

# Adventist World

07-08/2022

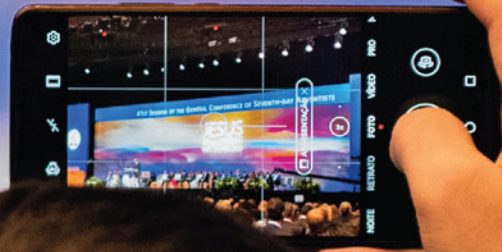
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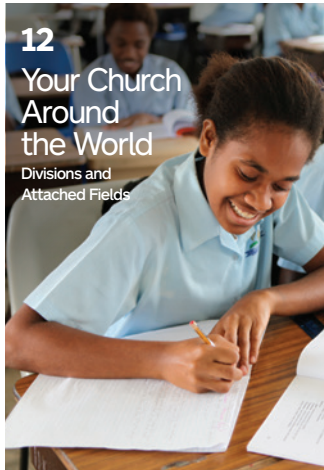
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## Taking It All In

61st General Conference  
Session Special Edition





Cover image: Mark Froelich

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# A History to Be Written

BY BILL KNOTT

At a moment of unprecedented disruption in all things global, there is a natural sense of gratitude—and relief—that attends the record of the Adventist Church’s recently completed 61st General Conference Session. The simple fact of having conducted an in-person and virtual gathering of more than 2,500 delegates to do the business of a world denomination is remarkable enough as war rages, economies teeter, travel is snarled, and disease has paralyzed the planet for more than two years. In the normal course of things, we would be closing the book just now on the story of this GC Session.

But the fuller history of this gathering remains to be written. The Church’s all-encompassing mission, including evangelism, worship, teaching, and faithful discipleship, will have the final say about the gathering held June 6-11 in St. Louis. It’s in the name of that mission that we expended such effort and expense, traveled all those miles, elected leaders, and adopted policy proposals.

The stories of what followed the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15 give us key metrics by which to assess what was accomplished at this Session, the first of which is this: *The value of the gathering is proportional to the increase in mission resulting from the gathering.*

In the biblical account, months of division and disagreement among honest followers of Jesus resulted in a church council that consciously streamlined the movement to expand mission to places where the gospel had never been preached. Thus, by analogy, the lasting importance of the Session in St. Louis will be measured in ten thousand places not named St. Louis, and won’t be known for some time yet.



We will search for answers to these questions: Were the believers subsequently strengthened and encouraged, as happened after the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:32)? Did strong, biblical teaching grow up in congregations around the globe (verse 35)? Were barriers to mission—in language, culture, traditions, and practices—taken down (Acts 17), allowing all whom the Spirit is calling to find a home in a rapidly growing community of faith? Did mission spring up in new places (Acts 16:10), with new leaders (like Apollos and the Ephesian elders), and following new methods? Did women (like Lydia, Priscilla, and Philip’s daughters) and youth (like Timothy) find

warm welcome for the gifts given them by the Spirit?

The answers to these questions won’t be known for months or years—perhaps not until uncounted multitudes gather one day beside that sea that looks like glass (Rev. 15:2). It is what happens in this interval—between St. Louis and that one at which we sing the songs of Moses and the Lamb—that will be decisive for heaven’s record of our recent Session.

That is a history yet to be written, and that first must be lived by millions of believers who never traveled to St. Louis or cast their votes as delegates. On them—on all of us—rests the true significance of the gathering we held in June.

Pray for the part the Spirit is calling you to play in the history of mission. Your service will help to write the new Book of Acts.

We believe in the power of prayer, and we welcome prayer requests that can be shared at our weekly staff worship every Wednesday morning. Send your requests to [prayer@adventistworld.org](mailto:prayer@adventistworld.org), and pray for us as we work together to advance God’s kingdom.



**On Thursday morning, June 9, during the 61st General Conference Session, held in St. Louis, Missouri, Karen Melina Bazán, a delegate from the North Mexican Union Conference, speaks to a motion on the floor.**

Photo Credit: Mark Froelich







Josef Kissinger

## Ted N. C. Wilson Reelected as General Conference President

**Delegates vote to accept the Nominating Committee recommendation.**

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

Delegates to the 61st General Conference (GC) Session in St. Louis, Missouri, United States, voted on June 6 to accept the recommendation of the Nominating Committee to reelect Ted N. C. Wilson as president of the General Conference. With their vote, delegates confirmed Wilson, who has been president of the denomination since 2010, for the 2022-2025 period. It will be his third term as president.

“Our goal is to maintain focus on what God has called the remnant church to do,” Wilson said. “But a single person cannot do it. We are a team of almost 22 million members.”

### ABOUT THE PROCESS

The Nominating Committee includes more than 260 members from among the delegates of every major church region and the Gener-

al Conference. Members nominated to the committee by their respective regional caucuses on or before June 5 met on the afternoon of June 6 to discuss the first item, which historically has been the nomination of the president.

At the end of the June 6 evening business session, retired GC vice president Lowell Cooper, who earlier in the day had been elected as chair of the Nominating Committee, went to the podium to present the body’s first report. “We’ve been hard at work during several hours,” Cooper said. “We had the opportunity to discuss several names as potential candidates for the position of General Conference president.”

Cooper explained to delegates why they spent several hours to come to a decision. “It took us a while to get organized, to under-

stand protocol,” he said. It included making sure the electronic voting app was working properly and that those members participating through Zoom videoconferencing could interact with the in-person members.

“It took some time to get acquainted with parliamentary procedures,” Cooper added, “in a group that has several different languages and cultures, and the necessities of translators. We’ve had some time in working ourselves into a team.”

### RECOMMENDATION TO THE FLOOR

Cooper shared that the Nominating Committee felt that God has blessed the church with leaders. So “after discussion, we voted, and the Nominating Committee has a recommendation to bring for your consideration tonight on a vote on one name that we took,” he said before calling Nominating Committee secretary Magdiel Pérez Schulz to present that report and recommendation with the delegates.

After Pérez Schulz presented the name of Wilson for the position, delegates voted electronically to approve the recommendation. ©





David B. Sherwin

## Delegates Return Erton Köhler as GC Secretary, Paul Douglas as GC Treasurer

**Both had been first tapped for those positions in April 2021.**

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

Delegates to the 61st General Conference (GC) Session in St. Louis, Missouri, United States, voted to accept the Nominating Committee recommendation of electing Erton Köhler (above, right) as GC executive secretary on June 7. They also voted to accept the recommendation of electing Paul Douglas as GC treasurer. Köhler and Douglas were first elected to these positions in April 2021 and will serve for the 2022-2025 term.

Köhler was born in southern Brazil and grew up with a desire to follow in the footsteps of his father, who served as an Adventist pastor. Köhler completed a bachelor's degree in theology at the Adventist Teaching Institute (now Brazilian Adventist University) in 1989 and graduated from the same school in 2008 with a master's degree in pastoral theology. Currently he is pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree from Andrews University.

From 1990 to 1994 Köhler served as a local church pastor in São Paulo. He was then elected youth ministries director of the Rio Grande do

Sul Conference in 1995, and in 1998 became the youth ministries director of the Northeast Brazil Union. In July 2002 Köhler returned to the Rio Grande do Sul Conference to serve as executive secretary. The following year he was elected youth ministries director for the eight countries comprising the South American Division. After serving for four years as youth director, he became the South American Division president in 2007.

Köhler is married to Adriene Marques, a nurse, and the couple has two children.

Douglas (above, left) was born in Jamaica and has served in various capacities at General Conference Auditing Services (GCAS) since 1986, when he was appointed audit manager. He holds a bachelor's degree and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree in accounting, as well as a professional certificate in strategic management and leadership.

In 1993 Douglas became a GCAS regional manager. In 1997 he was elected GCAS assistant director, becoming GCAS associate director in 2000. For the past 14 years prior to his election as GC treasurer, he has served the Seventh-day Adventist Church as GCAS director.

In 2020 he developed the Road Map to Resilience initiative for church leaders and their governing committees. This initiative seeks to prepare leaders "to sustain mission in times of crisis and provide an agile response to rapidly emerging realities."

