



NAD Year-End Meetings, Day 5 (Photos: Pieter Damsteegt/NAD).

North American Division Votes Request for Tithe Parity

BY ALISA WILLIAMS | NOVEMBER 6, 2018

The penultimate day of the 2018 North American Division Year-end Meetings on Monday, November 5, slowly built to a crescendo that ended in a motion to reduce the amount of tithe the NAD gives to the General Conference to parity with other divisions, and a personal appeal from NAD President Dan Jackson.

The day began with the Treasurer's Report from G. Thomas Evans, retiring NAD treasurer. The bulk of the report and subsequent discussion focused on tithe: what the NAD receives, how much is returned to the conferences/unions, and how much is given to the GC for use in other divisions around the world.

The total tithe received from members in the NAD in 2017 was \$1,020,674,628. This was an increase of over \$18 million from 2016. NAD tithe has gradually increased over the last ten years, and has topped \$1 billion for the last two years. In 2016, 44 percent of the total world tithe came from the NAD.

Evans reminded the delegates that several years ago it was voted, in conversation with the General Conference, that the NAD would gradually reduce the amount of tithe it gives back to the GC, from 8 percent in 2012 down to 5.85 percent in 2020. The NAD currently gives 6.35 percent (2018). In 2016, the NAD gave \$74.2 million to the GC, while the rest of the world combined gave \$25.8 million.

Of the over \$1 billion that was received in 2017, \$846.68

million (82.95 percent) was kept at the local conference and union levels for use and \$173.99 million (17.05 percent) was remitted to the NAD, which it then distributed as shown in Diagram 1.

The amount left for use by the NAD is approximately three cents per gross tithe dollar, which is then spent as shown in Diagram 2.

After the report, several delegates appealed to the NAD for more money to be allocated to helping immigrants and refugees within the United States. "We need to let them know we know they're here and we need to support them," said Dean Coridan, president of the Iowa-Missouri Conference. He continued, saying that this needs to be addressed with the GC—they need to understand that North America *is* a mission field, and serving, for example, the Karen immigrants here in the United States is just as important as supporting the Karen people in refugee camps across the world.

Debbie Jackson, a lay member from Colorado, spoke to the fact that there are children born right here in America who don't have access to food or water. "North America *is* a mission field. . . . There is a mission field here with our children, and I don't see us reaching out to them, and it hurts my heart."

The Treasurer's Report was accepted unanimously by the body, and then Juan Prestol-Puesan, GC treasurer, appealed to the delegates saying the GC has needs, too. It has ministries it hasn't even touched, not because of lack



NAD Year-End Meetings, Day 5 (Photos: Pieter Damsteegt/NAD).

of heart, but because of funding limitations. “This is not our money, it is God’s money,” he said, and God will provide for needs. No division has enough money for its needs, but we trust God to provide. Prestol seemed well aware of where the conversation of the day was headed—toward a discussion and ultimately a vote on tithe parity.

A few more financial reports, including ones from the Adventist Retirement department and the General Conference Auditing Services (GCAS), finished out the morning. The average mortality of an Adventist employee is actually less than that of the general population, retirement director Ray Jimenez told the audience. Robin Kajjura from GCAS told the audience that there are 321 entities within the NAD that are evaluated by GCAS. Of these, 73 percent were evaluated in 2017, and 90 percent of these received a standard (compliant) report. “That’s a really good percentage,” she said.

After lunch, a slew of additional reports were presented, including Christian Record Services, Adventist Media Ministries, and Oakwood University, before the discussion turned back to finance and Jackson opened the floor for discussion.

Terry Shaw, president of Adventist Health System, was first at the mic and immediately made a motion:

“Recommend the NAD Administration to discuss with General Conference the issue of financial parity.”

