Adventist Hospitals in West Africa are in need of funding in order to open after being closed due to the Ebola virus. Cooper Adventist Hospital in Liberia had to be placed under quarantine when two workers became infected. Waterloo Hospital in Sierra Leone had to close when several workers contracted Ebola and three died.

Hospitals are said to be the most dangerous place you can be right now. That is why it is important to show support to these brave medical professionals that are working to maintain a level of safety and health for the patients they are treating. Some of the greatest needs are gloves, masks and surgical gowns as well as other much-needed equipment to help maintain a level of safety and protection for the physicians and patients.

The goal is to raise $250,000. Help by donating and/or raising funds at the Fundly site: hope4.fundly.com/ebola-crisis; MORE: Watch the video

In Bermuda ACS is Responding – Across the island of Bermuda, people are cleaning up after Hurricane Gonzalo became the second storm to hit the island in a week. The hurricane made landfall as a Category 2 storm with 113 mph winds that tore through the island just days after Tropical Storm Fay caused havoc on the island.

“We praise God for answering our prayers and sparing the lives of the people of Bermuda amidst these two storms,” said NAD President Daniel R. Jackson. “Our thoughts and prayers continue as Bermudians rebuild their lives. Our Adventist sisters and brothers are committed to assisting the communities that have been affected, meeting their immediate needs.”

Adventist Community Services (ACS) in Bermuda is assessing its response on the island. The St. Georges Adventist church has been designated as a post disaster response site by the authorities. Continue to keep Bermuda in your prayer. For the latest updates on the storm visit www.bernews.com. Help the relief efforts.
The secret to a happy life? 'Try and help somebody' says Rosa Moore, 100

Southwestern president rappels burn tower

Portland-area hospitals adjust Ebola plans

Washington Adventist University Boosts Its Five-Year Graduation Rate by 67 Percent

2014 Annual Council News Links:

Suggested revisions to Adventist Church Manual include matters on discipline

Adventist leaders approve new administrative unit in Central America

Oakwood constituents back transfer to NAD

Adventist Church sets vote on women’s ordination for next July

Church leaders urged to hire pastors, not administrators

Annual Council adopts recommended edits to Fundamental Beliefs

Church membership reaches 18.1 million

Wilson says Satan trying to destroy Adventist Church

Ebola deaths include 16 Adventists in West Africa

Day two of Annual Council is preamble to next year’s election, women’s ordination vote

Surfer pastor, clinics, literature outreach are evangelism highlights this year

Annual Council opens with focus on healthful living, appeal for diplomacy

2014 LUC Campus Catalyst Training for launching, growing, and sustaining Adventist Public Campus Ministry will be provided by seasoned campus minister, Ron Pickell, NAD Coordinator for Adventist Public Campus Ministries through Adventist Christian Fellowship.

Date and place: October 31–November 2, at North Shore Adventist Academy Gymnasium, 5220 N. California Ave. Chicago, Ill.

Registration fee is $25. The first 50 registrants will receive the Catalyst Kit free. After that, the kit is $50 extra, to be paid separately, upon arrival if wanted. This extra is not to be paid with the $25 registration fee.

EBOLA: 16 Adventists among 16,500 deaths

Adventists in West Africa suspect the virus may have come from Apna’s Evenmore Adventures, a group of people who claim to work for the ‘true God.’

Do not have 2015 information on them yet, but we are supplying the dates and where you will be able to find more information when it becomes available:

Feb. 9–11, Adventist Recovery Ministries Training, Atlanta, GA

Feb. 27–Mar. 1, Adventist Recovery Ministries Training, Brooklyn, NY

Mar. 2–6, NAD Health Ministries Training, Guam, Micronesia

Apr. 08–10, ASI Pathway to Health Outreach – San Antonio Training, Glendale, CA

May 28–29, NAD Health Ministries Training, Lincoln, NE

June 28 – July 1, CALLED NAD Ministerial Convention

June 28 – July 1, Ministerial Spouses Convention

Aug. 5–8, Adventist—laymen’s Services & Industries (ASI) Convention

Sept., 20, Let’s Move Day

Sept. 20–27, Let’s Move Week

Oct. 9–11, Adventist Recovery Ministries Training, Dallas, TX

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Adventist World/ NAD Edition
fee as the money goes to different places. Questions? Contact Tony Hunter.  MORE

Missional Church: A Biblical Approach to Mission in Western Culture – The Doctor of Ministry Missional Church concentration is designed to move participants into the mission field of North America, leading transformation for mission and organic systems thinking, and transacting the vision of missional church through leadership development. A new cohort is forming now, with the first intensives scheduled for January 26–February 12, 2015. Ministry professionals with MDiv or other completed graduate degrees in ministry-related areas may qualify. The application deadline is November 28.

Contact dmin@andrews.edu or call 888–717–6244 for more information. You will find the application package on the DMin website.

Resources

Just released: New resources for 2014 Welcome Home Sabbath (Nov. 22) – Many feel that our Church is better at converting and baptizing than we are at retaining and reclaiming. Seventy percent of us are missing someone we love who no longer attends. Let’s change that!

An Indescribable Welcome Home includes both a Leader’s Guide and a Bible Study Guide, for use by small groups, with stories about reaching across to missing members.

ViewPoints

Adventist Volunteer Ministries – He Said "Go"
Walla Walla University Student Missionaries

Adventist Volunteer Ministries deployed approximately 58,000 short-term and long-term volunteer missionaries last year. Watch this video of student missionaries from Walla Walla University for their view of what they faced in new surroundings and in their mission. Read the blogs.  MORE
REACH North America

REACH: Community Outreach and Evangelism
Maryland Young Adults Help D.C. Homeless

Young adults from four Seventh-day Adventist churches in the greater Maryland/Washington, D.C., metropolitan area organized and hosted their second annual Park n’ Praise event.

The young congregants—representing the Seabrook, Metropolitan, Restoration Praise Center and Takoma Park (Md.) churches—host the event to provide food, clothing, toiletries, prayer and fellowship to 500 homeless individuals.—Story by Abby McPherson MORE (from Columbia Union Visitor News Bulletin, August 21, 2014)
NAD NewsPoints- Ebola fight, Bermuda, Annual Council News, Welcome Home resource, Volunteer Views, 500 Homeless Helped
Childrens Hospital, Adventist Health invest $10 million in Fowler clinic

By Andrea Castillo

Childrens Hospital Central California and Adventist Health/Central Valley Network are teaming up to build a new medical plaza in Fowler specializing in pediatric care, among other services.

The partnership combines the hospitals pediatric care expertise with Adventist Healths knowledge of rural and adult health care. Their goal is to ensure Fowler area residents dont have to travel as far for high-quality medical services.

The two nonprofits bought equal shares of a 16-acre property on Highway 99 to build spaces for pediatric care, adult health care, labs and medical imaging. The plaza will be located on the east side of the highway near the Merced Avenue off-ramp.

Called The Fowler Project, the investment is estimated at more than $10 million. Todd Suntrapak, Childrens Hospital chief executive officer, said its announcement comes after about a year of discussions between the two organizations about how to enhance underserved areas in the Valley.

The community can expect an experience thats focused on wellness, he said. Thats our piece of the pediatric component. Adventist will offer adult care. Together well really be addressing the needs of the whole community not just the kids, but the whole family will really be able to benefit from enhanced access to the kinds of medical practitioners they need.

Suntrapak said the first building, expected to open in 2016, will be around 25,000 square feet and leave room for additional health-care development in the plaza, perhaps including a pharmacy. He said additional buildings could be built in the future.

Our first priority is to create that clinic so we can get busy taking care of patients, Suntrapak said, though he couldnt estimate how many new doctors and patients the facility would bring in.

Childrens Hospital and Adventist Health are also working to bring more pediatricians and pediatric specialists to rural communities and expand neonatal intensive care services in Kings County.

