENRICH program, which has been taken by more than 3 million couples. He has written 20 books and more than 100 articles in the field of marriage and family. Sabbath speakers will be Lael and Lena Caesar. Lael is an associate editor of the Adventist Review and Adventist World magazines, and research professor of Hebrew Bible at Andrews University, and Lena taught and directed the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology at Andrews University, as she does now at Loyola University in Baltimore.
Construction has begun on the transformational vision for Loma Linda University Health.

Last year, Vision 2020: The Campaign for a Whole Tomorrow was revealed as the organization’s largest endeavor in its 110-year history.

Now, ground has been broken for a new parking structure to pave the way for the larger project that includes a new adult hospital and expanded Children’s Hospital.

The Vision 2020 campaign addresses the future growth of education, research, health care and Loma Linda University Health’s emphasis on wholeness.

California passed new seismic requirements for hospitals that mandate a new adult hospital by the year 2020, and this has created a challenge that has been embraced as an opportunity to step forward in faith.

Though construction of the new hospital is mandated, it is also the opportunity to build a new state-of-the-art hospital that best serves patients, medical staff and the students who train here.

The number of beds in both towers will remain about the same as at present.

One of the largest underserved populations in the nation sits steps from our doors, and its care and our ministry have never been needed more than now.

The goals of Vision 2020 will allow us to continue to meet the needs of our community, while enhancing our facilities to provide mission-focused education that prepares our students for service around the world.

Our motto, “to make man whole,” is evident in the new plans. As soon as one enters, a chapel will be clearly in sight, reinforcing that this is a space where patients, families, staff and community members can experience a healing environment and whole-person care.

Concurrently, Vision 2020 is also raising funds to enhance scholarships, support research, and expand our Wholeness Institute. Education and training for service are central to all these plans for the future, as we continue the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ.

Read more at lluvision2020.org.
“The Lord turns my darkness into light” (2 Sam. 22:29, NIV).

I recently took a vacation to Iceland. It was a chance to relax with family and friends, and remember a place that once played an important role in my life. It also served as a reminder of what is important.

Twenty-seven years ago I went to Iceland as a student missionary, a position I didn’t know how to fill, in a country I knew nothing about. Two years later I left with renewed purpose in my life, and a deep appreciation for mission.

Iceland is known for its stark landscapes that serve as a beautiful tapestry to the constantly changing weather. There I discovered a love and appreciation for landscape photography and the way that light plays upon the mountains, glaciers, and waterfalls of the island. In Iceland, if you don’t like the weather, just wait five minutes, and it’ll change. I learned to be patient and to wait for change to happen, because a dull, boring scene could quickly change into one that would take your breath away.

As I left this summer’s General Conference session in San Antonio, I felt how it would be easy for some people to be frustrated by the “landscape” of the church. While some expressed positive feelings that reflected their outlook for the church moving forward, some of the decisions made by the world church were not received well by others. Feelings of resentment, frustration, abandonment, and loss were shared privately and publicly. Social media was full of commentaries that expressed concern for the future of the church and its ability to reach out to society. To some observers it appeared that the “landscape” of the church was dull and unappealing.

In times like this I pause and remember the landscapes in Iceland. Sometimes we need to stop and take a new look at the landscape, changing our perspective, looking for the beauty in the scene before us.

Near the end of my trip this summer we stopped at a waterfall I have always loved to photograph. If you don’t mind a little water, you can walk behind the falls and get a unique perspective. When we visited, it was a cold, rainy day, but despite the weather we were able to get some beautiful photographs. But like my feelings after Texas, I left wanting more. We continued our journey through Iceland, relaxing and photographing the beauty that God laid before us.

One of the joys of Iceland in summer is the long days, which include extended times of late-evening and early-morning light that photographers love. As we neared the end of one of the last days of our trip, we passed my favorite waterfall again. Clouds were just starting to move away, and I could see the low sun starting to peek through them. As we approached the waterfall, I saw the light moving across the landscape, approaching the falls.

We drove quickly toward the falls and grabbed our cameras to film the ever-changing scene. I snapped a few photos of the front of the falls, then quickly scrambled over the rocks to walk behind the falls. The scene that unfolded before my eyes was one of the most beautiful I have ever seen. As I clicked my camera’s shutter I said a quick prayer, thanking God for the experience.

Sometimes we need to learn to be patient and let God work on the landscape of our lives. This includes the church and our impression of it. We have to remember that He is in charge. Just when we think things are darkest, He unveils His light, and we see true beauty before us.

All it takes is a new perspective.
The Mission Lives On
I was saddened as I read of the death of Borge Schantz (see Andrew McChesney, “The Mission Lives On,” July 2015). In the article it is stated that “for 10 years he taught medical ethics to Muslim nurses . . .” Schantz may have taught nurses, but I know for certain that he taught respiratory therapy students.

In 1993, while working as director of Loma Linda University’s extension respiratory therapy program in the same Muslim country, I traveled to Andrews University to attend an Islamic missiology course taught by Schantz. He wished to visit this Muslim country. Loma Linda University required students to take two religion courses. We could not teach Christian religion to Muslim students, so Schantz developed an ethics course. He earned students’ respect and trust, and gently led them to an understanding of Christ’s mission.

Ken Lizzi
Auburn, Washington

Three Days That Changed a City
Thank you for Adventist World, an informative magazine. When I read Diane Thurber and Susan Jones’ article “Three Days That Changed a City” (June 2015), I wept, and I thanked God for these men and women who are giving of themselves to tell others about Jesus.

May God bless you all as you continue doing His work.

Marjorie Fortney
Saskatchewan, Canada

Banished or Blessed?
I am confused by Barbara J. Huff’s cover story “Banished or Blessed?” (June 2015). How does the medical work Sasha Ivanov would have been required to do differ from what Adventist health-care workers do today? I haven’t heard of anyone today refusing Sabbath work. Our hospitals don’t close down on the Sabbath.

Sharon Okimi
Smithville, Ontario, Canada

Contemplate Christ’s Perfection
I was delighted to read a reprint of Ellen G. White’s article titled “Contemplate Christ’s Perfection” (April 2015 Adventist World NAD edition), with the subtitle “Studying Christ’s character is our business.”

Thank you, thank you, thank you! If I noted correctly, this message was initially addressed to the church at Battle Creek, but it applies to each of God’s churches wherever it is located.

It is my heart’s desire that we here in Battle Creek (and far beyond) will heed this counsel and intentionally make it our business to study God’s character and apply the principles of His character to the environment of our worship service practices. This is a major key to church growth and retention.

Joanne Rector
Battle Creek, Michigan
Learn more about Logos SDA master libraries at Logos.com/AdventistWorld

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“Logos has revolutionized my Bible study and sermon prep!”

—Randy Roberts
Senior pastor of Loma Linda University Church
It’s what we’re waiting for.
Delegates at the General Conference session in San Antonio, Texas, approved a milestone update of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s 28 Fundamental Beliefs that, among other things, underscores the church’s teaching of a recent, literal Creation week.

