



# 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

APRIL-JUNE 2021

*During these unusual* times, we continue to conduct church business via Zoom and other electronic means. This year's Spring Meeting was no exception, as for the second time members of the GC Executive Committee met for this yearly meeting that normally focuses primarily on financial matters. This year, however, we addressed several additional issues, including the election of a new GC Executive Secretary and GC Treasurer due to the retirement of our longstanding and faithful executive officers, G.T. Ng and Juan Prestol-Puésan. We also discussed other important items, such as the need for a special GC Session to address continuing realities brought about by COVID-19, and hear reports from the Three Angels' Messages committee, Adventist Education, and more.

In spite of the many challenges we continue to face during these times, we see God's hand guiding His Church as we head into the very last days of this earth's history. Let us continue to be faithful, carrying out the mission He has given us to do through His grace, reaching a world in need, proclaiming the three angels' messages and the glorious news of His very soon return. Maranatha!

TED N.C. WILSON,  
PRESIDENT, GENERAL  
CONFERENCE OF  
SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTISTS



EDITORIAL



## TWO NEW EXECUTIVE OFFICERS ELECTED: TRIBUTES GIVEN TO OUTGOING OFFICERS

BY ANDREW MCCHESENEY, EDITOR, ADVENTIST MISSION

*W*ith an eye on mission, the General Conference Executive Committee confirmed Erton Carlos Köhler as executive secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and Paul H. Douglas as its treasurer/chief financial officer-elect at Spring Meeting on April 13-14, 2021. Köhler, who served as president of the South American Division since 2006, immediately took the reins from G.T. Ng, who retired after 11 years as executive secretary.

Douglas, who has led the

General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS) since 2007, will assume his new role when Juan Prestol-Puésan, elected in 2015, retires on July 31, 2021.

General Conference president Ted N.C. Wilson thanked both the outgoing and incoming officers for their dedicated mission spirit.

"I look forward to working with Erton and Paul under God's guidance," Wilson said after the Executive Committee's vote during a video conference. "We only want to do what the throne room of heaven dictates. So we place this old team and new team in God's hands."

## COMMITMENT TO MISSION



Köhler, a pastor's son from southern Brazil, has placed a special emphasis on church planting, urban mission, and intercultural mission during his time as division president. Under his watch, Hope Channel's South American affiliate expanded from 60 to 523 employees and currently distributes more than 24,000 monthly Bible studies. In addition, Köhler implemented a groundbreaking outreach program called Missionaries to the World

in which the South American Division, working closely with the General Conference and regional church entities, sent out 29 missionary families to the Middle East and other 10/40 countries, and covered all their costs.

Köhler reiterated his commitment to mission after his election.

"My heart is completely focused on mission," he said.

He also welcomed the invitation to serve at the General Conference, saying he has perceived God's hand guiding him over the years, including as the South American Division's youth director in 2003-06 and executive secretary of Brazil's southern Rio Grande do Sul Conference before that.

"I believe, friends, that God leads everything; I believe that God leads the church," he said. "I believe in God's leadership using human beings, and I believe that God leads my life, God leads my family, and God leads my ministry also. As a consequence, my only answer now needs to be, 'I will go!'"

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I believe in God's leadership using human beings, and I believe that God leads my life.



## A CERTAIN FUTURE



Douglas, born in Jamaica of Cuban descent, has worked with the GCAS since 1986, starting in its Loma Linda, California office. In 2007, he was elected to serve as director for the global operations of GCAS, headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, after having served as leader for its operations in the 44-country territory of the Inter-American Division. For the past 14 years, he has overseen the auditing of church organizations in 208 countries and traveled extensively throughout the

Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe and Australia. Douglas also has a personal passion for mission, speaking at evangelistic meetings that resulted in the planting of two churches in Nigeria in 2018 and 2019.

In accepting the new position, Douglas accepted a challenge from Wilson to “balance the demands between mission and financial reality.”

“I am not worthy, but I am willing,” he said. “I am willing to serve in this capacity, serve God and serve you, this church, as we blend together ... the matter of stewardship and evangelism.”

He added, “I believe we are in the closing chapters, if not the closing paragraphs, of earth’s history, and we now need to redouble our effort and navigate these very difficult and challenging times. And though there may be significant uncertainties, we can rest assured of a certain future.”

The positions of executive secretary and treasurer, together with all General Conference leadership posts, come up for election at General Conference Session in June 2022.

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## LIVES OF SERVICE



Also at Spring Meeting, Wilson thanked G.T. Ng and Juan Prestol-Puesán for their lives of service to God and the church.

Ng, the first Adventist baby born in Youngberg Memorial Adventist Hospital after it opened in Singapore in the late 1940s, has served as a missionary, teacher, and church administrator. Immediately after getting married, he and his wife, Ivy, moved to war-ravaged Cambodia to serve as missionaries. After that, they lived in Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines before moving to the United

States 14 years ago, when Ng became an associate secretary at the General Conference.

“G.T. is ... extremely mission focused,” Wilson said. “You cannot speak with him for more than five minutes and you will know his focus is mission.”

Ng said all credit went to Jesus.

“I never dreamed that I would ever work at the General Conference,” he said. “This is the last place that I would like to be because for many, many years, even while I was in the classroom, there was a gulf between academia and the church administration.

Today’s situation is much better. There is a convergence of understanding between the ivory tower and church administration.”

