



General Conference Executive Committee Newsletter

An informative publication for members of the General Conference Executive Committee as a service through the office of the

ANNUAL COUNCIL
2018 SUMMARY
SEE PAGE 7

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2018

I grew up in a secular

Jewish home in Miami Beach. The way our family kept the holidays, was like this: “They tried to kill us. They failed. Let’s eat!” That was the essence of it.

Then the next thing you know, I’m in a conservative Protestant Church—the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Trust me, it’s not been an easy fit. But the bottom line is, given what I believe in, the experiences I have, you’re stuck with me! I can’t be anything else—the experiences I’ve had, the things I know, I *have* to be here.

But now, what is it that keeps me here? Is it Jesus, *per se*? Well, you can find Jesus in a lot of different churches.

Is it the community? Well, the Jewish community would take me back in a second.

What is the thing, more than anything else? Well, it’s why I’m here—it’s the *doctrines*, the teachings that we have. You know, if you’re going to accept the Sabbath, you’ve wiped out 99 percent of your options. If you’re not going to believe grandma’s up in heaven and mean Uncle Louie is burning in hell, you’ve wiped out 99 percent of your 1 percent left.

So, the bottom line is, no matter how hard it was for me to become a member of this church, it’s been the easiest thing for me to stay here. And it’s because of the teachings, these doctrines.

Look around—you’ve got a secular Jew from Miami Beach, and you’ve got an Amish?! What is it that brings us together? It’s these teachings! The doctrines that nobody else has.

I just hope more than anything else we could remember the things that unite us—these wonderful, wonderful truths that unite us, if we could somehow remember how much they do and must overshadow the relatively minor things that divide us.

Clifford Goldstein, Editor
Adult Bible Study Guide
Opening remarks, Annual
Council Sabbath School
October 13, 2018



EDITORIAL



AMISH AND ADVENTIST: I’M ON A MISSION!

BY ANDY WEAVER

During the 2018 Annual Council, Andy Weaver shared his testimony of becoming a Seventh-day Adventist and how he is ministering to the Amish today through the West Salem Mission (www.westsalemmission.org). Following is an adapted selection of Andy’s testimony. Elements of the oral style have been retained. To hear his full testimony, click [here](#), beginning at 2:13:00.

A few years ago, we attended our first large Adventist gathering. Our mission had a booth at the ASI convention. During Sabbath school, I was sitting alone wondering, “Why do I sit here alone while there are half a million other Amish people out there?”

Just then, somebody touched

me on the shoulder. It was Elder Ted [Wilson]. I remember only one word he said—“Welcome!” After that, I don’t take for granted the little things that we say!

LARGE FAMILY

Many people comment on our large family—eight children. I

—continued, next page



“

I WAS BECOMING
CONVICTED
to let the Lord use
me to revive my
church . . . helping
them see who we
really are and where
we're really from.

don't really care for the world we live in, so I'm trying to create my own little world!

My mother was in a family of 17 children. My father was born into a family of 14. Between them, I have about 300 first cousins!

Naomi and I went to school together. Never thought I'd marry her, although we were good friends. I didn't see her much after eighth grade but saw her again when she was 16. I thought, "Lord willing, I will marry that young lady!" We married in 2004 and were happily part of the Amish community. We thought we'd raise our family old order Amish, and eventually go down to our graves as Amish people.

Being in an Amish community, you have a sense of belonging and security. That is the main reason the Amish church still holds together today, even though a lot of young people are leaving, there is a sense of belonging and security.

Our wedding lasted from eight o'clock in the morning until 12 midnight! There was lots of feasting, and food, and singing. That was the highlight of my Amish experience! I miss that more than anything.

SOMETHING MISSING

I worked on a farm. One day the owner told me, "Andy, I'm getting too old to take care of my farm . . . I'm going to sell it and move to the city." A few months later he told me he had sold his farm to a Seventh-day Adventist couple.

I found that intriguing because I was becoming very interested in what people believe, which is not normal for an Amish person. We were taught not to share our faith.

One day my brother told me he

had a book, *The Martyr's Mirror*, a compilation of early Anabaptist minutes from their court cases and letters they had written from dungeons. He recommended I get the book, saying it was a "life changer."