Ohio Conference President Ron Halvorsen spoke in favor of the motion, saying that despite the fact tithe has increased in his territory, because so much of it goes to other divisions, there simply isn’t enough left to fund their mission here. The church in the NAD is aging, the faithful NAD tithe givers who are funding mission are dying. “I want us to be the giving-est division in the world,” concluded Halvorsen, but if we don’t do something now to support our NAD churches and schools, everyone, every division all over the world, will be hurt.

Calvin Watkins, president of the Southwest Regional Conference, said “We may fund a great majority of the world church, but when you look at our numbers of what we’re baptizing, *this* is the new mission field.”

Lee-Roy Chacon, Texico Conference president, asked how the amount of tithe the other divisions give compares to what the NAD gives. Jackson replied that the other divisions all give 2 percent of their tithe to the GC, as is required by the *Working Policy*. Chacon then asked for an amendment to the motion as follows: “Recommend the NAD Administration to discuss with General Conference the issue of

North American Division 2017 Use of Funds:		
Tithe Income		\$173,986,369
Sent on to GC	\$67,364,525	
Tithe Exchange—(See Non-Tithe Graph Later)	\$30,720,000	
Evangelism Reversion	\$14,704,353	
Special Assistance	\$10,000,582	
Retirement-(Defined Benefit Plan Extra Appr.)	\$2,865,782	
Adventist Media Ministry	\$5,090,010	
Seminary--Min/Bus/Com/WIM Approp.	\$4,429,585	
Auditing Services (pay ½ of Conferences fees)	\$4,146,120	
Oakwood/Other Appropriations	\$2,137,656	
NADEI/AIM	\$1,735,275	<u>\$143,193,888</u>
Left for North American Division Use		<u>\$30,792,481</u>
<p>This \$30.79 million is right at 3% of the \$1,020.67 million gross Tithe (3 cents per gross tithe dollar)</p>		

Diagram 1

How We Used the \$30.79 Million NAD Pie Slice in 2017:	
All Admin. Functions/Expenses	\$22,223,150
Strategic Initiatives-Building Blocks	\$2,051,448
Projects-(Broken out later)	\$1,477,326
Evangelism	\$1,137,996
Adv. Giving/Schl Pay/ACC/eAdventist	\$1,084,151
Adventist Church Treasury Solutions	\$761,110
Guam Micronesia—Our Mission	\$502,083
Adventist Rev./El Centinela/Message	\$548,928
Plusline-AdventSource	\$282,361
Title VII Cases/Other/Misc	\$130,500
GC Session/Ministries & HR Conventions	\$352,778
Esperanza TV	\$173,408
Miscellaneous	<u>\$67,242</u>
	<u>\$30,792,481</u>

Diagram 2

financial parity to be accomplished in two to three years.” At the recommendation of another delegate, this wording was further clarified to read, “Recommend the NAD Administration to discuss with General Conference the issue of financial parity, with parity to be accomplished in two to three years.”

Jackson asked Prestol-Puesan to come to the mic and explain how the GC would be affected by the proposed

change. Prestol said that he wanted to interject some intelligence into the discussion. “You are voting with emotion,” he told the delegates, to murmurs of protest. He then continued, saying that to vote tithe parity is actually out of compliance, because only the GC can decide tithe policy.

“Tithe percentages are in the black book [*Working Policy*] as policy. If you say you want to change tithe percentages, you’re saying you want to change policy.” It can be

done, he continued, but it takes time and can't be done this quickly, and even with these discussions, the NAD still wouldn't be granted parity because the money from the NAD is necessary to fund mission. He said there are 500 families here serving the GC who would have to turn around and go home if this tithe parity motion is voted, because what is received from the NAD funds their salaries.

In conclusion, Prestol said the motion on the floor was out of compliance and world budgets have already been decided based on NAD tithe and cannot be changed now. We can't go back to the other divisions and say they won't have the money they were promised, he said. Jackson had to ask the room to maintain respect several times, as there were murmurs of dissent throughout Prestol's remarks.

