Annual Council Debates Ordination and Leadership

A request to allow commissioned ministers in the North American and Trans-European divisions to serve as conference presidents sparked more than six hours of debate Oct. 11, during the world church’s Annual Council. In the end, the controversial measure was defeated by a written vote of 167 to 117. Noting a need for experienced leadership within local conferences, Dan Jackson, North American Division president (pictured here), said, “We believe the position of a president of a conference should be open to treasurers, to finance officers, to secretaries who are not ordained, to those who carry a commissioned minister’s credential, but are not on an ordination track, including women.” Read more about this discussion in an Adventist Review report online HERE.

Urban Evangelism Plan Launched

Annual Council members have endorsed a plan to evangelize the world’s cities, beginning in 2013 with New York City. The vote came this week as a practical response to a formal call by Ted N. C. Wilson, world church president, to prioritize outreach to large urban centers, where half of the world’s population now lives. Between 2012 and 2015, church leaders will equip pastors and lay members alike to launch outreach efforts in more than 650 of the world’s major cities. Mark Finley, world church assistant to the president for evangelism, compares the nine-page blueprint on urban evangelism to the U.S. Declaration of Independence. “This will be looked on as one of the most significant turning points within the modern-day Seventh-day Adventist Church,” says Finley. Read more HERE.

Looking Ahead

October
14–16: OR Women’s Retreat
20: Dec. Ad/Article Deadline

November
6: Daylight Saving Time Ends
11: Veterans’ Day
17: Jan. 2012 Ad/Article Deadline
24: Thanksgiving Day

December
9: WWU Christmas Concert
25: Christmas Day
31: New Year’s Eve

GLEANER Blogs

• Cheri Corder
• Cindy’s Garden Blog
• Dear Counselor
• Let’s Talk
• Mike Jones
• Monthly Archival Photo
• Tip Sheet
million people, and has 2,900 Adventists worshiping in 70 churches and companies. Read more from the Adventist News Network HERE.

**Iseminger Promoted to World Church Undersecretary**

The world church vote to establish the Greater Middle East Union Mission (see item above) also created a leadership shuffle. Homer Trecartin, world church undersecretary (pictured here on left), will become the president of the mission. Replacing Trecartin as undersecretary is Myron Iseminger (pictured here on right). Iseminger, elected in 2010 as an associate secretary of the General Conference, has also served in Northwest treasury positions with the Upper Columbia and Montana conferences. In his 23-year denominational career he has studied and worked in five countries on four continents. Read more from the Adventist Review HERE.

**Are World Church Membership Figures Inflated?**

General Conference leadership is urging world church divisions to carefully audit membership rolls and remove the names of those no longer active in the movement or who have died, says David Trim, director of archives, statistics and research (pictured here). "The stones can cry out, but so can membership statistics if we have ears to hear. [The numbers] are telling us they are not entirely accurate," Trim told delegates at the church's Annual Council meetings this week. "I believe that inaccuracies have not crept in through a desire to deceive, but by not keeping proper records. Have we overstated gains and understated losses?" Read more from Mark Kellner’s report in the Adventist Review HERE.

**Upper Columbia Camporee Reaps 114 Requests for Baptism**

About 114 young people made requests to be baptized while attending the Upper Columbia Conference Pathfinder Camporee this year. The Camporee, held at Farragut State Park near Athol, Idaho, was attended by more than 766 pathfinders from clubs across the conference and even a club from Canada. "We have been averaging around 60 to 70 requests for baptism at camporees and fairs in the last few years," says Wayne Hicks, Upper Columbia Conference Pathfinder director, "so we were surprised to see such a high number of baptismal requests. Read more HERE.

**Cindy’s Garden Blog**

Current Issue

November

Power Surge — Spirit-led Ministry formed the theme for the Northwest Adventist Leadership Convention, a camp meeting for pastors. Read more and see photos in the November issue of the GLEANER HERE.
"You can be too big for God to use, but you cannot be too small." Who was the famous tithe payer who had this annotation marked in her Bible? See Cindy's Garden blog this week for the latest story.
PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT: Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson says he is against the request of NAD to allow commissioned ministers to serve as conference presidents. NAD president Dan Jackson, left, and NAD secretary G. Alex Bryant, center, sit nearby. [PHOTOS: Ansel Oliver]

‘Variance’ for North American, Trans-European Division Constitutions Fails Annual Council Vote

Spirited debate marks major discussion of women’s roles in leadership

BY MARK A. KELLNER, News Editor

A request to allow commissioned ministers in the North American and Trans-European divisions — those who have not been formally ordained as Seventh-day Adventist pastors — to serve as conference presidents sparked more than six hours of debate October 11, 2011 during the world church’s Annual Council.

In the end, the controversial measure was defeated by a written ballot vote of 167 to 117. The 50-vote margin defeating the NAD proposal also effectively ended the TED request, which would have permitted commissioned ministers to head church unions as well as conferences.

Noting a need for experienced leadership within the North American division’s conferences, Dan Jackson, NAD president, said, “We believe the position of a president of a conference should be open to treasurers, to finance officers, to secretaries who are not ordained, to those who carry a commissioned minister’s credential, but are not on an ordination track, including women.”

Jackson added, “This is not a request for women’s ordination. … We are talking about governance and leadership.”

Bertil Wiklander, Trans-European Division president, voiced his division’s request for a similar variance: “We need your help to allow all our members in outreach. Opening doors for women in leadership would strengthen growth of the church in Europe,” he said, noting the Adventist Church “in the Trans-European Division faces an extraordinary mission challenge where people are extremely resistant to the gospel and joining a church is an exception rather than the norm in these countries.”