The core statements of the church’s Fundamental Beliefs had not been touched since they were first adopted in 1980, with the lone exception of an additional belief in 2005. The delegates’ approval on Tuesday, July 7, after two days of discussions, marked the end of a five-year revision and vetting process.

None of the revisions change any of the Fundamental Beliefs, and many simply update and tighten the text, General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson assured delegates at the start of the discussions.

“We are not changing our Fundamental Beliefs,” Wilson said. “We are simply trying to enhance them and make them more understandable.”

The review committee modified 21 of the 28 beliefs, and Artur A. Stele, a General Conference general vice president and chair of the Fundamental Belief Review Committee, presented the proposed changes to the delegates.

Many of the proposed changes were minor, such as the replacement of the word “which” with “that” to reflect modern usage. Instances of “man” and “mankind” were changed to “people” and “humanity” to make them gender inclusive.

Delegates overwhelmingly backed revisions that clarified that marriage is between a man and a woman in belief number 23.

The delegates considered and approved revisions to 24 of the Beliefs on Monday, voting on them one by one. A two-thirds vote was required to refer an item back to the revisions committee.

But recommendations about four beliefs—on the Holy Scriptures (number 1), Creation (number 6), the Great Controversy (number 8), and Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary (number 24)—were sent back to the review committee for further work.

The review committee returned on Tuesday with amendments that took delegates concerns into account.

Most of the discussion both Monday and Tuesday centered around “Creation,” where the text was revised to add the word “recent” to describe when the Earth was created and “six literal days” to explain the length of Creation week.

Among the delegates who made recommendations for additional changes at the microphone were Jiří Moskala, dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University; Richard M. Davidson, professor of Old Testament Interpretation at the seminary; and Lawrence T. Geraty, president emeritus of La Sierra University.

Wilson prefaced the second day of discussion by saying a word could be interpreted in many ways, but the word “recent” was chosen because “we need to clarify that this process was not old.”

Wilson said he personally believed that the Earth is about 6,000 years old. “But we are not putting that language in here. We are using the word ‘recent,’” he said in an acknowledgement that Adventists are not uniform in their understanding of the exact age of the Earth.

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, a former director of the church’s Biblical Research Institute and a member of the revisions committee, said Adventists have estimated the Earth to be 6,000 to 12,000 years old, but are united in believing “Creation took place not too long ago.”

He saw “recent” as an acceptable description. “The church has never dated the divine act of Creation,” he said.

Turning to the inclusion of the phrase “six literal days” in the same Fundamental Belief, Rodríguez said no one was suggesting that Creation took place in six days of exactly 24 hours but simply that it happened in “literal
The Seventh-day Adventist Church seldom revises its Fundamental Beliefs. So why now?

There are at least seven reasons why a denomination might consider a revision to its belief statements. It might wish to—

A. Find smoother language and sentence structure.
B. Find language that is easier to translate into other languages.
C. Update terminology when the meaning or usage of language has changed.
D. Clarify language that may not clearly state where the church stands.
E. Address new situations that call for clarification.
F. Add an emphasis that was not mentioned in prior statements.
G. Change or add new statements that add to or change the meaning of the prior statements.

There were no changes in the Fundamental Beliefs adopted Tuesday that represent category G.

While there were no major additions (category F), there were a few minor ones. For example, belief number 2, “The Trinity,” added the phrase “God, who is love.” Belief number 11, “Growing in Christ,” emphasizes the social dimension of biblical Christianity. Affirming the love of God and emphasizing community welfare has always been important to our church.

Many changes fell into categories A and B. For example, in number 17,
In a sign of the ease with which the delegates accepted the final revisions, the discussions finished about 20 minutes before the scheduled lunch break, even though they were slated to last all morning.

Stele, the revisions committee chair, also announced Tuesday that the General Conference planned to publish an easy-to-read book containing the Fundamental Beliefs. He spoke after several delegates from the Trans-European Division expressed concern that newly baptized Adventists and Adventist young people faced difficulties relating to the beliefs in their current form. Stele called for the beliefs to be explained in modern language with the goal of reaching a new generation.

Stele acknowledged that the current text of the Fundamental Beliefs “might not be the best evangelistic tool.” But, he added, “We intend to work on a book that will make the language understandable to the younger generation.”

“Spiritual Gifts,” a word changed from “which” to “that”; number 25, “The Second Coming,” had 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 C, changes in the meaning of language. Number 7, which was termed “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 statement was last revised. 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 D. 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 this word “bodily”—unfinished business, carried forward from concerns raised 35 years ago.

Number 18, “The Gift of Prophecy”: Some felt that the church’s prior statement gave Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White authority comparable to that of the Bible. Changes have been made to remove this potential ambiguity. White herself emphasized 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 authority of Ellen G. White.

Number 6, “Creation” was the primary reason that the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs was reviewed at this GC Session. The existing statement has been re-interpreted by some to mean almost anything they wish about origins, including theistic evolution. Thus the 2004 Annual Council produced a statement that clarified that life on this Earth took place just as stated in Genesis 1 and 2. Those who chose to re-interpret Fundamental Belief number 6 maintained that the 2004 Annual Council 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 passed 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.
I used to be firmly convinced that the universe and all life originated through evolutionary processes open to our study. Then I learned that these processes of macroevolution are not open to study, because millions of years would be required to confirm them by scientific observation.

I also knew about the “missing links” (or “transitional forms”) needed to show how human beings descended from such primates as the ape. Then I discovered that there were countless missing links for all kinds of life, not just one.

Finding the Truth

It was a shocking realization to me that evolution was not really a scientific theory at all, because it cannot be tested; that it was simply the metanarrative used by scientists to form hypotheses and theories that can be scientifically tested and confirmed or invalidated.

As I read for the first time the Bible’s account of creation, it was so elegant and believable—even with all our scientific knowledge. Genesis is unique. No other ancient creation story is remotely credible today.

Nevertheless, some Adventists have begun to include evolution into the mix of those first “six days”—and with it, predation, suffering, death, and a creation “week” lasting hundreds of millions of our years—while claiming to believe “all 28 fundamental beliefs.” Thus, clarifying our statement on creation became a top priority.

Editing Fundamental Belief 6

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has always read Genesis literally, as a creation in six literal days, not as a description of life evolving over millions of years. Revisions made at the 2015 General Conference session do not change the substance of our beliefs; they only reduce potential misunderstanding by clarifying the first three sentences:

The word “historical” was added. Scripture provides the “authentic account” of God’s creative activity, but we also believe it is historical. Genesis 1 accurately describes what God created on each day and the order in which He created it.

Three ideas were clarified:

Since the Bible indicates that God made other “worlds” besides our own (Heb. 1:2; 11:3) and probably earlier than ours (the Greek word aiōnas refers to unbounded time), the sentence begins by indicating that God created the entire universe first, before the six-day creation. More Bible references were added to support our view (Isa. 45:12, 18; Acts 17:24; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

Including the word “recent” affirms that the creation of our world took place a few thousand years ago, not millions of years ago. Genesis 5 and 11, which contain the chronogenealogies that show a recent creation, were incorporated into the list of Bible references to support this addition and the first sentence’s claim that this is a historical account.