In both cases, delegates voted overwhelmingly to accept the committee recommendations. ©

## Delegates Vote Five New Division Presidents

**In the other eight regions, incumbents are elected for another term.**

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

In the June 8 afternoon business session at the 61st General Conference (GC) Session in St. Louis, Missouri, United States, delegates voted to accept the recommendation of the Nominating Committee for the president positions in the 13 divisions, or major church regions, of the Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world. Delegates voted overwhelmingly to reelect the incumbents in eight regions and to elect new presidents for the other five divisions. Division presidents are also vice presidents of the GC.

The five new presidents with their respective regions are highlighted below.

### **YO HAN KIM, NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION (NSD)**

Kim was elected as NSD president after serving as NSD director of Adventist Mission and assistant to the president. Previously he had served as associate director and director of the 1000 Missionary Movement (1000MM) in the Philippines for a total of 10 years. He also served as business manager of Sahmyook Health University in the Korean Union Conference from 2006 to 2012, and Mongolia Mission president from 2016 to 2021.

When Kim was director of the 1000MM, he managed the construction of most of the buildings needed for the ministry with donations. Then, as president of the Mongolia Mission, he helped coordinate the purchase of more than 8.32 square miles (21.55



Division presidents and their wives right after their election by the Session.

Josef Kissinger

square kilometers) of land for future use of the church in the territory.

**HARRINGTON AKOMBWA, SOUTHERN AFRICA-INDIAN OCEAN DIVISION (SID)**

Delegates voted to accept the recommendation to elect Harrington Akombwa as the new SID president. Until his election he was president of the Zambia Union Conference/ Southern Zambia Union Conference, a position he held from 2008 to 2020. Working in church administration since 1994, he also served as Zambia Union Conference secretary (2000-2008) and president of the West Zambia Field (1994-1998).

Akombwa completed undergraduate and graduate studies at Solusi College (later Solusi University) and, in 2010, a Doctor of Ministry in leadership at Andrews University.

**ROGER CADERMA, SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION (SSD)**

Roger Caderma was elected as the new president of the SSD after delegates accepted the recommendation of the Nominating Committee. During the past few months he had been serving as SSD vice president. From 2017 to 2021 Caderma had served as president of the South Philippine Union Conference, after being the region’s executive secretary from

2015 to 2017. Before that, he was president of the Southern Mindanao Mission from 2008 to 2015 and stewardship and planned giving director of the South Philippine Conference from 2005 to 2008. He also served in religious liberty positions, both in the South Philippine Conference and the Western Mindanao Conference.

As Southern Philippine Union Conference president, Caderma led a region that was consistently at the top in number of baptisms in the division. He also initiated the Mega Church Integrated Projects (MCIP), which helped to fund the construction of churches on a rotation basis.

**DANIEL DUDA, TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION (TED)**

Appointed TED education director in 2005, Daniel Duda has also served in the past few years as TED field secretary and TED Adventist Mission director. From 2005 to 2015 he also was the region’s ministerial secretary.

Duda has served as a pastor, evangelist, theology lecturer, and ministerial secretary in the Czecho-Slovakian Union. He also served in the Russian Federation as head of the Theology Department and academic dean at Zaoksky Theological Seminary (now Zaoksky Adventist University) before arriving at Newbold College in 1998,

where he held several positions.

Duda is passionate about studying the Bible and sharing his findings with others, being a frequent speaker at camp meetings in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe.

**ROBERT OSEI-BONSU, WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION (WAD)**

Robert Osei-Bonsu was voted as the new WAD president after serving as dean of the Theological Seminary at Adventist University of Africa (AUA) in Kenya. He had been an associate professor at AUA since 2020.

With extensive experience as an educational leader, Osei-Bonsu had served before 2020 not only as a church pastor in Ghana but also in various educational administration positions at Ghana’s Valley View University, including as rector (chief academic and administrative officer) and pro-vice chancellor of the school.

As a young pastor, Osei-Bonsu had served as youth, chaplaincy, and communication director of the South Central Ghana Conference. ©

**INCUMBENT DIVISION PRESIDENTS**

**East-Central Africa Division**

Blasious Ruguri

**Euro-Asia Division**

Mikhail Kaminskiy

**Inter-American Division**

Elie Henry

**Inter-European Division**

Mario Brito

**North American Division**

G. Alexander Bryant

**South American Division**

Stanley Arco

**South Pacific Division**

Glenn Townend

**Southern Asia Division**

Ezras Lakra





Josef Kissinger

## The New Face of GC Session

**Most delegates had that role for the first time.**

Shawn Boonstra, *Adventist World*

Thanks to the pandemic, the General Conference (GC) Session had a bit of a new face: the stands above the Session floor were typically far less crowded this time than in the past, and there was no physical exhibit space for global ministries and institutions to showcase their work (although there was a virtual exhibit space that can be accessed through the GC Session app).

Another remarkable way in which the session was wearing a new face: the number of new participants. As the Nominating Committee prepared its work, associate general counsel Josue Pierre helped mem-

bers calibrate the digital election platform, called ElectionBuddy. To test the voting, “we tend to ask, not a serious question, but a question that will reveal to us that the system is working,” he commented. “So one of the questions I thought of—especially for the Nominating Committee—was ‘How many of you have never served on a General Conference Nominating Committee?’ To our surprise, the overwhelming majority had never served [before].”

About 63 percent, it turns out, were new to the process. “I think we’re really at a turning point where we’re seeing a turnover of

the old guard into the new guard,” Pierre explained.

A similar calibration vote that was conducted to acquaint delegates with the voting process for the Session revealed a parallel phenomenon to what was experienced in the Nominating Committee. Sixty-four percent of attending delegates indicated that this is their first GC Session.

In addition to all the new faces in the Session, there was also a significant turnover in conference administration. According to Pierre’s sources at the North American Division, more than half of the conference presidents in the North American Division over the past two years are new.

The mission of the church never changes, but the faces sure do. ☺



**Left: Audrey Andersson, who was executive secretary of the Trans-European Division, is one of the new vice presidents of the General Conference.**

**Right: Maurice R. Valentine II has been elected as vice president of the General Conference after being vice president for media ministries in the North American Division.**

## How Elections Work at a General Conference Session

The process of electing leaders is transparent and secure.

Shawn Boonstra, *Adventist World*

The election process at the General Conference (GC) Session can be shrouded in mystery for a lot of people watching from afar. During the event more than 100 positions are filled. As the new officers are presented each day, many people wonder: *How were they chosen? Is the election a foregone conclusion?*

Not at all. If you've participated in filling positions at your local church, you likely already know how the process works. Usually, once a year, a local church congregation selects a nominating committee that meets to discuss and vet names for the various offices of the church, ranging from elders and deacons to Sabbath school teachers and the various department heads. Once the nominating committee has prayed over the names and discussed the best choice for each position, they bring the results of their deliberations back to the con-

gregation, which then votes on their candidates. Once all the names are approved by popular vote, the candidates assume their new offices.

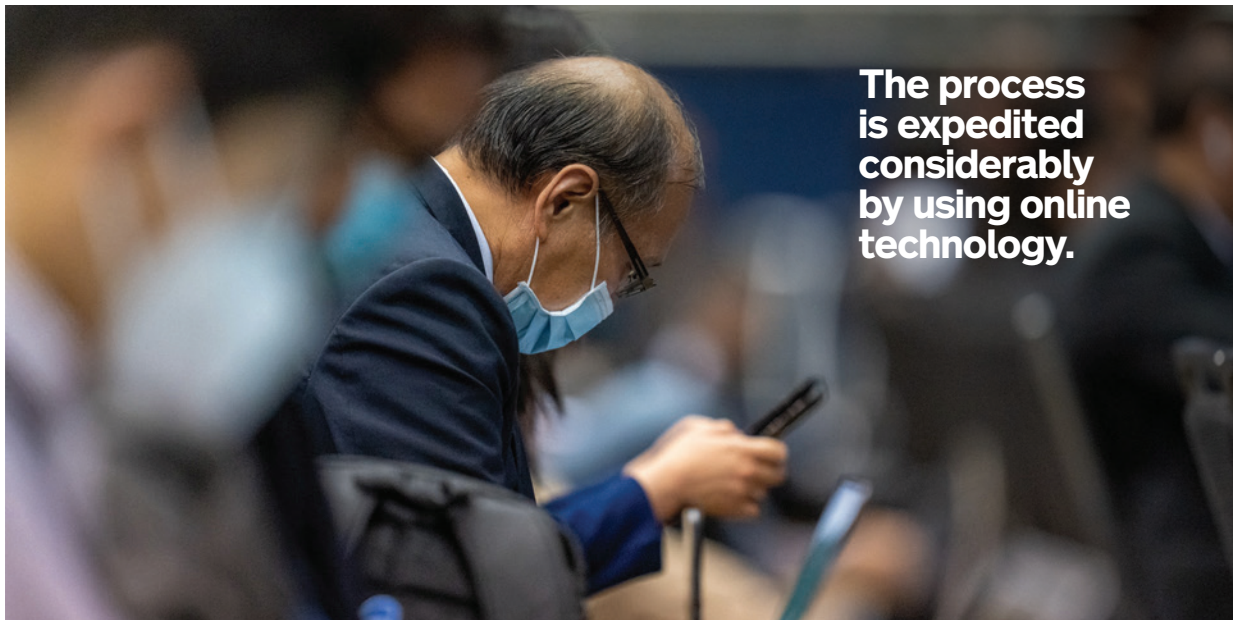
It works the same way at all levels of the church, Claude Richli of the General Conference Secretariat explained. "It's basically the same process throughout the whole system. . . . When the conference constituency takes place, every church is apportioned a certain number of delegates, based on the size of the church, to be sent as constituent members. When they get to the constituency meeting, they are recognized as delegates, and some of them will be selected to be on the nominating committee by the organizing committee—meaning there are two committees that do their work, so that it reduces the risk of political interference. This process takes place in the same way at the union level and at the division level."