Pastor Ted N.C. Wilson, General Conference president, took the rare step of relinquishing the chair during the morning session to speak in opposition to the NAD proposal.

“My thoughts and convictions are just those,” Wilson said in introducing his comments. “They are not the collective decision” of the General Conference’s administrative committee, known as ADCOM.

Wilson said he objected to the proposal on several grounds: First, he said, “the church is an ecclesiastical body, which is organized for the church. Leadership has been based, in the past, on trained leadership, on spiritual leadership.” He said he wasn’t suggesting commissioned ministers were not trained or not spiritual, but he did note a difference in those who are ordained. “According to scriptural injunction and our own history, we have a particular mode which we have followed in terms of top spiritual leadership.”

Second, Wilson noted, since only ordained ministers can unite congregations and ordain local church elders and deacons, there was a question of a commissioned minister fulfilling all the tasks of a conference leader.

Third, he said, “whatever we vote, will have some impact on the world church. We have taken the position in the past that ordination is recognized around the world. We are not here in the U.S. as the American Seventh-day Adventist Church; we are, rather, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in America, in Germany, in Congo, in Brazil, in the Philippines.”
Dan Jackson introduces an agenda item that would allow North America to have a conference president who has been either ordained or commissioned. The world church's policy currently only allows for ordained ministers to serve as a conference president. "We need to celebrate and respect culture in the church."

Ella Simmons, GC vice president, addresses the chair at Annual Council in support of NAD's request to allow commissioned ministers to serve as conference presidents. West-Central Africa Division president Gilbert Wari waits his turn to address the chair. The motion was later defeated 117-167.

Wim Altink, Netherlands Union president (part of the Trans-European Division), noted the objections that many Adventist leaders from other parts of the world might have to the proposal. However, he pleaded for understanding: "It is not that we from our division want to impose this to other divisions," he said. "Have room and respect for certain fields in the world where this would be a great blessing. It will be a great impetus for mission in our fields."

Uganda Union Mission director John B.D. Kakembo was among those voicing concern on that very point: He said he was troubled that "when we say that if we don't do this, we will be seen as people who are discriminating."

Valdis Zilgalvis, Baltic Union president, spoke in support of the variance: "Women in the early Christian church were recognized" as ministers, he said. "In fourth century, women were pushed away from ministry at the altar, and you know which church did that. ... I agree the leader should be trained, but I don't see a difference between the genders."

Paul Ratsara, president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean division, urged caution in the process: "Definitely this topic is a very sensitive one," he said. "It is very hard for me to stand here when I think of the request of my dear colleagues from this [North American] Division. ... We need to agree on that first: is this negotiable, is this something we can say, "You can do it, no problem?""

Jan Paulsen, retired General Conference president, underlined the complexities in cultural approaches to leadership: "If we say to the NAD 'You may not go this way,' please keep in mind, not only for this issue, but for other issues, what do we do with a situation that may develop that is in breach of what we decide. Some of you know very well in the name of democracy and in some Western settings, leaders may not have full control over a delegation that comes to a session," he said. "I would be profoundly troubled," he added, "if the church in one particular country found itself in a situation at variance with the church."

Nepthali J. Manez, president of the North Philippines Union, opposed the measure, saying, "If this is approved, I would encounter a lot of difficulties. If we grant this motion, at least from the way I assess my constituency, it would give me a lot of problems." He urged that delegates "wait at least a year" before moving forward.

James M. Golay, West African Union president, also expressed his concerns, saying, "The church is God's church. I don't want for the issue to divide us."

Golay said he had "read scripture," but did not "see it. It's not in the church manual or in the policy book. If this is going to be a new policy, we need to consult heavily."

Perhaps the most impassioned advocate of the afternoon was Dr. Ella Smith Simmons, the first woman elected a general vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist world church.
Reflecting on one speaker’s comment that the push for a variance was a form of salesmanship to lead towards women’s ordination, Simmons said, “I was not born into the Adventist Church, but the Adventist Church presented itself to me in a certain way. I hope I am not a victim of ‘bait and switch.’”

And in responding to the comments of some African delegates who opposed the motion, she said she was “deeply disturbed and concerned. Are your memories so short that you do not remember when you were oppressed in your own land? And that those who oppressed used the Bible to uphold this oppression?”

Simmons added, “We talk about unity. What is this unity? I’ve heard something described that is not unity, it is uniformity. … What we are describing is uniformity that is more akin to the bondage that grows out of mind control.”

Another world church vice president, Armando Miranda, opposed the measure, saying that while he had “profound respect” for the requests from TED and NAD, “I have [a] concern this issue will create more problems than solutions.”

After the vote and the failure of the NAD motion, Jackson reminded the council he still considered himself as a brother to all the delegates, regardless of how they voted. He appreciated the frank discussions that were held, he said.

“As Christians unity does not mean that I cannot disagree. I can disagree with you, but still love you as my brother,” Jackson said.

Wiklander said “we understand that the decision is ‘no’ to our request as well. We shall go home and pray.’

He added, “My deepest concern is with the many, many young people in Europe who grow up in an egalitarian society — of which many of you here have no idea what it is like -- where they are taught from their first hours that men and women are equal; it is very hard for them. We are losing many young people who feel that this is a matter of justice.”
Church leaders today announced a timetable for the process for studying the theology of ordination over the next few years, the latest action following a promise at last year's General Conference Session to study the issue.

Artur Stele, a world church vice president and director of the Biblical Research Institute, said the process would examine the foundation of ordination as well as its implications for church practices.

Leaders announced the plan during Annual Council, a yearly business meeting of the denomination's Executive Committee.

