Past, present and future

Think back to September 2008. Where were you? What were you doing? Now look at your life today. Has much changed? Are you still in the same house? Are you still in the same job? Are you still in the same country?

A lot can change in five years. Consider our team for instance. In 2008, only two of our current members were working as part of RECORD. We were also operating out of a different state, and the magazine was predominantly printed in black and white.

Change is inevitable, and often unexpected. However, there are changes for which we can plan and prepare. This is why leaders of the worldwide Adventist Church are already looking at developing a strategic plan for the future. The focus: the years 2015 to 2020. The plan: click here to find out.

And while we have your attention, be sure to check out the latest Adventist news from around the world in this week’s edition of Record eNews.
Church conference nominates woman president

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Want to be a "legend husband"? There's an app for that! Kent Kingston chats with Mark Reilly, a Baptist pastor and the mind behind the "Legend Husband" mobile app. Important info for men with iPhones, Android devices, and no phone at all.
Victorian Conference, with Mr Graeme Moffitt appointed as the Conference’s chief financial officer (CFO).

Adventist families among victims in terror attack

The husband of an Adventist church member from Nairobi was killed during the terrorist attack in Nairobi’s Westgate Shopping Mall, in which more than 60 people were killed and more than 170 injured.

More News
Seventh-day Adventist leaders are making initial recommendations for a global strategic plan based on the results of an unprecedented survey of the opinions, attitudes and spiritual life patterns of church members worldwide.

The survey results will guide members of the church’s Strategic Planning Committee as they identify areas of concern, rank priorities and administer opportunities for 2015 to 2020.

“The Church regularly engages in strategic planning to carefully position the organisation to best pursue its mission,” said Mike Ryan, chair and director of the Strategic Planning process and a general vice president of the Adventist world church.

“Data collection and analysis are crucial steps in this process,” he said.

In 2011, top church officials first voted to establish an ongoing budget for Adventist research. Since then, eleven research teams have conducted five major surveys. Seven teams worked on a survey of church members, eventually receiving completed surveys from 22,500 Adventists from nine world church divisions. Other research included a survey of more than 4000 pastors from all thirteen divisions. Including both survey and interview-based research, the study polled a total of 38,000 Adventists worldwide.

“That gives us a lot of rich data to work with,” said David Trim, secretary of the Strategic Planning process and director of the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research for the Adventist world church, which oversaw the research project.

Mike Ryan, an Adventist world church vice president, is chair and director of the church’s strategic planning process. [Photo courtesy: Gerry Chudleigh]

At a planning session in August in the US state of Colorado, committee members—who represent the diversity of global church membership and leadership—began drafting an outline of the Strategic Plan. Division presidents, Trim said, will have the opportunity to review the draft and offer input ahead of this year’s Annual Council, a church business meeting planned for October, at which some of the initial survey results may be released.

“Some of the results might come as a surprise, but [division presidents] already know the nature of the research,” Trim said.

Indeed, division leadership has been instrumental in the research process, Trim said. As well as supporting the work of the research teams, each division was asked to submit an appraisal of the strategic issues it rates most important, both for the world church and its own territory. Each department at Adventist world church headquarters submitted a similar appraisal.

“This research itself was successful largely because it was supported by the divisions and, indeed, many of the unions,” Trim said.
But strategic planning doesn’t end with survey results, or even the best interpretation of those results, church leaders said.

“Strategic planning must go far beyond decision-making based on the best orator. It must be built upon a solid biblical basis, the best research and information, and, most importantly, the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we choose a direction and begin to expend the resources of the church,” Ryan said.

Comprehensive strategic planning, church officials said, should also have a practical side and lead to measurable results.

“Encouraging more Bible reading and prayer will probably be in every Adventist strategic plan until the world ends, but strategic planning doesn’t stop at identifying areas of concern,” Trim said.

“It’s also asking, ‘What can be done to effect positive change?’ and identifying key performance indicators so that in five years, we can go back and measure our progress,” he said.

G T Ng, a committee member and executive secretary of the Adventist world church, said that any strategic plan should propel the mission of the church forward.

“We know that strategic planning is important, but it must be a servant to mission,” Ng said. “Planning is valid only when it helps the church fulfill the purpose for which it was established.”

The Adventist Church’s current strategic plan is “Tell the World”. The plan is designed to coordinate the church’s efforts to spread its message of hope, and is central to the church’s identity and heritage.

A revised draft of the 2015 to 2020 Strategic Plan will go to delegates of the 2014 Annual Council for approval.
Survey of Adventist ‘opinions, attitudes and spiritual life patterns’ coming to local churches

Feb 24, 2012 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

More than 60 percent of Seventh-day Adventists worldwide are women. Less than 40 percent of American Adventists study their Bible once a week.

Regularly cited at Adventist board meetings and business sessions, these and other so-called church statistics are not actually known to be factual. Many familiar “facts” might better be classified as “anecdotes, hunches and instincts,” says Adventist researcher David Trim.