The responses to the amended motion were mixed, with some saying the NAD has a responsibility to the rest of the world to fund mission in less prosperous areas. Several said that to move to reduce tithe now sends the wrong message and seems retaliatory after what happened at Annual Council. But others spoke to the specific, urgent needs within the NAD. One delegate pointed out that we have the equivalent of third world countries right here in the United States.

A delegate called question, which was voted through, thereby ceasing discussion and moving directly to voting the amendment on the motion. The amended motion of adding "two to three years" to the motion was then voted and passed: 119 yes, 114 no, and one abstention. Only a simple majority was needed to pass the amendment.

The floor then opened for discussion on the amended motion. Mike Hewitt from the Mountain View Conference, after identifying his conference as the smallest in the United States, said, "We have real challenges, our people are faithful, they believe in mission...but I can tell you we have churches who won't be here in five years...How are we supposed to help other parts of the world when we can't help ourselves?"

Carlton Byrd, director of Breath of Life, said the cost of doing ministry is rising faster and higher than what current tithe allocations can fund. "Salvation is free, but ministry takes money."



Diane Thurber, president of Christian Record Services, responds at the NAD Year-End Meetings (Photos: Pieter Damsteegt/NAD).

Keith Bowman, who founded the young adult ministry, *The Haystack*, said it is impossible to find money to fund youth and young-adult missions and meet them where they're at, which is online. He spoke to digital missionaries such as himself and Justin Khoe who runs "That Christian Vlogger." Though *The Haystack* is now under the NAD's purview, other great ministries are not because there is no funding to help them. But digital missionaries are the future and they need funding, concluded Bowman.

Dean Coridan, Iowa-Missouri Conference president, said he doesn't appreciate accusations of being in rebellion. If the GC recognizes the NAD is giving more than other divisions, but sees there's need here, they should have offered a solution themselves. But they didn't. And because they didn't offer a solution, they shouldn't kick or threaten the people on the ground when they are asking for a solution today. "In compliance, out of compliance, we are going to do mission," concluded Coridan.

Ron Carlson, Kansas-Nebraska Conference president said we can't keep kicking this can down the road. We've known about the needs for decades and our hands have been tied, but our members are saying enough is enough. We need to do something.

Todd Pascoe, lay member, stood in opposition to the motion. He said we have abundance in this country. "God is delaying the second coming so none are lost...and there are unintended consequences when we try to move this much money around."

After many responses, some in favor, some against, and several conflicted, a delegate moved to end the discussion and take the vote immediately. That motion passed, and so the vote on the motion then occurred. The motion passed with 121 yes and 90 no and was worded as follows: “Recommend the NAD Administration to discuss with General Conference the issue of financial parity, with parity to be accomplished in two to three years.”

With the vote out of the way, Jackson seemed to feel the time was right to share his personal opinion on the actions of the GC. In what appeared to be an off-the-cuff appeal, Jackson spoke for twenty minutes on the way the Church has mistreated women and the NAD’s dedication to women pastors.

Lastly, the writing committee’s proposed document was passed out to delegates to study overnight and to discuss the next day. Alex Bryant, NAD executive secretary, made an appeal from the dais that no one share the document with anyone outside the room. Media outlets were asked not to post it until Tuesday, after the discussion was underway. (The document has since been voted and officially released.)

Although the NAD officials are now tasked with beginning conversations with the GC regarding tithe parity, only time will tell whether the GC is willing to acquiesce to the request. If Prestol’s comments earlier in the day are any indication, the GC may simply say “no,” claiming such a request is out of compliance.

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NAD Calls for GC Compliance Document to be Rescinded

BY BONNIE DWYER | NOVEMBER 7, 2018

On the last day of the North American Division Year-end Meetings, an hour was set aside to discuss the statement of how the Division would officially respond to the General Conference’s recently approved process regarding non-compliance with General Conference actions. A writing committee had been appointed earlier in the week to draft a statement, and delegates had been given an opportunity to make suggestions they thought should be included.

