



General Conference Executive Committee Newsletter

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

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What is the root of all evil?

Some have proposed that comparison is a root cause. Do you compare yourself with others? How does it make you feel?

Frank Hasel reflects on the sin of envy in this issue's lead article. Envy is something we all have encountered—even within ourselves. When we compare ourselves with others, envy, contempt, or pride, may be triggered, and we may experience the painful desire to possess what the other has.

Sin entered heaven and earth when angels and humans compared themselves with God and coveted to have and be more than they were created for. They did not appreciate what they were given but tried to grab more. Since then, the craving for 'more' has been the ultimate downfall of many.

The antidote for envy is contentment. "But godliness with contentment is great gain..." (1 Tim 6:6 ESV), says Paul. What God gives is enough. Nothing beyond what He gives is needed, nor can it truly satisfy. Are you content with what God has given you, who He wants you to be, and where He wants you to go?

Torben Bergland
Associate Director
GC Health Ministries



EDITORIAL



ENVY—THE SINISTER SIN

BY FRANK HASEL, PH.D., ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
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Editor's Note: This article is abridged from a sermon given at the Triadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church in Clarksville, MD, U.S.A. on February 23, 2019. Elements of the oral style have been retained.

*H*ave you ever found yourself constantly pondering over a specific person, thinking long and hard, perhaps with some envious feelings about his or her qualities and advantages? You observe what they have, and you don't. You see what they have accomplished, and you haven't. You brood about the things they own, but you do not possess.

Suddenly, you find yourself imagining what life would be like if you could have the same things as

this person—the same talents, the same position with its perceived power, the same health, respect, etc. You start wondering, "Why does he/she have 'X' and I don't?"

I remember well the time after successfully defending my Ph.D. — I had enjoyed working as a pastor in Germany for some years and had just received a call to be a Bible teacher at our theological seminary in Austria. The new work as a young teacher took all my

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energy. I had a full load as theology teacher and several other responsibilities on the side, and yet I was able, occasionally, to write an article for our church magazines. I thoroughly enjoyed my work as teacher and was richly blessed.

But there was this other person with whom I started to compare myself—my cousin, Michael Hasel. He, too, had recently defended his dissertation and started teaching in the same year I began at Bogenhofen.

But he did not teach at a tiny country school. He taught at a major university in the United States of America. And he was not only successful in publishing a few articles in our church magazines; he published several scientific articles in some of the most renowned and respected, peer-reviewed scholarly journals, in addition to writing some books.

This was something I could only dream about. Even harder for me was that he entertained personal contacts with some of the finest, most prominent scholars in his field, and received recognition from those top professors.

This was something I did not have. As a young, aspiring scholar I realized publications were extremely important for my academic reputation. They could significantly determine my professional future and career!

I began to realize that instead of admiration for the things my cousin did well, another feeling was creeping in and growing stronger over time. I started feeling grudges. Instead of feeling happy with him for his accomplishments, I secretly envied his success. I began to seek the things I did not have by comparing myself with him.

I started eyeing the much better academic environment he was in, (better research library, sabbaticals, professional allowances, and much more) that enabled him to write those articles and books. I wanted to succeed in the same things where he succeeded! And I envied the things I did not have.

The more I compared myself with him the more I realized I could not enjoy his success and started coveting what he had. Slowly but surely our good relationship was negatively affected and burdened by my jealousy. And it was not his fault!

SATAN'S MOST EFFECTIVE WEAPON

Do you compare yourself often with others? Are you unhappy with yourself? Do you often have the feeling of being disadvantaged or being overlooked, or that you are missing out on something that you actually deserve?

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Slowly but surely our good relationship was negatively affected and burdened by my jealousy.



There are many sins whose disastrous and sinister effects weigh heavily upon us. But there is one sin with which we all most likely have had to struggle with in one way or another. We encounter this sin in many well-known biblical stories.

Right from the beginning, Cain and Abel were confronted with this sin. Joseph and his brothers had to deal with it even more impressively. Biblical authors mention this sin in the Old Testament as well as in the New, and they emphatically warn us against it.