Adventist officials could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Through the partnership, Suntrapak said, both organizations hope to better serve Fowler residents by increasing access to preventative and wellness-based care, which includes mental health.

I certainly think a holistic approach to health care is the way we should all be going in the industry, he said. While I dont know how common it is, I do think it is a model we will continue to invest in.

Childrens Hospital already has a longstanding partnership with Adventist Health, handling the pediatric neonatal intensive care unit at Adventists facility in Hanford. That unit will expand from four to six beds when Adventist opens its new Family Birth Center in 2016.

Suntrapak said the new partnership represents one of many for Childrens Hospital across the Valley, such as its leased clinic in Modesto, inpatient operation in Merced with Mercy Medical Center and specialized outpatient care in Bakersfield.

But this endeavor, he said, is the first model like it.
Its the first time that we have partnered to purchase property and develop a site in the way I've been describing and also have shared ownership in a clinic building, Suntrapak said.

The announcement of the Childrens/Adventist partnership comes a week after Childrens severed its 16-year relationship with Fresno's largest doctors group, saying it is no longer strategically aligned with Santé Community Physicians.

Santé, an independent physicians association with a panel of 1,250 doctors and nurse practitioners, is affiliated with Community Medical Centers, which operates Community Regional Medical Center in downtown Fresno, Clovis Community Medical Center and Fresno Heart & Surgical Hospital in northeast Fresno.

Childrens said Santé is trying to build its own group of pediatric sub-specialists who would work out of Community Regional. Santé said that's false: Only a pediatric surgeon has been added.

Suntrapak said the partnership with Adventist has absolutely nothing to do with the Santé dispute.

This is about enhancing access, he said. They have nothing to do with one another.

For Adventist Health/Central Valley Network, the move is the latest in an ongoing expansion from its base in Hanford. Adventist now encompasses rural hospitals in Selma and Reedley as well as a network of clinics extending from Taft to Oakhurst. Adventist already operates a community care clinic in Fowler that includes family practice, obstetrics/gynecology, pediatrics and diabetes education.

Contact Andrea Castillo: acastillo@fresnobee.com, (559) 441-6279 or @andreamcastillo on Twitter.
The secret to a happy life? 'Try and help somebody' says Rosa Moore, 100

Rosa Moore, who celebrates her 100th birthday on Oct. 22, 2014, in Huntsville, Ala., was born on an island in the Bocas del Toro archipelago off the northeast coast of Panama. (BocasTravel.com)

When Rosa Moore, who celebrates her 100th birthday Wednesday, Oct. 22, 2014, was born, her nation, Panama, was only 11 years old, and her birth was celebrated alongside celebrations for the opening of the Panama Canal. World War I was just three months old.

Moore grew up a paradise of mango and palm trees on a little island surrounded by the crystalline waters of the Bocas del Toro archipelago on the northeast coast of Panama.

"Everything was fresh from the ground," said Carol Moore, 75, Rosa's daughter, talking along with her mother in the Huntsville, Ala., apartment they now share. "Guavas, mangos, our backyard banana trees and coconut trees. It was great."

Carol Moore is hosting a reception in honor of her mother's birthday on Saturday, Oct. 25, 2014. It will be held after Sabbath church services in the community room next to the Oakwood radio station at 4920 Wynn Drive. The family's lineage stretches back to the early days of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in the late 1800s.

Rosa Moore's legs have kind of given out on her, and she has trouble walking. She has a bright smile, but isn't given to long speeches. But her mind is clear.

Rosa remembers hearing stories about the founding Seventh-day Adventist prophet, Ellen White, from her own grandfather, who was among the first Seventh-day Adventists in Panama. The people of her island were already keeping Saturday as the Sabbath when the first Adventist missionary to what was then Colombia arrived. Her grandfather became the first local elder.

Hers was a childhood of good work and good friends in a place removed from the chaos of the larger world as it fell into war. When Rosa Moore was 20, she looked across the crowd at her uncle's funeral and met the eyes of one of the most handsome men she'd ever seen: Alfred Charles Moore.

"He swept me off my feet - he was so handsome," Rosa said.

'A long time ago'

The feet-sweeping was mutual, Carol said. "She was a knock-out."

Rosa smiles that bright smile again.

"All the fellows used to flirt with me," Rosa said. "My husband thought I was the most beautiful girl. And I thought, 'Oh, that's nice.'"

The pair married, establishing a happy home. Both Alfred Charles Moore and Rosa trained as nurses, but on the side, Alfred Charles Moore performed as a popular calypso singer.
But with the end of World War II, their tranquil lives became less-tranquil. Rumblings and then actual skirmishes between the U.S.-supported government of Panama and the Panamanian military became more frequent. It was time to leave.

Rosa Moore, by then 34 with two children, took the lead. With the help of a relative in San Francisco, she came to the U.S. and worked as a domestic servant - the easiest job for an African-American woman to get. Within six months, she could send for her family.

"The U.S. was the place to be," Rosa said. "There was opportunity and jobs. Why, everybody was coming."

Immigration requirements for Panamanians were lenient. The U.S. government simply required that each family have a sponsor in the U.S. who would take responsibility for helping newcomers settle in. Once Alfred Charles Moore arrived, he set to work to help their family members back home.

With the money he made with his calypso music group, "The Senator and His Calypso Trio," Moore bought a big house and divided it into modest apartments.

"He would rent them rooms and help them get jobs," Carol Moore said.

"We sponsored a lot of folks to come to the U.S.," Rosa Moore said. "But that was a long time ago."

**Vegas to Huntsville**

Most things, now, seem a long time ago, Rosa said - like the decades when Alfred Charles Moore's group worked in big venues in Las Vegas and Reno and Rosa was able to devote her time to nursing and church activities. That's where, while Carol was working public relations for the Hilton Hotel, that she met Sammy Davis Jr., who asked her to join his staff in public relations.

In 1983, when Carol accepted her first job at her alma mater, Oakwood University, as activities director, her parents - her dad now retired from show biz - moved to Huntsville to help her raise her own children. That meant that Rosa often ended up cooking Sabbath dinner for the Oakwood students who gravitated to their home - sometimes as many as 50 on a Saturday afternoon.

Doing that kind of thing - feeding hungry kids, helping families get into a good situation - that's the secret to a good life, Rosa Moore says.

"You should try and help somebody else," Rosa Moore said. "That's why I have so many friends - some of them think they are relatives."

*Friends and relatives - whether related by blood or by love - who would like to send birthday wishes may mail them to Rosa Moore, Unit 103, 6204 Rime Village Drive, Huntsville, Ala. 35806.*
Southwestern president rappels burn tower

Southwestern Adventist University alumni and Joshua Fire Chief Wayne Baker watches as Southwestern President Ken Shaw rappels down the ESD burn tower Oct. 17.

Southwestern Adventist University alumni and Joshua Fire Chief Wayne Baker supervises as Southwestern President Ken Shaw prepares to rappel down the ESD No. 1 Training Facility burn tower Oct. 17. (Courtesy Darcy Force)

Southwestern Adventist University President Ken Shaw rappelled down the Johnson County ESD No. 1 Training Facility burn tower Friday.

Shaw made the descent in support of the university's new Fire Science Program. The tower is designed for repelling and high angle rescue practice and is a part of the training program for students enrolled in the Fire Science Program.

Fire Science majors sophomore Tony Rodriguez and junior Jeremy Hernandez, members Southwestern's first Fire Science class, rappelled with Shaw.

Shaw participated in the rappel to better understand the rigor and discipline required of students in this program, he said.

The Fire Science program, which began this fall, is offered in conjunction with Training Division of Crowley. At the end of the two-year program, students will have an associate of applied science degree from Southwestern, with firefighter, EMT, and fire inspector certifications awarded by the state of Texas.

Joshua Fire Department Chief Wayne Baker, Johnson County Medical Director Dr. Michelle Beeson, and Ian Curnow, PHI Flight Medic, were in attendance.