I was excited because I felt something was missing. Even though everything looked good, something was strangely missing when it came to spirituality.

I bought *The Martyr's Mirror* but was dismayed with some of the letters the early Anabaptists had written regarding righteousness by faith. To the Amish, it was unimaginable that you can just accept Jesus Christ, receive His righteousness, and become a child of God!

The book cited the verse: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord" (Jer. 17:5, NKJV). The Anabaptist writer stated he would not rely on *people* to tell him what is right and wrong; he would follow the *word of God*. This drove me to my Bible, and I started reading it in a totally new way.

I was becoming convicted to let the Lord use me to revive my church, to bring back the beliefs that were adopted by our early Anabaptists, helping them see who we really are and where we're really from.

A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

During this time, I met the Seventh-day Adventist who moved into the community. One day I asked him to take me to the hospital to visit my nephew, and he readily agreed. My brother and I got into the backseat of his double-cab truck, and as he drove, he asked us

a few questions. Before long he was preaching, clearly enjoying his captive audience! He told us about the great controversy theme—all the way to the hospital. When he picked us up, he continued sharing about the great controversy.

I responded that we hadn't been brought up learning this, so we shouldn't believe it. In the Amish church we were taught "...you must continue in the things which you have learned..." (2 Tim. 3:14). To us, this meant that if you were born Amish, you must remain Amish, but he wouldn't settle with that.

He showed me Mark 7:7, "In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men," and verse 9, "...you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition."

One day, the Adventist brought me a book—*The Great Controversy*. I started at the beginning and got into the history I had already studied in *The Martyr's Mirror*. When he asked me, "How are you doing with the book?" I said, "Well, I got bogged down; I'm not really reading it." So, he gave me another book—*The Desire of Ages*.

A DRAMATIC CHANGE

It laid around the house until one winter evening when I sat beside my stove and started reading the first chapter. And that is where my life dramatically changed!

I read, "Christ was treated as we deserve, so that we may be treated as He deserves" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25). I'd never thought about that! It used to make me angry that when Jesus was in Pilate's judgment hall, He wouldn't talk! I was the



Reading The Desire of Ages changed my perspective, and by God's grace I learned that if God is our defense, we don't have to defend ourselves.

kind of person who wasted no time in defending myself when challenged. But reading *The Desire of Ages* changed my perspective, and by God's grace I learned that if God is our defense, we don't have to defend ourselves.

I continued reading, "He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we may be justified by His righteousness, in which we have no share" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25).

Putting the book down, I walked around the house, thinking "I have found the truth. This *has* to be the truth!" I picked up the book again, read paragraph after paragraph, then set the book down to walk around the house again!

My Adventist friend returned one evening and I said, "This book is unbelievable! It's absolutely fantastic! It's changing my life! Where is the guy [who wrote it]? I want to meet this man!"

Knowing our Amish background of not wanting ladies telling us what to do, he reluctantly replied, "Well, um, he died years ago, and it was actually a lady."

"Well," I thought, "it's too late now, 'cuz I love the author to

death! I can't go back. I *will* read her writings, 'cuz they have driven me to the Bible and they have given me a lot of insight on the plan of salvation."

CONTROVERSY OVER 666

During this time there was a lot of controversy going on in our Amish community about a new law. We were avid deer hunters, and the state of Ohio had outlined a new process for getting hunting licenses. The new law was in section number 666!

We Amish were already scared to death of that number! We believed it had everything to do with credit cards and debit cards, photo IDs, etc., and would have nothing to do with it. We were suspicious, and this confirmed in our minds that this was the mark of the beast!

My Adventist friend took the opportunity to get a bunch of little booklets, "Decoding the Mark of the Beast." It's small; you can read it in one sitting. By the time you get to the end, you know from the Bible what the "Beast" is, and its mark!

As I read, I thought, "This is the truth, the *absolute truth*!" When I saw my Adventist friend I asked, "So, explain to me the whole Sabbath issue." I believed it was true, but wasn't convicted that I needed to keep the Sabbath. He explained it to me, and then I understood.

