



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 2018

I've always been drawn

to the power of compassion as exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus was filled with compassion. He had a balance of head and heart, and He received a lot of trust and respect.

Compassion is about strength, connecting with people, and getting things done. Many times in the Bible we read about Jesus seeing people and having compassion on them.

When one is compassionate, they relate to the pain and suffering that another person may be experiencing. They enter into their shoes, their experience, but with a view of helping them.

As leaders, we should lead with our heads, and with our hearts. An appropriate balance between the two will make the leader credible, and the people will love their leader.

"Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" we read in Colossians 3:12. And in James 5:11: "the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." As a leader, I believe that compassion is an element I need to bring into my leadership.

Compassion acts as a balance; it brings calm into a leader's life. But beyond that, it helps people feel cared for. They see a compassionate leader who deeply cares about people—who wants to see them do well. Compassion may also greatly minimize the toxicity of negative emotions.

Leaders often face tough situations, but when we follow the compassionate example of Jesus, blending the head and the heart, doors may open that would otherwise remain shut. In our lead story this month, we will see how ADRA and the Church are working closer together to bring compassion and healing to a world in need.

Geoffrey Mbwana
General Vice President

EDITORIAL



STRONGER TOGETHER ADRA AND THE CHURCH

BY GINA WAHLEN, M.A., EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

Clean water. Food. Disaster relief. Literacy training. Long-term development projects and more. These are just some of the things for which ADRA, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, is known.

For more than six decades, the agency (first known as SAWS, or Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Society, then Seventh-day Adventist World Service, before being renamed ADRA) has been seeking to "feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, and take in the stranger . . . reflecting God's love through compassionate acts of humanitarian service."¹

Today, ADRA holds "General Consultative Status," the highest status given to nongovernmental organizations by the United Nations. ADRA currently operates in more than

130 countries with a dedicated team of 6,000 staff and volunteers.

While ADRA does a tremendous work in ministering to the needs of the most vulnerable around the world, it has not always been perceived as working as closely with the Church as it might.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

At a meeting held March 8 to 15, 2018, in Montenegro, leaders from ADRA's global network gathered to discuss strategic plans for the agency. One of the items discussed within the strategic framework was how ADRA and the Church can work more closely together, according to Geoffrey Mbwana, chair of the ADRA board of directors, and a general vice-president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

"ADRA and the Church are coming

—continued, next page



closer together,” said Mbwana, and both are celebrating. By coming together now, we see the great potential that has always been there.”

CHRIST IS THE EXAMPLE

Jonathan Duffy, president of ADRA International, explained “Christ is the example for how each of us should live and model our ministries. Christ ministered to people’s physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs. He desired their good.

“While much of ADRA’s ministry is to help provide people’s physical needs, if it ignores the fact that every person is also a spiritual being, then its ministry is not complete. Just as the Church focuses on a person’s spiritual needs, they cannot ignore their physical needs.

“ADRA completes the Church and the Church completes ADRA,” Duffy said. “We are not separate but one ministry, which, when combined, ministers to the whole person just as Christ did.”

Ella Simmons, vice-chair of the ADRA board, and a general vice-president of the Church, expressed her delight with the spirit of cooperation evidenced at the meetings in Montenegro.

“I have always seen ADRA and the rest of the Church as one body, with ADRA being given a specific function for disaster relief and capacity development,” she said. “But with this meeting in Montenegro, I was much more impressed with the general expression of that unity from all of the participants, which is something that has not been quite so evident in the past.

“From what I heard and observed in the development of working plans, even in the questions, I heard individuals as well as the group seeking specific ways to enhance the relationship of ADRA to the rest of the Church, through the work that ADRA does,” Simmons said.

WORKING TOGETHER

While it is recognized that public funds cannot be used for direct evangelistic purposes, that does not mean ADRA and the Church can’t work closely together, according to Mbwana. “ADRA also raises funds from private donors, which gives a little leeway for participating in certain events,” he said.