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## ADVANCING GOD'S KINGDOM



Juan Prestol-Puesán, who was born in the Dominican Republic, has worked in church finances for his entire career, starting as an accountant in the Dominican Conference in Santo Domingo. In the 1980s, he served as church treasurer in the United States before being asked, in 1993, to serve as treasurer of the Euro-Asia Division. After that, he worked as associate treasurer and then treasurer of the North American Division before moving to the General Conference as undertreasurer in 2007.

“Juan is a ... mission-minded treasurer,” Wilson said. “He is a focused person on advancing God’s kingdom.”

Voicing gratitude to God, Prestol-Puesán recalled how he grew up, the son of a sea captain, on an island.

“I never thought that I was going to end up coming to the United States with my family and working to the point of serving the church in the General Conference,” he said. “It has really been a privilege, and I want to give all the glory to the Lord.”

The General Conference president, executive secretary, and treasurer work closely together, and Wilson said the need to replace the two retiring officers had weighed heavily on his heart.

“It is not something that you wish to face, especially after you have had such a warm, collegial relationship,” he said. “I ... talked to the Lord quite a lot about it.”

But he expressed confidence that the Holy Spirit had guided the selection of the new officers, and he encouraged all church leaders to renew their commitment to God’s mission.

“We are living at the very end of time. I tell you, Jesus is coming soon,” he said.



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at the very end  
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**LOOKING AHEAD: A BRIEF INTERVIEW WITH TED N. C. WILSON PRESIDENT**



**PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY: A BRIEF INTERVIEW WITH ERTON KÖHLER SECRETARY**



**PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY: A BRIEF INTERVIEW WITH PAUL DOUGLAS TREASURER/CFO-ELECT**

### What is your vision going forward after the Spring Meeting?

**O**ur senior leadership team, including G. T. Ng and Juan Prestol-Puesán, at the General Conference has operated under the wonderful Seventh-day Adventist mission vision of lifting up Christ, His Word, His righteousness, His sanctuary service, His saving power in the great controversy, His three angels’ messages, His health message, His last-day mission to the world, and Christ’s soon second coming.

Our new senior leadership team, including Erton Köhler and Paul Douglas, will have the exact same mission-driven focus as we lean completely on the Lord for all we do. We will be

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### How do you pray?

**M**y special prayer time lasts 20 to 30 minutes early every morning. I start by giving thanks. Then I lift up the challenges, dreams, and needs of my family, and finish by lifting up church leaders at every level and in various areas. I also have a prayer list on my cell phone that I pray over daily, including names of people who are ill, families who have lost loved ones or facing other crises, people who have left the church, country leaders, and church projects. Additionally, I pray throughout the day with people whom I meet, at meetings that I lead, and as new challenges arise. Prayer is my special support and fount of wisdom every day.

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### How do you pray?

**I** begin each day on my knees in prayer. However, my prayer does not end there as I continue in conversation with God throughout the day. In these conversations, I speak and God listens. Above all, God speaks and I listen.

### How do you read the Bible?

**I** have several approaches to reading the Bible: reading an entire book; focusing on Psalms, Proverbs, or the Gospels; or taking a particular passage of Scripture and reflecting on it for a period of time. If I were to choose a favorite approach, it would be reflecting on a Scripture passage. The method came years ago when I read a short chapter, “How to Read the Bible,” in Ellen White’s *In*

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—Wilson continued

committed to finishing God’s work on earth through the power of the Holy Spirit and asking our church members to be part of Total Member Involvement as we view the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. By God’s grace, we will use every innovative and creative approach under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this amazing worldwide great commission given to us by the throne room of heaven. We will continue the focus on Revival and Reformation, Mission to the Cities, Comprehensive Health Ministry, massive distribution of truth-filled literature, and many other mission outreach activities. We encourage all members to accelerate their commitment to the last-day proclamation of God’s truth as revealed in the Bible and elaborated in the Spirit of Prophecy.

What a privilege to have our new senior GC leadership team working with our church leadership and members worldwide to say to the Lord during these amazing end-time days, “Yes, Lord, I Will Go to proclaim your final biblical message of hope and warning as we look forward to Christ’s soon return!”

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**We will be committed to finishing God’s work on this earth.**

—Köhler continued

## **How do you read the Bible?**

I regularly read the Bible following the Believe His Prophets online initiative. But I like to go beyond the Bible verses and spend time in reflection, posting related comments on social media, and taking notes that are relevant to my personal life and can be shared with church members. Complementing my daily communion with God, I read the *Adult Bible Study Guide*, a daily devotional book, and a book from Ellen White.

## **How do you witness?**

My favorite form of personal outreach is sharing the missionary book of the year. I believe every book is a seed that can be shared and will bear fruit at the right time. By God’s grace, I have baptized two people resulting from missionary books I have shared.

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**Prayer is my special support and fount of wisdom every day.**

—Douglas continued

*Heavenly Places*. She says, “We should take one verse and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell on the thought till it becomes our own, and we know ‘what saith the Lord’” (HP 138). I copied the chapter onto a piece of paper that I keep in my Bible. (Read the four-paragraph chapter at: [bit.ly/PaulsBibleTip](http://bit.ly/PaulsBibleTip).)

## **How do you witness?**

Witnessing for me is about relationships. I wholeheartedly embrace Christ’s method of mingling with people, meeting their needs, winning their confidence, and bidding them to follow Him. Right now, even amid the pandemic, a group of men and I employ Christ’s method by providing food to those in need and nurturing relationships that will create the environment for the saving love of Jesus Christ to be shared.