We started sharing, believing that our church would be able to see and adopt this Bible truth and we would have a revival. But you know if you witness to people, there are always some who just don't care. They're going to stick with what they've always believed.

THREATENED WITH EXCOMMUNICATION

Soon, we were threatened with excommunication because of bringing “heresy” into the church, and so we became quiet. I had no desire to leave my Amish community or to be shunned by my own family members and the people I grew up with.

I laid low, but became one of the most miserable people in the world. I had suicidal thoughts, I was so incredibly miserable. I *knew* I had found the truth but was *so* unhappy that my church was not willing to at least look into what I had discovered.

Another truth I discovered was the mortality of the soul. To me, it was so incredibly easy to see that a soul is mortal. But we were taught that the soul is immortal, and if we’re not good enough to go to heaven we will go to hell and be tortured for all eternity. This really bothered me, because I never felt I was quite good enough to go to heaven.

Nobody goes to heaven just because they didn’t want to go to hell. I would sit in the Amish church, bothered that the preacher would preach hell fire to all those young people, especially the little children, who were terrified.

One day I was in my workshop thinking to myself, “I don’t want to work. I don’t want to live. I don’t know what to do with my life.” Then I remembered what happened when it was discovered I was studying Adventist literature—I threw all of my literature in the fire, Ellen White books and all, assuming my conviction would go away.

A CALLING

Standing in my workshop, I



The Weaver Family: Andy and Naomi Weaver in 2016 with their eight children.

remembered one book left in the barn I had intended to give to my Baptist friend—*The Great Controversy*. Maybe it would have something to offer me. I found the book, all curled up and dirty. Opening it, I started reading the chapter about Martin Luther and his separation from Rome. I read how he was threatened then excommunicated, his fearless responses, the danger he was in, and his convictions.

Then the Lord spoke to me in a very direct way: “Andy, I have suffered long with you. I have a calling for you.”

I answered, “Lord, if You help me, I’m here. If you tell me what to do, I will follow You. I will do what You tell me to do.”

From that day on, I started

working my way toward Adventism. I was still a member of the Amish church, but I had peace.

I became convicted to not shun people who left our church. I felt as if we had become like the people our forefathers had to deal with. Even though we didn’t kill people physically, we annihilated their reputation and tried to kill their voice in the community. “Those days are over for me,” I decided. “I’m going to act like a Christian if I claim to be a Christian and I will treat those people with love.”

This led to Naomi and I being excommunicated. If it were not for the Bible truth as we found it in Adventism, we would have never stood for this. But knowing what we knew, about the immortality of the soul, Bible prophecy, the 2300-

days—this was not only a pearl of great price, it was a gold mine!

I discussed it with my wife. At first, she said “It’s the truth, but we can’t leave the church. I can’t leave my family. My mother will shun me, and everyone in my family and all the people in the church will shun me! We can’t leave; I can’t do it!

But as time went on, we eventually decided that we would stand for what we believed because our beliefs are according to the Word of God, and we would become part of a different culture.

ON A MISSION

Then one day Naomi said, “You know, we could accept all this truth and still be Amish.” And I thought, “Well, that is interesting! What prevents us from maintaining our lifestyle, which we love dearly? We don’t have to change the way we dress; even though the community doesn’t accept us, we would still fit in.” And so, we were convicted that is what we would do.

We were excommunicated from the Amish church in 2013. I told Naomi, “My leaders have no idea what they’ve got themselves into. I love them, but I’m on a mission! What I have found is a gold mine of truth, a truth that will bring hope to people’s lives—even plain people who look innocent and peaceful. There’s a lot of hopelessness there—people with heartache, broken-hearted people.

“God has called us to bring this message to our people,” I told her. It was mysterious to me why this marvelous truth—the Three Angels’ Messages—had never been brought to modern-day Anabaptists—the Amish and Mennonite people.

While we love the Amish lifestyle, and we love our people, to me the most exciting thing on this earth



“

I'M ON A MISSION!

Photographs above are of the West Salem Mission congregation and children's programming.

other than the assurance of salvation is that I can be part of a worldwide church that believes just what I believe. That is the most beautiful thing!