The Biblical Research Institute at the world church headquarters will coordinate the process of studying ordination with corresponding Biblical research committees in each of the church's 13 world divisions, said church President Ted N. C. Wilson.

"This will be a very careful process," Wilson said. "We're letting you know how the world field will be involved."

Each division is asked to request their Biblical research committee to study the theology of ordination and its implications for church practices in that region.

Biblical Research Institute Director Artur Stele laid out the process that the world church will follow for studying the theology of ordination.

World church leaders promised to bring a report on the issue to a church business meeting by 2015. (photo: Ansel Oliver)

Stele announced the timetable as follows:

In November 2013, each division committee at their 2013 year-end meetings will review the study made by their division Biblical Research Committee and recommend it to the Biblical Research Institute director for consideration by a Theology of Ordination Study Committee. The General Conference Administrative Committee will also appoint a Theology of Ordination Study Committee with appropriate division representation.

From December 2013 to June 2014, the Theology of Ordination Study Committee will analyze the materials received from the divisions and prepare a combined report.

In June 2014, the report will be reviewed by General Conference executive officers and later by with the President's Administrative Executive Council and the General Conference Administrative Committee.

In October 2014, the General Conference administration will process the report for Annual Council, which will review the report and, if needed, take any appropriate action. If voted material needs to be placed on the 2015 General Conference Session agenda, it will be processed accordingly.

13 Comments

Hopefully, the world Seventh-day Adventist Church will recognize women in ministry as a result of the reports.

Daniel Masela | October 10, 2011 8:58 PM | Reply

So for those of us who are considering becoming pastors this kind of leaves us in the lurch. What should we do in the mean time?

bruce | October 10, 2011 9:47 PM | Reply
Hopefully the result of their study will be completely biblical, and will lead to practices that are pleasing to God and completely within His revealed will, regardless of politics or convenience.

Steve | October 10, 2011 10:22 PM | Reply

This is getting silly. Do we really need 13 separate studies on whether or not women are eligible for ordination? This is a cultural issue, and people on both sides will find “theological” arguments to support their position. We would have a more conclusive outcome if you just flipped a coin.

Leslie Thom | October 10, 2011 10:32 PM | Reply

Instead of criticizing I would recommend praying. Carrying those who work in this area in our prayer, might benefit our church even if it is a time consuming study so that God bring good out of it and lead our leaders. Sarcasm and negative comments just show how Satan can bring his destructive work into our church. If we prayed half as much as we criticize we would see And experience the goodness of God.

Peter Egyed | October 11, 2011 1:18 AM | Reply

Could they also study the biblical basis for women deacons!

Pembe | October 11, 2011 1:28 AM | Reply

Ordinations? People let us not confuse things,let us stick to the book of transformation(bible) so that we wont do wat is un neccessary...remember how God instructed this things of ordinations especially when it comes to a woman,not forgetting the nature of a woman for eden on ward...ordination for woman,think about it.may God bless you have great day.

Tubazex sithole | October 11, 2011 4:45 AM | Reply

Preach the Word, and be thankful that our leadership isn’t rushing into any changes without investing significant time and energy in study prior to doing so!

D. Kevin Burk | October 11, 2011 10:11 AM | Reply

I used to believe it was a cultural issue (along with others), and often complained vigorously about our leadership’s lack of cultural sensitivity! More recently, we attended the Arise Institute; one of our professor’s was Samuel Pipim. I now understand the Biblical background...

D. Kevin Burk | October 11, 2011 10:15 AM | Reply

Just like what Pastor John Brunt said, deacons and deaconesses are the same thing, with the exception of words. http://www.adventistreview.org/issue.php?issue=2010-1523&page=2

Daniel Masela | October 11, 2011 7:19 PM | Reply

This is happening because our church is trying to copy the world. Israel wanted to be like her neighbors (Egyptians, Babilonians, etc.) and they got lost. Why they do not look at what the Bible and EGW says about family? The mother who takes care of the kids has a job more important than the pastor in the pulpit, according to EGW. In South America women lead the church, sing, pray, preach, and do a much better work than north american women who cannot even preach and want to be priests to do such things. They say that men also should take care of kids, and they are right! But women and men have different roles, and the man is the priest of the house. If we change things, we will have lots of efeminate men around. See how much homosexualism is increasing because the world is becoming feminist. Please, Jesus, save my SDA church!!!

Seeking the Truth | October 11, 2011 8:58 PM | Reply
I welcome study, prayer and careful investigation of the issue, knowing that if the Holy Spirit leads any of these efforts, the conclusions will be in harmony with the word of God.

Seeking the Truth is right and I have read some of Dr Samuel Pipin's comments somewhere on the web. He is right. This is why it is so necessary to maintain faith in Jesus and live to His word each day by His grace. Belonging to a denomination does not mean anything; it is living to the truths of the word and living for Christ. May God bless all those who are doing this irrespective of denominational affiliation!

Andrew | October 11, 2011 11:48 PM | Reply

It is actually the spirit of sin and of this world that promotes male dominance and female subjugation. It is clear from scripture that gender equality and true spiritual partnership was part of God's original plan for both home and church.

So those who wish to perpetuate the ideology and practice of female subjugation and male dominance are the ones who are mimicking the world. These things are at the very heart of this wicked world's DNA.