We could say it is the obsession par excellence. It is a universal problem and it is extremely destructive in its consequences and repercussions on our human personality, and even more so for our togetherness. It is especially effective on people who seek holiness. This sin is envy.

There is a fable that Satan's agents were failing in their attempts to draw into sin a holy man who lived as a hermit in the desert of northern Africa. Every attempt had met with failure; so Satan, angered with the incompetence of his subordinates, became personally involved in the case. He said, "The reason you have failed is that your methods are too crude for one such as this. Watch this."

He then approached the holy man with great care and whispered softly in his ear, "Your brother has just been made Bishop of Alexandria."

Instantly the holy man's face showed that Satan had been successful: a great scowl formed over his mouth and his eyes tightened up.

"Envy," said Satan, "is often our best weapon against those who seek holiness."

No wonder God has dedicated an entire commandment against this sin. It is the final chord, of the entire Decalogue. And this commandment deals not just with deeds but with one's thoughts!

POWERFUL AND DESTRUCTIVE

Envy is this malicious, nagging inner disposition and attitude in which I jealously covet the success of another person, or the things he

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possesses, the advantages he has, and I begrudge the things I don't have. Often these grudges over the success and happiness of the other person is accompanied with very powerful feelings. These feelings can be so powerful and destructive that one is inclined to put down the other person or perhaps even considers destroying the things he has, and I lack.

Envy is a form of blindness where I no longer see in an adequate and realistic manner my own gifts and what God has given me, but instead my perception is solely focused only on the things and strengths of others. Envy leads to the unhappy feeling that I did not get what I should. Consequently, we build up walls that separate us from each other, and even from God.

We become prisoners of our own feelings of deprivation.

Envy is one of the most mysterious sins. Perhaps it is the origin of all evil in the universe—Satan envied a position he did not have.

The root of envy is as tragic as it is human: it grows in the soil of my own deficit, out of a feeling of deprivation, of having not received what I deserve, or where I think I have been treated unjustly. Envy makes the heart bitter (James 3:14).

And this bitterness leads to strife, controversy, and every evil thing. "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there" (James 3:16, NKJV). A modern Bible translation, "The Message" puts the same verse this way: "Whenever you're trying to look better than others or get the better of others, things fall apart, and everyone ends up at the others' throats."

Where there is envy, there is confusion. But the apostle Paul tells us God is not "the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33, NKJV). And this is exactly what James says in James 3:17:

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy (NKJV).

Envy is never satisfied—it never gets enough! Envy is strong and powerful. And envy makes us weak. When we are envious, our face gets pale, even green. Envy gets under the skin. Envy is all around us and it grows strange blossoms.

“DEADLY SINS”

In the Christian tradition envy is counted among the seven "deadly

sins.” Envy hinders our ability to freely relate to others; it inhibits our vitality and thinking so that our faith can no longer grow. Envy is one of the strongest drives we human beings have. It is a mighty dragon who pops up wherever human beings

live together for a significant time.

We encounter envy in the form of jealousy, or rival power struggles.

Envy is, as wise king Solomon stated, “rottenness in the bones” (Proverbs 14:30). It makes us sick. It isolates us from our fellow human beings. Often our inner unhappiness and dissatisfaction is the trigger that releases not just envy but a host of other negative feelings.