Now included is the divine interpretation of Genesis given in the Sabbath commandment (Ex. 20:11),
which limits the six days to the creation of our world, with its three habitable spaces and “all that is in them”: "the heavens" (sky), "the earth" (land), and "the sea" (water). Biblical support for these three environments (Rev. 10:6) and for the centrality of the Sabbath and a six-day creation to God’s last-day people (Rev. 14:7) were also added to the reference list.

Words were added to remove any remaining ambiguity and to clarify that we do not believe in a long timescale or evolutionary processes for creation:

God did not just complete His work during creation week—as if much of His creative work on this planet happened even earlier and over a longer period of time—He also “performed” it.

God’s work of creation took place “during six literal days,” thus excluding the possibility that the “six days” were symbolic of thousands or millions of years.

These six days “together with the Sabbath constituted the same unit of time that we call a week today.” The seventh day was an integral part of creation week, not separated from it by a gap of long ages. Also, that first week is not just “like” a week today, but “the same unit of time.”

How Our Editing Has Helped

Some have said that our original statement on creation was fine, and it was—for those who hold to a literal interpretation of Genesis. But since that statement was voted in 1980, an astonishing number of Christians, even some who claim to have a high view of Scripture, now read Genesis very differently, so as to make room for evolutionary processes requiring deep time—millions and even billions of years. These revisions are for such a time as this. They leave no room for doubt about what we believe as Seventh-day Adventists, no room for equivocation, no room for waffling. They never intended to before, and these revisions make that clear.

When, as an atheist, I began reading the Bible, three passages about creation profoundly impressed me. Isaiah 40:26-28 seemed to be speaking directly to me: “Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? . . . Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.”* I hadn’t known and hadn’t heard. But once I began to open my eyes and think about it seriously, I discovered the wonder of a world teeming with life best explained by Genesis.

Second Peter 3:3, 4 described my atheism perfectly. I was one of these last-day scoffers. I had, based on uniformitarianism, asked my Christian friends, “Where is the promise of his coming? For . . . all things are continuing as they were from the beginning.” It came as quite a shock to discover that my skeptical thoughts had already been recorded in the Bible!

Revelation 14:6, 7 predicts that faith in the Genesis account of creation and seventh-day Sabbath worship will be at issue in the last days.

My heart was won by the amazing love and mercy of a Creator God who saw thousands of years ago the world I would live in today and the evidence I would need to believe in Him. How about you?

* All Bible quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version [ESV], copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
A direct descendant of the “king of the wild frontier” took a stand for the King of the universe at the Alamo.

Ryan McCoy, the great-great-great-great-grandson of American folk hero Davy Crockett, came to the General Conference session to participate in a historical re-enactment at the Alamo, the frontier mission where his well-known ancestor was slain in 1836, and to staff a booth for his Adventist media ministry in the session’s convention center.

McCoy, 41, a third-generation Seventh-day Adventist, read a portion of the United States (U.S.) Declaration of Independence at the Alamo on Sabbath, July 4, as a crowd including his wife, Kelly, and 7-year-old daughter looked on.

“It is not only a great honor to participate in this event, but at this critical point in history, any time we...
can read about our Creator, we should take the opportunity,” McCoy told *Adventist Review*.

The Declaration of Independence includes the statement, “All Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

“It’s meaningful being the fifth great-grandson and being on this site, and being at one of the most important sites representing independence and freedom and fighting against oppression and tyranny,” McCoy said in an interview at the Alamo.

McCoy said he understands his forebears’ struggles. He drifted out of the Adventist Church in his 20s. He celebrated his thirtieth birthday alone in a Michigan forest, finishing the book *The Desire of Ages* by Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White. As he closed the book, he felt that the Lord spoke to him.

“He said, ‘Ryan, it’s your thirtieth birthday; my Son started His ministry on His thirtieth birthday. What are you doing for Me?’” McCoy said.

McCoy said he felt troubled and inadequate for the rest of that day.

For about a year he prayed for the Lord to put him on the front lines of evangelism. Now McCoy is speaker and director of Sealing Time Ministries, an Adventist media production company he started with his wife in 2002.

His famous relative, David “Davy” Stern Crockett, was a Presbyterian whose larger-than-life exploits during his lifetime made him a household name in the United States. Crockett, commonly referred to in popular culture as “king of the wild frontier,” served as a federal lawmaker from Tennessee in the United States House of Representatives. He fought in a revolution in Texas, which was a Mexican state at the time, and was killed in the Battle of the Alamo at the age of 49.

Crockett’s descendants learned about the Seventh-day Adventist Church a half century ago when a church member told McCoy’s grandfather, Alonzo McCoy, Jr., about evangelistic meetings that were taking place in the area.

The grandfather, a Nazarene pastor, became concerned for his church member and decided to attend the Adventist meeting, McCoy said. He kept going to the meetings. After the series ended, he studied more. In 1961 he was baptized.

McCoy’s father, Patrick, joined the church when he was 11, and recently retired from working at the Pacific Press Publishing Association in Nampa, Idaho.

The convergence of the Alamo reading and the General Conference session was no accident.

McCoy volunteered to participate in the reenactment after calling and confirming with the operators of the Alamo in January that he was a verified Crockett family descendant. The Alamo operators asked him to read the Declaration of Independence.

During the two scheduled readings at the Alamo, McCoy and two other participants dressed in authentic period attire and read the document.

McCoy said he saw parallels between Adventist believers and the troops who took a stand at the Alamo.

“It doesn’t take a whole lot of people to make a whole lot of difference in this world,” he said. “On these grounds there was a line drawn in the sand. The men made a decision where they would stand. They had the opportunity to leave; all but one chose to stay and fight no matter the cost.

“As a Seventh-day Adventist, and as the fifth great-grandson of David Crockett, I understand uniquely what that means,” he said. “At the end of time we need to know where we stand—and the lines are being drawn.”
All eyes were on the stage of the Alamodome for the big stories of the General Conference Session. But those weren’t the only stories there. There were 65,000 other ones all around us. Everyone had a story: life experiences, struggles and victories, ideas about God and the church. Take a moment to read some of the stories of our diverse and fascinating church, that we captured as they happened.

**Jae Man Park, Ph.D.**
**SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA**
As a doctor of public health and editor in chief at Korean Publishing House, Park combines his interests in health and publishing through a number of projects, including the Korean magazine *Home and Health*. When asked one of the health concerns in his country, he explains:

“High blood pressure is a major concern. The Korean people eat kimchi—fermented vegetables—every day, and lots of salty food, a probable cause for this problem. A friend of mine taught a class, and many Koreans were there. After lunch, he asked the students how many students of them had kimchi for lunch. Everyone raised their hands. My friend was shocked and thought it was unbelievable. But every meal, every Korean eats kimchi.”