NEVER LOOKED BACK

We were baptized and became members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2014. We never looked back. We never regretted it. Every day when I get up, I'm excited about the Lord and I'm excited about the Seventh-day Adventist movement. I *love* the Seventh-day Adventist Church and all the people in it!

I feel like I'm one of you—every one of you, you feel like my brother, my sister in Christ. I met an Adventist last night and he said, "I'm from Afghanistan." And I thought, "That is the most remarkable thing!" I wanted to hug him until midnight!

One of the proofs that God loves humanity is the Seventh-day Adventist movement.

I know we have our differences. You probably look at me and say, "Andy, you don't realize some of the problems in the church."

Believe me, I'm not a very smart person, but I'm not an ignorant person. I know we have our problems. I know there are issues, but to me, this is God's church. It's not Elder Wilson's church, and he's the first one who would tell you that

this is God's church. God works through people, and I believe in the people He put in positions.

REACHING THE AMISH

In 2015, some of us got together and were brainstorming how to reach the Amish people. I told them, "Number 1—I believe in the Seventh-day Adventist movement and I will be under the umbrella of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I'm not interested in starting our own organization, separate from the world church."

And so, we formed the little mission with a big vision and a big mission. We're in West Salem (Ohio), so we named it "West Salem Mission." What started as a little, insignificant congregation has become a significant little community in West Salem. About a year after we were baptized another Amish family was baptized, and last year five more families came in.

We realize that some of the people who came in were not influenced by West Salem Mission. One person was an hour away—he was in the heart of the world's largest Amish community. He sneaked to Wal-Mart and got a computer to watch movies! Then he came across some good preachers and went through all the Adventist teachings.

"This is the truth," he decided. He was keeping the Sabbath for

three months in the heart of the world's largest Amish community, all by himself, as a single person, and he thought he was the only Amish person who had such weird convictions! And then he found us.

We see God reaching these people. We have people from Michigan, Indiana, Virginia. I just got a call from someone in Kentucky who said, "Andy, we have a family of ten, and I was wondering if there's a church like yours in Kentucky?"

Something I realized the first time I went to a Seventh-day Adventist Church was that if I have to bring all of my people into a nominal Seventh-day Adventist Church, it's going to be a problem. It's nothing against the people, but the culture is *very* different. Amish are very much like Muslims in the sense they have convictions that don't just go away.

On the way home, I prayed, "Father, if it is Your will, it's my conviction that we should start an Amish Seventh-day Adventist Church." And so, that's when this all started coming together.

I want to thank each of you for your prayers, and your financial support. Without those two it would have been impossible for us to go forward, and I want to thank Elder Ted Wilson for inviting us today. We enjoyed our stay here immensely, and meeting all of you.



Please continue to keep this ministry in your prayers. They are looking to renovate their church and school as the congregation continues to grow. For more information or to make a donation, visit

www.westsalemmission.org

ANNUAL COUNCIL 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

The complete 2018 Annual Council Agenda, including documents, is available [here](#). Presentations and more material from the 2018 Annual Council can be found [here](#).



LEAD CONFERENCE

- As part of the 155th anniversary celebration of the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Battle Creek, the LEAD (Leadership Educational and Development) Conference featured heritage-themed plenary presentations and seminars, and tours around Battle Creek, including to the Oak Hill cemetery where Ellen G. White and other church pioneers are buried. The LEAD Conference was held October 11-13.



- Wearing 19th century dress, friendly volunteer tour guides at Adventist Heritage Village greeted GC Executive Committee members, attendees, and guests to meetings in the Big Tent pitched on the grounds of Adventist Heritage Village in Battle Creek, Michigan.
- *Lessons from Battle Creek*, a book co-edited by James R. Nix, director of the Ellen G. White Estate and Alberto R. Timm, associate director, was introduced in a presentation by Timm, highlighting some of the most important lessons from Battle Creek.

- The LEAD Conference [booklet is available here](#).
- LEAD Conference presentations, audio and video files are [available here](#).