Mbwana explained how ADRA can do a lot in partnership with the Church’s medical and educational institutions, pointing out that ADRA has “a wealth of expertise in how to approach the community.”

“ADRA sees itself as an entering wedge—to make friends, build trust, to open a door. Once that groundwork has been laid, the Church needs to come in and follow up,” he said.

Citing an example of how this can work, Mbwana remembered a time when major evangelistic events took place simultaneously in Zimbabwe. As an integral part of those events, ADRA built wells and provided community services.

“It created a great profile of the Church,” he said. “It’s not just about preaching. It shows that the Church really cares about the people it reaches. ADRA will not shy away from stating very clearly that what we are doing is on behalf of Jesus Christ. We are portraying the love of Jesus.”

ENDNOTES

¹ From “Our History,” adra.org/about-adra/history/



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Jonathan Duffy

GOD PROVIDES FUNDS FOR CENTER OF INFLUENCE

BY VIRIATO FERREIRA
AS TOLD TO ANDREW MCCHESEY

WWW.ADVENTISTMISSION.ORG



A serious dilemma unexpectedly emerged on a Friday morning. The architect of our VitaSalus Wellness Center announced that we urgently needed to put up railings around several buildings.

“If someone falls, you’ll be in trouble,” he warned.

He knew that he was right. VitaSalus—a clinic that works in harmony with the ethical, professional and spiritual values upheld by the Seventh-day Adventist Church—is located atop a mountain near the town of Penela, about 115 miles (185 kilometers) north of Portugal’s capital, Lisbon.

God’s Project

The architect put the total cost of the railings at 8,000 euros (US\$9,850). But he said we could pay only 4,000 euros by restricting the railings to the highest places.

I turned to our chief financial officer. “Do we have the money?” I asked. “Absolutely not,” he said. “There is no money.”

Worried thoughts filled my mind. Suddenly, a conviction struck me. It’s God’s project!

“Whose project is this?” I thought. “It’s not mine. It’s God’s project!”

I shared this conviction with our chief financial officer and others present at the meeting.

“God will supply the means for these railings,” I said. “We will not put the railings everywhere, just where they are absolutely necessary. Are you comfortable

in going ahead and ordering the railings?”

They nodded their heads in agreement, and I prayed, “Lord, we are going to order these railings because they are really needed.”

We ordered the railings.

Five days later, on a Wednesday, I received an e-mail from someone whom I had never met.

“Doctor,” he wrote. “I just want to tell you that I have deposited 4,000 euros into the VitaSalus bank account.”

“Praise the Lord!” I exclaimed out loud.

I wrote him an e-mail describing the events of the previous Friday morning. He replied immediately.

Answer to Prayer

“Doctor, this confirms that the money is for this project,” he wrote.

“On Friday morning, I woke up with a desire to help VitaSalus. I have never been there, but I just had that feeling. Still, I wasn’t sure whether my wife would agree with me, so I prayed a short prayer, ‘Lord, if this is Your will, put the same desire in my wife’s heart.’

“As soon as I finished praying, my wife came into my office and said, ‘Honey, you know that project in Penela? I think we should help them.’

“I couldn’t believe my ears, and I asked her, ‘How much do you think we should give?’

“I think 4,000 euros would be good,” she said.”

What a lesson for me! Had we stopped our work at VitaSalus because we lacked

the funds, we would have lost out on a big blessing brought about by trusting in God. It was not about the railings. It was about God showing us how His work can be fulfilled when we trust in Him.

We opened VitaSalus because Ellen White wrote that Adventists should establish these kinds of “centers of influence” outside major cities around the world to provide the sick with relief from physical suffering and also spiritual help. We have treated about 250 people since 2014, and at least five people have been baptized. We are now in the process of looking to expand and to open similar wellness centers elsewhere.

If the Lord says wellness centers should be opened outside every major city, we just need to trust in Him, and He will make everything possible. He knows the cities.

The railings taught me that we should make careful plans and then say, “Lord, if these are Your plans, it is up to You now to provide.”

