J. Neville Harcombe, Beloved Columbia Union Executive Secretary, Dies

J. Neville Harcombe, executive secretary of the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, passed away this morning in his sleep. He was 71.

“The Columbia Union family is experiencing indescribable loss and sorrow in the sudden passing of a dedicated, passionate, soul-winning administrator for Christ,” says Dave Weigley, union president.

"Neville was a man who had a keen interest in each aspect of God’s work. His love for God and his enthusiasm for God’s church will be sorely missed," says Dan Jackson, NAD president.

Harcombe, who served the denomination for almost 45 years as an ordained minister, departmental director and administrator, was a pastor at heart. “I love to preach, I love to go to camp meetings and I love conducting evangelism series,” he told the Visitor after joining the union team in January 2006.

The son of missionary parents, he spent his childhood in South, East and Central Africa. He was educated in South Africa’s Helderberg College and earned a Bachelor of Arts in Theology from Southern Adventist University (Tenn.) and a Masters in Leadership Administration.
Early in his ministry, he and his wife, Cindy, worked as singing evangelists. He pastored five church districts in the Southwestern Union before serving in the Oklahoma, Potomac and Chesapeake conferences as a departmental director and executive secretary. In November 1995 he was elected president of the Chesapeake Conference, where he encouraged constituents and employees to personally engage in the global mission efforts of the church through mission trips. When he came to the Columbia Union in 2006 as executive secretary, he continued that emphasis supporting projects in Africa and South America.

Harcombe, who was unanimously re-elected April 16, served on many of the union’s boards and committees, and as vice chair of the Washington Adventist University Board of Trustees and president and chair of the university’s radio station, WGTS 91.9 FM., both based in Takoma Park, Md. There again, he emphasized mission and evangelism, helping to launch the station’s chaplaincy program and engaging listeners in overseas mission trips.

The Harcombes, longtime members of Chesapeake’s Spencerville church in Silver Spring, Md., have two adult children, Denita and Douglas, and four grandchildren—Abbey, Olivia, Karissa and Luke. One of Neville’s greatest joys was baptizing two of his grandchildren last December.

Columbia Union leaders are in communication with the family and lending support. Details about funeral arrangements and condolences will be shared in subsequent emails and posted at www.columbiaunion.org. Inquires may be sent to cryan@columbiaunion.net.