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**I wholeheartedly embrace Christ’s method of mingling with people, meeting their needs, winning their confidence, and bidding them to follow Him.**

# NEW DIVISION PRESIDENT ELECTED

By Marcos Paseggi\*

**A**t a specially called GC Executive Committee meeting held on April 22, 2021, Stanley Arco, an experienced leader in both Spanish and Portuguese-speaking regions of the South American Division (SAD), was elected as the new president of the 2.5-million member, eight-nation division.

The GC Executive Committee (GC EXCOM) voted to accept the SAD Executive Committee (SAD EXCOM) recommendation of Arco for the top leadership position during a special virtual session. He will replace Erton Köhler, who was recently elected secretary of the Adventist Church after 14 years as SAD president, in the region that includes Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

After the SAD EXCOM recommendation on April 16, Köhler commented on the decision to send Arco's name for a confirmation vote.

"Pastor Stanley Arco is an experienced and balanced leader with a wide-ranging vision of the [Adventist] Church in South America," Köhler told *Adventist Review*. "He is a man of prayer, biblically sound, and well-grounded in the guidance of the Spirit of Prophecy," he said. "He is a leader open to dialogue, respectful, conciliatory, and notably focused on mission."

During the April 16 session, SAD EXCOM members also thanked Köhler for his years serving the Adventist Church in the region.

It was an emotional moment for

Köhler, who emphasized that he is confident about the future and Arco's leadership across the region.

"[Arco's] vision is that of a healthy church that grows not only in quantity but also in quality," Köhler said. "I believe the South American Division will be in good hands."

"This assignment is a joy, a privilege, and a huge responsibility," Arco told SAD EXCOM members after they recommended his name for the top leadership post. "I ask for the prayers of every member, of every person wishing for Jesus to come soon. Please pray for me, for all leaders, and for the mission of the Adventist Church in South America and around the world," Arco said.

Arco was born in southern Brazil and completed a degree in theology at the Adventist Institute of Teaching (now Brazilian Adventist University) in São Paulo in 1987. In addition to being a church pastor in Brazil, Arco served as a youth ministries leader across several church regions for 17 years. He also worked as the secretary of the South Parana Conference in southern Brazil and later as assistant to the SAD president.

In 2011, Arco was elected president of the Bolivia Union, and in 2015, he became president of the Chile Union Mission. From 2019 through 2020, Arco served as president of the East Brazilian Union Mission. In August 2020, he was elected vice president of SAD.

Arco is married to Regiane dos Reis Arco, and the couple has three daughters.

\*Adapted from an article published April 22, 2021 in the *Adventist Review*, [www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story16260-adventist-leaders-elect-church-president-for-the-south-american-division](http://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story16260-adventist-leaders-elect-church-president-for-the-south-american-division)



STANLEY  
ARCO

# SPRING MEETING REPORT

APRIL 13-14, 2021

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The yearly Spring Meeting was held April 13-14, 2021. This was the second time the meeting was held virtually, due to the coronavirus pandemic. To accommodate as many world time zones as possible, the meeting was held from 7:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (EDT) on Tuesday, and 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (EDT) on Wednesday. The Nominating Committee, however, met earlier on Wednesday, beginning at 5 a.m. (EDT). To view reports, videos and more from the Spring Meeting, visit [executivecommittee.adventist.org](http://executivecommittee.adventist.org)

## FINANCIAL STORY OF 2020

Treasurer's report to spring meeting 2021

By Juan Prestol-Puesán, Treasurer

The Fiscal year 2020 (FY 2020) was unique. It was the first year of the new quinquennium and the words to describe it are unexpected, unpredictable, and uncertain. It was a survival year, disastrous for

many and of new opportunities for others. In spite of the challenges we faced in 2020, the results of the FY 2020 reflect that the finances of the General Conference remain viable. Things are different, and the world in general, and the church in particular, are still in a survival

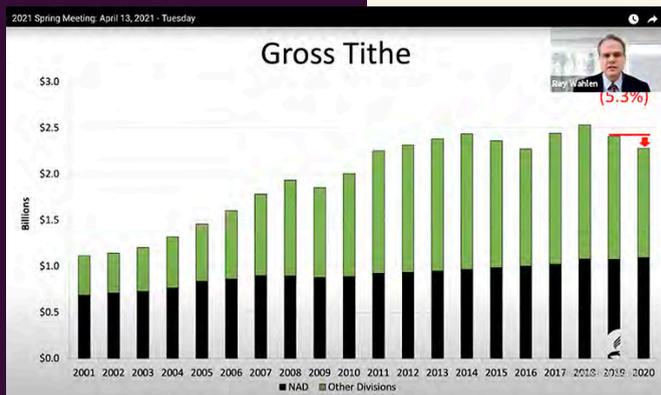
mode. We are doing new things, and we are learning to do old things in a different way.

The financial operations of the General Conference have been managed prudently, and we have kept different groups informed throughout the year. Reports were presented to ADCOM on May 12, to the GC Executive Committee on July 9, 2020, to GCDO January 11, 2021,

and to the GC Executive Committee on January 12, 2021.

We expressed our expectation in the early part of 2020 that we might show a 20 million operating loss at the end of FY 2020, and prayers were offered hoping for divine intervention. The five factors affecting our finances: 1) *Tithe and Mission Offering levels*; 2) *expense levels*; 3) *interest earnings*; 4) *blocked currency issues*; 5) *exchange rate levels affecting key currencies*, seemed difficult to predict in 2020, but in the latter part of the summer tithe became more stable, even though Sabbath School offerings were down by an average of 25 to 35 percent worldwide.