**Oriane Salmon**
**PAPEETE, TAHITI**
In Tahitian tradition, if a woman wears a flower in her hair on the right side, she is single; but once she moves it to the left—the side of her heart—it indicates that she is engaged. With a quiet confidence, Salmon pointed out that she now wears her flower on the left. She’s attending the session with her mother, an elder in one of the main churches in French Polynesia.

“I think older people in our church should pay more attention to the young people. There is a generation gap, so we don’t understand each other. When we have ideas, they do not accept our ideas.”

**Mary Sunder, Sushila Karunakaran, Ruby (White) Johnson**
**CHENNAI, INDIA**
These friends have a lot in common, including a touch of jet lag and a love of ministry. (Mary helps create children’s programming for Hope Channel India, and Ruby’s husband is director of the channel.)

**Mary:** “We just came this morning from India. It took 24 hours in flight, and we changed at least three different flights to reach here. We haven’t slept yet, but we find it wonderful to see all the people from different places. It feels like heaven.”
Vania Kasper
AMARILLO, TEXAS, UNITED STATES
Over the years, Vania and her family have lived in several places, including Alaska. With long hours of summer daylight and long hours of winter darkness, Alaska taught her to live by the clock, rather than the sun. Every place they live teaches them something new.

“I’m originally from Portugal, but Texas is home now, because my husband is a pastor here. I just always knew I was going to be a pastor’s wife. All the time, I just knew it. I like it, but the hardest part of being a pastor’s wife is moving around.”

Zlata Grinchenko, 9
Volodymyr Grinchenko
Nikita Grinchenko, 10
HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES
Originally from Ukraine, Volodymyr Grinchenko is a pastor in Maryland, United States. He and his wife are enjoying seeing General Conference Session through the wide eyes of their children.

Volodymyr: “The kids like to go treasure hunting in the exhibit hall. All the ministries—what they do and how they present—it mesmerizes them. They can spend hours there walking around without complaining. It’s amazing to see them in action. They go to every booth.”

Zlata: “We’re going to get a few things for our cousins in the Ukraine. We want to send them some presents because they weren’t here.”

Nikita: “The exhibit hall feels like a miniature heaven, because of all of the presents!”

Gelder Gamboa
ORANGEWALK, BELIZE
Want to know what Gamboa is excited about? Just ask. He’ll pull out maps, stories, and statistics. The young adults in the church in Belize, for example, are on fire, according to Gamboa.

“We have a total of 40,000 church members in Belize, and the population is 350,000. We are the second largest denomination in the country, after Roman Catholics. Actually, I was a Catholic, but then the Lord took me to a home that belonged to a Seventh-day Adventist, and they began to share their faith with me. And, to God be the glory, I then accepted the message. That was about 25 years ago.”

Charlie Whitehorse
MONUMENT VALLEY, UTAH, UNITED STATES
Charlie is assistant to the president for Native American Ministries for both the Arizona and Nevada-Utah conferences. He strives to preserve Navajo tradition in his household, for example, by speaking the language with his children and wearing native costumes to camp meeting.

“Native Americans want you to stay longer if you’re working with them; and getting to know people is important to them. You don’t want to just be there for a year or less. The more time you spend there, they’ll get to know you, and the trust will be established. If you do a quick meeting, they’ll make a decision for Christ, but then they’ll fall back and go back to the church of their initial belief. You have to be there to support them.”
The expansion seeks to more efficiently nurture the church’s fast-growing membership.

New Union Conferences

By Andrew McChesney

Session Approves

35 New Union Conferences

The expansion seeks to more efficiently nurture the church's fast-growing membership.

Moving to streamline the church's work at a time of rapid growth, delegates opened the General Conference session by officially approving the addition of an unprecedented 35 new union conferences to the Adventist world church.

Delegates easily approved the administrative units—most of which are located in Africa, Central America, and South America—by holding up yellow cards in a vote in the cavernous Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas.

The vote was needed to officially confirm unions that have been organized since the last General Conference session in 2010 or are slated to be organized in the near future.

“The high number of new unions is unprecedented in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” G. T. Ng, executive secretary of the General Conference, told the Adventist Review earlier. “It is a reflection of the church growing with breakneck speed around the world.”

Most of the new unions came as a result of rapid church growth. The Adventist world church has a membership of 18.5 million, compared to the 16.3 million reported at the 2010 General Conference session.

In order to more efficiently nurture growing membership, it has become necessary to divide existing unions, establishing two new entities instead, church leaders said. Zambia, whose membership passed 1 million in April 2015, is an example of this. Its Zambia Union Conference will split into two unions during meetings on September 20 to 23.

Other regions have advanced from union mission to union conference, indicating maturity in finance and leadership.

The 35 unions surpass the previous record of 22 unions added in 2010 and 22 unions added in 2005. Only nine unions were added in 2000.

The new unions were presented to the delegates on the opening morning of the 10-day General Conference session. The respective division secretaries introduced the respective union presidents on the Alamodome’s stage.

Most of the new unions—22—are in the three church divisions in Africa, Rosa Banks, a General Conference associate secretary and liaison to the three African divisions, told delegates.

Among the new unions is the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission, which was formed in 2012 with the intention of strengthening the focus of reaching the Middle East and North Africa.

“By uniting the former Trans Mediterranean Field and the former Middle East Union into a new union directly attached to the General Conference, it has been possible to enhance efforts to reach the population in this part of the 10/40 window,” said Harald Wollan, associate secretary for the General Conference who serves as liaison to the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission. “Under the able leadership of the current administration, wonderful things are happening in this challenging part of the world.”

Homer Trecartin, president of the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission, said it was a challenge to unite pieces of various divisions into the new union, but the result is worth the effort.

“It takes primarily Muslim countries, puts them in one group, and allows us to focus on one part of the world,” he said on the sidelines of the General Conference session.

The Trans-European Division also has a new union in Finland. The constituency in the Finland Union decided to reorganize the church’s work in that country for efficiency’s sake, transforming from a union conference to a union of churches conference, Wollan said. “By eliminating administrative entities, it becomes possible to operate with fewer administrative positions, thus getting more pastors out in the field,” he said.

Wollan said the establishment of new unions matters to every church member because it helps the church better fulfill its mission of preparing people for Jesus’ return.

“The church was organized for mission. The more streamlined and efficient the leadership of the church, the better membership care and the more efficient it can become in evangelism,” he said. “We all share a responsibility in witnessing about the soon-coming Savior.”
Smaller team has big plans for mission.

A slimmed-down leadership team of six general vice presidents was elected to the General Conference and charged with helping implement three mission-oriented goals that the Seventh-day Adventist Church intends to prioritize over the next five years.

The lineup includes three new officers—Guillermo E. Biaggi, Thomas L. Lemon, and Abner De Los Santos—and three reelected officers—Geoffrey G. Mbwana, Ella S. Simmons, and Artur A. Stele.

“There will be a very strong emphasis on mission,” General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson said Monday as he assured delegates that the smaller team would be able to help steer the church’s work.

