Weekly News From Around the Columbia Union Conference

**Women's Group Hosts Fifth Men of Honor Event**

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Community Service

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Longtime Allegheny East Conference Employee Retires

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post as communication director of the Allegheny East Conference (AEC). His employment with the AEC began in 1962 when he became a teacher at Pine Forge Academy (PFA) in Pine Forge, Pa. He served as a teacher for 12 years, and as a registrar for three of those years.—Story by LaTasha Hewitt

Adventist Church Sets Vote on Women’s Ordination for Next July

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.—Story by Edwin Manuel Garcia/ANN

Read the entire October Visitor online here!

More Adventist News

Ebeneezer Church Plans for Growth, Community Involvement
Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington Hosts "Raising Hope" Walkathon
28 Fundamental Beliefs Get an Update
Church Leaders Urged to Hire Pastors, Not Administrators
Ebola Deaths Include 16 Adventists in West Africa

Annual Council Opens With Focus on Healthful Living, Appeal for Diplomacy

Preparation is Key: Tips for Disaster Preparedness

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Women’s Group Hosts Fifth Men of Honor Event

columbiaunionvisitor.com/womens-group-hosts-fifth-men-of-honor-event/

October 15, 2014 · by Michelle Bernard · in Allegheny East Conference, Columbia Union News

At the Washington Metro Area Women’s Ministries’ (WMAWM) fifth annual Men of Honor celebration, held at the Dupont Park church in Washington, D.C., group leaders recognized more than 140 men for their exceptional contributions to their churches and communities.

Story by LaTasha Hewitt

Honorees represented several age groups and professions—from young professionals to a 91-year-old deacon, from pastors to military servicemen. The WMAWM, also known as Chosen Vessels, divides the honors into three categories: Helping Hand, which recognizes selfless acts of kindness; Spirit of Community, which recognizes consistent commitment to community or public service; and Unsung Hero, which recognizes significant service that has gone unnoticed.

WMAWM’s highest honor, also called Chosen Vessels, highlights outstanding support to the global mission of Women’s Ministries. This year, for the first time, the group presented this top award to two recipients: Dan Jackson, North American Division president, and Dave Weigley, Columbia Union Conference president.

To be considered for any of the awards, all nominees had to meet three general requirements: they are a male 18 years or older, they are nominated by a female and are an active member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church or local community. All nominations first passed through the local Women’s Ministries leader and pastor of their home church.

Denise Crarey, WMAWM leader, says she was inspired to start the Men of Honor event after observing three men who were doing extraordinary things outside of their assigned tasks. “I thought, if these men are doing such great things, there must be others,” she says. After three years of planning, the WMAWM held their first service in 2011.

Cynthia Poole, Allegheny East Conference’s (AEC) Women’s Ministries leader, hopes that this event will inspire other areas. “We consider men the leaders, but we don’t often appreciate and affirm them,” she shares. “This event was paramount for letting the men know that the women of Allegheny East Conference love and support them.”

To watch coverage of the event, view the AEC Today video newsletter at visitaec.org.
Burlington Church Highlights Importance of Community Service

columbiaunionvisitor.com/burlington-church-highlights-importance-of-community-service/

October 15, 2014 · by Michelle Bernard · in New Jersey Conference

*New Jersey Conference’s Burlington church recently hosted Community Service Day, a special time to show the importance of volunteering and highlight the network of resources the church and other local agencies provide to the area.*

*Story by Terrina Williams*

New Jersey Conference’s Burlington church recently hosted Community Service Day, a special time to show the importance of volunteering and highlight the network of resources the church and other local agencies provide to the area. The day started with a passionate sermon by Channing Allen, a guest speaker, who emphasized the importance of honoring God and caring for those in need. During the service, the church took time to award individuals for their devoted service to the church and community.

The day also included a community outreach program featuring nine extraordinary speakers, including Rowena Madden, executive director of the governor’s office on volunteerism; James Fazzone, Burlington mayor; as well as police officers and community service personnel. Each speaker shared unique ways that people can get involved in their communities. Madden in particular affirmed the Seventh-day Adventist Church for its valuable organizational support during major disasters.

“Community Service Day was amazing. The members of your church are really invested in their community and interested in finding ways to help and get kids involved,” said one attendee.
October 9, 2014 · by Michelle Bernard · in Allegheny East Conference

Longtime Conference Employee Retires
Story by LaTasha Hewitt

In September, after nearly 53 years of service, Robert L. Booker retired from his post as communication director of the Allegheny East Conference. His employment with the AEC began in 1962 when he became a teacher at Pine Forge Academy (PFA) in Pine Forge, Pa. He served as a teacher for 12 years, and as a registrar for three of those years.