SABBATH SERVICES

- Many wore 19th century apparel to Sabbath services held in the Battle Creek Tabernacle, paying tribute to the Adventist pioneers on the 155th anniversary of the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Battle Creek in 1863.
- Sabbath School Alive! with its three components of Mission, Bible Study & Prayer, and Fellowship, was modeled during the Sabbath School program in the Battle Creek Tabernacle. Leading out were Ramon Canales, director of the GC Sabbath School and Personal Ministries department, and Jim Howard, associate director.
- In his sermon, "The Past With a Future—Looking Back to Move Forward Led by God," Pastor Ted N.C. Wilson, General Conference (GC) president, stated "Let us hold fast the confession of our faith as the pioneers did. They faced many obstacles and antagonism just as we do, but let us hold fast our belief in God's Truth, His Word, and His



—continued
next page



GC Executive Committee members at Sabbath morning services at the Battle Creek Tabernacle during Annual Council 2018

love for His church. This church will not fail and will not fall apart. Your church, God's church, will go through to the end through the power of the Holy Spirit."

- During the service, recently retired IAD President Israel Leito baptized Mexican business owner Jorge Molina

SECRETARIAT REPORT

- In his report titled, "Adventism 101," G.T. Ng, GC Executive Secretary, emphasized mission, stating "The first 30 years after the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist church signaled unparalleled global expansion. Adventist missionaries were sent to: Switzerland (1874); Germany (1875); France (1876); Italy (1877); Norway (1878); Australia (1885); British Guiana (1885); South Africa (1887); Hong Kong (1888); and Argentina (1891).



- Quoted in the Secretary's Report: "In the great closing work we shall meet with perplexities that we know not how to deal with, but let us not forget that the three great Powers of heaven are working, that a divine hand is on the wheel, and that God will bring His purposes to pass" (*Evangelism*, p. 65).

- During his report, Gary Krause, GC associate secretary and director of Adventist Mission, highlighted the "Total Employment Tent Makers Program," which allows people to seek job opportunities in their field in challenging places, to engage their communities and share the love of Jesus.

- The Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists (ESDA) Project is well underway. In her report, managing editor Dragoslava Santrac, outlined three goals:

- 1) To have the ESDA online with at least 2,500 articles and accompanying photos, video and audio materials launched at the 2020 GC Session;
- 2) To continually update and expand the ESDA online;
- 3) To publish the print edition after the first 8,000 articles are available online.

—continued, next page

- The Seventh-day Adventist Church has more than 21 million members, according to David Trim, director of the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research. In his statistical report, Trim noted however, that since 1965, the church has experienced a membership net loss rate of 42 percent, meaning that 4 out of every 10 members are leaving. Nevertheless, he highlighted that accessions are rising. In 2017, someone became a Seventh-day Adventist every 23 seconds. He attributed this growth to church planting.
- VividFaith is a new website and app connecting people with mission opportunities. Expanding on existing models of online volunteer recruitment, VividFaith redefines mission service to include more than short and long-term opportunities overseas. It also offers a social networking platform. VividFaith is now accepting applications from organizations with mission opportunities to post. To apply, organizations must be either in the SDA Yearbook or members of NAD ASI.



- A first of its kind mission textbook, *Introduction to Adventist Mission*, by Gorden R. Doss, seminary professor at Andrews University, was introduced at Annual Council. The book was produced in partnership with the Institute of World Mission.

TREASURY REPORT

- The returning of tithe has increased around the world, Juan Prestol-Puesán, GC Treasurer, said in his treasurer's report.
- The increase in giving is seen, at least in part, as a result from a renewed emphasis on stewardship.



- "Tithe is sacred, and we do not deal with it trivially," Prestol-Puesán said.
- A special report was given on the acquisition and distribution of the "extraordinary tithe" donation. Read about the report here.
- Juan Prestol-Puesan gave a very well-received presentation on "Transparency and Integrity." He was assisted in his presentation

by Dr. Ann Gibson, former dean of the School of Business, Andrews University. "No one has a monopoly on transparency and integrity," said Prestol-Puesan. "The issue of transparency is not limited to finances. . . . I believe this is a matter very crucial to the church." Watch the presentation here, beginning at 3:05:30. Download the presentation slides here.