When our November statement showed a decrease to net assets, without donor restriction, of \$7,806,582, I thought that if three of the five factors mentioned above would align themselves appropriately, we might not have a disastrous year. Although, we might still sustain a decrease in operations. I prayed to the Lord to allow us to simply break-even for the year 2020, and I expressed that



JUAN PRESTOL-PUESÁN  
Treasurer

RAY WAHLEN  
Undertreasurer

reaching a break-even, or even showing \$10,000 above break-even would be like a dream come true.

Today I wish to inform this committee that my wild dream materialized, and my prayer was answered more generously than I thought it would be answered. Here are the highlights for the year 2020:

- Increase to net assets without donor restrictions of \$67,816—more than six times what I asked the Lord to provide.
- Expenses held down gave lower income a chance to meet. If expenses had not been cut down the possibility of a break-even would not have occurred.
- Appropriations to divisions and institutions, as well as to the 10/40 Window were not reduced.
- Tithe income in North America in 2020 rose over 2019 by 1.71 percent.
- Allocations suspended as per the GC Executive Committee action of July 9 were partially restored in December of 2020. These affect the ending balances of ISEs, GCAS, and GRI.
- Funding of depreciation for 2020 done partially. Additional funding to complete total depreciation funding may be possible later in 2021.
- The special reserve set aside for the tithe parity program remained untouched in 2020.
- Liquidity and operating levels previously reported below adequate levels ended 2020 at an adequate level due to the lower expense level. During the year the General Conference reduced personnel, eliminated services, and avoided unnecessary costs that made the financial picture different.



Juan Prestol-Puesán, Treasurer

These are only salient points on our current statement that allowed the year to end within income levels. In other words, we addressed multiple issues and the Lord acted mercifully and faithfully.

The year 2020 ended as unpredictable and uncertain as it began, but the Lord was with us. He made the difference by adding His blessing to our humble efforts, and the General Conference ended the year in the black giving us enough evidence of His loving care. FY2020 left us plenty of warning against careless management, and cautioned us about being overconfident in 2021 and beyond.

The year 2021 will be a catch-up year for the following areas:

- Make up allocations to ISEs and GCAS to reach pre-Covid19 levels, if possible.
- Area Travel Allowance to be increased from 50% to 100% in July of 2021.
- Seek an improvement in the Mission Offering giving to pre-Covid19 levels.
- Renew more normal economic and mission activities.
- Determine the staffing level to be recommended to the GC Session in 2022.
- Complete the sale of Review & Herald property in Hagerstown, MD.
- Complete the new warehouse facility in Silver Spring, MD and the sale of the Elkridge warehouse operation.

But we saw the blessing of the Lord in 2020, and we wish to express our gratitude to Him for His faithfulness and His love.

## A TESTIMONY

I wish to leave with you one more testimony about how God manifested Himself to us. In 2020 I did a fair amount of reading about the eschatology and the closing events of earth's history. Particularly I studied selected portions of the book *Last Day Events* and what will precede the close of probation, the conclusion of mission, and the end of giving and the wrapping up of organized work. I read and meditated on Ellen G. White quotations such as this:

"The time is coming when we cannot sell at any price" (5T152 [LDE 148]).

"Hoarded wealth will soon be worthless" (*Review and Herald*, March 21, 1878, [LDE 148]).

"Those who are loyal to God will see every earthly support cut off. Because they refuse to break His law in obedience to earthly powers they will be forbidden to buy or sell" (*The Desire of Ages*, 121, 122 (1898) [LDS 148]).

"Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints . . . and at that time their possessions cannot be disposed of to advance the cause of present truth. I saw that *if any held on to their property, and did not inquire of the Lord as to their duty, He would not make duty known . . . but if they desired to be taught, He would teach them, in a time of need, when to sell and how much to sell*" (*Early Writings*, pp. 56,57, 1851, [LDS 261], emphasis supplied).

"When the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, *the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd's voice.*" (6T401, 1900, [LDE 152], emphasis supplied).

My fear in Fiscal Year 2020 (FY2020) was that the flow of income would not be sufficient to match our already reduced expenses, and our liquidity level would go significantly down. The Lord answered my prayers and my concerns very clearly.

As we were closing FY2020 our accounting office notified me that we had received a few large and unexpected donations for the 10/40 Window and the Unusual Opportunities Fund from individuals that were not known to us. The donations were in the millions of dollars. This came to me as (#1)

a confirmation of the statement "the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd's voice," and (#2) as a small down payment of what I expect to see in a larger scale shortly before the close of probation.

A worldwide manifestation of giving guided by the Holy Spirit when funds will be given in the largest amount we will ever see. The funding needed for the concluding effort to reach humanity before the close of probation.

I take comfort in the thought I found in *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp 120, 121:

"The program of coming events is in the hands of our Maker. The majesty of heaven has the destiny of nations, as well as the concerns of His church, in His own charge."

I am grateful that in the year 2020 the Lord allowed me to have a glimpse of what will likely happened at the very end of mission.

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# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE VOTES TO APPROVE SPECIAL GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

By Beth Thomas

One-day business meeting to address amending the Constitution and Bylaws to allow virtual Session participation.

