RE-ELECTED!

Report by Celeste Ryan
Plyden
Photos by David Hittle

Last night delegates to the 26th Constituency Session of the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists unanimously voted to re-elect officers for the 2011-2016 session—Dave Weigley, president (pictured center with his wife, Becky), Neville Harcombe, executive secretary (left with his wife, Cindy), and treasurer Seth Bardu (right with his wife, Theresa). Despite a torrential rainstorm, hundreds of delegates and guests packed the Southern Asian Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Md., for the session where they closed the Sabbath with a vespers concert by Washington Adventist University's renowned choir and orchestra before commencing the business session and its first agenda item: President Weigley's quinquennial report. Afterwards North American Division president Dan Jackson assumed chairmanship of the meeting to oversee the election of officers. It took less than 10 minutes for delegates to unanimously vote to return all three leaders for the next five years.

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President’s Report
Highlights Members Engaged in Mission

Once the business session was officially open with nearly 200 delegates seated, Weigley gave his President’S Report delegates reviewing the six priorities outlined by the union’S Executive Committee in late 2006. The 70-minute report streamed live on the Internet and recorded for DVD production, included nine video stories and live interviews with 30 members, pastors and leaders from across the Columbia Union. Weigley also spoke with Mountain View Conference member Delsie.
Ninety delegates of the Washington Adventist University (WAU) constituency met on the university’s Takoma Park, Md., campus Friday to receive President Weymouth Spence’s quinquennial report. “The spirit is growing at WAU,” he announced. “We are engaging minds and transforming lives.” Enthusiastic constituency delegates voted to receive his report, new bylaws that endorsed the board’s April 5 decision to add a branch campus in South Lancaster, Mass., and a board of trustees for the next five years.

The president’s and auditor’s reports reflected an upward trend for the university that some five years ago struggled financially. Spence proudly noted that since that time of trouble, the university has rebounded to now offer a three-school model with 32 undergraduate programs, eight graduate degrees and realize a 30.5 percent increase in enrollment—its highest since 1991. Patrick Farley, executive vice president for finance, reported that the university now functions with positive working capital and decreasing debt.

“The is a very significant moment for WAU … We acknowledge the wonderful things that God has been doing in the past five years,” remarked Dave Weigley, chair of WAU’s Board of Trustees and president of the Columbia Union Conference.

The delegates also addressed the university’s addition of a branch campus in South Lancaster, Mass., at Atlantic Union College (AUC). Many noted the historic nature of the proceedings, which means that two unions—the Columbia Union Conference and the Atlantic Union Conference—will partner to operate one university. Each will contribute financially and have representatives on the board.

WAU constituency delegates unanimously voted to accept the new bylaws effective immediately and subject to ratification by the AUC constituency meeting June 13. If that happens, WAU will now offer Seventh-day Adventist higher education to students in 15 states and the islands of Bermuda.
“This is a mile-marker for us,” shared Neville Harcombe, Columbia Union Conference executive secretary. “We need to take care of the educational needs of our young people on the East Coast.”

Donald Blake, PhD, who retired from the board after two terms, said that while cautious about the addition of a branch campus, he was “glad to go out with a sense of strength that the university has now” and called the president’s report “very encouraging.”

Victor Zill, executive secretary/treasurer for the Mountain View Conference, said, “I’m very thankful the university is in a much stronger financial position where they are able to better pursue education ministry. It is very exciting to see the addition of a second campus moving forward and whatever opportunities that may provide.”

Spence explained that adding a branch campus was an opportunity not only for WAU, but for the Adventist Christian educational system. “There are many of our institutions that have been struggling financially for years, and this historic vote starts a trend, hopefully, that will bring our schools together for the long-term sustainability of Adventist Christian education overall.”

WAU Board of Trustees Members 2011-2016
1. Dave Weigley
2. J. Neville Harcombe
3. Weymouth Spence
4. Hannah Blake
5. Raj Attiken
6. Nancy Bailey
7. Seth Bardu
8. Violet Cox
9. Larry Boggess
10. Albert Reese
11. Bruce Boyer
12. Hamlet Canosa
13. Vijay Charles
14. Charles Cheatham
15. Jose Cortes
16. Dwayne Dortch
17. Phyllis Edmonds
18. Ray Hartwell
19. Saundra Laughlin
20. Scott McClure
21. Margaret McFarland
22. Donald Melnick
23. Bill Miller
24. Joan Francis
25. William Robertson
26. Fredrick Russell
27. Timothy Shriver
28. Carol Stewart
29. Charles Tapp
30. Rob Vandeman
31. Mark Young

*AUC will name 12 members at its June 13 constituency meeting.