Baker, Beeson, and Curnow are alumni of Southwestern.
Portland-area hospitals adjust Ebola plans

The Ebola virus. (Photo: Getty handout image)

Portland, Ore.— For weeks, doctors and nurses at Portland-area hospitals have been preparing for the possibility of Ebola. But health workers are now rethinking their approach after new recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**VIDEO: Watch KGW report**

To find out more about plans, preparation and training, KGW submitted a list of questions to six of the largest hospitals and health care providers in the Portland-Vancouver area including OHSU, Providence Health, Kaiser Permanente, Adventist Health, PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center and Legacy Health. Here are the questions KGW submitted, along with a summary of the answers provided.

Do you have a specific policy regarding potential admission of patients infected by Ebola?

Every hospital in the Portland-Vancouver area has a specific policy regarding treatment and admission of patients with Ebola. "We are updating and revising them as new information comes in," said Jean Powell Marks, spokesperson for Providence Health.

If so, have you communicated that policy to staff and how (i.e. email, meetings, etc.)?

Health care providers are using a variety of methods to reach their staff. "We have communicated to staff via staff meetings, emails, intranet postings, internal newsletters, and safety huddles," said Amber Shoebridge of Legacy Health.
Can we obtain a copy of that policy?

Adventist Health referred us to the CDC for guidelines. Both OHSU and Legacy declined to provide a copy because their policies are changing as new information and guidance is released by the CDC. "OHSU's response plan is fluid," said Tamera Hargens-Bradley, spokesperson for OHSU.

Have you held any drills or training on Ebola in the past year? If so, when and please describe the type of training?

Hospitals have been training for Ebola for weeks but many have stepped up that training just recently. "In light of the situation in Texas, Infection Control leaders have been providing hands-on practice sessions to ensure caregivers in these departments (Emergency Room and Intensive Care Unit) are familiar with the proper use of personal protective equipment," said Joanne Olsen, Chief Administrative Officers at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center. "Intensive Ebola specific drills began two weeks ago and cover such issues as patient screening, patient isolation and preparation drills," said Jean Powell Marks, spokesperson for Providence Health.

Do your hospitals/facilities have sufficient supplies of eye protection (i.e. face shields or side shields with goggles) for daily use?

"Yes, and we are ordering more to ensure appropriate levels of equipment are available," said Joanne Olsen, Chief Administrative Officer at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center. Other hospitals said currently they have adequate eye protection. They might need to order more.

Do your hospitals/facilities have sufficient supplies of fluid resistant/impermeable gowns for daily use?

Health care providers have the necessary gowns, for now. "OHSU is equipped with sufficient personal protective equipment to safely care for an Ebola patient; however, depending on the scale of the exposure, it is likely that we would need to collaborate with other hospitals to ensure an adequate supply," said Tamera Hargens-Bradley, spokesperson for OHSU.

"We currently have supplies of protective gear recommended by the CDC here in the region, and more are on the way. We do not anticipate shortages of gear at this time," explained Michael Foley of Kaiser Permanente.

Do your hospitals/facilities have plans to equip isolation rooms with plastic covered mattresses and pillows?

Several hospitals described how any supplies used in the care of an Ebola patient would not be reused. They would be destroyed. "PeaceHealth Southwest plans to have all materials safely removed and incinerated according to CDC guidelines," said Joanne Olsen.

**Ebola: #FactsNotFear**

**Salem Hospital: Woman tested does not have Ebola**

Washington Adventist University Boosts Its Five-Year Graduation Rate by 67 Percent

Follow
Digital Journal

Press Release
>PRWEB.COM Newswire
>PRWEB.COM Newswire Takoma Park, Md. (PRWEB) October 15, 2014

Washington Adventist University (WAU) has improved its graduation rate over the past five years by 67 percent, a feat matched by fewer than a dozen other institutions of higher education in the nation that offer bachelor's and master's degree programs.

"We are pleased to see such a significant improvement in our graduation rate, as it reflects the work we are doing to track, guide and support student success," said WAU President Weymouth Spence, Ed.D., R.T. "Based on our data and assessments conducted through graduate surveys, employee satisfaction surveys, and learning outcomes, we are addressing identified issues to ensure that our students thrive and graduate."

Contributing to the rate increase are a variety of support programs for students, faculty and staff, along with the university's "Vision 2020 – Growing with Excellence plan," which is building a culture of excellence based on the Baldrige program. A new "8th Semester Free" program that began this fall for incoming freshmen is expected to further boost graduation rates, as it motivates students to complete their undergraduate degrees on time with an offer of free tuition in their last semester.

The university's Betty Howard Center for Student Success offers academic support, career services and cooperative education, disability services, faculty development, a first generation ambassadors program, the First-Year Experience program, an active Honors Program, and the One Step Away program that helps returning students reach their degree goals. In addition, access to counseling services, financial assistance, mentors, tutoring and testing services, a writing center, math and computer labs and college study skills classes also help students graduate.

For more information about Washington Adventist University, go to http://www.wau.edu.

# # #

Washington Adventist University is part of the Seventh-day Adventist system of higher education. The university has been educating college students since 1904 on a 19-acre campus in suburban Takoma Park, close to the nation's capital. A total of 1,185 students of all faiths participate in the university's eight graduate and 32 undergraduate programs. The 2014 edition of U.S. News & World Report ranked Washington Adventist University among the best regional colleges in the north.

Media Contacts: Angie Crews, 301-891-4134, acrews(at)wau(dot)edu Donna Bigler, 240-286-1169, dbigler(at)wau(dot)edu

Read the full story at http://www.prweb.com/releases/2014/10/prweb12246170.htm
Suggested revisions to Adventist Church Manual include matters on discipline

Harald Wollan, an associate secretary of the Adventist world church and secretary of the Church Manual Committee. Here he presents suggested revisions of the manual to delegates of Annual Council on Monday, October 13. [photo: Viviene Martinelli]

Executive Committee sends edits to next July’s GC Session for consideration

October 16, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Edwin Manuel Garcia/ANN

Delegates at the 2014 General Conference Annual Council this week agreed to amend some chapters of the Church Manual, including adding new details to further specify the reasons that members can face discipline.

The 13 reasons for which members can be disciplined—such as disloyalty to the church and physical violence—did not change. But the section that deals most closely with extramarital relationships was expanded to include details on specific definitions relating to sexual conduct.

The current wording on that section states that members can be disciplined for “violation of the seventh commandment of the law of God as it relates to the marriage institution, the Christian home and biblical standards of moral conduct.”

The Church Manual revision committee proposed to replace that statement with the following: “Violation of the commandment of the law of God, which reads, ‘You shall not commit adultery’ (Ex. 20:14, Matt. 5:28), as it relates to the marriage institution and the Christian home, biblical standards of moral conduct, and any act of sexual intimacy outside of a marriage relationship and/or non-consensual acts of sexual conduct within a marriage whether those acts are legal or illegal. Such acts include but are not limited to child sexual abuse, including abuse of the vulnerable. Marriage is defined as a public, lawfully binding, monogamous, heterosexual relationship between one man and one woman.”

Delegates overwhelmingly adopted the recommended changes yesterday. The revisions will be forwarded as a proposal to be voted on at the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, United States.

Many of the modifications to the Church Manual were minor edits.

In one chapter, the outdated word “ordinance” was removed from the description of the communion, foot-washing ceremony and baptism. Another chapter added the word “discipleship” to emphasize that local churches should be more mission-minded to its members and the community.
A new section was added to recommend that church boards have a “mission-driven, broadly-based” finance committee or similar structure to review the budget process.

In addition, references to Adventist Youth Society, also known as AYS, were deleted and replaced with Adventist Youth Ministries, or AYM.