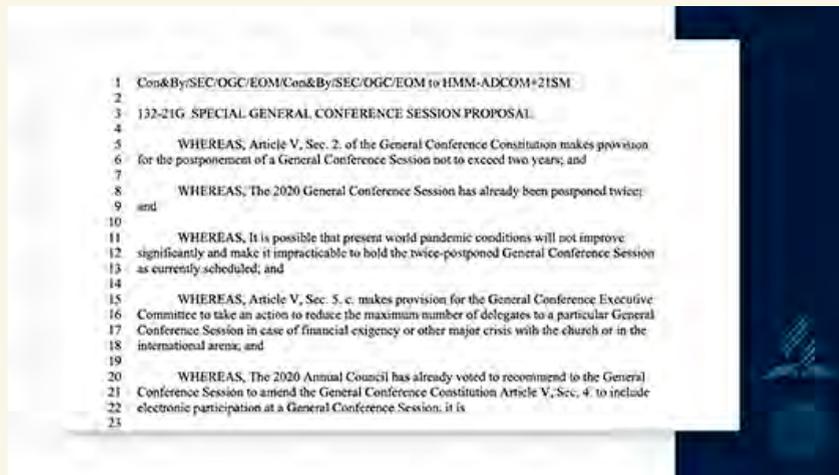
**M**embers of the Executive Committee of the General Conference (GC EXCOM) voted to approve a one-day special General Conference (GC) Session in January 2022. This special Session will address just one item: amending the current Constitution and Bylaws to allow delegates to participate in the GC Session virtually.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented change in the way business is conducted around the world. The Church is no exception. Committee meetings are conducted via Zoom or other virtual platforms; church services, Bible studies, and outreach events are held online to protect members and others from potential health crises.

With GC Session originally scheduled for late June 2020 postponed until May 2021, then postponed again, Church leadership became concerned. Article V, Sec. 2. of the GC Constitution provides for the postponement of a GC Session, not to exceed two years. Due to the Covid-19 health crisis, this allowance has already been met, with the rescheduled GC Session to be held June 2022 in St. Louis, Missouri.

But what if pandemic conditions do not improve significantly, making it impracticable to hold Session? What if the required quorum of 905 delegates (one-third of the 2,713 delegates) is not able to convene onsite and in-person, due to visa and travel restrictions? If unforeseen and uncontrollable external circumstances prevent the holding of GC Session in 2022, it would force the GC to go beyond the timeframe allowed in the Constitution, making them non-compliant to their governing document.

The Constitution and Bylaws Committee carefully examined these concerns before



A portion of the recommendation from the Constitution and Bylaws Committee

bringing a proposal to the GC EXCOM as a potential solution. In framing the proposal, Hensley Mooroooven, undersecretary for the world church, mentioned several factors had been considered, including transparency and staying within the current boundaries provided by the Constitution and Bylaws. According to Mooroooven, the committee wanted to ensure that any action taken would be beneficial to the delegates and avoid frustration. Out of possible solutions the committee considered, “This is the most plausible one,” he said.

Ted N.C. Wilson, GC president and chairman of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, said that the proposal has garnered strong support from the Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and the GC and Division Officers Committee (GCDO). “I think we all realize it is a reasonable, functional and practical solution to the challenge that we are facing,” he said.

The motions presented to the EXCOM included:

1. To convene a special GC Session on January 18, 2022 at the World Church Headquarters in Silver Spring, Md. with the sole purpose of amending the Constitution, Article V, to include a new section allowing for delegates, when requested by the EXCOM, to participate in Sessions remotely.
2. To request that the number of regular and at-large delegates required to be in person or on-site at a particular GC Session (in the event of extenuating financial or international crises) be reduced to 400, with a quorum of 134. This provision is allowed in Article V. Sec. 5.

## SPECIAL SESSION Q & A

*Questions answered by G.T. Ng, GC Executive Secretary, and Karnik Doukmetzian, GC General Counsel*

3. To request that divisions unable to send their allotted quota of delegates to the Special Session due to travel restrictions or other issues, reallocate their quota to the GC ADCOM to select individuals primarily from their division who are already working at the GC headquarters to represent them in business session.
4. To confirm that the GC will not be reimbursing delegates for travel related to the Special Session.
5. To request all 13 world division executive committees and 137 union executive committees discuss and vote on the proposal with positive affirmation received by simple majority of those entities, recommending the constitutional amendment, and report back to GC Secretariat not later than August 31, 2021.

After some discussion, three motions passed by a majority vote, taken electronically.

The first motion, to approve the Special General Conference Session proposal, was approved by a vote of 169 to 3.

The second motion, to convene a Special General Conference Session on January 18, 2022, in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, for the purpose of amending the General Conference Constitution to allow for electronic participation at General Conference Sessions, was approved 168 to 3.

The final motion, to reduce the total number of regular and at-large delegates to the January 18, 2022, Special General Conference Session to 400 was approved by a margin of 170 to 1.

### **Q: Are all 400 delegates asked to be at the special Session?**

**A:** No, it's unrealistic for 400 people to come if the current situation remains. With health conditions and immigration challenges, it would be nearly impossible for all the delegates to arrive in Silver Spring in person. That is the reason why we are proposing that, in their places, individuals from their division already working at the GC act as their substitute.

### **Q: What is being done to ensure transparency?**

**A:** The special Session will be livestreamed. The agenda and wording of the proposed solution will be circulated so everyone will know what the language is. And finally, the unions and divisions, in their executive committees, will have an opportunity to review this in their setting and approve the action and wording that is being recommended.

### **Q: What is the required quorum of delegates?**

**A:** The GC Constitution mandates a quorum of one-third of the total number of delegates to be physically present to transact important business. With the proposed number of required delegates reduced to 400, a quorum would be 134.

### **Q: How did the committee come up with the idea of reallocating an unused quota of delegates to the GC?**

**A:** The Constitution provides for an allotment of delegates and is clear how the number is determined. We will do the same. However, we recognize that travel restrictions will limit

the number of delegates able to come. The allotted number has just been reduced by a percentage. We still want to maintain the same allocation that the Constitution provides for but adapt it to suit the current situation.