I find your reference to Ellen White is puzzling and incongruous. You suggest that she promoted the subordination of women in the church, yet she said straightforwardly that "women should study to become pastors to the flock." And you cite her, who held ordained minister credentials, to argue against the ordination of women today. She did not stay home and tend to her children as you condescendingly suggest women today should do. Often EGW's children were in the care of others while she traveled freely, preaching, teaching, and exercising the spiritual authority of a Church founder, an ordained minister, and divinely-called messenger. Her work, her spiritual authority within the Advent movement and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and her views on this topic are a matter of historical record. Sister White can never be the poster child you are trying to make her into for the sake of your cause. That wasn't what she believed, taught, or practiced.

Fortunately, many people have become well acquainted with the real Ellen White who did all the things the Apostle Paul supposedly said a woman should not do in the church. Ellen White's life and ministry are a testament against the popular, worldly, male-domination/female-subordination themes of the vast majority of this planet's people and cultures.

If you want to be free of the way and the spirit of this world, look at how Jesus spoke of and to women and how he treated them with respect, as equals. Look at the positive examples of female spiritual leadership: Deborah, Priscilla, Dorcas, Ellen, and so many, many others. Imagine what this world will be like when Paul's vision for a church and society where there is "no more male or female, Jew or Greek, slave or free" really takes hold. Then put your energy to work turning that vision into reality--building a better world and a better church.

WWJD | October 12, 2011 12:26 AM | Reply

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Comments (You may use HTML tags for style)
Top leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today endorsed a plan to evangelize the world’s cities, beginning in 2013 with New York City. The vote came as a practical response to world church President Ted N. C. Wilson’s call yesterday to prioritize outreach to large urban centers, where half of the world’s population now lives.

Historically, rural areas have responded to the Adventist Church’s message of hope more than cities, said world church Secretary G. T. Ng. "We are a church of islands and villages," he told more than 300 delegates at world church headquarters on October 9 for Annual Council business meetings.

"Urban evangelism can be overwhelming," Ng added. An estimated 19 million people who speak some 800 languages live in New York City.

Outreach to cities weighed heavy on the minds of even the first Adventists, Ng said. Church co-founder Ellen G. White wrote that she spent many sleepless nights thinking about evangelism to big cities. "It is distressing to think that they have been neglected for so long," she wrote.

Even today, "most of the church’s resources are going outside the cities, even though most of the needs are now inside cities," said Gary Krause, director of the church’s Office of Adventist Mission. Echoing a well-known statement from White, Krause said the church must follow Jesus’ New Testament example of outreach -- He mingled with people, showed care and compassion and met physical needs before calling anyone to follow Him, he said.

The plan that delegates endorsed today hinges on both corporate and personal evangelism. Between 2012 and 2015, church leaders will equip pastors and lay members alike to launch outreach efforts in more than 650 of the world’s major cities. To better reflect the “cultural diversity and unique character” of the church’s thirteen world divisions, regional administrators will choose the outreach cities and craft an approach that will best connect with their respective communities.

Adventist evangelist Mark Finley compared the nine-page blueprint on urban evangelism to the U.S. Declaration of Independence. "This will be looked on as one of the most significant turning points within the modern-day Seventh-day Adventist Church," Finley said. "This document is more than paper; it can be a north star in modeling comprehensive care and compassion to big cities."

While delegates demonstrated collective support for the plan, several offered suggestions on how to strengthen it. Many said it should acknowledge the work of Adventist evangelists and laypeople already ministering in New York City.

Leslie N. Pollard, president of church-run Oakwood University, said such people should be recognized in the document. "We would like to see these people affirmed for sticking with the city, not abandoning it. We don’t want to invalidate them because now the big boys from Washington are coming in," Pollard said.

G. Earl Knight, president of the church’s Greater New York Conference, echoed Pollard’s call for collaboration with those on the ground in New York City. "They know the challenges. Some who entered that battlefield got discouraged and left. Some stayed and fought the battle." Knight said. By working together, and through the world church’s “insight, vision and all the resources we can find,” the church can accomplish “this tremendous task,” Knight said.

Other delegates questioned whether a major evangelism effort in New York City could be sustained "long after the lights go out, the speakers leave and the tent is pulled down." One suggested a lifestyle center focusing on the church’s emphasis on healthy living.

"I promise you that Health Ministries is here to train, to..."
Earl Knight, president of the Greater New York Conference based in Manhasset, urges the Executive Committee chair for the world church to work collaboratively during an urban mission focus with those who are already working in urban areas.

"Every department of the General Conference will bend their backs to provide you in the field with whatever resources you feel you need to accomplish whatever you feel is most appropriate for your region," Handysides said.

The church's educational institutions, too, can play a central role in making urban evangelism sustainable, Pollard said.

"Our schools could serve not just as havens," Pollard said, "but as mission centers. Schools could also coordinate research on which methods of urban evangelism are most effective, turning evangelists into "professors of ministry," Pollard said. Here again, he called for input from those already ministering in the city. "They have a strong sense of what works and what doesn't work."

Trevor Baker, president of the church's regional Northeastern Conference, reiterated the need for a "sustained presence" in New York City after the "onslaught of evangelism."

Ministry to New York City has been a longtime passion of Wilson's. The world church leader's 1981 New York University doctoral dissertation was "A Study of Ellen G. White's Theory of Urban Religious Work as it Relates to Seventh-day Adventist Work in New York City."

While the church's focus on urban evangelism will begin in New York City, Wilson reminded delegates of the global scope of the effort. He visited cities in Europe several times this year and told delegates he holds a "deep burden" for the region.

--Click HERE to read the document on mission to cities.
Jasper Migosi | October 10, 2011 5:41 AM | Reply

The doors we not be able to get through by knocking on we maybe able to get through them by utilizing the internet more. I hope that the conferences can get behind the online ministries and the stats from these sites will also help to determine what people are looking for in cities as well. I hope people contact me on this topic I have much to say. My email address is rick@lu4jesus.org God Bless us all!

