Keeping the Vision Alive

After coming out of vision in 1848, E. G. White told her husband: "I have a message for you. You must begin to print a little paper and send it out to the people. Let it be small at first; but as the people read, they will send you means with which to print, and it will be a success from the first. From this small beginning it was shown to me to be like streams of light that went clear round the world" (Life Sketches, p. 125, 1915). I believe that the Publishing Ministry is indeed an indispensable part of God's plan in saving mankind. Throughout the entire history of God's Church on earth, literature evangelists have played a very significant role in advancing His kingdom through the medium of print.

Each year, thousands are being ushered into the family of God by reading some kind of literature; an evangelistic handbill, a beautiful tract, a large or small book, or maybe even a lead card found in a doctor's office waiting room. Since the time God gave instructions to E. G. White to "write down" the vision, the Publishing Ministry has been fulfilling its mission of evangelism and nurture. Let us keep that "vision" alive!

Pardon Mwansa, GC Vice President and Advisor to Publishing Ministries

The First Ever Multi-Division Literature Evangelist Congress Held

From four of the world divisions (SPD, SSD, NSD, SUD) they converged in Bangkok, Thailand, April 25-28, 2007. They met under the worthy motto: "Keeping the Vision Alive."

The Opening Ceremony was extremely inspiring as the diverse cultural characteristics of over a thousand literature evangelists and leaders from 23 countries were highlighted by their variant national costumes, each group carrying their own national flag.

In his keynote address on Thursday morning, Elder Orville Parchment, Assistant to the President of the General Conference, focused clearly upon the theme of the congress and extended warm recognition to the courageous work of literature evangelists as frontline workers for God. The publishing director of the General Conference, Pastor Howard F. Faigao, presented a comprehensive and colorful report, highlighting the Quinquennial goals of the 40,000 literature evangelists worldwide. He extended a heartfelt challenge to the world publishing team to establish at least one active literature evangelist in every Adventist church and thus swell the number to 55,000 literature evangelists worldwide.

Stirring sermons and messages maintained the focus of our mission on keeping alive the vision of service in literature ministry. Three
division presidents, Laurie Evans, SPD; Alberto C. Gulfan, Jr., SSD; and Jairyong Lee, NSD; presented outstanding messages. Pastor Laurie Evans challenged the delegates to keep their vision clear by sharing it vigorously with others. In his devotional talk, Pastor Albert C. Gulfan opened his address with the following words. "Your speaker this morning, is a literature evangelist, and he is also the son of a retired literature evangelist. So my roots go deep in the literature ministry." He assured the LEs that their ministry is appreciated and is very essential. Pastor Jairyong Lee encouraged the delegates to take the Word of God as our source of strength and power in ministry for, when we take Jesus as our Partner, victory is assured.

Pastor Wilmar Hirle, G.C. Associate Publishing Director, reminded us that when we come down from the mountaintop of the LE Congress, we would meet the enemy. But we were not to fear. Jesus has invited us to "lay all of our cares upon Him because He cares for us."

In his Sabbath sermon, Pastor Orville Parchment related the story of James Stockdale, a high-ranking officer in the U.S.A. Navy. He was left in chains as a prisoner of war in Vietnam for eight years. Upon return to the U.S.A., he was asked why he survived when so many others perished. He said that so many of them had set short-time goals for their release. They focused on dates like Easter, or Christmas, or some other short-term date. Then, when their release did not materialize when it was hoped for, discouragement overwhelmed them. Many gave up hope and died of a broken heart. "The difference with me," he pointed out, "was that I focused on the end of the story, the coming of Jesus."

The Literature Ministry is a work of faith, and the big questions are: "Will those who come behind us find us faithful? Will the fire of our faith light their way? Will our footprints lead them to success?"

The division reports and LE testimonies sector of the congress allowed each division a designated time slot in which to present testimonies and reports from the field. The reports were filled with stories and audio-visual presentations that inspired us to indeed put our hands into the hands of God to perform ever greater exploits for Him. During their presentation, the South Pacific Division and Signs Publishing Company officially launched a new children’s book series called The Moose Series, that is written by Shaun Hepworth, a literature evangelist in Australia.

Thursday evening’s cultural presentations showcased the numerous talents of the various people groups. They ranged from ancient cultures with thousands of years of history to the younger nations with shorter time frames of recorded history. The Tahitians brought a Polynesian flavor to the program, while their near neighbors, from Papua New Guinea, dressed in the colors of their national flag. The Filipinos portrayed several national folk dances reflecting the different tribes of the country.
and the Japanese highlighted their ancient culture in songs, traditional instruments, and costumes. Finally, the Korean fan dance received a well-deserved standing ovation, as they displayed the rare skills of a culture thousands of years old. The Australians combined a song and an enactment of the folk story of The Swagman. Indonesian musicians brought a special flavor from their ancient oriental past, while the LEs from West Papua added color and pageantry with feathers, tusks, and plumes.