The Nominating Committee faced a considerable task during the long days of the 61st Session. Their first discussion lasted nearly five hours before the committee brought back the name of incumbent Ted Wilson for General Conference president. That is just one of many positions to nominate, which meant that the committee was very busy throughout the week.

The process is expedited considerably by using online technology. In St. Louis, delegates are using ElectionBuddy, a digital voting system that enables delegates to vote by using their personal devices.

The ElectionBuddy system—known to be secure—has been working smoothly, in spite of the hiccups faced by delegates on the first day of the Session. After the bugs were ironed out, the voting ran smoothly, and voting participation on most agenda items has been high.

How are General Conference officers chosen? Essentially, you choose them. When the newly elected officers appear on the platform each day, they are there because of a process that started with you. ©



The process is expedited considerably by using online technology.

James Bokovoy





Josef Kissinger

## A Day of Rejoicing

**World divisions spent hours reporting the wonderful works of God.**

Shawn Boonstra, *Adventist World*

The points of order are finished. The lines at the microphones are gone. The screens no longer display endless lines of policy text, the obsolete portions stricken through. That which is to be referred back to committee has already gone back. The leadership of the General Conference divisions has been affirmed.

The business of the church, in other words, has concluded.

On Friday morning there was a distinctly different flavor to the goings-on at the dome. The technical business of the church was complete; it was now time to celebrate the real business of the church—mission. One can only imagine what might transpire if we could bring the pioneers of this global movement back from the dead for just a moment to witness what they could only dream about. Once upon a time a handful of nineteenth-century visionaries gathered to speak excitedly about the fact that the

remnant church had been born and its mission was to reach every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. On June 10 they would have been bowled over by what they heard.

It is telling that the reports from the church—13 divisions, plus attached missions and fields—took all day to deliver. Beginning with the North American Division, which reported shortly after morning worship, and ending with the Southern Asia-Pacific Division near the very end of the day, the reports of God's people at work across the face of the entire globe were the only thing on Friday's agenda. Each division received only 15 minutes to report on seven years of breathtaking missionary activity, which meant there was a little adrenaline behind the pace of the good news being delivered to the auditorium.

It was a festival of sight and sound as delegates witnessed what John only saw in vision: God's final message of mercy going to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. One can only wonder if John might not have seen some of the same faces we saw on Friday as he witnessed earth's closing scenes.

It served as a powerful reminder that none of us is alone even though the work of preaching the three angels' messages can be incredibly lonely for those laboring in obscure fields or remote locations. We may all be laboring in relative isolation, connected only to a few local Adventists, but we are each firmly tethered to the Lamb on Zion, whose heart beats with increasing anticipation for the moment when the cries of the angels are finished and the kingdom can commence.

Each report revealed that the church continues to grow. Some divisions were able to report tens (even hundreds!) of thousands of baptisms; others reported some—and that some was like the widow's mites, in that they represented incredible sacrifice on the part of Adventists who are laboring in places where our work seems, to the outside eye, utterly impossible. And speaking of impossible, the reports finished with a deeply encouraging appearance from our brothers and sisters in the now war-torn Ukraine, where the work, incredibly, continues in spite of rocket-damaged churches and lost church members.

In addition to the encouraging growth of the church, another persistent theme was the pandemic. Our worldwide church was united not only by mission but also by the challenge of continuing the work of Revelation 14 in the face of a global crisis that made traditional outreach methods all but impossible. The solution? Digital missionaries, usually young people. We saw the incredible Spirit-breathed ingenuity of God's people as they scrambled, in an endless variety of contexts, to figure out how God's work could triumph over a near-global lockdown. We did not just baptize between 2015 and 2020; the past two years have proved incredibly fruitful.

It is only right: the week began with a declaration of mission, reminding all of us that in the business in the hours ahead we would be handling holy things and that the mission of the remnant church must be the lens through which we viewed every discussion, every decision, every policy. Then, when the business finally ended, we returned to that focus by celebrating what God has done through our meager efforts.

There are a lot of churches in this world, but only one global movement that satisfactorily answers to the descriptions found in the three angels' messages. One must suppose that when John was isolated on Patmos, he was permitted a quick glimpse of this day in vision: the endless variety of colors, languages, accents, and cultures—some of which were completely unknown to the Mediterranean world of John's day—that gave robust testimony to the fact that God intended to keep His word after John was laid to rest.

Imagine the reports on the sea of glass; perhaps that's why it takes days to ascend to the kingdom when Jesus comes. ©

## Cyclists Take 1,200-Mile Missionary Ride

**Team celebrates the opportunity to connect, pray with people.**

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

Under a summery early-afternoon sun, a group of church leaders, relatives, colleagues, and friends met at Kiener Plaza Park in downtown St. Louis to welcome the I Will Go bicycle ride team on June 5.

The eight cyclists, who had left Washington, D.C., two weeks earlier, completed the last leg of their 1,200-mile (2,000-kilometer) journey west, just hours before the beginning of the 61st General Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Along the way, the cycling group, composed of several church leaders and a church lay member, distributed Adventist literature as they talked to local residents and prayed for their needs.

"There were times when we arrived in a small town and everyone was out there, and we were able to spread out and talk to people," Australian Union Conference executive secretary Michael Worker said. "When they found out what we were doing, they would ask, 'Why are you doing it?' and we were able to tell our story and distribute Adventist literature very easily."

### THE GREATEST THRILL IN LIFE

General Conference Ministerial Association associate secretary Anthony Kent, who also participated in the ride, agreed. "As we were riding, I was praying, 'Lord, You brought us on this road for a purpose; show us the people You want us to meet.'"

Kent said God answered his prayer, as He led them to people in need of comfort, prayer, and spir-

itual encouragement. "For me the greatest thrill in life is to lead people to Jesus Christ," he said. "When [people] discover the transforming power of Jesus Christ, their lives are never the same."

Another of the participants, General Conference Health Ministries associate director Torben Bergland, reflected on the health component of the initiative. "It is amazing what the body can do. I had been a cyclist for more than 30 years, but I had never done something like this before," Bergland said. "For me, it has been an eye-opener, how your mind can often be a limitation, not your body."

But the witnessing component of their journey was what most impressed Bergland. "We met people who had never met an Adventist before," he said. "For me, it increased my sense of urgency, that we need to reach all those people who are out there, because they are looking for something, they need something, and they are open, if we are just willing to go and connect with them."

Bergland added that this is just one example of a way to reach others, but it could serve as a model. "I hope it can inspire other people to be creative, to think how they can use their interests, skills, talents—whatever they have—in a way that they can go out and connect with people out there."

General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson said that as impressive as the cyclists' feat was, reaching out to others should not be exclusive of such major initiatives. "All of us can put ourselves in a place when we can honor God with our lives," Wilson said. "Everyone can do something for Jesus, so we just don't sit back but do what their jerseys said: 'I Will Go.'"