### **Q: Why are we requesting the unions and divisions to take this action and send their response back to the GC?**

**A:** Divisions are regional offices of the GC. That is why we need their executive committees to take a vote. Unions are the foundational organizations of the GC and their votes in this matter are crucial.

### **Q: Why is there only one item on the agenda? Can delegates discuss other business during this Session?**

**A:** There will only be one agenda item and that has already been voted. Any amendments to the agenda cannot be brought forward unless it goes through due process.

### **Q: If the body accepts this motion, then the ability for electronic participation will be included in the Constitution and Bylaws. Is there something in place for next year's Session to be held virtually?**

**A:** The EXCOM will need to meet again at the beginning of the New Year (2022) to decide whether we will have an in-person, onsite or hybrid meeting. The change in the Constitution will allow for this flexibility, but it will be up to the EXCOM to make that determination based on world events and the availability of individuals to travel.



CAMPMEETING.COM

Adventist Virtual Global Campmeeting

## GLOBAL VIRTUAL CAMP MEETING BEGINS MAY 19

By Beth Thomas

A special five-day Global Virtual Camp Meeting is scheduled to begin May 19, 2021. A collaborative group from GC departments had already been planning a virtual exhibition hall for the GC Session in St. Louis. But when the session was postponed due to COVID-19 concerns, they decided to use the scheduled time for an alternative event that would still bring members together from around the world to encourage each other, focus on our beliefs, and prepare for the mission at hand.

“We thought, ‘What better way than to have a big camp meeting?’” Tim Aka, associate treasurer and director of investments for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, said. “I grew up going to camp meeting and enjoyed everything that goes on there. Of course, a virtual camp meeting isn’t quite the same, but it could be a good spiritual refreshing for people. We also thought it would be good to hear from our global leaders—from the deep thinkers, scholars and theologians of our Church—what we believe and what we hold to be the truth. This time of spiritual refreshing is something that is needed right now,” Aka noted.

How will a virtual camp meeting work? Over the five days of May 19-23, keynote speakers such as Barry Black, Alejandro Bullón, David Williams and Michael-John Von Hörsten will give presentations, followed by more than 350 seminars offered in six different tracks: discipleship, education, health ministries, media, missions, and theology. Presentations will be kept fairly brief, allowing for interactive question and answer periods afterward. Attendees may register for any seminar.

Presenters are directly involved with booths people can visit in the online exhibit hall. Sam Neves, associate director of Communications for the World Church,

explains how the exhibit hall will function.

“When you enter the website, you have an image of a big hall. There are posters and banners for exhibitors. You can select a floor and a rolling banner of virtual ministry booths will appear. After making your selection, you will see all the information about that ministry. Some will offer online chat sessions with a booth volunteer who can answer any questions you have,” he said.

The organizational committee hopes this event will “expose the best of Adventism. Very few people have the opportunity to see what entities, ministries and organizations around the world are doing. This global camp meeting will provide a way for members to travel virtually across continents to see how the mission is advancing, and what exciting projects others are doing,” Neves said.

The global event will have programming centered around three major regions: Asia-Pacific, Euro-Africa and the Americas. Seminars will be scheduled for time zones around the world.

Event organizers invite you to make this global camp meeting a spiritual highlight of the year. More detailed information and free registration is available at [campmeeting.com](https://campmeeting.com).

“

You are invited to make this a spiritual highlight of the year.

\*Adapted from an article published by *Adventist News Network*, <https://adventist.news/news/adventist-global-virtual-campmeeting-to-launch-may-19>

## MORE HIGHLIGHTS FROM SPRING MEETING 2021



**Devotional  
Tuesday, April 13**  
“Ten Camels and Three Angels” presented by Justin Kim, assistant director, GC Sabbath School and Personal Ministries department

In his devotional, Justin Kim reviewed the biblical story of Abraham’s trusted servant’s quest to find a godly wife for his son, Isaac, and focused on Rebekah’s helpful, kind spirit and willingness to say, “I Will Go” when the call came. Describing her thoughtful actions in “going above and beyond” to help this stranger, Kim pointed out how she no doubt carried a minimum of 2,000 liters (approx. 530 gallons) of water to

his ten thirsty camels, without thought of reward. Contrasted with her selfless service was her brother Laban, who, based on the material goods he noticed, showed interest and hospitality. Later, as the story unfolds, Rebekah realizes the amazing opportunity given to her, and decides to be a part of the Abrahamic covenant, to be a blessing to all the families of the earth, and she said, “I will go” (Gen. 24:58).

“It’s not in these big decisions in committees,” said Kim, “but it’s in moments when strangers ask you a question, are you going to say, ‘I will go and be part of God’s salvation plan, to be part of the Three Angels Messages?’ or be like Laban and play around with the social circumstances? . . . Help me, Lord, to be a ‘Three Angels Agent,’ to be faithful in small things, *and* very big things. This is God’s call for us today.”



**Devotional  
Wednesday, April 14**  
“Second Thoughts?” presented by Conrad Vine, president, Adventist Frontier Missions

Perhaps the largest decision ever made was made in the Garden of Eden,” Conrad Vine stated in his morning devotional as he described what it must have been like as Jesus formed the body of Adam--the hands, the legs, the heart, the brain, “as He knit Adam together in preparation for the breath of life.” Knowing that man would do many good things, Vine pointed out that Christ knew what wickedness would happen, too.

“One day, those hands would be used to hammer nails into His own hands . . . one day tongues would cry, “Crucify!” He looked at those eyes

and realized that one day those eyes would look upon Him with hatred. He looked upon those feet and realized that one day, Roman soldiers would be kicking Him with their feet. . . . One day Jesus would inhabit a lifeless body such as lay before Him in the Garden of Eden.”