- Financial objectives for the current GC administration include:
 - 1) operating on a balanced budget;
 - 2) maintaining adequate levels of liquidity and working capital to honor the obligations of the world field;
 - 3) providing a meaningful support service to the regions and programs that interact with the General Conference.
- GC Undertreasurer Ray Wahlen reported that for the second straight year the in-house operating budget of the General Conference has been under the 2-percent operating cap (calculated as 2 percent of global tithe).
- Wahlen reminded the delegates that all levels of the church must report on their use of tithe on an annual basis.
- Funds from the 2020 GC Session offering have been designated for the One Year in Mission program.

OTHER ITEMS

- Monday morning's devotional, "Experiencing the Past—The Bible Way," was given by Denis Kaiser, church history professor, Andrews University seminary.



■ Israel and Ludmila Leito were honored for their many decades of service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In addition to other areas of service, Pastor Leito served as president of the Inter-American Division for nearly 25 years.

■ A new five-year strategic plan, “I Will Go” was unveiled. The draft strategy simplifies the current “Reach the World” plan, while retaining a sharp focus on spreading the gospel and nurturing members. It will come to a vote at the 2019 Annual Council and, if approved, be implemented at the 2020 GC Session.



■ An updated mission statement for the Seventh-day Adventist Church was approved. It reads: “Make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel of the Three Angels’ Messages in preparation for His soon return (Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Rev. 14:6-12).”

■ Delegates approved a document entitled Regard for and Practice of General Conference Session and General Conference Executive Committee Actions. The decision was an extension of a vote by the General Conference Executive

Committee at its October 2017 meeting. The document outlines a process for addressing matters of non-compliance within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

■ The 2019 GAIIN Conference held February 22-March 1 in Sweimeh, Jordan, will be hosted by the GC Communication Department and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).

■ The Nurture & Retention Summit will be held April 5-7, 2019, at the world headquarters in Silver Spring, MD, USA.

■ Mario Ceballos, director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, reported how Adventist chaplains are making a positive impact around the world.

■ “Your Brain, Your Body,” is the theme for the 3rd Global Conference on Health and Lifestyle, to be held July 9-13, 2019 at Loma Linda University.

■ As of January 2, 2019, all Adventist Health System-owned facilities will be known as AdventHealth, reported Terry Shaw, president and CEO Adventist Health System. A presentation on the name change is available here.

■ Paul Douglas, director of the GC Auditing Service (GCAS) presented the 2017 GCAS Annual Report to Annual Council.

■ Thinking of starting an Urban Center of Influence? E. Douglas Venn, Global Mission Director shared resources to help start Urban Centers of Influence.



■ A special partnership has been established between the GC Special Needs Ministries (SNM) and Christian Record Services (CRS). In their report, “The Blind Shall See: A Providential Development,” Larry Evans (SNM), and Diane Thurber (CRS), announced an exciting new technology for reaching the blind. They also encouraged division leaders to help create awareness, acceptance, and action in reaching the blind.

CHECKUP



Tips for Avoiding End-of-Year Stress*

The end of year season can bring both joy and stress as we reflect upon the year that is past, anticipate the year ahead, and spend time with loved ones and friends (or not). Here are some simple tips to help make this time of year as healthy and stress-free as possible.

1 Start Each Day With God.

While many wonderful activities abound, don't forget to start each day with God. Spend quiet time reading and reflecting on what He has to say to you through the Bible and prayer. Enrich your study by reading the Spirit of Prophecy. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6, NKJV).

2 Get Plenty of Exercise.

Being active can elevate your mood and help you cope with stress. Exercise and other types of physical activity stimulate the production of endorphins in the brain. Endorphins can trigger positive feelings, boosting mood and reducing feelings of anxiety and stress. Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity a minimum of three times each week.

3 Eat and Drink Healthfully.

It may be tempting to indulge in high-sugar, high-fat foods, but don't forget the importance of healthy eating. Fresh (or frozen) fruit can offer a healthy alternative to rich desserts. Eating too much sugar and fat will not only leave you feeling ill, but the pounds (or kilograms) will quickly sneak up on you.

Remember that soft drinks and even fruit juices are loaded with sugar.