Church researchers say a major survey of the opinions, attitudes and spiritual life patterns of Adventists worldwide will help shape more effective ministry and mission. [photo: iStockphoto]

Trim, who directs the world church’s Office of Archives, Statistics and Research, wants to see anecdotal evidence replaced by “actual data.” Beginning this year, his office will oversee a major research project to survey the opinions, attitudes and spiritual life patterns of Adventist pastors, church members, institutional employees and college and university professors worldwide.

“We need to know what is actually happening in the church, not just what we’d like to be happening,” Trim says. That knowledge can equip church leaders to use money and resources more judiciously and effectively, he says.

“We’re doing this because we want to do ministry and mission better. We want to be better stewards of what God has given to us, and we want to be more effective in discipling and winning souls,” Trim says.

It wasn’t until last year that top church officials first voted to establish an ongoing budget for Adventist research meant to inform the church’s strategic plan. Previously, Adventist research was conducted sporadically, with limited focus and funding, and almost exclusively in North America, Trim says.

This time around, the plan is for a “rigorous” survey carried out in each of the church’s 13 world divisions, Trim says. Using the new research budget, his office has contracted with research teams at Adventist universities in North America, South America, Inter-America, Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia and Australia. Each team has demonstrated research “expertise and experience,” Trim says. While much of the anonymous polling will take place this year, some surveys may continue into early 2013, with full results due back at world church headquarters by June of 2013.

Survey questions will go beyond age, gender, ethnicity and other statistics-based research to ask about attitudes and opinions on spiritual life, fundamental beliefs and values, church leadership, Adventist institutions and fellow members, among other topics.

“The Adventist Church is committed to a strategic planning process that provides direction based on a body of evidence,” says Michael L. Ryan, a world church general vice president and vice-chair of the church’s Strategic Planning and Budgeting Committee.

“All strategic planning is really only for one reason: How do we better advance the mission?” Ryan says.

Adventist researcher David Trim wants to see “actual data” replace “anecdotes, hunches and instincts” about the church. Here, Trim reviews files in the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research, which he directs at world church headquarters. [ANN file photo]

How beneficial the results are depends largely upon whether Adventists worldwide fully engage in the survey, Trim says. There’s no way to track survey results back to individual respondents, so researchers are hoping members will feel confident in giving honest answers -- “not
what you think we’d like to hear,” he says.

“We understand that people will not always be doing what we wish they were doing. We understand that people are not necessarily believing what we want them to believe. And we understand that often they won’t be feeling very happy with us,” Trim says. “There’s going to be what will be perceived as bad news. But we want to know this so we can do a better job.”

In some cases, survey results might spur church leaders to launch programs that would “modify our behavior and practices,” Trim says. Other results may prompt better communication between leaders and members.

“If people are unhappy with an area that’s fundamental to our faith, then we can educate and explain to members why this is essential,” Trim says.

While he expects that much of the research will be published by Adventist scholars, Trim says some of it will remain confidential.

“My hope is that in fact we would not only get answers to really important questions, but -- as a side product -- we would also increase the research capacity of the church,” Trim says.

Many Adventist researchers have demonstrated that they can produce “good, rigorous research,” and Trim is keen to see them given “time and space” to benefit the church.

“I think at times we have made decisions based on who can give the best speech at a [church business meeting]. Somebody who gets up and has a burden on his heart and says, ’Brethren, I feel we should do thus and so,’ and he’s eloquent, he’s impassioned, and he uses all the right Adventist buzzwords and everybody says, ‘Amen, vote the money.’ And often nobody asks, ‘Is this really reflecting a need wider than this one person’s perception?’” Trim says.

More and better Adventist research will equip leadership to use church money and resources in the best possible way rather than the most immediately appealing way, Trim says.

He also hopes the church’s growing commitment to research will help boost member confidence in Adventist leadership. They’ll know that research is steering leadership toward better informed decision-making and, ultimately, better methods of spreading the Adventist hope.

Church leaders expect the first wave of surveys to begin by the end of April.
Church conference nominates woman president

Riverside, California, United States

Pastor Sandra Roberts has been nominated for the role of president of the Southeastern California Conference (SCC). If elected, Pastor Roberts will become the first woman to serve as president of a Seventh-day Adventist conference.

The nomination comes as the SCC prepares for its constituency meeting on October 27. Last year, the Conference became one of the world’s first regions to adopt the full ordination of women.

Pastor Sandra Roberts.

The SCC has made no official comment on the move to vote Pastor Roberts, who currently serves as the Conference’s executive secretary, to the presidential position. As per the usual procedure, Pastor Roberts is the only nominee for the role of president. A list of names recommended by the SCC’s nominating committee can be found on <www.seccsession.org>.

World church leaders have repeatedly asked Adventist Church regions to refrain from moving independently on women’s ordination.