But the proposed amendments that drew the most attention from delegates sought to: Tighten the wording on who is allowed to address the congregation from the pulpit; clearly define that a marriage is between a “man and a woman” as opposed to the former wording, “husband and wife”; and identify the reasons for discipline on grounds of sexual immorality.

Some delegates protested the removal of the words “seventh commandment” from the discipline section and others said the section needed to be more specific, such as including a passage to deal with “inappropriate texting.”

The proposal on “unauthorized speakers” sought to remove details about who other than credentialed ministers can have speak from the pulpit. The proposal also suggested omitting a line that states that pastors who have been “removed from the ministry” shouldn’t be able to preach.

The new wording states: “Only speakers worthy of confidence will be invited to the pulpit by the church in harmony with guidelines given by the conference. Individuals who have been removed from membership or designing persons who have no authority from the church, should not be given access to the pulpit.”

Delegate Chester Clark questioned why the committee would want to adopt a position that “simply seems to be shifting from one policy that’s applied around the world to having different standards or different guidelines maybe in every conference.”

Harald Wollan, secretary of the Church Manual Committee, explained that the change would allow churches to adhere to the manual. “The majority of laypeople are not issued credentials,” Wollan said, “so what has been practiced is actually against the Church Manual and we wanted to have something in the Church Manual that actually can be followed.”
Adventist leaders approve new administrative unit in Central America

The current South Central American Union Conference territory will divide into two unions to better support management of local ministry. One union will include Panama, and the other union will include both Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

**South Central American Union Mission to become two unions**

October 16, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Ansel Oliver/ANN

A Seventh-day Adventist Church administrative unit in Central America will be reorganized into two sections, a step that underscores Church membership growth in the region.

Church leaders approved the change yesterday on the final day of Annual Council, a meeting of the Executive Committee, at the denomination’s headquarters.

The move affects Church structure in the countries of Panama, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, which are home to a combined Church membership of approximately 295,000.

The Church’s South Central American Union Conference will become two unions—the Panama Union Mission and the South Central American Union Mission.

A union is made up of several local administrative fields. A union with the “conference” designation is financially self-supporting, while a union with a "mission" status relies on its parent management structure, a "division," for support and oversight.

The headquarters for the Panama Union Mission will be in Balboa, Panama, and the headquarters for the South Central American Union Mission will be in Alajuela, Costa Rica.

The reorganization will become effective on January 1.

"We’re wanting to make these changes in recognition of the development of the mission of the church in those territories," said Agustin Galicia, an associate secretary of the Adventist world church.

Once the changes are implemented, the church’s Inter-American Division will be comprised of 23 unions, the most in of any of the denomination’s 13 world divisions. Inter-America is also the largest division by membership, with more than 3.7 million Adventists.
Oakwood constituents back transfer to NAD

Oakwood University President Leslie Pollard speaks at Annual Council today regarding a transfer of the university's sponsoring entity from the General Conference to the North American Division. From left: Karnik Doukmetzian, general counsel for the Adventist Church; Pollard; Dan Jackson, president of the North American Division; and Ella Simmons, a vice president of the Adventist Church. [photo: Ansel Oliver]

University will still get annual subsidy but will need to downgrade status of its Ellen White center

October 15, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

Constituents easily approved the transfer of Oakwood University from the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s General Conference to its North American Division in a move that won't affect the amount of church money that it gets every year but will lead to a downgrade of its Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office.

Constituents supported the switch in a 129-1 vote on Wednesday, the last day of the Annual Council, a major church business meeting at the General Conference’s headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. A subsequent vote to amend the university’s bylaws passed 114-0. Neither vote had any abstentions.

The transfer earlier was endorsed by the board of trustees at the Huntsville, Alabama-based university and by the General Conference, which oversees the Adventist world church. Wednesday’s decision clears the way for a final vote by the North American Division in a few weeks.

“Welcome home to your home division,” Daniel R. Jackson, president of the North American Division, told the meeting on Wednesday.

Administrators at Oakwood, a traditionally black school for North Americans, initiated the conversation to transfer to the North American Division after deciding that it made sense to align more closely with the division where its target students live.

The General Conference has sponsored the school since Adventist Church pioneer Ellen G. White co-founded it in 1896. Without the General Conference, the school likely wouldn’t have survived the troubled racial history of the U.S. South.

University president Leslie N. Pollard praised White’s influence on Oakwood.

“If there is anyone close to being a saint in the African-American community, it is Ellen White,” he said at the constituency meeting.

Ella Simmons, a General Conference vice president who has actively worked with Oakwood on the transfer, said ahead of the vote that she believed White would have approved of the plan. She said she had a passage from White’s book Ministry of Healing that applied to the situation.
Reading a list of questions on what an engaged couple should ask before marriage, she said: “Let the questions be raised, ‘Will this union help me heavenward? Will it increase my love for God? And will it enlarge my sphere of usefulness in this life?’ If these reflections present no drawback, then in the fear of God move forward” Healing (p. 356).

The transfer will lead to the downgrade of the university’s Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office, a depository of White documents and other historical materials from the main office at the General Conference headquarters. Only General Conference-sponsored schools are allowed to have the higher status, and the Oakwood facility will be renamed a White Estate research center.

Jackson said the only impact of the change would be on the sign outside the center’s door.

“Nothing is going to change—just the name,” he said in an interview after the vote.

Jackson also said that the size of the university’s subsidy would stay the same but come from the North American Division rather than the General Conference.

The General Conference has earmarked $1.28 million for the university in 2015, a 2 percent increase from 2014, according to General Conference financial statements released at the Annual Council. The North American Division will deduct that amount from the money that it sends to the General Conference and give it to the university, Jackson said.

Oakwood is in good financial health, said Pollard, who last month opened a university-owned franchise, Edible Arrangements, in a bid to cut student tuition. Oakwood is the first Adventist school to own a franchise.

Pollard said 10 percent of the university’s $50 million annual budget comes from North American Division institutions.

General Conference Treasurer Robert E. Lemon concurred with Pollard’s financial assessment.

“Oakwood University is in a very, very good financial position,” he said.
Adventist Church sets vote on women’s ordination for next July

Adventist Church Vice President Mike Ryan chairs Annual Council on Tuesday, October 14 as delegates overwhelmingly voted to place an item on the agenda of next year’s General Conference Session asking if regional divisions may allow women to be ordained as ministers. The vote was 243 to 44, with 3 abstaining. [photo: Viviene Martinelli]

Annual Council asks Session to consider letting divisions decide on ordination

October 14, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Edwin Manuel Garcia/ANN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church as early as next July may decide to take a historic vote on whether to allow women to be ordained ministers.

The decision to allow for a vote was made today by the General Conference Executive Committee at the Church’s world headquarters during the 2014 Annual Council. A vote on women's ordination could put an end to—or further prolong—a decades-old debate that has threatened to divide the denomination, according to those on both sides of the issue.

With 243 votes in favor and 44 against, and at the end of daylong deliberation, the Executive Committee agreed to place the following question on the agenda of the 2015 General Conference Session in July, which sets policy for the entire Church:

"Whereas, The unity for which Jesus prayed is vitally important to the witness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and;

"Whereas, The Seventh-day Adventist Church seeks to engage every member in its worldwide mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ among people from every nation, culture and ethnicity, and;

"Whereas, Various groups appointed by the General Conference and its divisions have carefully studied the Bible and Ellen G White writings with respect to the ordination of women and have not arrived at consensus as to whether ministerial ordination for women is unilaterally affirmed or denied, and;

"Whereas, The Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms that “God has ordained that the representatives of His Church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference Session, shall have authority”

"Therefore, The General Conference Executive Committee requests delegates in their sacred responsibility to God at the 2015 General Conference Session to respond to the following question:

"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"[.]

If the question about the theology of ordination is put up for vote, and passes, then leaders in each of the church's 13 world regions may decide whether to ordain women in their territory.

The proposal voted by the Executive Committee today was brought to the assembly floor as a recommendation from the Church's top officials and could be considered a creative way of dealing with a thorny issue by taking a neutral-leaning stance.