The shuffle is significant, reducing the number of general vice presidents from nine to six, a level last seen in the 1990s. A record four general vice presidents announced their retirement months before the General Conference session. With the election, two sitting general vice presidents will leave office: Delbert W. Baker and Pardon K. Mwanza.

Some delegates were surprised by the announcement of the smaller team. Wilson said he had explained to the Nominating Committee that the General Conference could do with fewer general vice presidents because their workload had shrunk over the past five years. He named as examples the General Conference’s transfer of two institutions—Pacific Press Publishing Association and Oakwood University—to the North American Division and the closure of Review and Herald Publishing Association’s printing operations last year.

Several delegates still questioned the decision, with one saying it was odd to reduce leadership at a time when the Adventist Church is experiencing unprecedented growth. A vote on the nominations was postponed until Monday so concerned delegates could speak with the
Nominating Committee.

Simmons, the first woman to serve as a general vice president of the Adventist Church who was first elected in 2005, said change in organizational leadership structure is always a part of growth. “We just need the wisdom of God to know what change is for His honor at any given time,” she said in an interview.

The four general vice presidents who earlier announced their plans to retire are Lowell C. Cooper, Armando Miranda, Michael L. Ryan, and Benjamin D. Schoun.

The new leadership team will be tasked with pursuing the Adventist Church’s three goals of emphasizing Christ and His righteousness, faithfulness, and the involvement of every church member in evangelism and witness. Wilson identified the three goals as his top priorities after his reelection, and the new general vice presidents spoke eagerly about fulfilling them.

“All mission is eventually local,” said Lemon, former president of the Mid-America Union Conference in the North American Division. He said he would like to see the Adventist Church get to the place where its members are so connected in their local communities that a community would feel a huge loss if the church went away.

“I believe we have become rather inward focused to the point that it wouldn’t matter in a number of places around the world if our churches burned to the ground,” he told Adventist Review. “That is huge.”

He said Adventists have to be more than the hands and feet of Jesus. “We have to be the boots that get things done in our communities,” he said.

Biaaggi, an Argentine national who has lived the past 15 years in Russia as president of the Euro-Asia Division from 2010 to 2015 and division treasurer before that, said he longed to see every church member reach at least one person for Christ per year.

“Then that person would reach another person and fulfill the mission of the church,” he said.

De Los Santos, a Mexican national and former vice president of the Inter-American Division, underscored the importance of humility in serving others. “We need to understand the necessity to be humble before God and to stand before people to serve them,” he said.

**Ella Simmons** holds the distinction of being the first woman to serve as a vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church. Simmons was elected at the 2005 General Conference Session, held in St. Louis, Missouri.

A veteran educator, Simmons has served as chair for departments of education (Kentucky State University), associate dean (University of Louisville), and professor (Oakwood University, La Sierra University).

She gained administrative experience while serving as academic vice president of Oakwood University and provost and academic vice president for La Sierra University.

**Abner De Los Santos** served as vice president in charge of member retention in the Inter-American Division since 2010. Originally from Mexico, De Los Santos is an ordained minister who began his work as a church pastor in 1986 in southeast Mexico. He served as conference secretary and later conference president for 10 years. De Los Santos also worked 10 years as secretary and later president of the North Mexican Union from 2001 to 2010.

Ordained in 1991, De Los Santos, 52, earned a master’s in pastoral ministry from Andrews University and completed a doctorate degree in ministry from the Inter-American Theological Seminary in 2012.
Geoffrey G. Mbwana was elected as a general vice president for the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference in 2010.

Born in Tanzania, Mbwana spent time in high school and college working as a literature evangelist in India and Sweden. Mbwana graduated from Spicer Memorial College in 1982 with bachelor’s degrees in religion and psychology. He earned a master’s degree in education from Andrews University in 1984 and completed a master’s in educational psychology at Poona University in 1986. He is married to Nakku Mbwana, and they have two daughters: Orupa and Upendo.

Thomas L. Lemon began his career as a pastor in Maryland and later pastored in Texas. In 1996, he accepted a call to serve as assistant to the president of the Rocky Mountain Conference. He then was ministerial director in Oregon (2002-2006) and president of the Minnesota Conference (2006-2009), before accepting the position of president for the Mid-America Union Conference.

Lemon has served as a board member for a number of higher education and health-care institutions. As president of Mid-America Union, Lemon’s stated areas of focus were evangelism, education, and health care.

Guillermo E. Biaggi served as president to the Euro-Asia Division since 2010, and prior to that served as treasurer of the same from 2000-2010.

Biaggi’s previous church work includes administration and finance throughout several church organizations around the world for more than 40 years.

His leadership in the Euro-Asia Division saw the expansion of evangelism impact in urban centers in dozens of cities across the territory. In addition, Adventist schools increased in number under his leadership from five to 26, and a theological seminary in Ukraine was established.

Artur A. Stele was elected as a general vice president for the Seventh-day Adventist world church at the 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia. He was born on in Kaskelen, Kazakhstan.

He graduated from Almaty Medical College in Kazakhstan in 1979 with a degree in pharmacy. In 1986, Stele received a bachelor’s degree in theology from Friedensau Adventist University in Germany. That same year Stele married Galina, the first woman to graduate from Andrews University with a doctoral degree in ministry.
General Conference (GC) session delegates elected six new presidents to the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s 13 world divisions and reappointed seven incumbents.

General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson said officers at Adventist world church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, would work closely with division presidents to fulfill the church’s mission of preparing people for Jesus’ return.

“Every division president is [also] a vice president of the General Conference,” Wilson reminded delegates during a discussion after the division presidents were elected.

Six Newcomers Among 13 Division Presidents

A look at the leaders of the church’s major global regions

The six new division presidents are Leonardo R. Asoy (Southern Asia-Pacific Division), Mario Brito (Inter-European Division), Michael F. Kaminskiy (Euro-Asia Division), Ezras Lakra (Southern Asia Division), Glenn Townend (South Pacific Division), and Elie Weick-Dido (West-Central Africa Division).

These new leaders replace incumbents who retired, were not reelected, or, in the case of the Euro-Asia Division’s Guillermo E. Biaggi, moved to the General Conference as a general vice president.

Leonardo R. Asoy, newly elected president of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, most recently served as president of the South Philippine Union Conference based in Cagayan de Oro City. He has served as a district pastor and division Sabbath school director. He and his wife have two grown children.

The new president of the Inter-European Division is Mario Brito, formerly Ministerial secretary of the Inter-European Division based in Berne, Switzerland.

Daniel Jackson was reelected for a second term as president of the North American Division (NAD). Jackson, a native of Canada, served as a pastor, teacher, and administrator in Canada and the Southern Asia Division.
Raafat A. Kamal has been president of the Trans-European Division (TED) since 2014. Originally from Lebanon, Kamal began his denominational service as an educator. He served in England, Norway, Pakistan, and Iran.

Michael F. Kaminskiy comes to the leadership of the Euro-Asia Division (ESD) after being secretary and vice president of the division.