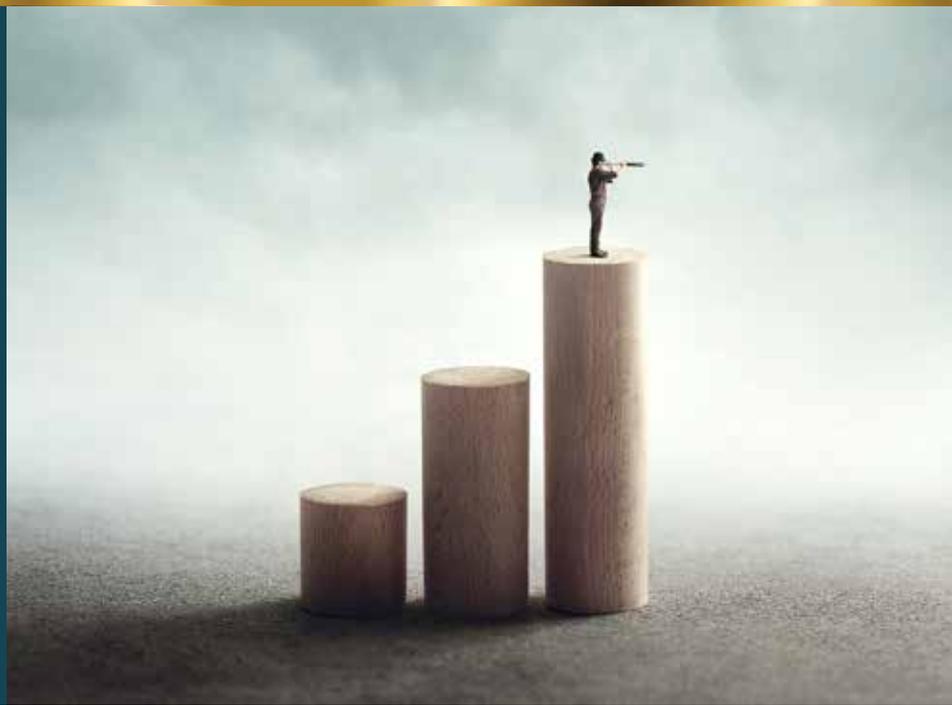
God knew about the destructive power of envy. Therefore, in this final commandment, God opens up to us a new perspective on how we should relate to each other. Here we find divine words of wisdom and instruction to respond to the power of envy and jealousy:

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s” (Deuteronomy 5:21-22, NKJV).

Notice, God says there are seven specific things we should not covet. The number seven seems to indicate completeness. In listing those

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It is so easy to envy individual things that a person possesses (and I don’t have). But the question one must ask is: “Do I really want to have everything the other person has?”



specific seven items God seems to draw a protecting fence around the things He has given us for life.

In this tenth commandment God Himself guarantees to respect the important boundaries between me and my neighbor. The things that are mentioned are very specific and concrete; one would think this should be sufficient. So why, after this detailed listing of specific things, this seemingly insignificant last clause: “or anything that is your neighbor’s”? Isn’t that broad statement a weakening of the previous?

No! The Hebrew person thought differently; he thought more holistic. Here in the final words of the Ten Commandments we find for the English word “anything,” the short Hebrew word *kól*. *Kól* means “anything,” but in the Hebrew language it can also denote the entirety— everything—the totality of it all!

WHOLISTIC VIEW

When we read the tenth commandment with this understanding, we understand what

God wants to tell us: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not covet your neighbor’s house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything (everything) else—the totality of all that is your neighbor’s!

Here we encounter how God sees human beings—wholistically, in the totality of our lives! We often covet something specific in the life of another person, but God sees us much more comprehensively! It is so easy to envy individual things that a person possesses (and I don’t have). But the question one must ask is: “Do I really want to have everything the other person has?”

Not just his attractive and beautiful wife, but also the mother-in-law? Not just the big house, but also the big mortgage payments, utility costs, and taxes? Not just the impressive (German) sports car, but also the exorbitant leasing and insurance payments to drive it?

Not just the success in his professional career, but also the hard work and heavy burdens that come with it?

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For me this opened up a window, a new opportunity to learn to be happy and even rejoice.



In other words, *everything*—the totality of it all—that belongs to him/her? Do you want to trade your life with his/her life? Would you be willing to live in their skin? Completely?

It is this totality of life, that God has in view! This is what He wants to protect. And therefore, God wants to safeguard what is ours. The tenth commandment makes this very clear! We often look only at the attractive things in life, we often only envy the nice-looking, eye-catching individual things (the sweet cherries...), the success and the admiration that goes along with it. But life does not work that way.