### DIVINE APPOINTMENTS

A day before, the team had stopped for a special Sabbath program at the



**“I was scared. But this experience really changed my life. I learned that I can go and tell the story of my family to anyone.”**

**— Rob Hansford**



Mark Froelich

Thompsonville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Thompsonville, Illinois, just a few hours shy of the ride finish. During the program, participants told stories about “divine appointments” they believed were set by God.

Participant Rob Hansford, an Adventist accountant in Australia, said that for him, the most frightening part of the journey was sharing his faith with people. “I was scared. But this experience really changed my life. I learned that I can go and tell the story of my family to

anyone,” Hansford said.

During the program Adventist Review Ministries executive editor Bill Knott reminded the in-person audience and those following the livestream that the call to do mission does not originate in us but in God. “We don’t move into serving the church because we think we have something to offer,” Knott said. “It’s Jesus’ call. Without the call, there could be no mission.”

Thompsonville church pastor John Lomacang agreed. In his

closing thoughts he emphasized that the trip did not match most of the participants’ comfort zones. “But I learned that God can do anything with the willing heart,” he said.

Lomacang added that these cyclists might never know the full impact of their ride until they reach heaven. But again, he emphasized, the key is accepting God’s call to reach out. “God can do anything through us if we just say the words ‘I Will Go,’” he said. ©





# Your Church Around the World

The following pages contain extracts from the General Conference Session reports from the 13 world divisions and three of the fields directly attached to the General Conference. We have tried to maintain the tone of each report, for tone often tells more than mere facts.—Editors.



Chinese Union Mission workers

CHUM

## CHINESE UNION MISSION (CHUM)

According to a 2021 report, the church in China has grown to more than 476,000 members. The Chinese Union Mission (CHUM) is thankful for ongoing opportunities to serve and support God’s mission. To serve and support God’s children in this vast area, the CHUM produces inspirational printed material, websites, smartphone apps, videos, and more.

The CHUM is also developing a theological library, initially focusing on translating 70 of the best Seventh-day Adventist theological books into Chinese. Completed books can be downloaded for free and used by leaders and members worldwide.



## EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION (ECD)

The East-Central Africa Division’s Mission Extravaganza drew crowds of up to 50,000 in Kampala, Uganda. Community members were blessed by free medical services, exhibits, and evangelistic messages. More than 8,600 people chose to follow Christ, and 41 new churches were planted as a result.



ECD Media Center

The division is now home to more than 4.7 million members, worshipping in 31,052 congregations and organized into 12 unions, the South Sudan Attached Territory, and the Eritrea Mission Field.



Libna Stevens/IAD



### EURO-ASIA DIVISION (ESD)

**The Euro-Asia Division (ESD) encompasses territory ranging from central Europe to eastern Asia, and South Asia to the North Pole. Adventist pioneers arrived in the area at the end of the nineteenth century, and the message of salvation spread rapidly. There are now more than 100,000 church members meeting in 1,700 congregations across 13 countries.**

In April 2022, conflict erupted between Russia and Ukraine, resulting in more than 4.5 million refugees, thousands of dead and wounded, and countless destroyed houses and church buildings. Through collaboration with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the Euro-Asia Division provided assistance with lodging, transportation, food and medicine, clothing, and hundreds of tons of humanitarian aid.



### INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION (IAD)

When an earthquake rocked Port-au-Prince, Haiti, killing more than 300,000, Professor Greger Figaro began leading worship services in front of his home for the homeless who gathered there. For more than five years they worshiped under a tent right in the middle of the street. Today, the Église Adventiste Galaad church has its own property and building overflowing with more than 500 members.



Libna Stevens / IAD

**In Mexico, church leaders and members are working to exceed the nearly 24,000 new members baptized last year during the first online regional evangelism campaign coordinated by the five unions in the country.**



Baja California Conference

ESD

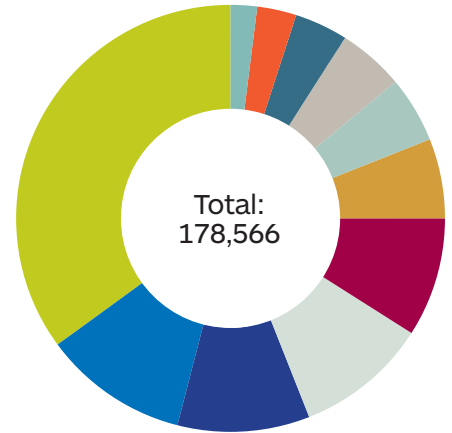
## INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION (EUD)

### People 7.0

An inter-ministries congress on discipleship brought together more than 400 Children's, Family, and Women's Ministries leaders in Lignano, Italy, to cast the vision of becoming more efficient disciple-makers inside our own homes and churches.



## EUD Membership by Unions



- Austrian Union (2%)
- Swiss Union (3%)
- Bulgarian Union (4%)
- Czecho-Slovakian Union (5%)
- Italian Union (5%)
- Portuguese Union (6%)
- South German Union (9%)
- North German Union (10%)
- Spanish Union (10%)
- Franco-Belgian Union (11%)
- Romanian Union (35%)

## NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION (NAD)

The church is blessed to have the Adventist health-care system as part of its organizational orbit. In the North American Division (NAD), we have five health-care systems that collectively lead 1,148 clinics/hospitals throughout our territory. They engage in the healing ministry of Jesus every day.

Volunteer health-care professionals provided medical, dental, vision, and surgical services during the Your Best Pathway to Health free mega-clinic in Indianapolis at the Lucas Oil Stadium. They treated more than 4,255 patients during the four-day event. Pictured with a patient is Dr. Miriam Morgan-Skinner.



Samuel Girven



NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION (NSD)

**Signs of Jesus' second coming are present everywhere, but many parts of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) territory still need to be reached with the gospel. Cities full of people have not yet heard that message.**



The 1,000 Missionary Movement, operated by the NSD and the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, trains hundreds of Adventist youth from across the world for mission service. These young people are sent in pairs to mission fields where they devote one year to the Lord. Since 1993, nearly 11,350 young people from 64 countries have gone through the program. The fruit of their labor includes 74,392 baptisms, 800 churches built, and 1,491 churches and companies established in 47 countries.

NSD

SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION (SAD)

**In the South American Division (SAD) more than 2,500,000 members meet weekly to worship in nearly 29,000 churches and companies across eight countries. Through them the gospel reaches every region, no matter how challenging or remote.**

Literature evangelists are committed to sharing the gospel. Books and magazines are taken from house to house, company to company, spreading the message of hope. The Impact Hope literature project alone distributed more than 163,000,000 free books and other material to homes in South America.

SAD



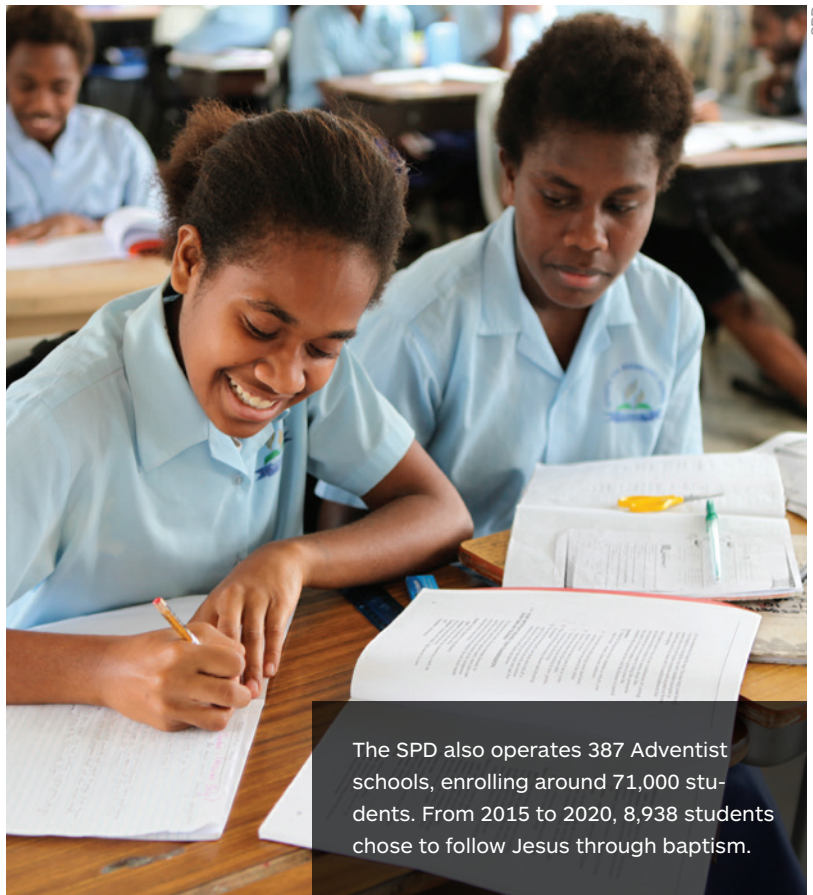


## SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION (SPD)

With more than 42 million people in its territory, the South Pacific Division (SPD) encompasses a diverse region of tropical islands, rugged mountain villages, coastal communities, and large cities. Throughout the last seven years, our key ministry strategies have centered on discipleship, health, Mission to the Cities, and media. Leadership development has been added as an important priority in the last two years.