4 Sleep Matters. While it is great to spend time with friends and loved ones, getting enough sleep will help to ensure that your time together remains pleasant. Some of the medically-documented benefits of getting enough sleep (more than 7 hours) each night include: reduces stress, provides energy and alertness, improves memory, helps with weight loss, reduces risk of depression, helps the body repair itself, reduces inflammation, may help prevent cancer, keeps your heart healthy, and more.

5 Keep It Simple. This time of year can be especially stressful trying to accomplish too much. Make sure you're not setting unrealistic expectations for yourself. Everything doesn't have to be perfect, and you don't have to do everything yourself. Get your others involved and delegate. Or, if you feel that hosting an event at your home

is too much, don't feel obligated to entertain relatives and friends. Know your limitations and learn to say "no."

6 Pick Your Battles. Being in close quarters with some family members for long periods can be stressful. Everyone has their own personalities. Because of differences, it may be easy to rub each other the wrong way. Allowing remarks to irritate you can lead to misery and stress. Set aside differences and agree to disagree. This is easier said than done. Letting go and picking your battles, reduces anxiety. Don't let the actions of others rob you of joy.

7 End Each Day With God. At the end of the day, gather your family and friends together and sing praises to the Lord. Thank Him for His goodness of the past year, recount your many blessings, and praising Him for sending Jesus to this earth as our Savior. Read and pray together. Some of your warmest memories may come from this special time.

*Sources include Healthline Red Newsletter, <https://www.healthline.com/health/holiday-stress-management-tips#1>, <https://www.healthline.com/health/holiday-stress> and VeryWell Health, <https://www.verywellhealth.com/top-health-benefits-of-a-good-nights-sleep-2223766>.





THE BACK PAGE

Directions: For more information on an item, click on the corresponding number on the map.

1 Russia's first Protestant seminary celebrated its 30th anniversary. Known now as Zaoksky Adventist University, the school opened on Dec. 2, 1988, as a theological seminary for training pastors across the Soviet Union. Located approximately 75 miles (125 km) south of Moscow in the **Zaoksky, Tula Region**, the institution soon added a school of agriculture. Later, more degrees were added. Most church workers currently serving in Russia and other former Soviet countries received their education at Zaoksky.

2 Valuing education and community involvement, the West-Central Africa Division (WAD) in **Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire**, has gifted a public school complex of 15 primary schools and 3 kindergartens with 300 school benches. Previously, more than 5,000 students in Abobo, a northern suburb of the capital city, had to fight each day to get a place to sit. Pastor Elie Weick, WAD president, was presented with a picture of students seated on the new benches, with the caption, "*Before we*

were 4 on the same bench, but now we are only 2 and I am happy."

3 Using augmented reality, a new app developed in the South American Division (SAD) helps to illustrate figures in the Book of Revelation. The app works hand in hand with the New Missionary Bible from SAD and was presented to the 222 participants at the division's year-end meeting on Nov. 10 in **Brasilia, Brazil**. The Bible and app are an especially practical resource for members directly involved in giving Bible studies.

4 The deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California (U.S.A.) history began on Nov. 8, 2018. Known as the Camp Fire, the fire roared through the town of **Paradise**, destroying at least 19,000 buildings, including the Paradise Seventh-day Adventist

Church, part of Paradise Adventist Academy, and several structures of Adventist-owned Feather River Hospital, as well as thousands of homes. Nearly 1,300 Adventist church members were affected, with many losing everything except their lives.

5 The South Pacific's newest Adventist Hope radio station aims to share the good news about Jesus to the residents of Kiribati. The new station, located at Kiribati Mission headquarters at **Korobu, South Tarawa**, went on air November 12. Radio announcer Tarataake Angirio made the first transmission, later saying that it was an historic day for the Church. The station, an initiative of the Trans Pacific Union Mission, aims at reaching 60 per cent of the 103,000 citizens of Kiribati, where the Church has historically struggled to find a voice.

A new online resource is available highlighting current issues of interest to the members of the church worldwide.

beinformed.adventist.org

As much interest has been shown regarding church unity, governance, items voted at General Conference Sessions and Annual Council meetings, this page offers an easily accessible place to find videos, articles, and documents related to these items and more.