God sees everything; He sees our life in its entirety. He sees our unique history. He sees our personal story. He sees our past. And He knows all the undertakings of our life. He knows us from our birth. God is with us when we ride on the crest of success, and He knows us when we are in the shadows of defeat. Our life is like the rings of a tree and every new year gives us a unique identity and history that no one else has. In the eyes of God, He sees us as we are. He sees our life in its totality, and this we cannot rip apart and dissect.

Therefore, we do well to see each other in this totality as well. If I only pick a few precious things from the life of my neighbor—like sweet cherries—if I isolate, select, and pick only what is desirable in my eyes, it would mean that I cut something from the life of the other person that has taken years to grow in his life. And if I do this, I forget the entire picture—his entire life—and do not realize that what I envy will never really fit into my life, my history.

Only if I start seeing the other person in his entirety, as someone who, through his whole life and through God’s grace, has become what he/she is, only then can I begin to see the other person with different eyes.

Do I really want to trade my entire life with him? No, then it would no longer be my life! If I realize this fact, I can begin to see the unique gifts and talents God has given me with new eyes. It widens the narrow perspective of envy so that I can start to see the other person, and myself, with God’s eyes.

REALITY OF LIFE

Love is blind, we often say. But envy makes us even more blind, because envy isolates one thing and cuts it from the entire life of the person. Envy is divisive and splits relationships. Therefore, we need to see that envy is an enemy to life.

It can take a long time to realize, acknowledge, and accept this part of life. It is the experience of loss that we must learn—to let go of things I would love to have, but don’t. We must learn that we cannot have everything in life.

It is important we learn to adequately deal with this reality of life and be able to mourn over this fact. Envy hinders this important work of grieving. The person who is jealous and full of envy cannot deal adequately with the things he doesn’t have and becomes incapable of focusing on and enjoying the things he does have. But with God’s help, we can learn to focus on what we do have and find new ways to put our abilities to good use.

We often waste so much time

complaining about what we don't have. We fuss and whine and start comparing ourselves with others. But a difficulty grows out of such comparison: either we become depressed, or proud. And both are a hindrance to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives! Often it is not the deficiency we experience that hinders the influence of God's grace in our lives, but our resistance to accept the reality of our lives and start using the things He has given us to His glory.

When I realized this in my own life, I started to breathe again, spiritually speaking. I was able to tell God the things I miss—my unfulfilled dreams, my disappointments, my deficiencies, my inner longings. And I was able to experience the wonder and the miracle of God's transforming grace.

Slowly I was able to accept, with God's help, the situation of my life in which I found myself. God helped me to begin to see not just the things I did not have, or no longer had, but opened my eyes to the many things I still had and could use for His glory.

For me this opened up a window, a new opportunity to learn to be happy and even rejoice with my cousin in his success, and to be proud of him for the many things in which he is so successful. I experienced greater joy and satisfaction in my own life when I did not envy his success but instead learned to be grateful for it. With God's help, I started to see the other person in his totality and began to see his success as something that enriched our relationship.

God has put us together with

other people so we can help and benefit from each other. That's why we have the church!

In the concluding thought of the Decalogue, God calls us to be men and women who see each other as God sees us—in our entirety, in the totality of our life. He does not focus on a single strength or single deficiency. He sees everything, from the beginning to the end. Therefore, we can trust our entire life fully into His hands.

To live as His children, as He commands us to do, we should live our lives to the glory of God rather than being filled with envy about things that do not belong to us and that are not part of who we are. This is the way to freedom to which the concluding verses of the Ten Commandments point us.

REVIVAL FOR MISSION



A brand new television program, "Revival for Mission," launched on September 6 on Hope Channel. In this program, Pastors Ted Wilson and Derek Morris go behind the scenes of mission, meet amazing people, and affirm commitment to the truths found in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. The 30-minute program features personal interviews, Q & A's, and more. In addition to the weekly studio program, special field episodes are aired on the last Friday of each month, featuring mission in the various divisions of the world church. The program airs every Friday, at 8:30 p.m. (ET), on Hope Channel and on hopetv.org. Episodes are also available anytime at revivalformission.tv.