Luke 10:2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

Lord you can start with me first!

Rick Dupponon | October 10, 2011 12:01 PM | Reply

Praise God for these plans. Let us all in a "concerted action" doing much "noise" and the walls will fall. Then continue to Mexico City, the city more challenging for evangelism in IAD.

ABEL SANCHEZ | October 10, 2011 3:39 PM | Reply

The cities are full of people just like anywhere. If we truly love people we'd be in there in a heartbeat.

Andrew | October 11, 2011 11:42 PM | Reply

I would like to say that there was an outreach in NYC from the late 70s thru the early 90s- The Van Ministry, which was begun by a former GNYC Conference President and his wife, then other people took the ministry when the constituency decided they didn't want someone heading their conference who was spiritually focused (this isn't saying the current president isn't).

While the wife will say, "Our retirement was the direction God wanted us to go", I am saddened that today the ministry is minimized to pretty near void because church politics stepped in and ousted the concept seen by the former president and wife where Ellen White says "Ministry pertaining to health is to be done in large cities" (rough quote). Check the book "Gospel Workers" pages 345, 354, and 360.

Thank you.

Kirsten | October 12, 2011 12:51 AM | Reply

"The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure. Who has authority to begin such a movement? We have our Bibles. We have our experience, attested to by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. We have a truth that admits of no compromise. Shall we not repudiate everything that is not in harmony with this truth? {1SM 205.1}

I hesitated and delayed about the sending out of that which the Spirit of the Lord impelled me to write. I did not want to be compelled to present the misleading influence of these sophistries. But in the providence of God, the errors that have been coming in must be met. {1SM 205.2}
Church in Middle East now an attached field of world headquarters

Israel Field also transferred to direct headquarters oversight

10 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

Top leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church voted yesterday to transfer administrative oversight of church operations in the Middle East from the church's Trans-European and Euro-Africa divisions to church headquarters.

The newly formed Greater Middle East Union Mission is home to 21 countries and more than 500 million people, and has 2,900 Adventists worshiping in 70 churches and companies.

Under the new organization, South Sudan becomes part of the church's East-Central Africa Division and the church's Southern-Africa Pacific Division will oversee the Pakistan Union. Culturally, Pakistan can better be served by the division that also serves Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, leaders said.

The church's Euro-Asia Division will absorb Afghanistan. The world church headquarters will directly oversee the Israel Field and the new Greater Middle East Union Mission. That union mission will also include the Trans-Mediterranean territories. South Cyprus will remain in the Trans-European Division.

Despite more than 100 years of outreach to the region, data indicates that the mission of the church is moving with challenges in the region, members of the church's Greater Middle East and Mediterranean Survey Commission said in an October 9 report to Annual Council delegates.

Attaching the "high priority" Middle East region directly to world church headquarters will enable quicker implementation of projects, commission members said in the proposal. "It would make movement of personnel, funding and ideas easier across what used to be different division boundaries," they said. The realignment would also group countries together that have similar cultures.

Commission members also said the Middle East "should be the focus of the entire church," citing another advantage for moving regional leadership to oversight by world church headquarters.

In 2010, the church tasked the commission with studying Adventist work in the Middle East, with the intent that a territorial realignment might be necessary. A study of historical, demographic and statistical evidence seems to indicate that the church grows best when overseen by a unified and geographically contiguous body, commission members said.

The Middle East is part of a region called the 10/40 Window, where two-thirds of the world's population lives, only one percent of which is Christian.

"I want you to think of the incredible challenges in the Middle East," world church President Ted N. C. Wilson told delegates. "We want to give full credit to the workers already there," he added.

Bertil Wiklander, president of the Trans-European Division, addresses the chair with his support as well as some concerns about the proposal to adjust administrative structure in the Middle East, which includes his division. Behind him, Bruno Vertallier, president of the Euro-Africa Division, waits to speak. The proposal also affected his division. The proposal later passed.

Bertil Wiklander, president of the Trans-European Division, addresses the chair with his support as well as some concerns about the proposal to adjust administrative structure in the Middle East, which includes his division. Behind him, Bruno Vertallier, president of the Euro-Africa Division, waits to speak. The proposal also affected his division. The proposal later passed.

"We have personal ties to our people in this area, and we have spent much time in prayer with and for them. We have thoroughly enjoyed working in our attached fields and have poured our best time, talents and resources into it," Wiklander said.

Euro-African Division President Bruno Vertallier said that in recent years, the region has redoubled its work in the Middle East and that the administrative shift would be considered difficult for some people.

"Our recommendation is to strongly emphasize the training of local people," Vertallier said. "We have some wonderful people working there right now and we must add to them. The great challenge will be to
train more people in local fields and give them the best tools possible to meet the needs of Adventists and community members."

Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson said the move would signal that the region is a world priority for the denomination.

"The Middle East is a unique place," Wilson said. "We have to take this area of world field as a special burden. We're also grateful for what the Euro-Africa and Trans-Europe have done to foster and nurture Adventist mission in those areas of Middle East."

6 Comments

the adventist mission in Middle East no jokes encounters so many difficulties in spreading the gospel but what makes it a bit easy was the help of other christian denomination like the Jehovah's Witess,Roman Catholic,Protestant,Born Again,Baptist etc. as we all know they too spread the gospel of Christ Jesus.
do we have to convince all muslims,hindus,buddhist,pagans to becomes christians before we could say the gospel mission is already accomplished?
if that is the case,then we had a long long way to finish it,as you all see the generation of non christian continue to pass their belief to their offspring so no way we could christianize the wholeworld unless all non christan people all vanished away on the face of the earth,but i wonder if that would ever happen as we all know time immemoreal the people are already dying in the name of their religious God but nothing much did change,only the number of years that had passed.

