Study of Publishing House Restructuring Ends without Merger Recommendation

by Mark A. Kellner, Adventist Review
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A commission announced June 19 to consider a merger of the Pacific Press Publishing Association in Nampa, Idaho, and the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Hagerstown, Maryland, will cease its work immediately, officials of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and North American Division said today. The General Conference owns the two organizations.

Citing “differing perspectives as to the interpretation” of Spirit of Prophecy writings about the independences of the two units, a statement issued by church leaders said: “It is felt in the best interest of the publishing work of the church at this time for there to be no change to the governance of the two institutions.”

However, the statement noted that leaders of the General Conference and its North American Division have “requested that the two publishing houses continue to operate under their current structures but that they try to find ways to realize economies through closer cooperation and possible shared services.”

Additionally, “The publishing houses are also encouraged to work very closely with and respond to the North American Division's mission-driven publishing needs and cooperate in
developing more division-oriented and efficient delivery and distribution systems,” the statement indicated.

As noted in an earlier report, “Review and Herald Publishing Association is the successor to the first publishing house, The Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, incorporated in 1861. The Pacific Adventist Publishing Association, established in California, was organized in 1875. It was renamed as the Pacific Press Publishing Association in 1904. A third General Conference-sponsored publishing house, Southern Publishing Association, merged with the Review and Herald Publishing Association in 1980.”

In the July 31 announcement, church leaders asked Seventh-day Adventists to “please pray for the public sharing and personal use of printed and electronic materials as we lift up Christ, proclaim His three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 and announce His soon second coming.”

The full text of the statement can be found here.

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On June 19, 2013 the General Conference and North American Division administrations forwarded to the boards of Pacific Press Publishing Association and Review and Herald Publishing Association a request for the two organizations to consider a merger in the near future. A taskforce was formed to study the matter and prepare recommendations to go to the two boards and to their constituencies.

The taskforce has been diligently meeting, earnestly praying and carefully studying the matter. While there are differing perspectives as to the interpretation of the specific Spirit of Prophecy statements regarding the Review and Herald Publishing Association and Pacific Press Publishing Association in this current setting, all support the importance of the Spirit of Prophecy and the need for a strong publishing ministries involvement in evangelistic outreach. However, the differing perspectives on Spirit of Prophecy statements merits further reflection and the nature of a restructured relationship in whatever future format that may develop requires deeper analysis and modeling. It is felt in the best interest of the publishing work of the church at this time for there to be no change to the governance of the two institutions. Because of this the General Conference and North American Division administrations have requested that the two publishing houses continue to operate under their current structures but that they try to find ways to realize economies through closer cooperation and possible shared services. The taskforce will not continue but the General Conference and North American Division administrations will work closely in conjunction with the publishing house boards and administrations in a cooperative way to facilitate the closest working relationship possible for the accomplishment of the evangelistic, witnessing and nurturing objectives of local churches and members in the North American Division and the world field. The publishing houses are also encouraged to work very closely with and respond to the North American Division’s mission-driven publishing needs and cooperate in developing more division-oriented and efficient delivery and distribution systems.

The Church cherishes the Spirit of Prophecy counsel indicating that the publishing ministries are a vital part of the fourth angel’s message of Revelation 18 until the end of time. Let us work together for a continually expanding emphasis and use of the Church’s print and digital evangelistic and witnessing materials by church members, local churches, church organizations and all of us. Please pray for the public sharing and personal use of printed and electronic materials as we lift up Christ, proclaim His three angels messages of Revelation 14 and announce His soon second coming.