You are what you eat” is more than just a cliché. It’s a well-known medical fact pointed out more than 100 years ago by inspiration:

“Our bodies are built up from the food we eat. There is a constant breaking down of the tissues of the body; every movement of every organ involves waste, and this waste is repaired from our food. Each organ of the body requires its share of nutrition. The brain must be supplied with its portion; the bones, muscles, and nerves demand theirs. It is a wonderful process that transforms the food into blood and uses this blood to build up the varied parts of the body; but this process is going on continually, supplying with life and strength each nerve, muscle, and tissue.

“Those foods should be chosen that best supply the elements needed for building up the body. In this choice, appetite is not a safe guide. Through wrong habits of eating, the appetite has become perverted. Often it demands food that impairs health and causes weakness instead of strength. We cannot safely be guided by the customs of society. The disease and suffering that everywhere prevail are largely due to popular errors in regard to diet.”

— *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 295

HOW CAN WE EAT TO LIVE?

- Choose whole grains over processed, refined grains.
- Be careful with sugar! Especially avoid the combination of sugar and dairy.
- Cut back on cheese and butter.
- Eat at set times and no snacking!
- Avoid eating close to bedtime.
- Chew your food thoroughly.
- Make mealtime a happy time.



CHECKUP 

EAT TO LIVE*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Eating at regular times with no additional snacks will help your digestive system get a break and will help to improve your overall health.
- Some eating patterns that may increase the risk of developing type two diabetes in men:
 - ▶ Skipping breakfast
 - ▶ Eating frequently
 - ▶ Snacking
- The same study also indicated that snacking and skipping breakfast could contribute to the problem of obesity.

*Adapted from *Habits that Heal: Habits from America's Longest Living People*, by Monica Fukuda with David K. Fukuda M.D.

FROM GANGSTER TO GOD: ADVENTIST CHURCH USES UNIQUE OUTREACH METHOD

BY ANDREW MCCHESENEY, ADVENTIST MISSION

Jayson Rogers cried out to a God he didn't know at the age of 12.

"I don't know how or why," Jayson recalled. "I was lonely at night, in the dark, crying into my pillow."

Twelve-year-old Jayson, the youngest of nine children, was staying with an aunt and uncle in northern New Zealand when he prayed for God to intervene in his life. His parents deemed him uncontrollable, and he had been kicked out of school. Although only a boy, he was breaking into homes and stealing cars. At the age of 10, he bought his first car with his first wages — earned by helping his father at a construction site. The vehicle was a "rust bucket," he said, but he only wanted it for its license plates. Over the next few years, he placed those license plates on nine cars he had stolen.

Jayson didn't sense an immediate answer to his nighttime prayer, and about a year later his parents took him back home to New Zealand's biggest city, Auckland, where Jayson sank deeper into crime. At age 15, he stole his first marijuana plant and moved in with his girlfriend, Krystal, at her parents' house. He joined a street gang and grew and sold marijuana for several years. Then he became addicted to meth



and sold the drug to support his own habit for 11 years.

"I was heavily involved with gangs and the underworld," he said. "I was known for home invasions, kidnapping, and extortion. I had three cooks and four distributors working for me in a syndicate."

He also carried wads of cash. Every two to three days, he earned 10,000 New Zealand dollars (U.S.\$7,000) from meth sales.

Then one day a man named Andrew approached him at the public swimming pool and invited him to free kick-boxing classes. Jayson jumped at the opportunity, hoping to improve his intimidation

and street-fighting tactics.

Jayson joined a group of other gangster-types at a sports hall on Wednesday evening. Andrew led the group in an hour of sweat-inducing exercise. Then he brought out a pile of Bibles and announced, "Let's gather around the table and share."

Jayson was shocked and wanted to leave. But for some reason he stayed. As Andrew spoke for 30 minutes, Jayson raged against God in his mind. He thought, "Who is God? I am God in my world. I have workers, my own minions. I am well respected and highly looked up to. I am God."

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Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matthew 6:19-20

He returned to reality when Andrew ended the meeting by reading Jesus' words in Matthew 6:19-20: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."