May God help us spread the gospel in a more safe and easy ways.Amen

Ben | October 10, 2011 10:20 PM | Reply

Congratulation to this move! I just wish that my beloved church will at last start to seriously identify and motivate the most precious resource she has: dedicated Arabic, Farsi and Turkish Seventh-Day Adventists, workers with the adequate skills, knowledge and experience (and passports). Please do not start with those who are willing to do something! Rather start with those who have (successfully) done something. By creating such a data base, a lot of energy can thus be saved, and a big deal of cultural misunderstandings and frustration can be avoided.

Sylvain Romain | October 11, 2011 4:49 AM | Reply

Who is taking care of Turkey (Division, president, statistics)? Will Turkey be part of the Greater Middle East Union Mission? Thks for a short overview or a link to it.

CB Schaeffler | October 11, 2011 7:46 AM | Reply

I will also say congratulation for this move! I also hope that all th turkish speaking nations and people will get a special focus, schools and leadership that speak their language and see their needs.
Learn and start with those who have already done a great job and is winning souls today. Now they can finnaly get help to grow in more workers and projects... and get the job done!
I am really happy to read the good news! Thanks GC!

Elin T H Berglund | October 11, 2011 11:59 AM | Reply

This is fantastic news. We are grateful for the bold steps and brave decision. I take encouragement from this vote as it puts our church on an upward track for heightened collaboration among fields struggling with similar issues. It also positions all fields to benefit from utilizing shared knowledge and experience. May God bless all your efforts Homer. Praise God.

B Parks | October 12, 2011 7:39 AM | Reply

pour certains ces nouvelles sont réjouissantes , pour d'autre elles apportent de la tristesse. Nous
espérons que Dieu est à l'origine de ces changements. Je n'ai pas bien compris pourquoi il fallait tout remanier. l'œuvre avançait, surtout en Afrique du Nord où les gens ressemble plus aux européens qu'aux orientaux. Même s'ils suivaient, la plus part d'eux, la religion musulmane.
L'avenir nous dira si les décisions sont sages. Nous sommes que des humains, je sais que Dieu travaille au travers de nous, mais soyons prudent!!!
Que Dieu continu à diriger nos frères qui pensent avoir raison.
Maranatha

Ivana | October 12, 2011 2:31 PM | Reply

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Trecartin Appointed President of New Greater Middle East Union Mission

Szilvasi to continue as union secretary; Iseminger replaces Trecartin as undersecretary

BY ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK STAFF

Seventh-day Adventist leadership today appointed world church Undersecretary Homer Trecartin to serve as president of the church’s newly formed Greater Middle East Union Mission.

Trecartin previously served as secretary-treasurer of the former Middle East Union and planning director for the world church’s Office of Adventist Mission, among other positions.

Trecartin replaces Kjell Aune, who served as president when the region was overseen by the church’s Trans-European Division. Annual Council delegates voted yesterday to make the region an attached field of world church headquarters.

"By doing this, we've set this region up as a global priority," said Gerry Karst, an Annual Council delegate and former world church vice president. "I want to appeal to this body to view it as [such] and give it the resources necessary for it to be successful," said Karst, who served as president of the church’s Middle East Union in the 1980s.

Leadership also voted to reappoint Tibor Szilvasi, who will continue in his capacity as church secretary for the region.

World church Secretary G. T. Ng said church leaders will review possible candidates for the union's treasurer and announce their nomination at a later date.

Delegates voted current Associate Secretary Myron Iseminger to replace Trecartin as world church undersecretary. Iseminger studied and worked in five countries on four continents during his studies and a denominational career that has spanned 23 years. Before election as an associate secretary of the General Conference at the 2010 Session, he was the treasurer of the Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Spokane, Washington, and came to that position after serving nearly three years as the Associate Treasurer and Personnel Director for the world church’s Southern Asia-Pacific Division.
Adventist Church Membership Audits
Planned, Revised Figures Contemplated

Accuracy, transparency are key, says church statistician

BY MARK A. KELLNER, news editor

The General Conference leadership is urging the world church’s divisions to carefully audit membership rolls and remove the names of those no longer active in the movement or who have passed away, said David Trim, director of archives, statistics and research at the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Silver Spring, Maryland, world headquarters.

"The stones can cry out, but so can membership statistics if we have ears to hear. [The numbers] are telling us they are not entirely accurate," Trim told delegates to the church’s 2011 Annual Council meetings. "I believe that inaccuracies have not crept in through a desire to deceive, but by not keeping proper records. Have we overstated gains and understated losses?"

The proposed audits and reviews are expected to take place over the next few years, Trim said, and likely will result in a lower overall membership number than the recent claims of between 16.5 million and 17 million baptized members worldwide. Although it has been estimated by church officials that as many as 25 million to 30 million people worldwide attend Adventist worship services weekly, the church only counts as members those who have been baptized. Traditionally, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has only baptized those old enough to make a conscious decision to unite with the church, and does not baptize infants.

The call for greater scrutiny of membership statistics reflects a desire for accuracy and transparency, Trim said. As servants of God and of His church, the first need is to be open and above-board in representing its membership numbers.

"This doesn’t mean that God hasn’t blessed the church or is not blessing," Trim said before his report. "It’s just that we’re being honest."

G.T. Ng, executive secretary of the General Conference, told Annual Council delegates on October 9, "The numbers game is not about numbers. It’s about people -- souls that are lost twice. If these souls had not been lost, we would have a membership of 24 to 25 million."