Dr. Viriato Ferreira is director of the VitaSalus Wellness Center in Penela, Portugal, and honorary assistant director of the health ministries department of the Seventh-day Adventist world church.

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“If someone falls, you’ll be in trouble,” he warned.

April 2018
**SURVEY RESULTS
PRESENTED TO THE
UNITY OVERSIGHT
COMMITTEE**

Qualitative research continues

BY GENERAL CONFERENCE
UNITY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Results from the worldwide survey designed and administered by the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR) were presented to the Unity Oversight Committee on March 20, 2018, during a scheduled meeting held at the world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The six-question survey addressed issues relating to compliance with voted actions of the GC Session and the GC Executive Committee.

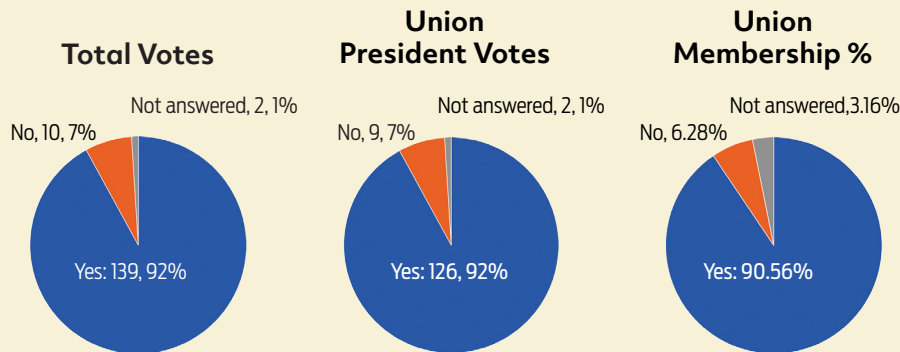
The report, presented to the committee by the Director of ASTR, David Trim, included data gathered from all division and union presidents. The presidents were requested to answer the six survey questions according to what they believe is the view of the majority of members in their territory, as opposed to their personal opinion.

Survey Results

Trim noted that 100 percent of the surveys, sent out on January 18, 2018, had been received by March 4. He then presented each question and responses, including 1) number and percentages of votes received; 2) number and percentages of Union president votes; 3) percentage of Union membership living in the territories represented by each vote.

QUESTION 1:

"Should the General Conference Unity Oversight Committee appoint a team to listen sensitively, counsel and pray with the presidents of unions not in compliance with voted actions of GC Sessions and of the GC Executive Committee?"

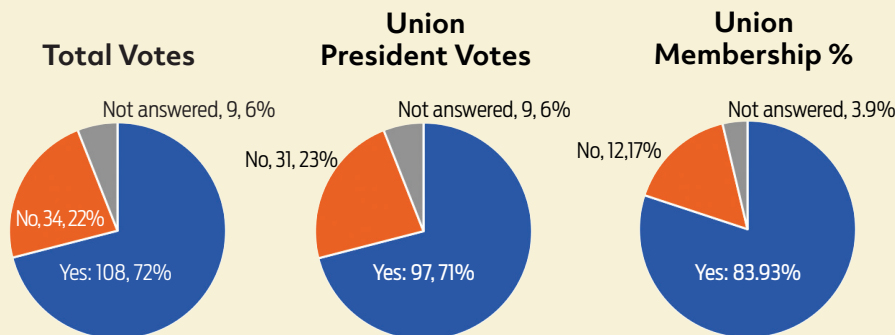


Response:

● "Yes"—139 total votes (92%); 126 union president votes (92%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 90.56%.
● "No"—10 total votes (7%); 9 union president votes (7%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 6.28%.
● Not answered—2 total (1%); 2 union presidents; percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 3.16%.

QUESTION 2:

"Should there be further organizational consequences for unions that do not comply with voted actions of GC Sessions and of the GC Executive Committee?"