SPD



SPD

The SPD also operates 387 Adventist schools, enrolling around 71,000 students. From 2015 to 2020, 8,938 students chose to follow Jesus through baptism.

## SOUTHERN AFRICA-INDIAN OCEAN DIVISION (SID)

**The Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID) family has rallied around the Total Member Involvement initiative, as church members and entities embrace the call to reach the world and impact communities for Christ through the “I Will Go” strategic plan.**



SID



As part of a community SID Pathfinder launch, the first-ever Pathfinder drill for youth with special needs was held in the province of Gauteng, South Africa. The Deaf Pathfinder club members expressed their joy in participating in this drill.



SOUTHERN ASIA DIVISION (SUD)

**In the SUD, Total Member Involvement ignited awareness among members of all ages. In Kolkata, India, Adventist World Radio (AWR) conducted five medical camps, screening more than 2,600 patients and performing 178 life-changing cataract surgeries.**



Unsplash / National Cancer Institute

Sarad Kumar Banjare, a Pentecostal pastor, attended Adventist Zoom meetings regularly. He was baptized in 2021, and changed the day of worship from Sunday to Saturday in his church. Many of his members stopped coming. While discouraged, he did not give up. He conducted three evangelistic meetings, and many of his members were baptized in 2022.



SUD



SSD

SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION (SSD)

**With a population of more than 1 billion, the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) is an extremely diverse territory covering 14 countries. More than 850 million of the population belong to unreached people groups.**

The Adventist Church in the SSD is known for its health and education services. Considered strong assets in the community, our 19 Adventist health-care institutions and 984 schools ably support the Lord's work by disarming prejudices and making inroads for the gospel.

## TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION (TED)

Daniel Duda, former Education and Adventist Mission director for TED and recently elected president of the division, highlights the Three Angels Motorcycle Club in Novi Sad, Serbia, as one of his favorite mission projects. This Adventist group of bikers meets and befriends others in the biking community and has produced special literature focused on their needs.

**“We have voted more than £1 million (US\$1.4 million) on 301 mission projects and 133 church plants,” Duda says.**



## WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION (WAD)

**The West-Central Africa Division (WAD) is one of the largest territories of the world church, spread across 22 countries. Leaders, pastors, and laymembers mobilized to hold major evangelistic endeavors each year from 2017 to 2020, resulting in 305,468 baptisms.**

Number of Schools:



Number of University Students:



Number of Students:



Number of Teachers:



Number of Universities:



Number of Graduates:



Number of Students Baptized:





#### ISRAEL FIELD



In Israel, the Ashdod church organized an Adventurers Club for community families. Today there are more non-Adventists in the club than church members. When they organized a family weekend, most of the families attended. By God's grace they are seeing an increase in attendance and the impact of God's Word.

#### MIDDLE EAST NORTH AFRICA (MENAUM)

In 2015, the Adventist Church in the Middle East North Africa Union Mission (MENAUM) had only one member for every 148,000 nonmembers. Today we have one Adventist member for every 99,000 people.

**Our region has more than 53 cities of at least 1 million population. In 2013, 25 of these cities were unentered. Today we have workers in 16 of them. While this may seem like a small step, it means the work in the MENAUM is moving forward and that the world church's investment is making a difference.**



# Hold Fast What You Have

Jesus Is Coming! (Part 1)

Photo: Szabo Viktor

**A**round the globe, Seventh-day Adventists have the great expectation that “Jesus is coming soon!” What a wonderful spirit of spiritual dedication and evangelistic enthusiasm in our worldwide family. With so many countries and cultures, we praise God there is one culture of Christ that binds us together and makes us all citizens of heaven.

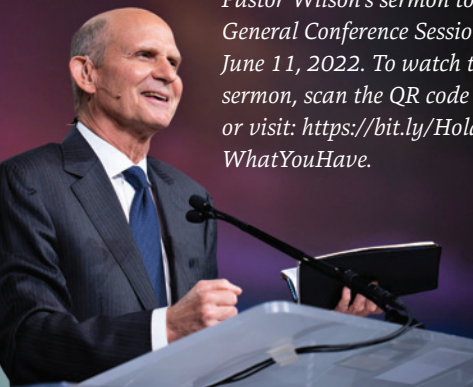
“Jesus Is Coming Soon!” And the Bible tells us, “Hold fast what you have!” Let us never give up pure Bible truth as we see signs of the Second Coming increasing everywhere. Many signs point to the end of time and the need to “hold fast” what we have—never give up pure Bible truth. Jesus says, “Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” (Rev. 3:11).

Despite the swirling chaos all around us, we can plant our feet directly on and believe completely in the unchanging Holy Word of God—the Bible! Satan has attacked God’s Word down through the ages, but God has always protected His Holy Word and always will. He asks us to stand up for the truth and hold fast what we have believed. Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as it reads and as the foundation of all our beliefs. From the Holy Word we understand Seventh-day Adventists to be God’s called remnant church with prophetic identity—it is a unique movement, with a unique message, on a unique heavenly mission.

As God’s remnant people identified in Revelation 12:17 as those “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ,” we have a special message of warning, grace, and hope. “Seventh-day Adventists have been chosen by God as a peculiar people, separate from the world. . . . He has made them His representatives and has called them to be ambassadors for Him in the last work of salvation.”<sup>1</sup>



*Note: This is the first of a three-part series taken from Pastor Wilson’s sermon to the General Conference Session on June 11, 2022. To watch the full sermon, scan the QR code below or visit: <https://bit.ly/HoldFastWhatYouHave>.*



Josef Kissinger





## HOLD FAST

Regardless of the many obstacles we face, let's hold fast our belief in God's Word and His love for His church. His church will not fail; it will go through to the end under the power of the Holy Spirit. In these last days of earth's history and in response to our earnest prayers, God will pour out His Spirit on all who humble themselves and conform their lives to His will as expressed in His Holy Word and His instructions in the Spirit of Prophecy, showing His infinite love for the human race.

Let's review several vital truths from God's Word that He would have us hold fast.

## HOLD FAST TO:

1. The biblical truth that the Godhead is constituted by three divine, equal Persons who have existed, and will exist, from eternity to eternity.

2. Simplicity in Christian lifestyle, personal dress, conduct in church life, and everyday activities.

3. Biblical truths and their relevancy for today, despite persecution. Avoid issues that are distractions from God's last-day three angels' messages to the world with Christ's righteousness at the core of those messages. Hold fast to the pure Word of God, not allowing any syncretistic or mystic aberrant theological beliefs into the Seventh-day Adventist Church (see 2 Peter 2:1; Heb. 13:8, 9).

4. Your careful observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, commemorating biblical Creation accomplished by God recently in six literal days. In humility and respect, do not allow anyone to negatively influence you to believe anything but Bible truth that tells us this earth was created by God, by His Word, in six literal, consecutive, 24-hour days, recently. The Spirit of Prophecy, which I believe was inspired, just as God inspired all

prophets, tells us this earth was created "about," or "around," 6,000 years ago. I believe that statement. Why would you be a Seventh-day Adventist, if in the very fourth commandment God tells us to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy (and in reality, the Lord allows us to work six days and the Bible tells us He took six days to create, capping it with the blessed, seventh-day Sabbath)—why would you keep the seventh-day Sabbath literally if God were telling you a big fable? Be a Seventh-day Adventist because you believe God created this earth in six literal, consecutive days, recently. Hold on to your faith.