Some proponents of women's ordination voted in favor of the motion but expressed strong concerns that the proposal before the Executive Committee lacked a formal recommendation for or against ordination. Proponents fear the issue will carry less weight when the question comes up at the General Conference Session that meets July 2-11 in San Antonio, Texas, United States.

"I think this body needs to give direction to the world church," said David Weigley, president of the North American Division's Columbia Union Conference. "We are missing a golden opportunity to give direction. Leaders lead, they give direction," he said.

"Based on what I see from the history of this particular issue, it seems that the Annual Council has always played a very prominent role in what is passed onto the GC session," said Heather-Dawn Small, Women's Ministries director for the Adventist world church. "I've seen from the past that what this Annual Council decides influences the GC Session."

Today's Annual Council's chairman, Vice President Mike Ryan, suggested that the recommendation needed to be unbiased, and that the ordination question was best suited for the delegation at Session.

More than 20 people spoke on varying sides of the issue.

Alberto C. Gulfan Jr., president of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, said he appreciates the contribution of female evangelists, but that his region's constituency "is not ready to move towards the ordination of women pastors." He added: "We are also supporting this recommendation to bring this to the General Conference in Session and let the world decide on the issue once and for all."

General Conference President Ted N. C. Wilson, who has opposed recent moves for women's ordination that have come before Annual Council, did not express his opinion during the meeting, but indicated before the discussion that he would be willing to adjust his stance.

"If this body accepts the recommendation to place a question before the General Conference Session and that Session after prayerful consideration and review votes something," Wilson announced, "I pledge to you I will follow what the General Conference votes. I want to ask each of you to do the same."

The discussion over women's ordination began more than 130 years ago, according to Church archives, and has intensified since the 1970s, especially where members are calling for change, including the United States, parts of Europe, and the South Pacific. The General Conference Sessions in 1990 and 1995 voted down proposals that would have allowed women's ordination, and the matter has not returned to a Session agenda since then.

However, at the 2010 Session in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, a delegate from the U.S. state of Pennsylvania made a request "for the Adventist Church to develop and articulate a theology of ordination."

That question led to a commitment from General Conference leaders to open the discussion and appoint the Theology of Ordination Study Committee, or TOSC. The 106-member committee was asked to take a profound look at
ordination and provide information to help the General Conference decide how to handle the matter.

TOSC’s response was a 127-page report that was the basis for today’s discussion.

The report acknowledged that committee members—who hailed from around the world and met four times, for several days each time—were unable to come to agreement on whether to support or oppose women's ordination.

TOSC produced three separate statements to summarize members’ viewpoints. Those positions were then explained by three different scholars in a presentation before the Executive Committee; the statements also were printed in the TOSC report.

One position, labeled Statement No. 1, said that only men could be ordained throughout the world church. Statement No. 2 said that entities responsible for hiring pastors should be able to make their own decisions on whether to ordain female ministers. Statement No. 3 said the decision should be left to the leadership “at a proper level” to determine whether ordination “may be appropriate for their area or region.”

While the theology of ordination will be placed on the General Conference Session agenda, the measure’s outcome is far from certain. The nearly 2,600 voting delegates may decide to adopt, reject, or amend the proposal.
Church leaders urged to hire pastors, not administrators

Adventist Church Treasurer Robert E. Lemon delivers the treasurer’s report to Annual Council on Monday, October 13. [photo: Ansel Oliver]

Treasurer Lemon points to headquarters' strict financial policy as a model to emulate

October 14, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

The General Conference, the top administrative body of the Adventist Church, had 282 employees in 1995.

Today it has 287, an increase of only five employees.

But the Seventh-day Adventist world church has not remained the same. Membership soared from 8.8 million to 18.1 million over those 18 years, while the number of world divisions increased from 11 to 13, the number of unions grew from 94 to 125, and the number of missions grew from 459 to 602.

General Conference treasurer Robert E. Lemon said the tight reins on the hiring of new administrators is a model for all levels of church administration, and he urged church leaders to follow the lead of the General Conference.

“The message that I have for church leaders is if they are going to be successful in having money to do work in the field, they must control the number of people they have at their conference, union and division offices,” Lemon said in an interview on the sidelines of the Annual Council, a major business meeting of church leaders in Silver Spring, Maryland.

“Adding pastors and front-line employees is what we encourage, and not just adding to administrative levels,” he said.

Lemon made the appeal to church leaders as he presented his annual treasurer’s report at the Annual Council on Monday. He also provided a snapshot of the financial state of the world church, showing that it received $2.39 billion in tithe last year, a 3.54 percent increase from $2.31 billion in 2012. Of that amount, the General Conference received nearly $150 million last year, roughly the same amount that it has gotten since 2011.

Lemon reminded the Annual Council how tight finances were for the General Conference during the early 1990s and how they had had to adjust appropriations and reduce the number of employees.

Benefits of Sound Finances

He said the General Conference has hired people as needed since then, including the director of a new Children’s Ministries department, but every addition comes at a cost to another part of the budget. If a department wants to add a staff member or a service, it has to find something to cut. To optimize costs, nearly all General Conference leaders now share administrative assistants rather than have their own.
“You go to some places and every year they are adding two or three people, but if you add two or three people here, you will have eaten up everything that we’ve got,” Lemon said. “We’ve added positions over the years, but we’ve added very, very few.” In a nod to the U.S. political system, he added: “When we have, it takes both houses of congress, the president not to veto it, and everyone to support it.”

Lemon said the main goal of the General Conference is to only maintain enough working capital to have a healthy financial operation and cover day-to-day expenses, and to allocate all excess funds at the end of the year to special projects.

Those practices have allowed the General Conference to absorb the shock waves of the 2008-09 global financial crisis and is helping it withstand the constant fluctuations of foreign currencies today, he said.

It also has meant that the General Conference has been able to provide substantial sums of money for special projects, including ongoing initiatives to share Jesus in the 10/40 Window, a territory covering North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Lemon said spending in the 10/40 Window is now comparable to the size of a division’s budget.

He called on church leaders from around the world to become more effective by practicing financial discipline. “If you want your organizations to have the ability to respond immediately like we do with special projects, you can’t just add employees,” he said.

**Cutting North American Division’s Tithe**

Lemon, who will retire next year, said the General Conference’s improved financial footing has allowed it to adjust its financial relationship with the North American Division, which for years has contributed a much higher percentage of tithe to the world budget of the General Conference than other divisions.

Lemon praised the North American Division for its generosity. “The world has plowed the North American Division’s field for a long time,” he told the Annual Council.

The North American Division, which once contributed 10.72 percent of its tithe, now gives 7 percent and will give 6 percent by 2020. The change, which started in 2001, has provided the North American Division with a combined $267 million to spend on its own projects.

Over the years, the amount of tithe contributed by other divisions to the General Conference has grown to 2 percent from the previous 1 percent.

Last year, 50 percent of tithe and mission offerings received by the General Conference came from the North American Division, and the other 50 percent came from the rest of the world.

The General Conference’s biggest single outlay last year was $80 million in appropriations to divisions and institutions. Other major expenses included $23 million for inter-division missionaries and $44 million for General Conference staff and programs.

Separately, Annual Council delegates on Monday approved a recommendation from the treasury to support a request from the North American Division to explore the idea of moving its headquarters out of the General Conference building. If the division chooses to move, the General Conference will provide $3 million to assist with the transition. If the relocation is outside the greater Washington area, where the General Conference has its headquarters, the division would need additional approval from General Conference leadership.

“This should never be treated as an initiative to get them out of the building. Quite the opposite,” Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Adventist world church, told Annual Council delegates after the vote.