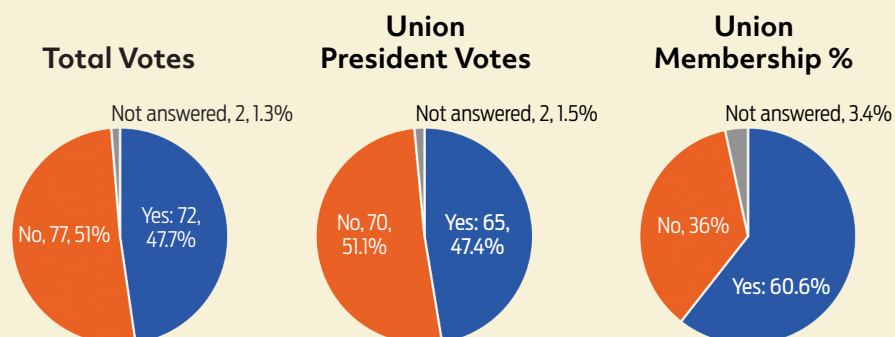


Response:

● "Yes"—108 total votes (72%); 97 union president votes (71%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 83.93%.
● "No"—34 total votes (22%); 31 union president votes (23%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 12.17%.
● Not answered—9 total votes (6%); 9 union presidents (6%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 3.9%.

QUESTION 3:

"Should church leaders be asked to sign a document saying that they will follow voted actions of GC Sessions and of the GC Executive Committee?"

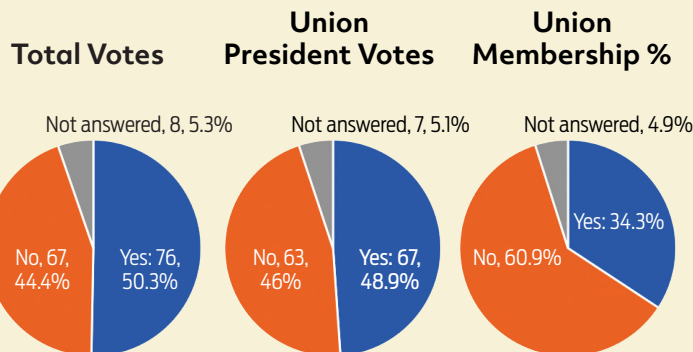


Response:

● "Yes"—72 total votes (47.7%); 65 union president votes (47.4%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 60.6%.
● "No"—77 total votes (51%); 70 union president votes (51.1%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 36%.
● Not answered—2 total (1.3%); 2 union presidents (1.5%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 3.4%.

QUESTION 4:

"Should presidents of unions not in compliance with voted actions of GC Sessions and of the GC Executive Committee be allowed to speak (i.e. have voice) at meetings of the GC Executive Committee?"

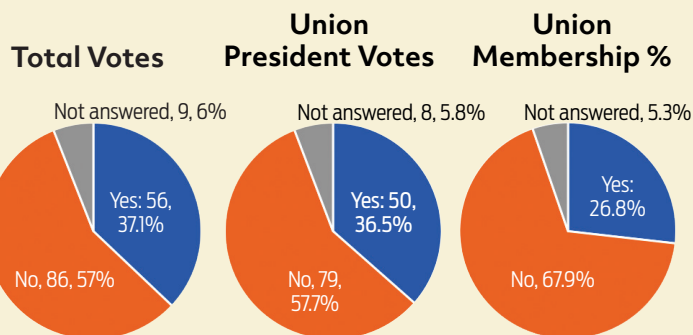


Response:

● "Yes" — 76 total votes (50.3%); 67 union president votes (48.9%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 34.3%.
 ● "No" — 67 total votes (44.4%); 63 union president votes (46%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 60.9%.
 ● Not answered — 8 total (5.3%); 7 union presidents (5.1%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 4.9%.

QUESTION 5:

"Should presidents of unions not in compliance with voted actions of GC Sessions and of the GC Executive Committee be allowed to vote in meetings of the GC Executive Committee?"