Such losses may only be for a season, however. On October 7, Jairyong Lee, president of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, acknowledged the loss of tens of thousands of names from the rolls during a recent audit. However, new evangelistic efforts in China and other nations in the division have replenished those numbers, and new members are being discipled and nurtured so they remain active.

Another division president voiced support for the move: "I really want to appreciate the Secretariat for this bold move," said Paul Ratsara, president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, one of the world church’s largest regions. "This is a test of accountability and transparency for all of us. I believe we really have to do this."

Organized in 1863, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is the top administrative body for the church, which is active in 203 countries and territories worldwide. The Annual Council meetings are designed to inform the movement’s world leaders of current trends and needs, as well as to take actions necessary to carry forth Adventism's
mission.
Pastor Ken Rogers spoke at the 2011 Pathfinder Camporee and challenged kids with following Jesus no matter what it takes.

Thomas Warren of the Wheatland Coyote's Pathfinder Club, shows off the eggs he duct taped under his arms for his part in the Da-Duck-Duct-Tape relay race. The silly Sunday morning activity turned out to be one of the favorites of the weekend many clubs reported.
Lewis-Clark Pathfinder Club members prepare to raise the pathfinder flag during the opening ceremonies of Sabbath morning worship.

Wayne Hicks, UCC Pathfinder director baptizes Kelsey Bitton of the Deer Park Pathfinder Club. She and Trina Whorely, of the Spokane Linnwood club, were both baptized at the camporee on Sabbath morning.

Wayne Hicks, UCC Pathfinder Director and Allan Williams, Bible Worker, share in baptizing Trina Whorely of the Spokane Linnwood club. Trina as well as Kelsey Bitton of the Deer Park club were both baptized at the camporee on Sabbath morning.

FARRAGUT, Idaho, September 29, 2011 - About 114 young people made requests to be baptized while attending the Upper Columbia Conference Pathfinder Camporee this year. The Camporee, held at Farragut State Park near Athol,
Idaho, was attended by over 766 pathfinders from clubs across the conference and even a club from Canada.

"We have been averaging around 60 to 70 requests for baptism at Camporees and Fairs in the last few years," said Wayne Hicks, Upper Columbia Conference Pathfinder Director, "so we were surprised to see such a high number of baptismal requests. Even two pathfinders from the Canadian club, True North, made requests for baptism."

Camporees create a fun and exciting event for Pathfinder clubs to attend, but they are also designed to be highly spiritual events. Sleeping in a tent, cooking over the fire, playing outdoors and learning about nature, are all part of the fun that connects a series of spiritual talks centered on knowing Jesus Christ.

The theme of the three-day event was, "This is My Fathers World." The keynote speaker, Pastor Ken Rogers, told a number of stories over the weekend that taught how Jesus would relate to people if he were in the world today.

Rogers played the part of Mordecai in the Esther play at the 2009 world-wide pathfinder camporee in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Currently, Rogers is a Vice-President for Student Life and Mission at Walla Walla University, but he has been a youth pastor, academy chaplain, Bible teacher and choral instructor. He also spoke at an Upper Columbia Conference Pathfinder fair 20 years ago in Ellensburg, Washington.

"I really appreciated the rapport that Pastor Ken had with kids and the spiritual applications he made with his stories," said Lisa Malakowsky of the Pend Orielle Valley Pathfinder Club. "and we also appreciated the effort that was taken to create meaningful Sabbath afternoon activities."

Farragut State Park offers a number of great activities for Pathfinders in itself, with 40 miles of forested trails, beautiful lake-front and The Brig Museum which teaches about the park's history as a US Navy submarine training station during World War II. But, in addition, Pathfinders enjoyed presentations by several wildlife experts as well. Kelly Greene, a wildcat expert from Athol, Idaho, gave presentations about his captive bobcat and lynx which are native to the northwest but are rarely seen in the wild. And several Washington State University (WSU) students from the WSU Raptor and Rehabilitation program made presentations that included live birds of prey like a barn owl, red tailed hawk and an American kestrel.

"Very few people get to see these kinds of animals up close and personal," said Hicks, "so we are very thankful that these people were willing to come and make their presentations."

These are just a few of the activities that make the camporee memorable for kids. "We really enjoyed the huckleberry ice cream treat on Sunday," said Cindy Johnson of the Othello Outreachers Cub. "It wasn't just the ice cream, it was the opportunity to socialize with other clubs that made it extra special."

Camporee program planners also included a special tribute to Merrill and Joyce Brown who have a combined total of 93 years of pathfindering. A special prayer of thanks and gift was given to Carolyn Bullock, a long-time Pathfinder staffer who came to the Camporee despite the debilitating stroke she suffered last year. Two teen pathfinders, Kelsey Bitton of the Deer Park club and Trina Whorley of the Spokane Linnwood club, were baptized on Sabbath during the worship service. And Chief Raincloud brought us a 99.99 percent precipitation-free weekend.

"I wouldn't have changed a thing about the weekend," said Dottie Gleed of the Othello Outreachers Club. "I'm just glad Our Savior was included in the whole thing."

Top Stories

- 911 Gospel Patriotic Concert ([News/news10012011](http://www.uccsda.org/News/news10012011)) 10.06.2011
Nelle

Re-written by Cindy R. Chamberlin, as adapted from Paul Kengor’s work. Permission granted via Dr. Kengor.

“You can be too big for God to use, but you cannot be too small,” an annotation from Nelle’s Bible.