Jayson was confused. How could he lay up his jewelry in heaven out of the reach of rust and fellow thieves? He pondered the matter all week and returned to class the next Wednesday. After several weeks, Andrew asked him if he would like to help lead the class. Jayson was surprised and pleased. To qualify as an instructor, he took a first-aid course at Andrew's church, Papatoetoe Seventh-day Adventist Community Church. Soon Jayson was attending Sabbath worship services with Krystal and their seven children. He accepted Jesus and, after 21 years living with Krystal, he asked for her hand in marriage. The church celebrated its largest family baptism when he, his wife, and five of their children were baptized on the same Sabbath. The two youngest children were dedicated to Jesus that day.

Jayson, 36, said his life has changed completely over the past three years.

"We no longer live with six-foot fences, baseball bats, sawed-off shotguns, and Rambo-style knives,"



Jayson Rogers, his wife, and four of his seven children in front of the Papatoetoe Seventh-day Adventist Church

he said. "We now live with white picket fences, and I own my own handyman business."

He still co-leads the kick-boxing class, which has yielded at least six baptisms. A tear slid down his cheek as he thought about his parents. "I used to receive phone calls from my worried Mom every day," he said in an interview in an Auckland diner. "She witnessed firsthand the ugly nature of what I had become."

He hopes to point his parents and others to Christ.

"Now I am peaceful, happy," he said. "I wouldn't change it for anything. I am God's disciple now, and I want to share the Word as much as I can in any way He wants me to."

For more mission stories, visit: www.adventistmission.org.

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



1 Seventh-day Adventist leaders in the **Bahamas** are still waiting to know the fate of the hundreds of members who have been affected by the devastating effects of Hurricane Dorian on the hardest hit islands of Abaco, Grand Bahama, Bimini and the Berry Islands. Hurricane Dorian, a Category 4 storm, took place September 1, 2019 in the northern Bahamas for over 40 hours, with winds of over 185 miles per hour, flooding the islands, stranding residents and killing at least seven people.

2 Members of the Espaço Adventista da Colina in **Brazil** provided care to Catholic pilgrims on their trek to the city of Romaria. The Adventist group distributed clothes, juice, and water and provided medical care and massages to the pilgrims as they passed by during one of the greatest religious festivities in the state.

3 More than 4,000 women from 22 countries of WAD gathered in **Kumasi, Ghana**, for the Women’s Ministries Congress, making it the largest ever such congress in West-Central Africa. In addition to the registered participants, countless others came from various countries to join the women under the theme “Saved to Serve,” from July 29 to August 3, 2019.

4 The Znaci Vremena Publishing House in **Zagreb, Croatia**, celebrated 50 years of continuous operation this past July. A grand weekend celebration was held at the Zagreb 1 Adventist church compound, and included inspiring messages, good food and fellowship, and good offers on recent publications.

5 His Excellency Paul Kagame, the president of the **Republic of Rwanda**, and Ted

N.C. Wilson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, recently unveiled the new East-Central Africa Division School of Medicine. The new medical school is on the Masoro campus of the Adventist University of Africa (AUCA) in the city of Kigali. The medical school is the second of its kind on the African continent and the seventh in the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide.

6 More than 15,000 people were heavily affected by a fire that swept across a densely populated slum in Dhaka, the capital city of **Bangladesh**, leaving thousands homeless. ADRA works with authorities to provide aid to thousands affected by slum fire.

7 The **Mongolia** Mission Public Campus Ministries held its inaugural “Total Student Involvement Summer Camp” at its Youth Training Center in

July. Eight young people were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist family during the camp.

8 More than 150 people from around **New Zealand** gathered at Auckland University of Technology in Manukau to attend the first Digital Discipleship Conference in New Zealand. The conference brought together Seventh-day Adventists from multiple generations who are passionate about using technology and the digital space to share their faith.

Important Meetings, October 2019

at the Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

- 3** Presidents Council
Secretaries Council
Treasurers Council
- 6, 7, 10** Division Officer Interviews
- 8** GC & Division Officers
- 10, 11** LEAD Conference
- 10-16** Annual Council