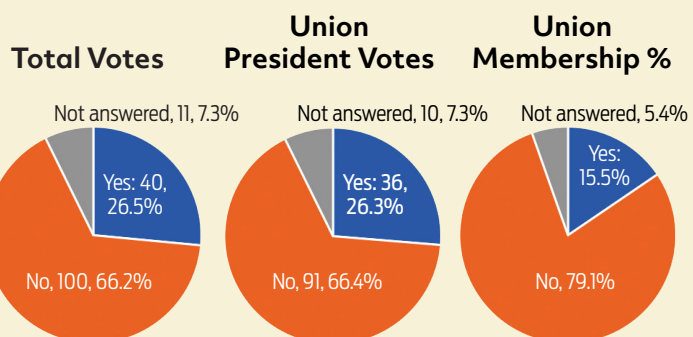


Response:

● "Yes" — 56 total votes (37.1%); 50 union president votes (36.5%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 26.8%.
 ● "No" — 86 total votes (57%); 79 union president votes (57.7%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 67.9%.
 ● Not answered — 9 total (6%); 8 union presidents (5.8%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 5.3%.

QUESTION 6:

"Should presidents of unions not in compliance with voted actions of GC Sessions and of the GC Executive Committee be allowed to serve on standing committees or ad hoc subcommittees of the GC Executive Committee?"



Response:

● "Yes" — 40 total votes (26.5%); 36 union president votes (26.3%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 15.5%.
 ● "No" — 100 total votes (66.2%); 91 union president votes (66.4%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 79.1%.
 ● Not answered — 11 total (7.3%); 10 union presidents (7.3%); percentage of world membership residing in those unions: 5.4%.

CONCLUSIONS DRAWN

The following conclusions were drawn from the collected data:

- ▶ There is overwhelming **support** for a GC team to meet with presidents of unions not in compliance, "to listen sensitively, counsel and pray."
- ▶ There is strong **support** for some kind of consequences for non-compliance.
- ▶ There is also strong **support** for not allowing presidents of non-compliant unions to serve on standing or ad hoc committees of the GC Executive Committee.
- ▶ There is pronounced **support** for not allowing presidents of unions not in compliance with voted actions of GC Sessions and of the GC Executive Committee to vote in meetings of the GC Executive Committee.
- ▶ A majority of Church leaders **oppose** removing "voice" as well as vote from non-compliant union presidents.
- ▶ Most Church leaders also **oppose** requiring union presidents to sign a document promising to abide by GC Session and Executive Committee actions.

Qualitative Data Gathering Continues

A preliminary report on qualitative data gathering was given by Hensley Mooroven, secretary of the Unity Oversight Committee. Mooroven reported that qualitative data is continuing to be gathered through personal visits and dialogues with division and union leaders worldwide. Qualitative data is also being gathered from GC institutions and the GC Leadership Council, composed of GC officers and departmental leaders.

So far, 11 such dialogues have taken place, according to Mooroven, with many more scheduled for the near future.

"Of the dialogues that have taken place," added Ryan, "there appears to be a positive correlation between the quantitative and qualitative data."

Ryan pointed out, however, that in the end, "data is a guide. It can be empirical, but not necessarily infallible, information. It's a guide, not an absolute. But we will be informed by the data in crafting what is brought to the Executive Committee during Annual Council 2018."

On May 14, 2018, the Unity Oversight Committee will meet to draft a proposed outline of the statement that will be brought to the Annual Council. The outline will be a work in progress. "We want to continue to be informed by the qualitative data that we will be receiving from dialogues with the remaining divisions," said Mooroven.

The Spiritual Necessity of Church Unity and Biblical Authority to Accomplish God's Mission

PART 2

BY TED N. C. WILSON, PH.D.
PRESIDENT, SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

The following is the second part of the keynote speech that Ted N.C. Wilson gave at the 11th annual Global Leadership Summit on Feb. 6, 2018, in Lisbon, Portugal.