On a brisk February evening in Dixon in 1922, shortly after his eleventh birthday, Dutch strolled home returning from a basketball game at the nearby YMCA. His mother, Nelle, was out on a sewing job trying to earn a few dollars. Dutch expected to come back to an empty house. Instead, he was shaken by the sight of his father sprawled out in the snow on the front porch, passed out, flat on his back, freezing, too inebriated to make it to the door. “He was drunk,” his son later remembered, “dead to the world.” The boy leaned over and smelled the whiskey escaping through his dad’s long snores. His hair was soaked with melted snow, matted unevenly against the side of his reddened face.1

Dark Demon

Jack’s arms were stretched out, recalled his son, “as if he were crucified — as indeed he was.” He had been taken by the “dark demon in the bottle.” Dutch stood over his father for a minute or two, not sure how to react. He wanted to simply let himself in the door, go to bed, and pretend his dad wasn’t there. Instead, Dutch grabbed a fistful of the old man’s overcoat and heaved him toward the door. He dragged him into the house and to the bedroom, out of the way of the weather’s harm and the neighbors’ fixed attention. It was a sad moment for father and son.1

“They were awful poor,” a neighbor reflected years later. Another friend recalled her family sent so many charity food plates over that her father built a hinge next to the family’s kitchen window so food could easily be left inside. Dutch’s father, Jack, a nominal Catholic, alcoholic and unsuccessful salesman, moved his family from town to town, job to job, and rental to rental. Dutch’s family never owned a home and had to sublease the houses they stayed in just to make rent.1 They could afford few decorated Christmas trees, but undaunted, Nelle decorated a table or created a cardboard fireplace out of a packing box with ribbon and crepe paper.2

Bleak Life

Despite the face of alcoholism by Dutch’s father, extreme poverty, and frugal living, Nelle stayed forever optimistic and cheery, accepting her hardships as God’s unerring plan, and throwing herself fully into helping the “poor
and helpless." Dutch's most vivid, earliest memory of his mother was of her taking a covered dish to someone needier than they.

“If there ever was such a thing as a saint on earth, it was Nelle,” said friends later. Nelle visited the sick in hospitals, bravely walked into tuberculosis (TB) wards, comforted mentally ill in institutions, and gave weekly Bible studies to jail inmates. Nelle's flair as an “elocutionist” — notably in her “dramatic readings” of Scripture — made her a favorite among prisoners.

As a prodigious newspaper reader, Nelle followed international events closely out of personal interest and with a sense of Christian obligation. Doing some work for Russian believers, in the summer of 1924, she helped raise money to erect a chapel for the Russian church in New York City — a symbolic act showing solidarity for Russian believers.

Frugal Life

There is no doubt if she had the education, today she would have been ordained. Sources claim Nelle lead her church virtually single-handed, writing bulletins, preparing Sunday programs, prodding the congregation ... Nelle's True Blue Sunday school class was the largest (even more popular than the pastor’s) and her church was described by one historian as, “the voice of democracy and individualism in the religious sphere.”

Blessed with an engaging voice and the confidence of a natural performer — Nelle was renowned in Dixon for her recitations both outside the church and within, self-written stories and poems frequently published locally, and for acting in plays. Dutch, always in tow, absorbed his lifelong love for drama and language skills from the time at his mother’s church.1

Did Nelle ever wonder if her prayers escaped the ceiling? In her frugal life, was her dedication for good in vain? Her heavenward petitions lost?

Nelle's prayers and good deeds came to fruition decades later, echoing in the voice of the 40th president of the United States of America, Dutch — a.k.a Ronald Wilson Reagan. President Reagan, habitually and unapologetically declared his mother’s God. He projected Nelle’s youthful optimism, exuded her cheerfulness, captured her love for theater, and championed her good deeds.

Tear Down this Wall

Reagan’s words at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, Germany, on June 12, 1987, “Mr. Gorbachev tear down this wall,” effectively toppled the Berlin Wall and ended the cold war. But these were not accidental words; these were straight from the pew at his mothers’ church. Common recurring threads within his speeches, freedom and opportunity were non-other than Nelle’s winsome optimism peeking out. In his two presidential terms, Reagan was
unapologetic for his Christian beliefs and often referenced “God’s unerring divine plan,” in the face of obstacles—a pattern learned in childhood.

**Nellanomics**

When random requests arrived at the White House that he could fulfill, historians say he did so. Once, an elderly gentleman wrote to him and asked him for a rocking chair, it was the formative Dutch, who took the oval pen and ordered it delivered to the needy address. Nelle’s charities showed themselves in the president’s small kindnesses: He chose to stay at the White House for Christmases rather than return to his beloved ranch so his secret servicemen could be near their families. His most lifelong treasured Christmas gift was a letter describing how his brother brought Christmas to a needy family.

Trickle-down Reaganomics brought about the longest peacetime economic stability in U.S. history, surpassed only by a short time in the 1990s. But in reality these were “Nellanomics,” the trickle down of one godly woman who inculcated a young boy and formed a president in the process.

Nelle did not live to see her son become leader of the free world. However, she always credited her son’s ascent in Hollywood and his financial success to her tithing. As president, Reagan advocated and paid a regular tithe, quoting his mother’s scrupulous training to give 10 percent. During his youth he “tithed” to his brother’s college tuition because the boy had no other way to go. Reagan quoted Nelle’s belief, “The Lord [would] make her 90 percent twice as big if she [made sure He got] his tenth.” (Leviticus) He said she believed being faithful would grant her a tremendous spiritual and earthly blessing in return.

Sources:


6 Ronald Reagan’s Democrat to Republican, p. 68

This entry was posted on Thursday, October 13th, 2011 at 10:15 am and is filed under Cindy’s Garden Blog. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.