John Freedman, president of the North Pacific Union and a member of the writing committee, read the statement to the delegates. It affirmed commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist faith and oneness in the body of Christ.

It recognized Christ as the head of the church, the Bible as “our only creed,” the work of the Holy Spirit, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the resulting spirit of Christlike forbearance. It continued:

As such, we are compelled to reject the spirit and direction of this document voted at the 2018 Annual Council (hereafter indicated as ‘the document’),

as it is not consistent with the biblical model of the church. We simply cannot, in good conscience, support or participate in the implementation of the process outlined in the document, as it is contrary to the culture of respect and collaboration taught in the Bible

Additionally, the NAD statement said the GC document “moves us away from the principles behind the 1901–03 reorganization.”

There were three requests for action: 1) that the General Conference Executive Committee at its 2019 Annual Council rescind the action approving this document, 2) that it revise any policies that enable majority fields to dictate the management of non-doctrinal, non-biblical issues to minority fields and create policies that protect the interests of minority fields, 3) that an item be placed on the 2020 General Conference Session agenda calling for a statement that affirms respect for the multiple cultures and practices in which we minister and empower ministry that is sensitive to the local context.

With an admonition from the chair “not to wordsmith the document,” the floor was open for discussion.

Jim Micheff, president of the Michigan Conference, was first to the microphone. He spoke against the document, but in a conciliatory manner. “This is my family. I have agreed to disagree with those in favor of women’s ordination. It is not an issue I wish to discuss.” But he said this document makes that very difficult, because he felt that to accept the three requests for action would be to deny the authority of the General Conference. And the third item, in particular, the GC could not do. “We would have independent divisions interpreting what Adventism is throughout this whole field.” He concluded that,

If this vote goes, Michigan is a member of the North American Division of the General Conference. We will embrace it. You are still my brothers and sisters. We may not agree. I know that God is going to bring unity into this church. I don’t know how he is going to do it, but he is going to bring us into unity.

Ramiro Cano, the president of the Central California Conference, who in a previous speech had told the gathering that he was from a compliant conference in a non-compliant union, opened his comments with a reference to the principles Jackson had set when the writing committee was given its task to draft a statement: 1) reflecting NAD mission, 2) in a Christ-like manner, 3) in harmony with biblical principles. “I want to affirm the work of the writing committee,” he said “it meets the principles that you outlined.” He said he was opposed to the document presented in Battle Creek, he was disappointed by that action. And then he closed with a question, “This document when it gets to the GC, will there be a receptivity to the document?”

Darrel Lindensmith, a pastor from the Dakota Conference, gave the shortest speech. “I did not have high expectations. Thanks committee. It is perfect. Shorten the first page a little, but just thank you.”

Ricardo Graham, president of the Pacific Union, also expressed appreciation to the writing committee saying that he liked the length and the tone. “It does not sound angry or rebellious. It sets out clearly the direction the division has been moving towards.” He reminded the delegates of a 2012 action taken at a Pacific Union Conference special constituency meeting (by a vote of 79 percent to 21 percent to recognize ordination without regard to gender. “We have moved in that direction because that is what our people

asked us to do. As an employee of the Pacific Union Conference, I have moved in the direction.” He closed by saying that “God is an equal opportunity employer.”

Diane Thurber, the president of Christian Record Services, was the only woman to speak. She began her comments in support of the document by pointing out that women are a majority in our Church’s membership, and that she was speaking “for those women whose voices have been silenced by those who don’t understand or recognize God’s love for women and His plans to deploy women to help Him reach a dying world.”

I stand here because I could not say no to the call of God to serve in leadership for our Church. I am not a pastor but I am charged to help reach the more than 217 million visually impaired and 39 million who are blind in the world and ultimately to ‘empower people who are blind to engage their community and embrace the Blessed Hope.’ It was not a decision I made without confirmation of His call, a recognition that none of us are fully equipped for what He calls us to do, and belief that the message of His saving grace will only reach the whole world if we allow God to use and equip whomever He chooses to use for whichever task He needs done whenever He desires. We have seen many women, like men, submit their lives to Him and accomplish His purpose in powerful ways. How can we stand in His way?