Booker moved to the conference office in 1975, first serving as the director of two departments, education and communication. During his employment at AEC, he also served as the director the Sabbath School, Education, church ministries, Community Service and Children’s Ministries departments, among other roles. He also served on numerous boards across the North American Division.

Booker says that one of his proudest accomplishments was being instrumental in encouraging the formation of the present National Pine Forge Academy Alumni Association and PFA’s Student Association. Another proud achievement occurred in 1976 while he worked as the director of education. Booker advocated for AEC teachers. Their paychecks were based on contributions from the local churches and they sometimes had to wait weeks or months to receive their wages. He proposed that teachers become contractual workers under the conference, assuring that they would be paid on time each month. Although Booker is eager to start some new projects, retirement is bittersweet. “It was fun working here, and I'll miss everyone,” he says.

He is married to the former Audrey E. Fordham, the PFA nurse.
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.

Read the entire story on Adventist News Network.
They started with a handful of believers who wanted to worship according to their faith. They began holding services in private homes and overtime they grew exponentially and had to acquire larger accommodations.

That was 104 years ago.

Today, Ebenezer Seventh-Day Adventist Church has more than 3,000 members and is housed in a beautiful building located at 1437 Christian St. in South Philadelphia. The present location has been established for more than 80 years.

“Actually several of the members got together, went to the bank and purchased it themselves,” said the Rev. Charles Drake III, Ebenezer’s pastor.

Using their own homes as collateral, Drake said the members put their faith to work until eventually the church was able to buy back the mortgage from the members.

Drake said the Christian Street church was the first but it gave birth to others as members continue to grow and the church expanded.

Some 12 other church congregations were later formed, giving Ebenezer the distinction of being the “mother church” from which they were born.

“Over the years the congregation grew and grew and from that congregation there were 12 other churches started from that era,” said Drake.

“Now we have churches that came from us that are all over North Philly, West Philly, New Jersey, Norristown, and all of them are a good size.”

Drake described the membership of Ebenezer as an aging one consisted largely of older people and the church recognizes a need to recruit younger members if it is to survive into the future.

“The average age of the membership of Ebenezer right now is probably in the ‘50s and ‘60s,” he said.

“Within this years time we have developed a strategic plan for growth and more community involvement. We are particularly targeting youth through our ministries,” he said.

One of those ministries geared towards youth is the Praise Cafe. Praise Cafe takes place the third Friday of every month and is a service where young people get together for fun, worship and fellowship.

“It’s an open mic kind of situation and we serve finger foods and non-alcoholic beverages and folks stand up and recite poetry or sing a song. It’s an open mic cafe type of thing,” said Drake.

There was also a revival this summer which was directed and organized by the youth themselves and a youth church.

If you visit Ebenezer on Saturday, there will be no shortage of youngsters attending the church. In fact, some of the elders in the congregation joined the church as children themselves.

Carol Pride Kearney began attending Ebenezer as a child and has now been a member of for over 50 years.

Kearney said at one time Ebenezer was one of the only churches in the area.
"Historically, right here, we have seen changes take place. Our neighborhoods have changed and so our outreach has changed," she said.

Mable Oglesby has also been a member for over 50 years and said she began attending after meeting a young woman who was well versed in the Bible. That woman was a member of Ebenezer and once Oglesby paid them a visit, she never left.

"The warmth, the nurturing and the spiritual atmosphere kept me here. It's a great church family." Oglesby.

Then there's Barbara Freeman, who attended school at Ebenezer in the first grade in 1951.

"I have been here every since and I will never go any place else," said Freeman.

"The love of God keeps me here and the friendliness of the people."

"My mother is gone now, but she brought me here at two years old and I'm still here."

Those changes in the neighborhood bring changes in the needs of the people who populate them and Kearney said health and fitness was among those concerns.

"We developed some programs that we developed in the community and so we do things around the issue of diabetes, hypertension, and weight loss."

Seventh Day Adventists believe that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and as such adhere to principles of health to maintain them. This year the church began what it calls the 40-day challenge where for 40 days those who take the challenge adapt a diet similar to those believed to have been given to the Israelites by God during their 40-year sojourn in the desert during their escape from enslavement in Egypt.

Ebenezer also provide free blood pressure checks and life-age assessment tests on Wednesdays.

"We believe that a healthy church is a growing church, and we believe that a healthy growing church attracts others who want to be healthy," said Drake.