The Sabbath School was a lively, multi-cultural program. The Mission segment contained personal interviews with leaders and literature evangelists from Thailand, Africa, and Australia. Three Division Publishing Directors from IAD (Miami, U.S.A.), ECD (Nairobi), and SID (South Africa) brought thrilling stories of exploits in soul winning from their fields. The Lord's Prayer was uttered with a sacred international significance as each line was uttered by a different voice in a different language. Twelve of the different languages groups participated.

A festival of beautiful music was enjoyed in Sabbath School and at the church service. Some of those who contributed were the Thailand Men's and Women's Choir, the Vanuatu and Solomon Islands Group, and the Indonesian Ladies Quartet (Who will ever forget, the lady who sang bass so well?).

The Awards Ceremony was so special. Faithfulness in God’s service is worthy of both recognition and celebration. On Sabbath afternoon, literature evangelists from four world divisions were awarded pins to recognize them for their years of faithful service. Three literature evangelists from Japan were awarded 50 year service pins. They were greeted with a well-deserved standing ovation in recognition of their amazing service records. The award pins served to remind us all to rededicate ourselves to the Lord's service. Soon the last book shall have been sold, the last prayer offered in a home, the last Bible School enrollment taken, and Jesus will come to claim His own.

A fitting finale to this great gathering of literature evangelists was the commitment service. We wish every one of our readers could have experienced the Spirit of this gathering. In his message based on Psalms 37:3-5, Pastor Howard F. Faigao challenged us to “Trust in the Lord, delight in His work, and daily commit ourselves unto Him - for then He shall give us the desire of our hearts and abundantly bless our ministry.”

The Bangkok Congress was surely a memorable event. But it was just a foretaste of another day coming. A day when not just a few countries will be represented, but men, women, boys, and girls from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people will gather together again. Not in Bangkok, Thailand, but around the very throne of God.

Kevin Geelan, Associate Publishing Director South Pacific Division
God's servant counsels us that, "The publishing branch of our cause has much to do with our power" (Life Sketches p. 446).

What makes the printed page such a powerful instrument in spreading the gospel? Why can a book reach people who can be reached in no other way? Consider these possibilities:

1. Books have permanence. This allows them to work over long periods of time.

2. Books are consistent. They give the same message without variance.

3. Books are conduits for the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that was present when they were written abides with them as they are read.

4. Books are tolerant. They never respond hastily or take attacks personally.

5. Books are not respecters of persons. Whoever chooses to read them, can receive the blessing.

6. Books have availability to God's timing. They are ready to serve at the touch of a hand.

In 2006 The Great Controversy was again published. More than 359,880 copies in Russian were distributed. This means as an average of three copies of The Great Controversy for each church member in EAD. Church members were united in distributing this very nice book.

The Voice of Hope prepared a 15-minute DVD telling the story of the circumstances of E. G. White's writing of the book. Our church leaders have shared their great experiences in distributing the book and of the good influence the book has had in their lives.

Church members have accepted the call to take part in the distribution of The Great Controversy in EAD.
It has become a tradition now and a very good one. Here in the Central Philippine Union Conference (CPUC), we hold a special training seminar for our entire staff of publishing leaders every year. It is a well recognized fact that leaders, even those of us with many years of experience, stand in need of periodic retraining and maintenance. We need the newness of the refresher courses to keep us on top of our skills. It helps us maintain, under God, a higher quality of service. We cultivate a healthy sense of pride and a sacred commitment to excellence in training others for successful sales evangelism. It is also rewarding for leaders to come together in Christian camaraderie to study, share mutual observations, discuss methods and to dialogue solutions. There is strength found the honest sharing of each others’ burdens and triumphs.

Our Leadership Seminar held June 25 to 28, 2007, was just such an occasion. We were delighted and blessed with the presence of Elder Howard F. Faigao, our General Conference Publishing Director for the world field. His instruction inspired us deeply as he held before us the importance of the ten major goals for the Publishing Ministry throughout the world field. His insights into the formulas for strengthening our leadership at all levels brought renewed conviction to our hearts.

Pastor Vivencio R. Bermudez, Publishing Ministries Director for the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, refreshed our minds by revisiting the important policies that govern the Publishing Ministry. He further reinforced the need for complete leadership integrity throughout our ranks.

Pastor Levi J. Estores, President of the West Visayan Conference (formerly the CPUC Publishing Director) presented the subject of “Shepherding Leadership.” He amplified clearly the points within the methodology of Christ Himself that can solve our problem of excessive LE turnover in today’s program. We were blessed by the special services of Mr. Sergie B. Ferrer, Undertreasurer of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. His contributions were highly practical for he explained details of the new retirement program of the church. He encouraged active literature evangelists to think wisely for the future by contributing at least 3% as their personal share in order to qualify for the full privileges afforded by the church in this new plan.