She asserted her belief that the Compliance Committees that will convene as a result of the document voted at Annual Council, “will ultimately punish women, perpetuate more pain, and may ultimately prohibit women from serving as God calls and ordains.”

In spite of the chair’s request that people “not wordsmith the document,” there were multiple suggestions for additions of words and phrases for clarification. Before breaking for lunch, the chair called for a vote, even though the writing committee was charged with making corrections over the lunch hour. The statement was approved with 176 in favor and 48 no votes. Late in the afternoon, the edited document was returned to the floor, the modifications were read, and then a second approval of the document was made via a raising of hands.

BONNIE DWYER is editor of *Spectrum*.



North American Division President Dan Jackson speaks at the 2018 year-end meetings.
(Photo: Flickr.com/NAD/Mylon Medley)

Hooy and Credulity

BY DANIEL R. JACKSON | NOVEMBER 6, 2018

Editor's Note: This is a transcript of the November 5, 2018 statement from North American Division President Dan Jackson following the discussion and vote to bring the amount of tithe sent by the NAD to the General Conference into parity with the other world divisions within the next three years.

I think we are done for the day. Now please come tomorrow with your running shoes, because we have a lot to accomplish tomorrow. I want to make a statement before you get up.

I want to make a statement that is very sensitive. But I am saying it to you, and I don't know if we are streaming still. It doesn't matter if we are, or if we are not. I think the discussion of the last two days demonstrates a malaise in the church. I believe that all of us need to pray that we will overcome that malaise, or at least the spirit of God will overcome that malaise in the church. We must appeal to God to bring us together.

I will say from the perspective of serving as the president of this division for eight years, that I am very tired and probably angry at the way our division is looked at by the world. We are

not rebels. We are Seventh-day Adventists. There is tremendous loyalty to the church in the North American Division. Once again, I would challenge—and I mean challenge—someone to find any of the divisions that are more loyal to the church, both in terms of policy and finances than the North American Division. I will not sit here and tell you what I know, because it would be embarrassing to the world church. But if we have two unions, or forty-nine women who have been ordained, these are small matters compared to some of the other matters that exist around the world .

I don't know where the discussions will go that we've just voted, but I will tell you, there had better be a spirit of reconciliation on the part of all. No condescension. No, we are not your students. We are colleagues together in ministry with our brethren from the General Conference. Period. It will be unacceptable to the three of us, as it is unacceptable to you, that you're looked down upon. It's just not acceptable. I will not tolerate it, and I mean that just as I say it. I will walk away so fast it will make anybody's head spin. This division has not only been the breadbasket, but it has been the source of human resources that have fanned and fueled mission and growth and development in the world church for decades. And I hope and pray it will continue to be. I hope and pray that we can come to an amicable resolution of the financial issue that is pregnant in this division. Because we don't live in the days. "The days of wine and roses." We don't live in that world anymore. We just don't.

And so, I am making this statement so that you all know, and so our world leaders know, and my good brothers, my fellow division presidents: Be a little careful. I'm not saying this militantly, I'm appealing: Be a little careful about how you talk about this precious division. And the precious people who lead in this division.

I want Jesus to come. I expressed some time ago to Elder Wilson, following the 2015 General Conference [Session], these sentiments: "I know that you believe we are on the borders of Canaan. I don't believe that. I believe we are headed back into the wilderness."

We all bear a responsibility here. We have got to stop talking about the brethren like they're scumbags. We must pay respect, give respect, and appeal that we work together. Condescension isn't pretty on anybody. So, by God's grace, this has been a serious period of time these last two days. And we still have some territory to cover.