Nevertheless, He still chose to breathe into that body the breath of life, effectively giving Himself the “kiss of death.”

Vine went on to describe the profound consequences affecting the entire universe, and how God takes the responsibility of re-creating us by offering

salvation to all.

“We all have a common problem, that problem is sin,” stated Vine. “We all have a common destination, and that is death. And we are all in need of a common solution, and that is a sin-bearing Savior. . . .

“Jesus had no second thoughts when He bent down in the Garden of Eden and breathed into the lifeless body of Adam the breath of life. My prayer today . . . is that each one of us will have no second thoughts as we affirm afresh . . . our hope, our faith, our love, and our gratitude to Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”



### Adventist Education

John Wesley Taylor V, associate director, GC Education department

Adventist education is a powerful evangelistic tool that encourages students to become Seventh-day Adventists and remain in the church, according to John Wesley Taylor V, associate director, GC education department. Citing multiple studies in his report, titled “Joining and Remaining: A Look at the Data on the Role of Adventist Education.” Taylor outlined the many advantages offered by Adventist education, including students scoring higher than the national average on standardized tests and higher graduation rates than public schools. More importantly, noted Taylor, was the conversion of students to Christ. From 2009 to 2018, more

than 463,000 students were baptized at Adventist educational institutions, he said, underlining “the central role of Adventist education in the evangelistic mission of the Church.” Taylor reported that according to the longitudinal Valuegenesis study, the more years a student was in Adventist schools, the more likely they were to remain in the Church. “They showed greater belief in the fundamental teachings of the church, and they were more likely to intend to remain Seventh-day Adventists at age 40,” he said.



### Three Angels' Messages Committee Report

Geoffrey Mbwana, Elias Brasil de Souza, Vyacheslav Demyan, Almir Maroni, Willie Oliver, Michael Ryan, Heather-Dawn Small

In the Three Angels' Messages Committee report, chair Mike Ryan reminded those attending Spring Meeting that “the authority to proclaim the three angels’ messages rests in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. It does not rest with a committee.” He continued, “The work of the committee is moving forward quickly, for good reasons. I believe we live in a time just before Jesus’ coming, and we need to go about the work

we’ve been asked to do—the proclamation of the three angels’ messages.” Echoing those sentiments, Geoffrey Mbwana, chair of the awareness subcommittee, spoke of the importance of “applying that message into our own lives and then seeing how we as a church will proclaim that message to the world.” Artur Stele, who coordinated the report, explained how many departments, institutions and other entities of the church were partnering together in this important project. Departmental directors Almir Maroni (Publishing), Heather-Dawn Small (Women’s Ministries), and Willie Oliver (Family Ministries) shared how their departments were involved in spreading these important messages. Vyacheslav Demyan, vice-president for programming at Hope Channel International (HCI), shared how HCI is purposefully engaging young people around the world with the proclamation of the three angels’ messages in recording a special Week of Prayer series on the topic, to be translated into 70 different languages. Elias Brasil de Souza, director of the Biblical Research Institute (BRI), explained how the BRI assists people in understanding how to interpret the Bible, including the three angels’ messages, through their recently published book, *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach*, and accompanying videos.



**Missionary Book of the Year,**  
Almir Maroni,  
director, GC  
Publishing Ministries

“

**Who is the person that I love and I want to see in heaven? Approach that person with a missionary book!**

Billy Biaggi, GC  
General Vice  
President

**A** Missionary Book of the Year has been produced by the GC Publishing Department every year since 2007, and since that time more than 500 million of these books have been distributed worldwide, according to Almir Maroni, publishing director for the world church. These missionary books are translated into more than 50 languages, said Maroni, and offer a way for all to be involved in missionary service. “Many cannot preach or give a Bible study, but they can surely distribute a book,” he said.

In introducing this segment, Billy Biaggi, GC general vice-president who serves as advisor to the Publishing Department stated, this is “a special missionary program that all 21 million church members can be involved in! Children, teens, young people, adults, elderly--all can be involved, thinking, ‘Who is the person that I love and I want to see in heaven?’ and then approach that person with a missionary book!”

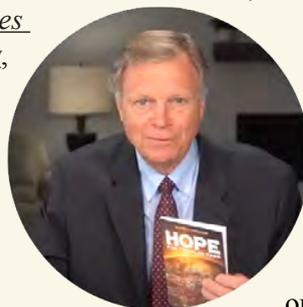
The Missionary Book for 2021, *Hope for Troubled Times* written by Mark Finley, is “for this pandemic time and is a very important book,” said Maroni. “Hundreds of thousands are being distributed.”

Following the suggestion of the Three Angels’ Messages Committee, the 2022 Missionary Book focuses on those messages. The book, titled, *The Final Hope: Three Messages of Hope for an Anxious World*, written by Clifford Goldstein, will be available to world Divisions at their year-end

meetings this year, according to Maroni.

Looking ahead to 2023 and 2024, Maroni announced a special project—“*The Great Controversy 2.0.*” During these two years the book *The Great Controversy* by Ellen G. White will be distributed by the millions as the Missionary Book of the Year.

“Why again?” asked Maroni in his presentation. He answered by citing portions of what Ellen White said about the book. “*The Great Controversy* should be very widely circulated. It contains the story of the past, the present, and the future. In its outline of the closing scenes of this earth’s history, it bears a powerful testimony in behalf of the truth. I am more anxious to see a wide circulation for this book than for any others I have written, for in *The Great Controversy*, the last message of warning to the world is given more distinctly than in any of my other books” (*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 127).