Erton C. Köhler was reelected as president of the South American Division (SAD), a position he has held since 2007. A native of Brazil, Köhler was the youngest division president when he was elected, after serving as a conference and division Youth Ministries director. He graduated with a degree in Theology from Brazil Adventist University.

Ezras Lakra most recently served as president of the Northern Indian Union Section based in New Delhi. He and his wife have two children and one grandson.

Jairyong Lee is returning as president of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division. Lee, president of the division since 2005, began his pastoral career in South Korea. He has served as a professor of theology, and was director of the 1000 Missionary Movement. He was elected division president after serving as Ministerial Association secretary, Stewardship director, and Global Mission coordinator.

Israel Leito was reelected as president of the Inter-American Division (IAD). Leito, president of the IAD since 1994, has seen membership in that division go from 1 million to 3.7 million members. Leito, a native of the Caribbean island of Curaçao, breaks a record for longest serving division president, a position he has held for more than 21 years.

Paul S. Ratsara has been president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division since 2005. Before that he served as secretary of the division. Ratsara lost his wife, Denise, to cancer in 2013. He married Joanne in November 2014, and their blended family includes nine children.

Blasious M. Ruguri was elected president of the East-Central Africa Division (ECD) at the General Conference session in 2010. He began his career as a district pastor, eventually becoming division secretary. He studied global leadership at Andrews University.

Glenn Townend is the new president of the South Pacific Division (SPD). He previously served as president of the Trans-Pacific Union Mission, and before that as president of the Western Australia Conference. He has served as a pastor, church planter, and conference administrator.

Elie Weick-Dido comes to the presidency of the West-Central Africa Division (WAD) after serving as Sabbath School/Personal Ministries director for the division. Weick-Dido has earned D.Min. and Ph.D. degrees from Andrews University and served as pastor of a Haitian congregation in North America.

General Conference delegates unanimously reelected G. T. Ng (left) as General Conference (GC) executive secretary and GC under-treasurer Juan Prestol-Puesán (right) as General Conference treasurer.

Ng, whose service for the denomination includes being a pastor, seminary professor, and General Conference administrator, was elected as GC secretary five years ago at the GC session in Atlanta.

Since then, Ng has emphasized the importance of keeping accurate membership records around the world. Combined with keeping accurate records, Ng has made membership retention one of the key focuses of the world church.

Prestol-Puesán gave perhaps the shortest acceptance speech in General Conference history after being elected as General Conference treasurer, replacing the retiring Robert E. Lemon. “On behalf of my wife and myself, we’ll do our best, God helping us,” he said.

Born in the Dominican Republic, Prestol-Puesán has served as treasurer of various church administrative levels, including the Atlantic Union Conference in North America, the Euro-Asia Division, and the North American Division.
Reflections From North
Leaders and members

Delegates pray for God’s leading during the July 2 morning session. 60th General Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in San Antonio, Texas.
At the sixtieth General Conference session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, held July 1-11, 2015, delegates of the world church reelected Daniel Jackson, president; G. Alexander Bryant, secretary; and G. Thomas Evans, treasurer, to be the executive officers of the North American Division (NAD).

Jackson was elected division president in 2010, coming from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada. Bryant and Evans were elected to their positions in 2008 and 2007, respectively. The leadership of the division is excited about the prospect of continuing the work they started five years ago, in transforming the church into one that is focused on reaching all people in North America with the Christ-centered message of Hope and Wholeness.

Soon after his reelection Daniel Jackson sat down with NAD communication director Daniel Weber to share his thoughts on the mission of the church in the North American territory, and his hopes and wishes for its members.

You were just reelected for another five-year term. How does this compare to five years ago when you were elected?

Well, last time it was such a shock for me that I thought of it as a brand-new adventure, and I started out with a lot of exuberance and enthusiasm. This time around there’s a fair amount of knowledge and a fair amount of concern for the future of the church. But I’m pleased and happy to be able to serve.

I’m deeply moved by the expression of the NAD delegates yesterday as they stood when we were announced. I told my wife, I’ve got to put my head down, because I’m going to blubber. So there’s just a completely different kind of sense this time around. Now I not only understand what’s going on, but also sense what lies ahead.

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How does the mission focus of the past five years affect the mission of the division for the next five years?

I see the past five years as having been very positive, very enjoyable years. We moved in directions that we hadn’t gone before, and I believe God has blessed the NAD. I think we built a solid foundation during the past five years.

When I look ahead, I see a wide variety of potentials, all of them are good, and I praise God for what lies ahead. We have a positive future ahead of us.

Some say the church faces slightly contentious times based on some of the discussions taking place here [in San Antonio]. In spite of that, what is your hope for the church?

Ellen White wrote, “Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object on which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard,” and I believe God wants to do things through the church that it has never experienced. I see that as particularly true in the North American Division.

We are the mother division [of the Adventist movement], but we have not grown. We have not been as aggressive as some of the other divisions. We cannot be South America. We cannot be Eastern Africa. We are the cosmopolitan, complex, diverse group of the North American Division. But in the future there are some things we can do to ignite an advancement of God’s cause that has not been experienced in this division before.

What gives you hope?

The people. People in the division give me hope. I’ve had the privilege of traveling back and forth through this division to a variety of different meetings in different places, and I see the desire of our people to be engaged in the work of the gospel.
That is particularly true of our young people. I think our young people are waiting to be fueled to become a dynamo, and I see this in a number of areas. We have not fully explored those areas, or exploited them yet, but I think that people are the potential of this division. I get excited when I think of some of the things that could happen.

This is not a “paid political announcement.” I have seen enough of North America, and enough of the people of North America, to know that something is waiting to happen. God is going to do something positive in our territory.

What would you say about the discussions going back and forth concerning issues that are not theological but are more ecclesiastical?

We are bound together. This is my theological and practical belief: we are bound together with bonds that Jesus created with His own blood. So regardless of what a person’s position is, or how they feel about us, they are still our fellow believers. So I would say to individuals: By God’s grace the engine known as the North American Division is going to move down the tracks.

By God’s grace we are going to rise above theological differences, practical differences, suspicions, or whatever, and we are going to forge a movement here. God is leading us. My statement to everyone would be Come with us. Get on board with us. Move ahead with us.

Regardless of what a person’s position is, or how they feel about us, they are still our fellow believers.

General Conference Session 2015
A millennial perspective

Two millennials, Katie Morrison and Maxwell Aka, had a conversation about the 2015 General Conference session while they were in San Antonio. Morrison, 21, a senior at Union College, was a communication intern at the Rocky Mountain Conference. Aka, 24, works in the Youth Department at the Ontario [Canada] Conference. It was the first General Conference session either of them had attended. —Editors.