North American Division leaders will discuss the possible move at their annual year-end business meeting in
November.
Adventist Church Vice President Ella Simmons chairs Annual Council while delegates discuss proposed edits to the Church’s 28 Fundamental Beliefs, a few of which appear on the screen. [photo: Ansel Oliver]

Belief on Creation could be changed to emphasize six ‘literal’ days

October 13, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Edwin Manuel Garcia/ANN

A policy body of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on Monday voted to adjust the language of a key fundamental belief to emphasize that creation was a “recent” event that took place during “six literal days.”

The decision by representatives of the church’s 13 world divisions meeting at the 2014 Annual Council agreed with top Church officials who are growing concerned about what they claim is a misinterpretation of the creation account within the denomination.

The church’s official stance on creation—known as Fundamental Belief No. 6—currently states, in part, “In six days the Lord made ‘the heaven and the earth’ and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week.”

The proposed section of the revised belief, to be sent to delegates of the church’s official governing body for a vote next year, now reads: “In a recent six-day creation the Lord made ‘the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them’ and rested on the seventh day.”

Church leadership insisted on inserting the word “recent” to establish the biblical belief that creation occurred thousands of years ago, as opposed to the conflicting belief of evolutionists who insist earth is at least 4 billion years old. The phrase “six literal days” is significant to church leaders because it conveys that each day of creation lasted one literal day.

Church leaders were concerned that if Seventh-day Adventist members adopt the position that creation was not a six-day literal event, they’ll abandon the denomination’s central belief about the Sabbath being a 24-hour period of rest.

The vote was 179 to 15, with 5 abstentions, to adopt the recommendations of the Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee, which first met in 2011.

The move to clarify the church’s position comes at a time when an increasing number of Adventists, including some in the denomination’s academic institutions, are subscribing to theistic evolution, a view that acknowledges God and science are responsible for creation.
General Conference President Ted N. C. Wilson has made it a priority to affirm the literal, six-day creation.

He clearly expressed his viewpoint in a major speech to more than 400 Bible and Science teachers, and other denominational workers, in Nevada, United States, two months ago.

Quoting from the Bible and the writings of Church co-founder Ellen G. White, Wilson urged the audience to “hold firmly to a literal recent creation and absolutely reject theistic and general evolutionary theory.”

Wilson’s position is supported by the Biblical Research Institute (BRI), a General Conference think tank that promotes the study and practice of Adventist theology and lifestyle.

The BRI maintains that the church’s identity will be at risk if Fundamental Belief No. 6 does not emphasize the literal, six-day creation. Should theistic evolution become more widely accepted, the BRI stated in a report, “we will be in danger of losing the biblical foundation for the Sabbath and our understanding of salvation.”

The protocol to modify the fundamental belief on creation is a long process that began in 2010 in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, by delegates of the 59th General Conference Session who voted to make the changes. The Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee was appointed to evaluate and merge the proposal with the 2004 Statement on Affirmation of Creation and seek input from church members around the world before advancing its recommendation to the Annual Council delegates. The committee is led by Artur Stele, a General Conference vice president and head of the BRI.

Relatively few of the 330 delegates meeting at church headquarters commented on the proposal.

Church historian David Trim cautioned that the proposal, which includes wording that establishes the six literal days, together with the Sabbath, “constituted a week as we experience it today,” could be subject to differing interpretations.

Shirley Chang, a North American Division delegate, said adding the word “recent” seemed out of context.

Former Trans-European Division President Bertil Wiklander took issue with the insertion of the word “historical” to describe the creation account. He said the church is better off with the original statement, because the revised belief “could take the meaning that the account belongs to history.”

The topic of creation was among the most-discussed part of an agenda item Sunday and Monday that recommended modifications to the 28 beliefs.

The Adventist Church first adopted 27 Fundamental Beliefs in 1980 under then President Neal Wilson, who said revisions would be needed periodically. In 2005, the Church added the 28th “Growing in Christ.”

In this week’s proposal, none of the beliefs were changed substantially.

The belief of Marriage and the Family for the first time acknowledges that unmarried people are valued too: God “embraces both single and married persons.”

The section on Christian Behavior previously suggested that godly people act in harmony “with the principles of heaven.” It now reads that they act in harmony, “with biblical principles in all aspects of personal and social life.”

Most of the modifications were edits, such as deleting redundancies, adopting more inclusive language, erasing “men of God” and replacing with “persons of God,” fixing punctuation, and scrapping “marriage partners” in favor of “a man and a woman.”

The proposed revisions to the Fundamental Beliefs will be considered by delegates of the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, for adoption into official Church policy.
Adventist Church Secretary G. T. Ng delivers the secretary's report at Annual Council on Sunday, October 12. [photo: Ansel Oliver]

But executive secretary Ng would rather talk about 'serious loss' of members

October 12, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

Membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has topped 18.1 million for the first time, but G. T. Ng, secretary of the Adventist world church, isn’t celebrating.

Ng expressed dismay about large losses.

“It’s easy to baptize them, but it’s much harder to retain them,” Ng said in an interview.

“Retention and nurture should be on the same side of the coin, but apparently baptism brings more glamour: ‘Look at how many I have baptized!’” he said. “‘Nurture? Who cares? There’s no glory for me.’ So we have an inherent problem: losses, serious losses. But not many people talk about it.”

Ng, however, made a point about talking about it on Sunday when he delivered a yearly membership report to the Annual Council, a major business meeting of world church leaders at the Adventist Church’s headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

Church membership has swelled by 1.5 percent to reach 18,143,745 million, up from 17,881,491 a year earlier, according to data that he presented. For the 10th year in a row, more than 1 million people joined the church—1,091,222 to be exact—but at the same time a decade-high 828,968 people were removed from the books after dying, leaving the church, or disappearing.

Some of the losses reflect an ongoing drive by local churches to audit their books to remove the names of unreachable members who have not attended worship services for some time, said David Trim, the world church’s chief archivist who compiles the data.

Without the audit, church membership would stand at 25 million today, Ng said.

Offering another difficult statistic, Ng said 31.8 million people have been baptized over the past 40 years, while 11.4 million have dropped their membership or gone missing. The figure does not include those who died.

Many of those people left because the church didn’t nurture them properly, Ng said in the interview.

In a recent example, the last Adventists who were baptized after an evangelistic series in a small village in northern India in 2005 reconverted to Hinduism in late August. The incident, which made headlines in the Indian media, raised fears among Christians that the reconversions were forced, which is illegal in the country.

But an Adventist task force sent to the village, Asroi, found that the 33 former Adventists had received little support
from church leadership since their baptisms in 2005 and at the same time had been eagerly courted by Hindu activists. Only about six people remained on the membership books when the reconversions took place.

Leaders with the church’s Southern Asia Division, which includes India, have engaged in soul-searching after the loss.

“We have to carefully nurture the newcomers and help them to be rooted in the word,” T. P. Kurian, Communication director for the Southern Asia Division, said in a recent e-mail.

Also Sunday, Ng defended the practice of counting members and said it could not be compared to an Old Testament census by Israeli King David that resulted in punishment from God. Ng said David’s actions were a display of arrogance and pride.

“When we count in the church, we have to count with humility,” he said.

The tally, he said, is simply “a report on what the Master has done.”

Ng elaborated in the interview by pointing to three of Jesus’ parables in Luke 15.

“There’s nothing wrong with counting itself,” he said. “After all, Jesus counted in the three parables, right? The woman counted her 10 coins and found one was lost. The shepherd counted only 99 sheep. The father lost a son. So there’s nothing wrong.”

Among the other statistics, Ng noted that growth was stagnating in the countries of the northern hemisphere and Australia but exploding in the southern hemisphere, especially in Central and South America, Africa, and Southern Asia. Furthermore, he said, the modest growth taking place in North America and Europe was largely coming from immigrants from the southern hemisphere.

Europe is even more challenging, he said. The Church has three divisions in Europe, a legacy of its long presence on continent, but membership is small. The Trans-European Division, which includes Britain, is the smallest of all of the church’s 13 divisions with 84,428 people.