The Adventist Church is currently engaged in a global discussion on the practice and parameters of ordination. As part of this discussion, the General Conference has constituted an ordination study process to make recommendations in the lead-up to the 2015 General Conference Session.
Adventist woman named government minister

Manolita Ly, director of Family Ministries for the Adventist Church’s French Polynesia Mission, has become the first woman to be appointed to the government’s Council of Ministers.

Mrs Ly, 52, will begin serving as the country’s minister of Social Works and Employment in November. She has previously worked as a psychologist and associate director for social services and a special assistant to the president of French Polynesia.

“I never would have thought I’d end up as a minister for the French Polynesian Government,” said Mrs Ly. “Please pray for the government of French Polynesia. We need your prayers.”

Mrs Ly’s favourite Bible verse is Matthew 25:35: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.” She will join fellow Adventist Church member Thomas Mouthame, French Polynesia’s minister of Agriculture, on the Council.
New leaders for Victorian Conference

Record.net.au/items/new-leaders-for-victorian-conference

Nunawading, Victoria

Pastor Graeme Christian has been named president of the Victorian Conference, with Mr Graeme Moffitt appointed as the Conference’s chief financial officer (CFO).

The announcements come following the Conference’s constituency meeting at Seddon Adventist church on Sunday (September 22).

Pastor Graeme Christian. [Photo courtesy: Australian Union Conference]

"I've been with the AUC for more than a decade—which has been truly great," said Pastor Christian, who had been serving as the Union’s Ministerial Association secretary. "While I wasn’t looking for a change, I’m excited to lead the Victorian Conference as we move forward. Please pray for God’s work in Victoria."

Former Conference president Pastor Wayne Stanley announced his retirement from the position in July.

Aside from his years at the AUC, Pastor Christian has been apart of church leadership teams in Greater Sydney, South New South Wales and Fiji, serving in a number of administrative roles as well as a local church pastor.

Mr Moffitt has spent the past eight years working as a financial officer for the Greater Sydney Conference (GSC), serving as CFO since 2010. He has worked in church finance since 1984, serving in a number of different church conferences and at South Pacific Division headquarters.

Mr Graeme Moffitt. [Photo courtesy: Greater Sydney Conference]

"After much prayer, consultation, and consideration, I felt God's calling for me to serve in Victoria," said Mr Moffitt. "The opportunities and challenges for the Conference are great, but I hold close to the text in Matthew 19:26 that says, ‘with man this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.’"

During last Sunday’s constituency meeting, it was also announced that Pastor Darren Croft would continue to serve as general secretary of the Victorian Conference—a role he has held since 2009.
Nairobi, Kenya

The husband of an Adventist church member from Nairobi was killed during the terrorist attack in Nairobi’s Westgate Shopping Mall, in which more than 60 people were killed and more than 170 injured.

Harun Oyieke, a lecturer at Co-operative University College of Kenya, was among those killed in the attack. He was the husband of Florence Awino, a professor at the University of Nairobi.

People take cover as gunfire can be heard coming from a shopping mall (back) in Nairobi, Kenya, on September 21, after the mall was attacked by a group of gunmen the same day. [Photo courtesy: Associated Press]

The attack occurred at about 11 am on Saturday (September 21). Between 10 and 15 terrorists armed with automatic weapons and grenades attacked the shopping mall and killed 60 people, leaving at least 170 others wounded. At the time of filing this report on Monday night, at least 50 people were still missing according to Red Cross officials.

Among those killed were South African, American, Ghanaian, French, Netherlands, Australian, British, Chinese, Dutch, Indian and Canadian nationals. Several members of the Kenyan police and military were also killed or wounded in the attack as they attempted to rescue hostages.

World leaders, including UN secretary general Ban-ki Moon and US president Barack Obama, condemned the attack and expressed condolences with those who had lost relatives and friends.

“This is a time of shock for all Kenyans and all—including the UN family—who are proud to call Nairobi home,” Ban-ki Moon said in a statement. “I express my solidarity with them at this moment of grief and loss.”

The siege continued into the early hours of Monday night, when the Kenyan forces broke through and released the remaining hostages.
Somali Islamist al-Shabaab militants claimed responsibility for the attack.

Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta, who lost his nephew and the nephew’s fiancée in the attack, condemned the terrorists, saying his government would not allow them to break the country’s unity along religious lines.

Reports said the attackers who had been dropped off at the mall in three cars overwhelmed security guards by shooting shoppers indiscriminately. They besieged the mall and held scores of shoppers hostage as they exchanged fire with Kenyan police and the military. TV footage and pictures showed bewildered children standing next to dead bodies and wounded shoppers in and outside the mall.

Kenyans responded to the attack by donating blood for the victims and sending messages of hope. The national blood bank had exceeded its annual average of 4000 liters, and over Sh50 million (US$600,000) was collected in two days. The Adventist Church in Kenya gave a check of Sh1 million ($12,000). Vice President William Ruto said Kenyans had defeated evil by meeting it with kindness.