Punishing people is something that God ultimately will do. In my opinion, and I know this steps on toes, I will never agree to that document. It was voted by the world church. There was a majority vote. And the General Conference will have to apply whatever principles it needs to apply or it thinks to apply. Because you see,

you understand, the North American Division has never said we do not think there should be any accountability. We have never said that. As a matter of fact, as I said the other day, we offered a way through by request from the president of the General Conference. We offered a way. It was rejected. So what I'm saying now is that I am praying that God will give us the collective sense to assist us to find that document in the paper shredders.

If God is with a movement, it will prosper. If He's not, it is doomed to failure. I just have a very hard time believing that women are doomed to failure who are guided by the Holy Spirit.

I believe this church, this doesn't sound pretty, but I believe this church one day in the future is going to stand up in embarrassment and apologize for the absolute abuse of women.

I am not talking about—you know, people have different opinions—and I want the folks who think right now that I'm an absolute raving lunatic, to know I support your right to believe women should not be ordained. I support your right. You are a member of God's church. You are our brothers and sisters, and I'm not talking about that. I am talking about words entrenched in policies that beg credulity. You can't tell people today, "We love everybody, and everybody can do everything, except those positions that require...." Get that policy out of there. Just come out and say, "We do not believe in ordination of women. Period." That's all you have to say. But that nonsense, that hooley, in the B60 policy that allows us to put a noose around the neck of women is garbage. It's a good word. Don't say three times, "We love everybody, and everybody's acceptable, and you can do anything, except if there's an ordination requirement, and then come to the end of the policy and say all of these 'except' statements in parentheses do not apply—and do not apply them—to women who have been ordained as elders as it has been voted by the General Conference." I'm sorry it begs credulity.

Our women in the North American Division who serve as pastors and leaders will be protected by the North American Division and every conference and union president in this place.

There is more hooley—there is hooley in the male headship theology. It was never Seventh-day Adventist, it is not Seventh-day Adventist, and it is not going to become Seventh-day Adventist. So, here's a story. My good secretary just said, "Calm down." He's a good man. You know, we will continue to pray that God's spirit will lead the church, so that our women will not be held back or limited by glass ceilings that we have created to in order to protect our own positions.

So, I just wanted to tell you a thing or two at the end of the meeting. I know there will be some folks who will be madder than a hornet with me. And my basic statement is that if you are mad as a hornet, “Buzz off.” Because I have to tell you, I have lived through this for eight years and I am tired.

Let us determine by God’s grace that we will work: a) to support our women, that we will work—and this is painful—in harmony with the brethren, because that is part of our role, and the brethren around the world have said, “No.” So the onus is on us to demonstrate that our women are spiritual women of God serving Him, building ministry for Him, and we will not pull back. We are not going to quit a) hiring women pastors. If you feel we’re going to, or you’re going to kick up a fuss about it, too bad. We will not stop. Furthermore, we will continue to agitate for the ordination of women to the Gospel ministry.

Having said all that I have said in the last twenty minutes, I want to say: I have made an issue of this, because of the last two days. But this division, having said that, is not about Women’s Ordination. It’s about evangelizing the world with the Gospel of Jesus. And I don’t remember who it was, I think it was Todd Pascoe, who said we need, no, it was our brother from Columbia Union, we need to find new ways and new methods of evangelizing for Jesus Christ.

Some of us will do that believing in Women’s Ordination, some will do that not believing. I’m appealing to all of us, let’s touch each other, let’s work into each other’s hearts. We are brethren, or we are the bristers, you know? You know what a brister is? That’s a combination of a brother and a sister. We are the bristers. And we must work together. We have, and will always have, some impediments, but let us not be deterred. Let us move forward in our mission and with joy in our hearts—not anger—but joy in our hearts because the Lord Jesus, who came as a baby in a manger, is going to come again. And He wants us to live with Him, and with each other, forever.

And you know what I know about heaven? There’s not going to be one argument about women’s ordination. It’s like we used to say when I was a pastor: “There are good things about every period in history, for instance, the time of trouble, there will be no Ingathering.”

God bless you.

DANIEL R. JACKSON is president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.