Other participants included the union publishing ministries director and his associate, eight HHES managers, five local conference publishing directors, three associate publishing directors and thirty-nine local conference assistant publishing directors.

We were made thankful for the Literature Ministries Seminary (LMS) and that we could gather within this edifice located at Bulacao, Talisay City, Cebu. There we found the quietude conducive to good study, the teachers that make learning a delight, and quarters that encourage fellowship and adequate rest. Here, bonding in service between peers in ministry comes naturally.

The leadership of the CPUC Publishing Ministries Department wishes to thank each of our guest instructors for sharing with us from the depths of their experienced leadership. Their ministry is sincerely appreciated. We came away from this gathering totally regenerated for service. Praise God for His blessings!
On the weekend of May 31 to June 3, 2007, my wife, Marie, and I attended a very well planned and inspiring convention for literature evangelists in Bloemfontein, South Africa. More than two-hundred and forty literature evangelists gathered together from all parts of the Union for this important meeting. Guests were invited from Australia, Spain, and the Division office, as well as locally, to make this three-day meeting something truly worth remembering.

In his opening address, Pastor Francois Louw, President of the Southern African Union, expressed his welcome and sincere appreciation for what literature evangelists are doing throughout that territory. He is keenly aware of the reality that where the publishing work is strong, the church tends to be strong; and where the publishing work is weak, the church tends to be weak.

The messages of Pastor Kevin Geelan, Associate Publishing Ministries Director for the South Pacific Division, were outstanding. It was exciting also to hear of the progress and production plans of Safeliz, our Adventist Publishing House in Spain. Pastor Super Moesi, Publishing Ministries Director for the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, and Sam Alexander, of Johannesburg, opened our minds with their highly motivational presentations. They were characterized by challenging ideas and positive thinking in the service of our Lord.

When we arrived on Thursday, we were met by the animated voices and the excitement of a large group of literature evangelists, workers who had experienced the profound working of the Lord in their lives. Their enthusiasm for God's work showed, and they were ready to share their excitement with others. Hearing their outstanding experiences in the meetings, our hearts were deeply moved. In fact, this was one of the most inspirational LE conventions we have attended in any part of the world.

We want to say "thank you" to all who worked so hard to make this meeting possible. To Pastor Gift Maweemba, Publishing Ministries Director for the Southern Africa Union, we especially commend you for the leadership shown in organizing this great meeting. Thank you very much, and please do this again! This was the kind of convention that will not only increase the number of literature evangelists, but will enhance their working proficiency as they put into practice what they have learned. The potential of the Publishing Ministry in Southern Africa is great.

The Lord is giving us a wide-open door to help finish His work in this part of the world by way of the printed page. For the first time in the history of Southern Africa, the doors are now opening for us to find greater access to the hearts and minds of those of elevated influence within society. Further, Sunday-keeping church pastors are now opening their doors for us to come and display our books to their congregations. This is a new day!

Fellow literature evangelists, let us make the best of the opportunities opening before us. Let us move ahead and experience the joy of seeing that large harvest of souls, "most of whom will trace their first convictions to the reading of our publications." It is time for us to move out of the ordinary and let God do the extraordinary through us. This is what the Lord expects from us.

Go everywhere with God's books. Go even where no literature evangelists have ever entered! Go to those who would never know the truth for this time if YOU don't take it to them. And may God be with you!

Abraham Oberholster, a retired but very active veteran LE and publishing leader. He is a former Publishing Ministries Director of the Southeast Asia Union, and the author/compiler of the new LE devotional book Miracles of Grace.
The North American Division (NAD), along with Pacific Press Publishing Association® (PPPA), and the Review and Herald Publishing Association® (R&H), launched an exciting literature missionary project called “SEVEN in SEVEN in 2007.” SEVEN in SEVEN was a simple strategy to spread the gospel by encouraging each Seventh-day Adventist member in North America to distribute SEVEN pieces of literature in SEVEN days in 2007. This event happened April 7-14.

The PPPA leadership said that this project was inspired by the prophet who has been calling us to literature distribution for decades. Here’s a sample of what we’ve been told: “Let every believer scatter tracts and leaflets and books containing the message for this time” (Southern Watchman, January 5, 1904).

During those SEVEN days in April 7-14 the church in NAD could have distributed SEVEN million pieces of literature in just one week if each member shared just one piece of literature a day for SEVEN days! That’s right, SEVEN million pieces of literature, . . . SEVEN million contacts for Christ in ONE WEEK.

This indeed is a great mission-oriented activity which will keep the vision alive. "Our literature is to be distributed everywhere" (Christian Service, p. 153).

“Publications must be multiplied, and scattered like the leaves of autumn. These silent messengers are enlightening and molding the minds of thousands in every country and in every clime” (Colporteur Ministry, p. 5)