What is real unity? It is something that comes from a heart-felt submission to God and to our fellow church members as we work together, being instructed by the Holy Word, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Holy Spirit. The resulting unity far supersedes any privately held convictions after items have been carefully reviewed by the world church and decisions have been taken. It far supersedes any legal “rights” that might be exercised.

Moral and spiritual obligations to God, to His church, and to His united mission far outweigh any legal or independent opinions of a member or an organization within the general church body.

There may be a contention that a church organization, duly registered as a legal entity, is beyond the purview of general worldwide church decisions, the General Conference or division working policies, or model constitutions as outlined in the General Conference Working Policy.

The General Conference Working Policy indicates in B 15 10, voted by the General Conference Executive Committee with worldwide representation that:

“The *General Conference Working Policy* shall be strictly adhered to by all organizations in every part of the world field. The work in every organization shall be administered in full harmony with the policies of the General Conference and of the divisions respectively.”

A MORAL AND SPIRITUAL OBLIGATION

While certain legal rights are peculiar to a duly registered legal entity, in the church organization and general working activities, there is a power that supersedes any legal application—it is the moral and spiritual obligation incumbent on all units of the worldwide church, recognizing that the Holy Spirit is the guiding force that keeps the church focused on its heaven-born mission.

Some may argue that the world church has no legal standing to force compliance. Let’s be very clear: the church as a whole, including its individual units, operates on eternal truths, biblical principles, spiritual values, and heavenly ethics far beyond any earthly legal aspects.

The church is governed by the leading of the Holy Spirit and the biblical beliefs and mission we accept from God’s hand. As a result of the power of the Holy Spirit’s leading, the church, its leaders, its institutions, its organizations, and its members, are motivated by heaven-blessed collegial goodwill engendered by the mission for the Advent movement outlined in God’s Holy Word and the Spirit of Prophecy. This binds us together and trumps any reference to legal application.

Regardless of opinions, there is a submissiveness to God’s overall leading as expressed in His worldwide church and its deliberations as a representative body from all parts of the earth.

CHRIST’S AMAZING PLEA

When any organization, as a part of the body of Christ—His church—demands its own way contrary to the will of the entire body, that willful and independent

organization is working against God’s wishes for a united church in mission based on John 17.

Christ’s amazing plea encapsulated in John 17:20-23, beseeches us with the following heart-rending words, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as you have loved Me.”

What an amazing request on the part of Christ for us today, in His last-day Advent movement coming from cultures and people groups across the globe—a diverse group that is united in Christ and His mission for the church.

“*Moral and spiritual obligations to God, to His church, and to His united mission far outweigh any legal or independent opinions of a member or an organization within the general church body.*”

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The supposition that there can be unity in diversity can be misused to mask true intentions to embark on a path of disunity in the name of diversity. The Bible passages of John 17, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Philippians 2:1-4, and Acts 2:46 do not model or advocate a “mock” unity, allowing the various parts of the body to do as they wish with a pretense and veneer of professed unity, but without substance relating to a united mission and spirit controlled and motivated by the Holy Spirit.

In a section titled, “Unity in Diversity, found in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 145, we read:

It may seem to some that the contrast between their gifts and the gifts of a fellow laborer is too great to allow them to unite in harmonious effort. . . . Their talents, however diverse, may all be under the control of the same Spirit. In every word and act, kindness and love will be revealed; and as each worker fills his appointed place faithfully, the prayer of Christ for the unity of His followers will be answered, and the world will know that these are His disciples.

In loving sympathy and confidence God’s workers are to unite with one another.

He who says or does anything that tends to separate the members of Christ’s church is counterworking the Lord’s purpose. Wrangling and dissension in the church, the encouragement of suspicion and unbelief, are dishonoring to Christ. God desires His servants to cultivate Christian affection for one another. True religion unites hearts not only with Christ, but with one another in a most tender union.

When we know what it means to be thus united with Christ and with our brethren, a fragrant influence will attend our work wherever we go.