“So the divisions wonder, ‘Where we are going?’” Ng said. “It’s so tough.”

The British Union Conference, for example, has 34,512 members, a net increase of 464 people from 34,048 a year earlier. Most of the new members were immigrants.

“What about the indigenous British?” Ng said. “I mean, they were born there. They were from there. What about them? Are we doing something for them? Those are hard questions.”

Ng said mission stories usually end on a high note and leave the impression that the work was successful. But he said the statistics present another side of the picture: much of the world hasn’t had a chance to hear about the first coming of Jesus, let alone the second coming.

He said the church has a presence in about 230 countries, but another 22 countries recognized by the United Nations remain unentered. Furthermore, a country might have a large population of Adventists but still contain major people groups without a single Adventist. In Kenya, many of the 800,000 church members primarily come from two language groups, while the other 40 language groups are largely unreached. The same is true of Thailand, where most members come from minority people groups.

“So it does not mean that once you have entered a country the work is done,” Ng said. “Far from it!”
Wilson says Satan trying to destroy Adventist Church

Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Adventist world church, preachers the Sabbath sermon at Annual Council on Saturday, October 11. [photo: Ansel Oliver]

Adventist President urges church leaders to stand by the Bible even if its teachings are scorned as politically incorrect

October 11, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

Ted N. C. Wilson, leader of the Seventh-day Adventist world church, said Satan was using every means at his disposal to try to destroy the Adventist Church and neutralize its mission of proclaiming Jesus’ soon coming.

Wilson, speaking in a sermon that serves as his annual world pastoral address, said the devil’s tactics include ecumenism, charismatic worship approaches, and attacks on biblical prophetic understanding, and he said he had felt the blows personally in recent weeks with the death of a prematurely born grandson and the discovery that two other grandsons suffer serious health problems.

But he urged the listening church leaders of the Annual Council, a major church business meeting, to join him in submitting to God and taking a unified stand for the distinctive, biblical beliefs of the Adventist Church, regardless of whether the teachings might be derided as unpopular or politically incorrect.

“In these perilous closing scenes of Earth’s history, remember that the devil is attempting to neutralize anything and everything we do—even at this Annual Council,” Wilson told the packed auditorium at the world church’s headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. “Through God’s power, let us be entirely respectful, Christ-like, and loving in our discussions and exchanges during this Annual Council on whatever topic we may speak.”

The Annual Council has several key issues to discuss, including whether the world church should revise some of the wording of its 28 Fundamental Beliefs and extend ordination to women. The 338 members of the Annual Council will decide whether to send those issues for a final vote next July to the General Conference session, the top governing body of the world church.

Wilson expressed gratefulness to God for bringing about a “beautiful spirit” in pre-Annual Council meetings between world church leaders. He shared an appeal from General Conference and division officers to the Annual Council delegates, asking that they remain Christ-like even if differences of opinion emerged.

“Our humble demeanor and attitudes, through God’s power, will speak volumes to those who are watching,” he said, reading the appeal. “We earnestly appeal that we do all in our power to strengthen the church and this precious Advent movement.”

Read the full text of the sermon HERE.

Wilson said Revelation 13 outlines a two-pronged satanic plan to destroy God’s last-day people: an ideological war of
lies and errors that challenge the truth, and outright persecution culminating in a death decree against those who obey God's biblical laws.

"Though large-scale persecution will certainly come, currently Satan is trying to work from the inside to weaken the church through dissension, discord, and conformity to the world," Wilson said.

Satan's Destructive Tactics

Wilson repeatedly pointed to the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G. White, co-founder of the Adventist Church, as the way to discern God's will during the 70-minute sermon, which was punctuated with frequent "amens." At one point he urged Annual Council delegates to make sure that they weren't reading the Bible upside-down.

“When you read the Bible upside-down, you will get an upside-down understanding,” he said, citing an African saying that he heard on a recent trip.

He singled out the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation as undesirable, saying it clouded the themes and topics of the Bible.

“As we seek to know God's will through a study of His Word, we must not place strange interpretations and employ interpretive gymnastics to draw out conclusions that are not evident from a plain reading of the Word,” he said.

Wilson, who has made a call for “revival and reformation” a hallmark of his presidency, listed a number of other ways that he saw the devil seeking to destroy the Adventist Church, including:

- Inspiring a belief that reformation within the church means giving up unique doctrines so that it is easier for people to become Adventists.
- Using tradition and philosophy to destroy faith in the Bible.
- Urging people to move independently of the main body of the church.
- Advancing charismatic and Pentecostal music and worship approaches that focus on church members and those leading out in services rather than on the true worship of God.
- Distracting people with secular activities such as competitive sports, the Internet, the media, financial deals, and materialism.
- Encouraging poor health habits and a lack of respect for God's natural laws, thereby enfeebling the mind and numbing the senses.
- Stirring skepticism about the veracity of the scriptural record of the origin of life and early history.
- Spreading spiritualism.
- Promoting ecumenism, or cooperation and better understanding among Christian faiths with the unattainable goal of universal Christian unity.

Wilson strongly cautioned against associating with ecumenical groups.

"Don't succumb to the temptation to be so cozy with other religious organizations that you fall into the devil's trap of neutralizing your own effectiveness through unbiblical ecumenical bonds," he said.

Adventists also should avoid inviting clergy from other faiths from preaching to Adventist churches on Sabbaths, he said.

But he stressed that it was important for Adventists to be friendly with people of all faiths, to be leaders in public affairs and religious liberty, and to share their love for Jesus with the public.

Tragedy in the Wilson Family
Making his message personal, Wilson, 64, told of a series of hardships that have befallen his family and that he linked to Satan’s war against the church. Wilson and his wife, Nancy, have three married daughters and eight grandchildren.

Edward, the 2-year-old son of the Wilsons’ eldest daughter is suffering numerous neurological problems after eight months of cancer treatment left him cancer-free but with antibodies that are attacking his brain, Wilson said.

“We thank God that Edward is showing some improvement with treatment, but the extent of his future recovery remains uncertain,” he said.

A second grandson, 15-month-old James born to the Wilsons’ middle daughter, has been diagnosed with a rare genetic mutation that has only been detected in two other people in the world. Three weeks ago, the youngest daughter lost her third child.

“After the premature delivery at four months, she held the perfectly formed little boy in her hand,” Wilson said. “When the Lord returns, Catherine’s little son will be placed in her arms, and he will grow up in heaven.”

He said, however, that the devil would not succeed in any efforts to neutralize his family’s witness.

“In the last year or so, the devil has attempted to neutralize every one of our three precious daughters, their families and us as parents. But he will not succeed. God is in control. He will be victorious. The faith of my daughters and their families and all of us is strong in the Lord,” he said, drawing loud “amens” from the audience.

'We Are All in This Together'

Wilson cautioned that no one listening to the sermon in the main auditorium of the General Conference building was exempt from the devil’s attacks.

“We are all in this together,” he said. “There are many in this room who are going through far worse situations.”

Looking beyond internal church issues, Wilson said Satan was attacking the church on other fronts as well, including the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and violence in Iraq, Syria, and Ukraine.

Despite the difficulties, Wilson called on the delegates to boldly proclaim the distinctive message of the Adventist Church.

“Stay away from anything that will undermine our message or cloud our distinctive beliefs,” he said. “Don’t be tempted by the devil to blend in with the crowd or be politically correct. Don’t proclaim a generic Christianity or a ‘cheap-grace Christ’ that does not point to the distinctive Biblical truths to be declared worldwide, the very reason for which the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized.”

The church leaders stood when Wilson concluded with an appeal to join him in submitting to God’s power and asking for protection from the devil’s attacks.