Favorite Parts of the Session

KM: I like all the different people around. It’s crazy that you can walk by someone from Asia, someone from Europe, someone from Canada. All these people speak so many languages, and they’re all here for the same thing! They’re so friendly! I’ve been stopped on the sidewalk so many times, and they just strike up a conversation. I’m not nervous about being approached by people from the convention because everyone is so nice.
First appointed as secretary of the North American Division in 2007, G. Alex Bryant was reelected by the delegates in San Antonio. With him is his wife, Desiree.

Tom Evans, with his wife, Shirley, was elected to another term as treasurer of the North American Division.

Dan Jackson, and his wife, Donna, are presented to the delegates of the General Conference Session following his reelection as president of the North American Division.

MA: I’ve done quite a bit of missionary work all over the world, so I like the fact that I’m seeing people from all different places [pauses to say hi to a friend walking past]. I never thought I’d see them in the United States, of all places. But here they are! Yeah, that’s cool. Everyone looks so different, looking diverse.

**The Business Sessions**

KM: I’ve never been to a church or school board meeting, so this huge version is my first experience. It’s very annoying. There are so many people, and getting just a few people to agree is hard, let alone 2,500 people. And with something as important as this—a worldwide decision—I knew it was going to be hard, but it’s really hard. And all the points of order? And motions? It has to be frustrating to those on the floor if I’m getting this frustrated.

MA: Yeah, it’s the bureaucracy of it. I’ve been in school board meetings before, but I wasn’t sure what to expect here. It definitely is just a huge staff meeting. I’m amazed that they’re able to do anything at all, because there are so many people! It’s impressive and staggering at the same time. It’s like, “Wow, look at what you’re able to do!” But also, “Wow, look at the difficulty of it.”

**Atmosphere**

KM: It isn’t about you; it’s about God. Being at the Alamodome, I hear so many delegates saying, “Did you go over my point? I brought it up yesterday and I haven’t heard you mention it. I’m going to keep coming here to the microphone because I don’t think I’m being heard.”

Or I hear young people saying, “There aren’t delegates for us. We’ll never be heard. They aren’t listening to me.” I understand that equality is important, but honestly, it’s not about you—or me, for that matter. We are not the center of the church; God is.

MA: It feels like a mental switch between God stuff and decision-making stuff. Obviously, God is there in decision-making, but it’s just the atmosphere. It’s very clinical, very mechanical.

KM: That happened today! Some delegate made a comment, and the chairwoman said, “Let’s let the Holy Spirit take care of that matter.” It was so weird to me! I was thinking, Oh, right! I forgot about the Holy Spirit!

MA: There’s all this language that’s not typically church or religious language. Those people who work in the church might be used to it, but to me it’s weird.

**Women’s Ordination and Negativity**

MA: I don’t know how much I value terms like liberal and conservative. In terms of typical Christians in North America, I have conservative values. In terms of typical Adventists, I’m probably more liberal. But I don’t think that...
Anything else you would like to share?
Yes. I think Jesus is coming soon, and I’m praying that it will happen. I believe very sincerely that Jesus wants to return. I believe that He will return when we begin to grow into the church He wants us to be.

In The Acts of the Apostles Ellen White wrote: “From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. . . . The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to ‘the principalities and powers in heavenly places,’ the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10.”

We have to come to the place where, by God’s grace, we are extending His love to one another. So that we move beyond distinctions; we move beyond differences; we move beyond the racial problems that can plague us; and we begin to sense that the real standard we begin to implement in the church is the standard of love.

By God’s grace we are going to rise above theological differences, practical differences, suspicions, or whatever, and we are going to forge a movement here.

Then we can look at each other, and no matter whether we agree or disagree (and by the way, I believe the church needs honest, honorable disagreement), in the middle of any disagreement there always has to be the assurance: You are my brother. You are my sister. I love you. I care about you. Regardless of your position on this or that, we will link arms and walk together toward God’s kingdom!

Parting Thoughts
MA: It’s cool being here, and super-fun seeing people. There is lots of good food, and the air-conditioning is drastic.
KM: I would hope that the Holy Spirit’s presence would be as powerful as the A/C in the Alamodome. It’s both wanted and needed to cool things down. You need to make sure things go smoothly. Without the A/C and the Holy Spirit, things would not go smoothly.
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This passage has been used by Sundaykeepers to argue that the first day of the week was already replacing the seventh-day Sabbath in the first century. They also argue that according to this passage the church celebrated the Lord’s Supper on Sunday. We face here in Acts 20 three main issues: (1) the day of the meeting; (2) the purpose of the meeting; and (3) the reference to the first day of the week.

1. Day of the Meeting: The meeting was held “on the first day of the week.” The mention of lights in the room (verse 8) and the reference to midnight (verse 7) indicate that this was a Sunday evening meeting. Identifying the specific moment to which Luke is referring is a little more difficult. If he was using a Jewish calendar, according to which days were reckoned from sunset to sunset, Sunday evening would be what we call Saturday night (the evening after the Sabbath). If he was using the Roman calendar, according to which days were reckoned from dawn to dawn, Sunday evening would be our Sunday evening, and the next day would have been Monday. Sunday supporters tend to argue that Luke used the Roman calendar. The problem is that the first day of the week in that calendar was “Saturn-day,” not Sunday. They are forced to argue that Luke combined the Roman time reckoning (dawn to dawn) with the Jewish calendar, in which the first day was Sunday. This is highly unlikely. The best option is that Luke was using the Jewish calendar (see Luke 23:53–56), and that in this case the meeting took place during what we call Saturday evening (the first day of the week after sunset). As we will see, this is important.

2. Purpose of the Meeting: This was not a regular day of worship. First, the text says that Paul met with them “because he intended to leave the next day” (Acts 20:7, NIV). On their way to Jerusalem, Paul and his companions had decided to spend a few days in Troas; now they were ready to leave. This was a farewell meeting.

Second, the meeting was not, strictly speaking, a worship service—there is no reference to prayers and singing—but a long seminar during which Paul interacted with the audience. Two verbs describe what Paul was doing: “talking, talked” (verses 7, 9; dialegomai) and “talking” (verse 11; homileo). The verb dialegomai (“to argue,” “to instruct”) expresses the idea of reasoning and engaging others in dialogue. Paul did this in the synagogue (e.g., Acts 17:2; 18:4; 19:8) and in the marketplace (Acts 17:17). Homileo (“to speak,” “to converse”) implies dialogue and interaction (e.g., Luke 24:14, 15; Acts 24:26). In postapostolic times it meant “to preach.” Both verbs indicate that Paul was engaged in dialogue with believers, instructing them and answering their questions.

Third, the phrase “to break bread” does not necessarily designate the Lord’s Supper. It was a common Jewish designation for having a meal (e.g., Luke 9:16; 22:19; Acts 2:42 [cf. verse 47]; 27:35). In the second century the phrase became a technical expression for the Lord’s Supper, but this particular meeting was a farewell meal taken at midnight before Paul left.

3. First Day of the Week: The reference to this specific day is almost casual, used to date the event. Luke liked to date events (e.g., Acts 20:6, 15, 16; 21:1, 4, 15). More important is the implication that the previous day was a Sabbath day, during which Paul would not have traveled. So he waited until Sunday to travel.

