New Year’s Letter
Pastor Tzvetan Petkov, American Union President, Cedartown, GA

“Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.” Joel 2:16

Dear brothers, sisters, friends and visitors in the Lord,

One more year has passed into eternity, and a new year is ahead of us. Wars and rumors of wars, disasters, and national crises have marked this past year. However, for the true believers, the year was one of joy, spiritual success, and growth in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

In the beginning of a new year, our minds are full of questions and expectations. What is waiting for us? Which of the signs of the times will be fulfilled? In situations of uncertainty like this, the best we can do is follow the example of the prophet found in Habakkuk 2:2: “And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” The message of Habakkuk lets us understand that we are not supposed to worry so much about the external signs or the fulfillment of prophecies but mainly about our own spiritual condition. The prophet is eager to watch and to hear what the Lord has to tell him and what kind of answer He is going to give. If we can have this humble attitude, the Lord will definitely answer and guide us in the same way as He answered and guided the prophet Habakkuk in his time.

The answer to the prophet Habakkuk did not tarry long. The Lord answers His servants. He never leaves them in darkness. The Lord revealed a special message for a special time. And He speaks about a specific time for the fulfillment of His prophecy. We, as a people of God, have a specific message for this time of the end—the three angels’ messages. This message has to be carried with speed, by methods that explain it quickly, so that everyone can understand it. The Adventist pioneers were inspired by Habakkuk. They prepared their prophetic charts and explanations so everyone could hear and understand and quickly take their place in the army of the Lord. Today each one of us needs to find his place in the lines of the battlefield. The spiritual battlefield requires complete dedication of our minds, our strength, and our expectations. The message to the prophet Habakkuk reveals one of the major problems of all Christians in all times—the tarrying of the second coming of Christ. The Lord ensured Habakkuk, and ensures us all, that although things look like they are tarrying, they will come!

Dear brothers and sisters, let us not be discouraged. Let’s lift our heads and look to the originator of our faith—our Lord Jesus Christ. From Him come strength, power, conviction, faith, and hope. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In verse 4, the prophet Habakkuk is entrusted with the greatest message that has ever been given to
humanity—the message of Christ Our Righteousness. Habakkuk 2:4 says, “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” Only by faith can we survive and grow spiritually. Only by faith can we understand the work of God and receive forgiveness. Only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ can we spread the message and work for the salvation of others.

Let the message given to the prophet Habakkuk be the message for us in this new calendar year. Let each of us stand as a watchman in our place and listen to the voice of God. Let’s bring the message, quickly and effectively, to all interested souls—to our neighbors, friends, co-workers, and relatives. Let’s enjoy the righteousness of Christ, embrace the forgiveness of our Lord Jesus Christ, and never forget that without Him we can do nothing.

May the Lord bless us richly. Amen!

Helping the Philippines
A Message from The Good Samaritan Department of the General Conference

On December 4, 2012, a typhoon named Pablo slammed into the island of Mindanao in the Philippines, killing over 1,000 people and leaving over 13,000 people homeless. The typhoon also destroyed roads and bridges and caused several landslides and floods. Our church is represented in many places in the Philippines, and our brothers and sisters there have sent a request for help to meet their urgent needs. They have lost homes, rice fields, and palm plantations. Four churches were destroyed.

The Good Samaritan Department would like to involve the worldwide community of the International Missionary Society in this work of sympathy and brotherly love. Let us remember that from small droplets great rivers grow.

Donations collected in the various churches around the world can be sent by the union or field treasurers directly to the Good Samaritan in Italy, which has already sent emergency funding.

We thank all who will with joy and gladness give of their means to help their Philippine brothers and sisters in this hour of need. Photo Credit: Sonny Day, Philippines

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” Galatians 6:9
Baptisms in Denver
Barbara Watts, Denver, CO

Sunday, June 3, 2012, was a bright, warm day when the believers from the Denver church came together to witness the solemn covenant with Jesus Christ made by Brother Salu Tuilaepa, Jr., in baptism. Elder Joel Barnedo spoke words of encouragement and blessing for Brother Salu as he made the commitment to walk with the Lord.