“Our only future hope is in our personal connection with Christ,” Wilson said. “Our hope as God’s people, your hope and my hope, is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”
Ebola deaths include 16 Adventists in West Africa

James Golay, president of the West Africa Union Mission, speaks from Liberia onto a video screen projected to hundreds of church leaders gathered at the denomination’s headquarters. Leaders prayed for those affected by the growing epidemic. [photo: Viviene Martinelli]

Leader in Liberia joins Annual Council via video-conference

October 11, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Edwin Manuel Garcia/ANN

The Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa has claimed the lives of 16 Seventh-day Adventists, a church official announced Saturday.

“The people are suffering,” said James Golay, president of the West Africa Union Mission, speaking from Liberia onto a video screen projected to hundreds of church leaders gathered at the denomination’s headquarters for the 2014 Annual Council.

Golay would have attended the meeting, but stayed home. Global health organizations and church officials are encouraging people to limit travel to and from West Africa over concerns about the rapidly spreading infectious disease that has killed more than 4,000 people.

Ebola was the focus of a special prayer during the council’s Sabbath morning worship led by Elder Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the denomination.

“Today we have a special opportunity on behalf of our dear brothers and sisters in West Africa, to pray that God will intercede and will halt the terrible epidemic of the Ebola crisis, Wilson told more than 400 people in the auditorium. “We ask the world church to pray today and not to stop praying.”

Wilson, who earlier in his pastoral career served nine years in West Africa, said the 33,000 Adventists in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia are facing “unbelievable difficulty.”

He then turned to the video screen where Pastor Golay explained that church members are suffering not only because some have contracted Ebola, but because of the disease’s effects on fellowship: Adventists now avoid customs such as shaking hands and hugging.

In the packed General Conference auditorium, Israel Leito, president of the Church's in Inter-American Division, asked God to give courage to ministerial workers in West Africa.
“Father, I think of the pastors who can’t abandon their flocks, they cannot retreat from the onslaught of Ebola,” Leito prayed. “They have to continue visiting, they have to continue burying the dead, they have to continue comforting those that are sick.”

Leito concluded: “Help us to remember that we should not wait for a crisis to look for you, but that we should be connected with you at all times.”

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa is the largest and most complex Ebola outbreak since the disease was first discovered in 1976 in Central Africa, when it is believed that animals transmitted the virus to humans. The current outbreak, with an average fatality rate of about 50 percent, is believed to have started in Guinea in late December, and has spread to Sierra Leone, Liberia, and other countries.

The virus is spread among humans by direct contact, such as through broken skin or mucous membranes; blood and secretions; and contact with surfaces contaminated with such fluids.

Despite the rapid spread, Ebola is preventable with regular handwashing and the use of personal protective equipment.

Wilson said the church has responded accordingly to the crisis.

“We have many activities going on to take care of the people in West Africa, through ADRA, through our church, and we want to lift up to God today our people the population in general,” Wilson said, “and the wonderful work that is being done in the name of the Lord.”

In August, Health Ministries Director Dr. Peter Landless urged church employees and members to avoid travel to and from nations affected by the epidemic.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency reacted to the crisis with tens of thousands of dollars in supplies and equipment.

In partnership with Loma Linda University, Adventist Health International, and GlobalMedic, ADRA is providing Cooper Adventist Hospital in Monrovia City, Liberia and Liberian Ministry of Health with $92,000 in supplies, including: 60,000 vinyl gloves; 38,000 face masks; 3,200 isolation gowns and 600 disposable coveralls.

Cooper Hospital, where three people died, has closed temporarily, for a three-week quarantine period. Another medical facility in West Africa, Waterloo Adventist Hospital, also closed, after several staff members contracted the virus in the community. When Waterloo Hospital reopens it will be a government-run Ebola clinic.

In addition, ADRA in Sierra Leone is providing counseling to victims; training for staff and volunteers; and a public education campaign that includes Ebola prevention information on fliers, posters and television programming.
Adventist News Network®

News

The official news service of the Seventh-day Adventist world church
Adventist News Network®

The official news service of the Seventh-day Adventist world church
Adventist Church Health Ministries Director Dr. Peter Landless implores hundreds of world church executives to model healthful living in their own busy lives, and to make any necessary lifestyle changes in their diet, exercise and relationships. [photo: Ansel Oliver]

Harvard Professor Williams, Health Director Landless make case for healthful outreach, personal example

October 09, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Ansel Oliver/ANN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s 2014 Annual Council opened with an appeal for respectful diplomacy over coming discussions as well as a major call for the Church to focus on health. Leaders were implored both to establish health ministries for the community and to set their own example of healthful living.

Vice President Geoffrey Mbwana and Secretary G. T. Ng opened the seven-day meeting of the Executive Committee at the world church’s headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, before Church President Ted N. C. Wilson welcomed the several hundred present delegates.

Wilson wished church leaders God’s blessing over the next week of business sessions and spiritual meetings. “We’ve been praying earnestly that this room would be filled with a sweet spirit,” he said before reading a statement from top leaders. The statement was a strong hint regarding the planned upcoming discussion set for Tuesday, October 14 on the theology of ordination and how it relates to gender.

“We General Conference and division officers appeal to all Annual Council attendees to accept each other as brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of some differences of opinion that may be evident on certain subjects,” Wilson said, reading from the statement. “We ask for Christ-likeness and humble respect for each other in our words and activities during this Annual Council and beyond.”

From there, the evening progressed through three presentations from leading health experts, each of whom implored delegates to prioritize health-related ministry in their own regions of the world and make healthful living a personal priority.

David Williams, a professor of public health at Harvard University and an honorary associate Health Ministries director of the Adventist Church, delivered a lecture on the need for addressing underlying issues related to health, including income and racial inequalities, stress and depression.

The pinnacle example of health outreach, he said, was a mission center in Chicago established in 1893 by John Harvey Kellogg. The mission offered meals and shelter for the homeless, a clinic, a rescue center for prostitutes, a maternity home for unwed mothers and a drug re-habilitation facility. Kellogg established the center after reading the book “Ministry of Healing” by Adventist Church co-founder Ellen G. White, Williams said.
“The book ‘Ministry of Healing’ is our textbook in comprehensive [health] ministry, and we need to go back to the wonderful advice we have been given that can help us deal with challenges that we face,” Williams said.

Fred Hardinge, associate Health Ministries director for the Church, gave an overview on publicly-funded studies examining Adventists for their longevity. He said Adventists tend to live eight to 10 years longer than the general population. An avoidance of meat, especially red meat, was a key factor, he said.

Health Ministries director Dr. Peter Landless concurred, saying a plant-based diet is the preferred diet where it is available. His overall message emphasized balanced living.

“The world of science is shouting out the message to us through the most modern scientific journals, with evidence-based [examinations], that flesh foods are not good for us,” Landless told delegates. “I wish and pray that we will move to a plant-based diet, with a balanced Christ-like approach, not placing ourselves at various rungs of sanctification because of the diets we consume, but following what is the best we can do in the environments we find ourselves.”

Landless also urged leaders, who often fly on long flights and sit through long meetings, to set the example of healthful living. “How are you in yourself? Are your relationships healthy and growing?” he asked.

The meeting came to a close with British Union Conference President Ian Sweeney offering his testimony about recent lifestyle changes that brought him down to a healthier body weight. In the past two years, Sweeney said he had lost 75 pounds and received cheers for his slimmer physique when addressing a large crowd of Church members during a recent visit from President Wilson.

He decided to eat healthier food and exercise more after giving a book about health to a neighbor and realized the irony as it related to his own situation.

“I hadn’t preached a sermon on health and temperance for 15 to 17 years because it would have just been hypocrisy” Sweeney said. “The spirit impressed me that I want to reflect in my own life what I want to preach.”

Mark Finley, assistant to President Wilson, ended the meeting saying that “if the motivation for lifestyle change is anything other than honoring God with the body he has given me, that motivation is really shallow…. I would like to suggest to you that the power for lifestyle change comes from Jesus, and that as we come to him and say ‘lord, my body is yours. I want to honor you in every aspect of my life.’"