We can summarize the sequence of events as follows: During the Sabbath Paul worshipped with believers; during the evening, after sundown (the first day of the week), he met with them to instruct them and answer questions. The death and restoration to life of a young man lengthened the meeting. Paul returned to the meeting hall and continued to teach. Early in the morning they had a meal, and Paul finally departed.

Perhaps Luke’s main interest was to report the impact on the church of the miracle performed by Paul. In doing so, Luke placed it within its historical context: it happened in Troas before Paul left on the first day of the week. He was clearly not promoting Sunday observance.
Our thoughts often govern our behavior. We regularly act out what we think. Our actions and attitudes are deeply affected by our thought patterns. Positive, Christ-centered thoughts lead to positive, Christ-centered actions. Healthy minds produce healthy Christians; unhealthy minds result in unhealthy Christians. In this month’s lesson we will study how to develop healthy thought patterns as the motivating force for Christ-like actions.

1. What admonition did the apostle Paul give the believers in Philippi? Read Philippians 2:5.

2. According to Philippians 2:6-8, what is the mind of Christ?
The “mind of Christ” is the unselfish spirit of self-sacrificing love. Christ’s mind is revealed in His humble birth, His compassionate ministry, and His atoning death on the cross for our sins. Jesus’ words in Matthew’s Gospel state it well: “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). Lucifer desired to dominate. Christ desired to serve. Lucifer wanted the highest position to satisfy his ego. Christ chose the lowest position to redeem us. The mind of Christ is the mind of self-sacrificial service for others.

3. How can we develop the self-sacrificing spirit of Christ? How can our thought patterns be changed to reflect the mind of Christ? Compare 2 Corinthians 3:18 with Colossians 3:1-3.

When we behold Christ in His Word, our thoughts will reflect His mind. We gradually and imperceptibly change to that upon which we allow our minds to dwell. Ellen White wrote: “It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 598).

4. Why is it so vitally important to guard our thoughts? Read Proverbs 4:23.

To the ancient Hebrews, the heart was the seat of affections and thoughts. Solomon admonishes us to guard our hearts—our minds—well, because that is where the issues of our lives are determined.

5. What practical instruction did Paul give the church at Philippi regarding protecting our minds from the bombardment of secular, worldly influences? Read Philippians 4:7, 8 and make a list of the specific things the apostle says to think about, so as to produce healthy thought patterns.

6. In his letter to the believers in Rome Paul discussed two possibilities for the mind of Christians? What are these two totally different alternatives? Read Romans 12:2 to discover the answer.

Each day we are either being conformed to this world or transformed by the grace of Christ. The Holy Spirit longs to renew our minds through the power of the gospel so we can reflect the love of Jesus in our daily lives.

7. How can we deal with deeply ingrained thought patterns that seem to entangle us in faulty thinking? Compare James 4:7, 8 with 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5.

As we daily submit our thoughts to God, the Holy Spirit works within us to create new thought patterns. As old, negative, self-centered thoughts rush into our minds we resist in the power of Christ, “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). It is sometimes a great struggle to think the thoughts of heaven. But by God’s grace, and through His power, we can reveal His loving character and become healthy Christians in a sin-sick world.
As a native-born Englishman, and an Adventist for 50 years, I wish well for our message. However, I can echo Don McFarlane’s sentiments. One handicap, observed by an Anglo-Catholic 100 years ago, is our “shy, reserved manner,” as he put it. Even Ellen White herself recognized that Britain would be a different matter!

Another thing that hasn’t helped was our reluctance to identify ourselves. Not every area is like the Yorkshire town of Bradford, where in 1970 I decided to throw off all concealment and introduced myself as “from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in town.” I cannot recall a single door slammed in my face—Yorkshire folk don’t like you beating about the bush! My accent was also a help—a recognizable northern sound in it. Also related is our Adventist jargon, and the way my Afro-Caribbean brothers and sisters used a different hymnal—we used the 1952 New Advent Hymnal, while they had gotten used to the 1941 Church Hymnal.

Never was this difference shown more

Our Rendezvous With God
Gideon and Pam Petersen’s testimony (see “Our Rendezvous With God,” July 2015) is a powerful witness to God’s undying love for the unreached and His mysterious work in the hearts of missionaries. Adventist Frontier Missions (AFM) has now transitioned the full oversight for the new Himba congregations to the Namibia Conference.

But more than 7,000 people groups remain unreached today! God is seeking missionaries who will bear the everlasting gospel to every nation, tribe, language, and people. Anyone interested in serving can check http://afmonline.org/get-involved/be-a-missionary/ to find out how they can serve with AFM and reach the unreached for God.

Conrad Vine, AFM president
Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States

God is seeking missionaries who will bear the everlasting gospel to every nation, tribe, language, and people.

—Conrad Vine, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States

A Place of Worship for All
I appreciated Don McFarlane’s article “A Place of Worship for All” (May 2015) very much, but one thing McFarlane only hinted at was the large decrease in the membership of White British members: from about 12,000-plus to maybe about 2,000 to 3,000 today (and many of those elderly).

When an 80 percent crash occurs in an animal population, accurate surveys are carried out and the causes are researched and everything is done to reverse the trend. Could the same not be done in Britain? I like the diversity, but am sad about this decrease.

Gerard Fordham
Gosport, Hampshire, England

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Our family has issues: my father is a heavy drinker and has abandoned our family. Please help me pray for him that he may know Christ.

Cassie, Kenya

Please pray that God heals my husband from his illness.

Dailyn, Philippines

I would like to get married. May God guide me in my choice.

Tresor, Togo

Please pray for my brother who has been in the hospital for more than two months with a variety of medical issues. Pray for healing and financial help.

Merlidel, Philippines
Letters Policy:
Please send to: letters@adventistworld.org. Letters must be clearly written, 100-word maximum. Include the name of the article and the date of publication with your letter. Also include your name, the town/city, state, and country from which you are writing. Letters will be edited for space and clarity. Not all letters submitted will be published.

God’s Messenger
As a history student, I loved reading Reuel U. Almocera’s article “God’s Messenger: A Leading Influence” (May 2015). Undoubtedly, it contained valuable information for all Adventists who want to know about the history of our church.

Through visions and warnings to Ellen G. White, God led His remnant between 1869 and 1881. The influence of the messenger, White, was and is so powerful that God continues to speak to us through her writings. Thank you for this article—and this series!

Yoshiro R. Gálvez
Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, México

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Barry Gowland
Fishermead, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom

than when, here in Milton Keynes, the hymn “Safely Through Another Week” was chosen; we used the 1952 hymnal, and I struck up with the tune in the book—only to be told I was playing the wrong tune!

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The General Conference Session attendees dressed in beautiful costumes from around the world. Can you guess the country of origin of each person pictured here?

Photos: Josef Kissinger
ANSWER: Clockwise from top left: Colombia, South Africa, Mexico and South Korea

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**Source:** Robert Lemon, Treasurer’s Report, 2015

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