As the formerly predominant African-American neighborhood changes, Kearney said that it poses no problem for Ebenezer since the church is international with congregations around the world.

Its international reach is plain to see once you enter Ebenezer. Cambodians and Congolese and those of other nations regularly attend the church, some have not yet learned the language.

To help bridge the language gap, Ebenezer utilize interpreters and have purchased translation equipment which translates the English language.

"One thing that happens when you become an Adventist is that you become a family; it's a family and everyone becomes your sister or your brother," said Kearney.

Transition is how the word Drake used to describe the church and said that not only is it endeavoring to reach the youth but also adapting to changes in the surrounding communities as the demographics of the neighborhood changes.

The 7th Day Adventists have a rich history in Philadelphia said Drake.

"We are 17 million strong globally and we are in 217 of the 231 countries of the world; we have the largest hospital system in the world and we have the second largest educational system in the world," said Drake.

Adventists have also founded one of the largest hospitals in the nation. Situated in Loma Linda, Calif., the hospital and medical center is said to comprise of four hospitals with over 700 physicians and employs over 13,400 people.
“We have over 12 colleges, and I don’t know how many universities and schools,” said Drake.

Despite their presence around the world, Adventists say that each church is connected, making them uniform.

Adventists believe that Saturday is the Sabbath, are protestant in orientation, refrain from alcohol and try to limit themselves to a healthy diet which excludes pork.
The Annual Council approves revisions after two days of talks and sends the document to the General Conference session.

Story by Andrew McChesney, News editor, Adventist Review

Seventh-day Adventist leaders tentatively approved proposed revisions of the church’s core statements of its fundamental beliefs after two days of discussions that Artur A. Stele, chair of the revision committee, said had helped create a better product.

The delegates at the Annual Council, a major church business meeting, easily endorsed the last of the proposed revisions to the 28 Fundamental Beliefs in a 202-2 vote, with three abstentions, late Monday afternoon. They agreed to forward the document to the General Conference session for a final discussion and vote by the world church next July.

None of the revisions change any of the fundamental beliefs, and many simply update and tighten the text, Ted N.C. Wilson, president of the Adventist world church, assured delegates when the talks started on Sunday afternoon.

“I don’t want anyone here in the room to think we are changing our beliefs,” he said. “We are simply adjusting wording to make it clearer and more helpful.”

The 2014 Annual Council had scheduled a discussion and vote for Sunday afternoon, but more than 20 comments from delegates sent the revision committee back to work. The discussion reconvened Monday morning and all but one proposed revision was approved by a 179-15 vote, with five abstentions, before noon.

“I believe that the process was very helpful,” Stele, director of the church’s Biblical Research Committee, said in an interview. “Quite a number of suggestions were made after we presented the draft on Sunday, and we worked on it on Sunday night and Monday. As a result I think that the product is better than it was Sunday.”

Read 28 Fundamental Beliefs Get an Update in its entirety.
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.
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.
Annual Council opens with focus on healthful living, appeal for diplomacy

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.’"
Preparation is Key: Tips for Disaster Preparedness

October 9, 2014 · by Michelle Bernard · in This Month's Issue, Uncategorized

Preparation is Key: Tips for Disaster Preparedness

Story by Daniel Granderson

Professionals from our October feature “Ready? Set. Pack!” say they’ve learned a lot from the many hours they’ve helped disaster victims. Gain from their wisdom and be better prepared for the next natural event:

- **No two disasters are exactly alike.** Bob Mitchell, the Potomac Conference’s Adventist Community Services (ACS) coordinator, trains volunteers to always be flexible when responding.

- **Individuals, families and communities that prepare are much more likely to survive and recover quickly.** A family that has an escape plan and survival box with three days of food, medications, changes of clothing, a reliable communication device and some cash (among other vital items) is better prepared to cope with such a disaster, says Minnie McNeil, ACS/Disaster Response coordinator for the Columbia Union and director for the Allegheny East Conference.

- **Personal care products are underrated luxuries.** “One of the most important things we have learned is that, for people who don’t have anything, they need personal care kits: toothpaste, deodorant, soap, hairbrush, etc. Personal care is very important,” counsels Joe Luste, New Jersey Conference’s ACS/DR southern area coordinator.

- **Pay attention to the media.** “Too often, out of sight is out of mind,” notes Luste. “In a very complex society—including faith-based organizations, such as our own ACS/DR and denomination—fall into this trap. Media, in this case, helps remind us that, yes, news sells and storms are news, but they are also raising people’s consciousness levels.”

- **Realize that no one person or one state is immune to natural disasters,** notes Luste. We can all be impacted when we least expect it.