5. A simple, healthy lifestyle, including a plant-based diet according to biblical and Spirit of Prophecy counsel.

6. The unity in the church that God provides to all who focus their lives on Christ and His full biblical truth. "Christ is leading out a people, and bringing them into the unity of the faith, that they may be one, as He is one with the Father. Differences of opinion must be yielded, that all may come into union with the body, that they may have one mind and one judgment."<sup>2</sup> Let's be unified in Christ.

7. God's biblical institution of marriage between one man and one woman. God's Word confirms biblical marriage, biblical human sexuality, and the biblical family as instituted by God Himself at creation. The rampant sexual aberrations in the world are not condoned by the Bible and will not lead to eternal life. Sexual immorality in any form is to be submitted to God's power to change us into His likeness. God's ideal is to be followed through His power, to put us in a right relationship with His moral and natural laws. This is not impossible, for the Bible clearly indicates—"Do you not know that

# "Despite the swirling chaos all around us, we can plant our feet directly on the unchanging Holy Word of God—the Bible!"

the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11). We need to treat everyone with love and respect, and we define what is sin and what is not sin by the Word of God.

8. Spiritual, biblical respect for church authority, showing respect for God working in His church through appropriate bodies and careful observance of Bible and Spirit of Prophecy counsel.

9. Your great appreciation, use, and promotion of the Spirit of Prophecy—the writings of Ellen White—a heavenly gift to this church.

10. Biblical church growth principles and the heavenly explanations of evangelistic growth as revealed in the Spirit of Prophecy. Hold fast what you have! ☺

*To be continued in the next Global View.*

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 7, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 324.

**Ted N. C. Wilson** is president of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. Additional articles and commentaries are available from the president's office on Twitter: @pastortedwilson and Facebook: @Pastor Ted Wilson.



Devotional

# Devoted for Life



**CHARISSA TOROSSIAN**

**DEVOTIONAL  
MESSAGE PRESENTED  
THURSDAY MORNING,  
JUNE 9, 2022**

**W**hen Mary Magdalene first met Him, her life was a mess. Luke 8:1-3 tells us Jesus cast demons from her seven times! Imagine the kind of life Mary was living, if, when she met Jesus, demons called her “home.” The day Mary met Jesus, He changed her life (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). After she met the Master, she became His magnet. She devoted her finances to His cause. Wherever He went, she went too. By every action of her life, she placed Jesus first.





Photo: Lucas Ludwig

### **TRUSTING HIM, EVEN WHEN IT'S HARD**

When Mary and Martha's brother, Lazarus, fell sick, the sisters sent a message to Jesus. He replied, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (John 11:4). We have the benefit of knowing Lazarus was going to be resurrected, but all the sisters knew was that Jesus said Lazarus wouldn't die, but he did. What do you do when you pray for someone and they die?

Four days later Jesus came, and Mary ran to fall at His feet (verse 32). Oh, that her habit would be ours! "It was for Lazarus that the greatest of Christ's miracles was performed."<sup>1</sup> Lazarus' experience reminds us to pray no matter how hopeless the outlook, because even though He appears to be four days late, God is still on time.

### **A CROWNING ACT**

The crowning act of Mary's devotion to Jesus happened the week before Calvary. Simon, a Pharisee Jesus had healed from leprosy, invited Jesus to his home in Bethany as a way of saying thanks. Contrary to traditional custom, Simon didn't treat Jesus as the honored guest. All went well, until an uninvited woman whom John identifies as Mary (John 11:2), the sister of Martha and Lazarus, entered the room.

While listening to Jesus, Mary heard Him speak of His death. She had purchased an alabaster box of perfume—worth an entire year's salary—for the sad day when she would anoint His body. But now the word on the street was that Jesus was about to be crowned King.

Mary had the perfect gift for a King. Martha told Mary she was catering for Simon's feast, and that Jesus was going too. Mary saw her golden opportunity. She entered the house, "stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil" (Luke 7:38).

At Jesus' feet, the memories of *all* He had done for her and *everything* He meant to her flooded her mind. Suddenly her gift seemed so inadequate to give to Jesus. As she broke her box a fountain deep inside her broke with it, and the tears began to flow. The Bible says a woman's hair is her glory; Mary lay hers down at Jesus' feet. Her act told Jesus, *Lord, the lowest part of You is higher than the highest part of me.*

As the scent of sacrifice filled the room, Judas smelled the money. The disciples joined him in a chorus of criticism: *We love Jesus too, but this is ridiculous! She just poured 300 denarii down the drain that could've been given to the poor!* (see John 12:4, 5). To put this in perspective, when Jesus fed the 5,000, it was 5,000 men plus their wives and children, and Philip told Jesus 200 denarii wouldn't cover the bill (John 6:7). But 300 denarii might have. Mary's gift could've funded the feeding of thousands.

As Simon watched, the Bible tells us that he said to himself: "If Jesus were a true prophet, He'd know this woman is a sinner" (see Luke 7:39). This is the Bible's delicate way of saying Mary had lived a life of open immorality. How did Simon know this? How

## In the extravagance of her sacrifice Jesus saw the love of heaven poured out.

would a woman from a family like Mary's end up being demon-possessed and a prostitute?

*The Desire of Ages* tells us what is implicit in the text: "Simon had led into sin the woman he now despised. She had been deeply wronged by him."<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, Ellen White says Simon was Lazarus' uncle, which made him her uncle too!<sup>3</sup> Jesus could've exposed this massive skeleton in Simon's closet, but He didn't. Instead, He told a parable that concluded with this punchline: Those who are forgiven much, love much. Then turning to Mary, Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven" (verse 48).

He then went on to say, "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Matt. 26:13). Jesus wanted the whole world to smell the fragrance of Mary's gift! Why?

In her alabaster box broken at His feet, He saw His body, soon to be broken for us. In its precious perfume running to waste on the floor, He saw His blood "shed for many for the remission of sins" (verse 28), but hardly appreciated. In her motive He saw a reflection of His own in dying for us. Nothing but love led Jesus to Calvary! In the extravagance of her sacrifice Jesus saw the love of heaven poured out. Jesus said, "She has done what she could" (Mark 14:8). He has done all He could to save us too.

### A MIRRORED REFLECTION

Jesus saw in Mary what He longs to see in us all: a mirrored reflection of His character. Judas could sell Jesus for 30 pieces of silver; but He's worth so much more. He's worth breaking the alabaster box of your life over. What is Jesus worth to you?

Some find it hard to stand for a living Saviour; Mary stood loyally by a dying one. From the day Jesus rescued her till the day He died for her—she was His devoted disciple. She was last at the cross and first at the tomb.

On that Sunday morning when she found the tomb empty, she was the one who raised the alarm with the disciples. Peter and John raced back to see it because of her. "Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb" (John 20:10, 11).

Peter and John can go home; Mary can't. Loving devotion to Jesus glued her to this place. When everyone walked away from her, Jesus had stayed. When no one had believed in her, Jesus had seen value in her. When her family hadn't supported her, Jesus had stood up for her. When her brother died, Jesus had come and brought life. When the disciples had criticized her, Jesus had defended her. When she'd been abused, Jesus' love had brought healing and peace to her wounded heart. Angels appeared to Mary and she didn't even blink, because she was looking for Jesus.

"Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, 'Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him, 'Rabboni!' (which is to say, Teacher)" (verses 14-16).

No one spoke her name like Jesus! "Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to Me [Don't hold me back], for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God'" (verse 17).

I don't blame Mary for wanting to hold on to Jesus! But Jesus tells her to let Him go for a very important reason. "[He] refused to receive the homage of His people until He had the assurance that His sacrifice was accepted by the Father."<sup>4</sup>

Jesus was going to ascend to heaven in order for His sacrifice to be accepted. Imagine the excitement that pulsed throughout the unfallen universe. All heaven was waiting for this moment. But all heaven waited, because Jesus knew that in the shadows of that garden was a devoted, weeping woman looking for Him because she loved Him.

After this encounter, in my mind's eye, I see her breathlessly bursting into a well-bolted upper room exclaiming: "I've just seen Jesus!" Seeing the Lord changed everything for Mary, and it changes everything for us too. Revelation 14:4 describes a people at the end of time "who follow the Lamb wherever He goes." Because, like Mary, they love Jesus. Will you say with me today, "Lord Jesus, I will go for You and be devoted to You till You come"? ©

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 524.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 566.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, May 9, 1900.

<sup>4</sup> E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 790.

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**Charissa Torossian** is a prayer coordinator and part of the evangelism team for the North New South Wales Conference in **Australia**.