Concluding his presentation, Maroni stated, “We are living in the time of mass communication.

We encourage digital communication. But we know that we are at the risk of being cancelled—our websites, our radio and television might be cancelled in the future. Publications placed in the homes of people will continue preaching when all other forms of media will be silent. *The Great Controversy* is the book to be distributed now, before the time of probation closes.”

## INSPIRED COUNSEL FOR LEADERS

This is a dangerous age for any man who has talents which can be of value in the work of God; for Satan is constantly plying his temptations upon such a person, ever trying to fill him with pride and ambition; and when God would use him, it is too often the case that he becomes independent and self-sufficient, and feels capable of standing alone. This will be your danger, brethren, unless you live a life of constant faith and prayer.

You may have a deep and abiding sense of eternal things and that love for humanity which Christ has shown in His life. A close connection with heaven will give the right tone to your fidelity and will be the ground of your success. Your feeling of dependence will drive you to prayer, and your sense of duty summon you to effort.

Prayer and effort, effort and prayer, will be the business of your life. You must pray as though the efficiency and praise were all due to God, and labor as though duty were all your own. If you want power you may have it; it is waiting your draft upon it. Only believe in God, take Him at His word, act by faith, and blessings will come.

In this matter, genius, logic, and eloquence will not avail. Those who have a humble, trusting, contrite heart, God accepts, and hears their prayer; and when God helps, all obstacles will be overcome. . . .

You are pressed with urgent cares, burdens, and duties; but the greater the pressure upon you, and the heavier the burdens you have to bear, the greater your need of divine aid. Jesus will be your helper. . . .

True Christian character should

be marked by firmness of purpose, an indomitable determination, which cannot be molded or subdued by earth or hell. He who is not blind to the attraction of worldly honors, indifferent to threats, and unmoved by allurements will be, all unexpectedly to himself, overthrown by Satan's devices.

God calls for complete and entire consecration, and anything short of this He will not accept. The more difficult your position the more you need Jesus. The love and fear of God kept Joseph pure and untarnished in the king's court. . . .

He showed the same sacred regard for God's will when he stood next the throne as when in a prisoner's cell. Joseph carried his religion everywhere, and this was the secret of his unwavering fidelity.

As representative men you must have the all-pervading power of true godliness. I tell you, in the fear of God, your path is beset by dangers which you do not see and do not realize. You must hide in Jesus. You are unsafe unless you hold the hand of Christ. You must guard against everything like presumption and cherish that spirit that would suffer rather than sin. No victory you can gain will be so precious as that gained over self.

*\*Selections from "Warnings and Admonitions," Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, pp. 537-544.*



# THE BACK PAGE

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

**1** Marco Antonio Castro, DDS, director of the School of Dentistry at Montemorelos University, in **Nuevo León, Mexico**, was recently nominated as one of the top 100 doctors in the world by Global Summits Institute (GSI). According to GSI, each nominee is evaluated on their professional achievements in the areas of research, publications, continuing education, degrees obtained, previous recognitions, humanitarian efforts, contributions from innovation, leadership, and outstanding contributions to their profession. “The Top 100 Doctors” includes distinguished professionals who are selected among thousands of others from over 70 countries. Dr. Castro, who has been an Adventist for more than a decade, is pleased to represent Montemorelos University and is involved in several research projects with inter-disciplinary teams.

**2** Adventist young people in **São Cristóvão, Sergipe, Brazil**, participated in a creative way to reach their community through “balloon evangelism.” Being part of “Base Life Pioneers,” a missionary initiative, they went through city streets, spreading hope. At dawn, 200 families were surprised with balloons with notes containing biblical messages, words of love, comfort, and affection. The balloons with the messages were fixed on doors, gates, and windows of the houses. The director of Base Life Pioneers, Lucas de Matos, found the balloon idea on the internet and thought it would be a creative and safe way to share God’s love during these challenging times.

**3** As part of their Adventurer Club activities, youngsters in **Zaoksky, Russia**, visited the Ellen White Research Center there where they heard stories from the lives of early Church pioneers, including stories

of the early missionaries. At the end, the Adventurers were invited to become little missionaries and were each given two books to share, one to give to an adult (*The Great Controversy*) and one to give to a child (*Secrets of the Ship*). Two weeks later, the Adventurers excitedly shared their experiences of giving the books away. The activity was part of receiving the “Young Evangelist” honor patch.

**4** On April 22, 2021, at a special constituency meeting of the South Philippine Union Conference (SPUC) the constituents voted to split the **Mindanao territory** into two distinct union organizations. After this approval, the action will be forwarded to the division, which will then give the signal to the union to finalize all the necessary paperwork in preparation for the final approval by the GC Executive Committee. The territorial distribution and boundaries distinguishing the two fields

will be considered as the process progresses.

**5** The South Pacific Division (SPD) experienced a significant increase in baptisms in 2020, the only region of the Church to do so during the pandemic. The SPD recorded 49,058 professions of faith (POF), up from the 34,857 (11,223 POF) in 2019. The 40 percent growth in **Trans-Pacific Union Mission (TPUM)** and 30 percent in **Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM)** is noteworthy as a higher-than-normal growth rate, according to an article in the SPD’s Adventist Record. “Both . . . unions have focused on the harvest cycle of disciple-making,” Glenn Townend, SPD president, said. “They have been very active in each area of the process to make a disciple-making disciple. There has been a lot of training, models and practice in this with World Changer Bibles and Bible reading groups.”