Originally from American Samoa, Brother Salu ascribed to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. However, his wife, Toniva, decided for the Seventh-day Adventist faith and for many years attended the Adventist Church with their children. Her belief was very important in his coming to understand the beauty of the Adventist message. The two of them traveled to California for the Western Field Conference last August and rejoiced to be among the believers there.

In addition to playing the ukulele and singing (and his wife sings very nicely with him), Brother Salu is a great encouragement to others, sharing his personal experiences and spiritual insights in the Sabbath school and wherever he has opportunity. He has a special heart for the young people and his grandchildren. His approach to life has changed dramatically through his walk with Jesus, and it is a joy to hear him express his heartfelt convictions.

The believers in Denver are praying for Brother Salu’s son Taylor, who has severe heart problems. The grandchildren come frequently to the services, and they are a blessing to all.

In contrast to that warm day in June, December 16, 2012, was a typical winter day as the believers came together at the same place for the baptism of Sister Uyanga Sukhbaatar (whom we call Uii). She is married to a young man from Guatemala who is very familiar with the faith but has not yet been able to make a commitment to Jesus. Sister Uii, who is 22 years old, is from Mongolia and was raised Buddhist. She has visited the church for about two years. When Elder Joel Barnedo first spoke to her about Jesus, he told her that He is the Saviour of the world, who came to earth 2,000 years ago, lived here for 33 years, and died to redeem all mankind. This Jesus loves everyone and is in heaven preparing a place for her, her two children, and her husband. She told Brother Joel, “I want to believe in Jesus, and I want to become a Christian.” Then she hung the picture of Jesus and a poster of the Ten Commandments on her wall. She received Bible studies for one year.

Sister Uii is very dedicated to raising her children to love the Lord. Please join us in prayer that her husband will be able to overcome the hindrances that keep him from devoting his life to the Saviour, because he has expressed many times that he loves the Lord very much.

The Denver church is blessed with many visitors. Let believers everywhere put forth special efforts in the new year to cherish and encourage the visitors and interested souls and be true-hearted representatives of Jesus as we see the end of this world rapidly approaching.
Invitation to the International Youth Conference
August 21-28, 2013

Young people from around the world are invited to attend the conference and seminar sponsored by the General Conference Youth Department at beautiful Camp O-AT-KA on Sebago Lake in Portland, Maine, a center of Adventism’s early rise and development.

This is a unique opportunity for the youth to gain a wealth of practical spiritual knowledge to prepare them not only for service in their own countries but also to stand faithfully for Jesus Christ in tests that the world has never before faced.

The concepts that will be presented over the course of one week are cutting edge in the world of leadership training, and they will be seen to be founded on the eternal principles presented in the Holy Scriptures and lived out in the life of Jesus Christ. It is astonishing what God is doing and will do to have faithful people ready to give the last testimony to the world and greet Jesus at His coming.

In addition to the seminar and presentation of related spiritual topics, there will be outings for missionary outreach, visits to historical Adventist sites, and recreation in some of the most beautiful natural places on the east coast of the United States.

If you are interested in participating in this wonderful event, send an email before February 15, 2013, to Pastor Joel Barnedo, leader of the General Conference Youth Department, Youth@sdal844.org or jnbarn@yahoo.com, or to conference coordinator Barbara Watts, barbara.watts@sdal888.org, to notify the General Conference Youth Department of your interest and to receive the Program and Reservations Form. Reservations need to be made and payment received by April 4, 2013. If you have questions, call Pastor Barnedo at 720-325-0368. Barbara Watts can be reached at 916-765-3389.

2013 Calendar

- August 12-18, 2013: American Union Conference, San Diego, CA
- August 21-28, 2013: International Youth Conference, Camp O-AT-KA, Portland, Maine