WORLD VOICES

World Voices

Scan this QR code to read the original French version



Josef Kissinger © AR

## A Church That Speaks by Doing



**PEDRO TORRES**  
COMMUNICATION  
DIRECTOR FOR THE  
FRANCO-BELGIAN UNION

*For the first time in its history, Adventist Review Ministries offered daily commentaries and reports in six major world languages besides English during the GC Session. Here is one example from our French contributor.—Editors.*

One of the characteristics of the church is *inclusiveness*. Jesus said, “Whoever comes to me I will never drive away” (John 6:37, NIV). The body of Christ is inclusive par excellence. Only from this perspective can we, as the three angels of Revelation 14, truly preach the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

Such proclamation is the purpose of General Conference Sessions. When we read the last sentence of Revelation 14:6, we may think of this Session, of people of different origins, from a multitude of countries, dressed in their different ways, speaking their different languages. Looking at the delegates, we can see their distribution by linguistic affinity, by country, by other cultural traits. And we naturally identify more easily and closely with those with whom we communicate better.

There is a group of people in one area of the auditorium, however, that looks heterogeneous, different. What makes the group unique is the fact that it comprises a variety of backgrounds. But something special unites them: they “speak” with their hands. They are the Deaf.

These brothers and sisters “speak” a universal language, one that transcends barriers, borders, and cultures and uniquely unites those who speak it, regardless of where they come from, how they dress, or how old they are. I am referring to sign language.

I want to congratulate the organizers of the 61st Session of the General Conference for transforming this event into an opportunity to practice what we profess, to be an inclusive church.

As the son of a deaf mother, I grew up in a context that has taught me to observe hands and actions more than just words, to pay attention to details that others may not see or perceive. I am happy to see a worldwide church that allows sign language to be provided constantly, both on the floor and on the Internet. Some consider hearing impairment to be a handicap, but they may not realize that those who speak sign language cannot be silenced by surrounding noise, for it does not interfere with their communication. When I was a child, I could “talk” to my mother even if she was at a considerable distance, where the voice was not audible. Speaking with “gestures,” speaking by “doing” rather than by “saying,” is an advantage that the rest of us do not fully appreciate.

This helps us appreciate that Jesus did much more than He said. “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (John 21:25, NIV). This inclusiveness toward the deaf community fills me with hope. I see a church that speaks with “actions” as well as “words.” If we are able to imbue this principle into the plans of the church, we will be a church that “speaks” by “doing,” and that language, as that of my childhood, will never be disrupted by the noises of this world. “Doing” brings heaven closer. ©

# Teeth and Eschatology

Q

What is the meaning of “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”?

A

The phrase “to gnash the teeth” could describe a literal action or a figurative one functioning as an idiomatic phrase. The Greek noun *brugmos* could be translated as “gnashing, grinding, shattering the teeth.” The image may have originated in the experience of facing a wild animal that gnashes its teeth before launching an attack. It may also describe what happens to our teeth when we experience intense cold. In any case, it’s not just a bodily expression but an emotional one. The phrase is found seven times in the Gospels to describe the condition of the wicked in the final judgment. It’s also found in the Old Testament. I will highlight three important meanings.

## 1. MANIFESTATION OF ANGER

In the Old Testament the expression “to gnash the teeth” is used metaphorically to express the attitude of the wicked toward the righteous. The wicked are described as an aggressive animal, driven by irrational anger and ready to attack: “They gnashed at me with their teeth” (Ps. 35:16). This type of attack is premeditated: “The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth” (literally, “he gnashes his teeth against me,” Ps. 37:12; see Acts 7:54). After the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah describes the attitude of the enemy, saying, “All your enemies have opened their mouth against you; they hiss and gnash their teeth” (Lam. 2:16). Job applies the metaphor to God: “He tears me in His wrath, and hates me; He gnashes at me with His teeth” (Job 16:9). The phrase is used in those passages during confrontations between the righteous and the wicked, specifically when the wicked has the upper

hand. But the phrase is also applied to the wicked when the righteous is victorious: “He [the wicked] will gnash his teeth and melt away” (Ps. 112:10), namely, he will be in pain and sorrow.

## 2. MANIFESTATION OF DESPAIR AND REMORSE

In the Gospels the meaning of the phrase “to gnash the teeth” is determined by its context. In all its uses the wicked are facing God’s eternal judgment against them. The full phrase used is “there will be weeping/wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). Weeping points to sorrow for the loss the wicked now experience, and the gnashing of teeth expresses their deep regret and despair. They now realize what they have done and their indescribable eternal loss: “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:28, 29; cf. Matt. 13:42, 43). They lost the eternal fellowship of the righteous with the Lord in the kingdom of heaven.

## 3. MANIFESTATION OF ETERNAL SEPARATION

The phrase “weeping and the gnashing of teeth” is also used to express the anguish of the wicked after realizing that they are eternally separated from God (cf. Acts 20:36-38). In the context of each passage the key point is that the wicked are separated from the righteous and cast out into outer darkness—the absence of God (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30)—or into the fire of eternal death (Matt. 13:42, 50), or simply thrust out (Luke 13:28) of God’s kingdom. At that moment they will be angered at themselves for not joining the One who went into the darkness of separation from God for them (Luke 22:53; Matt. 27:45, 46). ©

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Angel Manuel Rodríguez is retired after a career serving as a pastor, professor, and theologian.



## Millennial Voices

# Quality Time With God



**Y**ou need to spend more time talking with Me. The thought wouldn't leave me alone. "I know, God," I huffed, "but I'm so busy now." Moving to Korea meant that my life looked vastly different from the long, slow days I had enjoyed the previous year while I was still job hunting. Adjusting to a new culture and job, plus getting involved in my local church and community, gave me many things to juggle. I didn't have the luxury of hours to read, pray, and journal as I did before.

Consequently, my devotional life became shakier. I would give more time to God when I had something to do for church, but there were so many other things requiring my immediate attention. "I'm doing mission!" I reasoned. "I'm busy working for You, God!" But I knew working for God is not the same as spending time with Him. God kept tugging at my heart. I needed to connect with Him more in my daily life, not just when I had to be up front in church.

My devotional life isn't quite what I want yet, but I've been learning two key lessons during this season. First, don't let guilt over doing something "imperfectly" stop you from doing it altogether. For example, I've always heard that devotional time should be in the morning. Because I found myself exhausted and rushed in the mornings—hardly my best time to give to God—I started to skip devotions because I couldn't do it as it "should" be done. Of course, that didn't help my spiritual life. I believe that God would rather us spend imperfect, distracted time with Him than no time at all. As we communicate with Him, we will grow, however slowly, in our ability to concentrate, and our appetite for Him will increase.

The second lesson is that quality is more important than quantity. Ellen White comments, "One passage studied until its significance is clear to the mind and its relation to the plan of salvation is evident, is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no purpose in view and no positive instruction gained."<sup>1</sup> I realized that I easily lost focus if I tried to read a lot in the morning just to check the "devotional duty" box. So instead, I started using an app to listen to a Bible passage along with some questions and commentary to meditate on. It was just 10 minutes long, but rich and deep. Sometimes I found myself stopped by a single verse or thought. One morning this simple phrase arrested my attention: "I choose to rejoice in God's attentive care today." The words stuck with me throughout the day, as I found my thoughts drifting to consider the personal attentiveness of God toward me and what it meant to *choose* to rejoice. Meditating on that one phrase, and its accompanying Bible passage, did me more good than simply ticking off a number of chapters.

Perhaps you are also finding it more challenging to spend time with God than you used to. Maybe your life looks different these days, and you have more responsibilities than before. If so, please don't give up on your devotional life altogether, no matter what else calls for your attention. God wants to be with you, however messy and imperfect that time might sometimes feel.

I am encouraged by these words from the psalmist: "My heart has heard you say, 'Come and talk with me.' And my heart responds, 'Lord, I am coming'" (Ps. 27:8, NLT).<sup>2</sup> ©

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

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**Lynette Allcock** teaches English in **Seoul, South Korea.**



## “May I Tell You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

**T**he hotel room was filled with thick blue smoke and smelled like burning sulfur. Gloria, terrified, dashed from the bathroom and stared at the videocassette player that was still glowing on the desk. There would be no Jesus film tonight.

It was 1999—June, or maybe July—and Pastor Stan’s evangelistic team had come to a village called Mendi, in the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. It was a dream trip, an opportunity to preach the gospel of Christ to PNG natives who had never heard His stories, never met His disciples, and never even imagined the possibility of His forgiveness. The team, coming from their homes in the northwestern United States, was armed with Bibles, sermons,

and medical equipment, along with a videocassette player and projectors that would show the *Jesus* film in full color. They had been praying for weeks and were ready.

\*\*\*

“This was the first time we had tried to use laptops and video projectors,” remembers Pastor Stan. “Since the village had electricity, we had brought the best tools we could find.”

There were screens inside and outside the large meeting tent, giant screens made of plywood and painted bright white the way good screens should be. And everything was working just as they had hoped. Thousands of people—3,000, 4,000, even 5,000—stood outside in the rain watching these things on the screens and listening to the preachers speaking God’s words.

The *Jesus* film was like candy to them. The best thing they had ever seen.

“The people inside were sheltered, and the people outside were getting soaked. Yet it didn’t seem to matter,” says Pastor Stan. “They came. Eager. Watching. Listening. Mesmerized by the wild animal videos we would show each evening. The local people had never seen lions, gorillas, or polar bears and were captivated as deer and elk and cougars moved across the screens for five minutes each evening.”

Pastor Stan remembers the experience as one of the most meaningful of his life. “My preaching probably wasn’t that great, but though I knew the people had come to see the videos, I gave them my all, describing Jesus and His love as clearly as I could.”

The days were exhaustingly busy. There were meetings every night, and during the day Pastor Stan and his wife, Gloria, visited homes in the villages. Wherever they went they were accompanied by armed guards who made sure the foreign visitors were protected from the roving bands of “rascals” who were terrorizing the area.

“Each night,” says Pastor Stan, “we played five minutes of the *Jesus* film. I wasn’t sure how the people would react

# Holy Spirit Power





to seeing Jesus live on the screens. In the film He is speaking English, and even though an interpreter would be translating every word into pidgin, I wasn't sure if they would understand the message. I shouldn't have worried. They just stood still, as if glued to their spot. It was like heaven had come to earth. Jesus was right there on the screen, and the people loved Him!"

\* \* \*

About halfway through the meetings, Pastor Stan was in the hotel one morning preparing for the evening's presentations. To make sure the videos had been rewound to the right place, he plugged the videocassette player into the electrical socket and turned it on.

"I forgot," he says with a grimace, "that the local electric power was 220 volts, and our VCR was designed for 120 volts! Right away the room filled with a bright crackling sound and a huge cloud of blue and black smoke. I pulled the plug out of the socket as quickly as I could, and looked up to see my terrified wife standing in the bathroom door.

"What have you done?" she cried.

All Pastor Stan could think about was the thousands of people who would be at the meetings tonight waiting to see *Jesus*. "What have I done, Lord? I blew it up!"

"I put the transformer on the VCR, and we prayed. We prayed on our knees. We prayed with our hands on the VCR. We prayed, and then we prayed some more. The people were coming to see *Jesus*, and I had fried the videocassette player!"

A dentist had come with the mission team, so Pastor Stan had him tinker and pray over the VCR as well. Nothing worked. The machine was dead.

That evening Pastor Stan and Gloria brought the VCR and the transformer to the church for the meetings. Humiliated yet hopeful, he explained the disaster to the team, and they all prayed over the VCR. "Lord, this is Your VCR, Your *Jesus* film, Your gospel, Your animal videos, and these are all Your people. I am so sorry I did something so foolish today. Please make the impossible happen. Please

## The people were coming to see *Jesus*, and I had fried the videocassette player!

make the burned-up VCR work tonight."

Do you believe God does electronic miracles?

"We decided to believe," say Pastor Stan and Gloria. "So we went to the church, sang the opening song, plugged the VCR into the transformer box, and pushed the ON button."

The totally fried 120-volt VCR turned ON, and, powered by an unknown current, worked through the entire meeting. It showed lions and tigers and polar bears. It showed the Bible verses for Pastor Stan's sermons. And it showed Jesus, alive, walking along the shores of Lake Galilee, healing the sick, playing with the children, and giving His life for the people of Mendi in Papua New Guinea.

The VCR played through all of that evening's program. It played all the next evening. And the next, and right on through to the last night of the meetings.

Then it quit.

"We carried it home with us," says Pastor Stan as he wipes tears from his eyes, "and tried playing a video on it at home. When I pushed the ON button, the VCR whirred, made a clunking sound, and then stopped dead. It never worked again."

There's a church in Mendi today. A church where people sing about God's love. A church where people pray to the God of miracles. ☺

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**Dick Duerksen**, a pastor and storyteller, lives in **Portland, Oregon, United States**.

# Adventist World

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# The Do-Good Pilot

I travel a lot, and this is my experience on a United Airlines flight from Los Angeles to Dallas.

The plane arrived 30 minutes late from San Francisco, California. The crew in Los Angeles hurried to prepare the plane for the next trip, to Dallas, Texas. When it was time to board, I walked onto the jetway. Right before the door to enter the plane, an elderly woman sat in a wheelchair waiting to get on. I was first in line after her, and a long line grew quickly behind us.

Suddenly the captain of the airplane stepped out from the plane door. He held out his arms and helped the woman out of the wheelchair.

The woman slowly stood up on unsteady feet, holding a cane in one hand. The captain picked up her bag and sweater and helped her walk onto the plane. Once inside, he asked me to wait while he made sure the woman was seated comfortably. All this time the line continued to grow behind me, with people anxious to get to their seat on the plane.

I was so surprised by the pilot's unexpected kindness. I wanted people to know how much the pilot carefully cared for an older passenger, even though the plane was late. As soon as I sat in my seat, I posted a message on Twitter: "I'm impressed: @United captain helps frail old woman onto LAX-

DFW flight. #Heroesinlife."

Even though the takeoff was delayed, the plane landed in Dallas two hours and 20 minutes later—11 minutes ahead of schedule!

I was determined to learn the name of this kind captain. At the plane's exit door I asked the flight attendant. She smiled and motioned to the open cockpit door. "Why don't you ask him yourself?" she said.

Captain Tuong Nguyen looked surprised at my question. I thanked him for his kindness to the elderly woman. I reached out my hand in appreciation, and the kind pilot smiled as he shook my hand, the same hand he used to assist the woman. I could tell that he considered his





## Bible Treasure

And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.

2 Thessalonians 3:13, NIV



## Make Your Own Do-Good List

There are many ways we can do good things for others. Use this space to write a list of things you will do to be kind and helpful to your family, at school, at church, and in your community.

If you fill up the space on this list, just keep going on another sheet of paper!

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

good deed to be part of his job. I even took his picture!

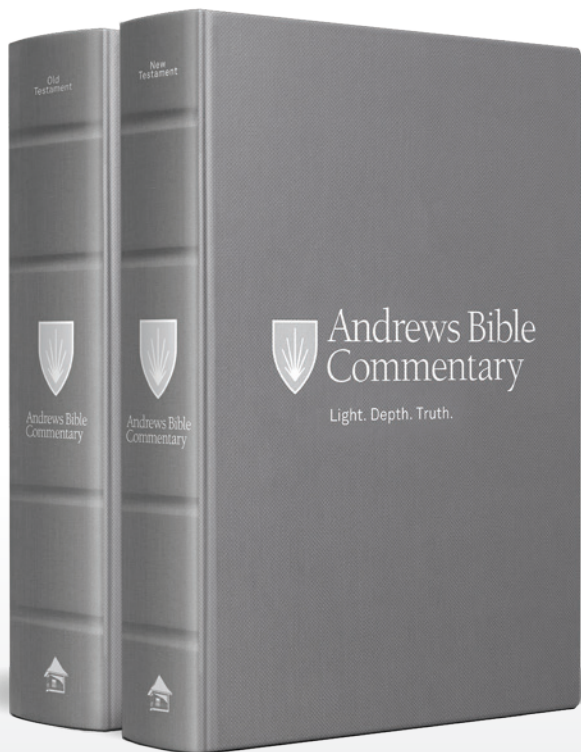
Is taking time to show kindness to a person important? The Bible says: "And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good" (2 Thess. 3:13, NIV). Kindness is important, even when we are running behind schedule. Kindness can have its own reward. Even though our flight was running late, the pilot took the time to assist the passenger, and we still landed early.

My prayer is: "Help me, Lord, to never grow tired of doing good." I hope that is your prayer too. ©



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