Further in the same section on “Unity in Diversity” it simply says:

“Those who are truly converted will press together in Christian unity. . . . To the end of time Christ is to be first. He is the source of life and strength, of righteousness and holiness. And He is all this to those who wear His yoke and learn of Him how to be meek and lowly. The duty and delight of all service is to uplift Christ before the people. This is the end of all true labor. Let Christ appear; let self be hidden behind Him. This is self-sacrifice that is of worth. Such self-sacrifice God accepts” (p. 147).

This self-sacrificing spirit and genuine humility born out of connection with Christ is what every one of us need today to diminish the tendency in all of us to champion our own opinions

and convictions in the face of the general church’s voted actions—God’s remnant church on earth.

A WALL OF EVIDENCE

It would appear that opposition to compliance of the Seventh-day Adventist general body’s actions, such as the General Conference in session or the General Conference Executive Committee functioning as God’s remnant church, on the grounds of “conscience” would come face to face with a wall of evidence from Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy indicating that independent thinking must be submitted to the larger body’s decisions.

In counsel for all of us, we are told in *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, that “when the conscience is guided by human perceptions, which are not subdued and softened by the grace of Christ, the mind is in a diseased condition. Things are not seen in their true bearings. The imagination is wrought upon, and the eye of the mind sees things in a false, distorted light” (p. 323).

In *Acts of the Apostles*, we read counsel for each of us to ponder:

There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence. They seem unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the

judgment of his brethren, especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people. God has invested His church with special authority and power, which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising; for he who does this despises the voice of God.¹

Further, these profound instructions are given for all of us: when, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered. Never should a laborer regard as a virtue the persistent maintenance of his position of independence, contrary to the decision of the general body. . . . God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority. . . . God has vested in His church in the



judgment and voice of the General Conference assembled to plan for the prosperity and advancement of His work.²

THE TRUE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Let us never forget the true mission of the church as we engage in Reach the World through Revival and Reformation, Mission to the Cities, Comprehensive Health Ministry, Total Member Involvement, and so many other opportunities to finish God's work through His power.

We are to be united in our mission to accomplish our heaven-entrusted task. Inspiration tells us, "The church of Christ is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. Its mission is to carry the gospel to the world."³ Let us be united in this mission and our approach to carrying out this mandate from heaven.

Let us always be reminded of God's objective of unity in His church as we lift up Christ and His three angels' messages—all based on Him and Him alone and as described in Ephesians 4:1-4: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Certainly, Christ's power over each of us and His church, and our submission to that power, is of utmost importance in realizing the spiritual necessity of church unity and biblical authority to accomplish God's mission of proclaiming Jesus' soon second coming, when the culmination of complete unity takes place. May God guide us to this end.

Endnotes

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 163, 164.

² White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 260, 261.

³ White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 81.

CHECKUP



REST*

Are you getting enough rest?

Getting daily, weekly, monthly, and annual rest is very important.

Daily

Sleep at proper times at night and take naps if necessary. Research has shown that adults need 7-9 hours of sleep per night to function optimally.

Weekly

Take one day out of each week—the Sabbath—to rest.

Monthly/Annual

Mini-breaks and vacations

Lack of sufficient sleep or low-quality sleep has been connected to many health problems. Some of the most common risks include:

1
Increased risk of disease

2
Obesity

4
Mood Disorders

3
Lowered immune system response

5
Higher risk of injury

6
Impaired mental function



*Material from *Habits That Heal: Habits of America's Longest Living People*, by Monica Fukuda with David K. Fukuda, M.D., pp. 26, 27.

ON THE MOVE!

Since Annual Council 2017, there have been a few changes to the spaces within the General Conference building. Follow the steps to see what's different and what's coming.*



1

NAD moves to Columbia, Maryland

Treasury moves to NAD retirement area.

2

Treasury moves back to a renovated space.

3

ADRA moves to the second floor.



4

All of ARM moves to the first floor.



5

AWR moves to ADRA's former space.

6

Archives will expand into former ARM space.



7

Library will move to the lower level.

Future plans include an expanded Visitor's center where the library is currently located.*



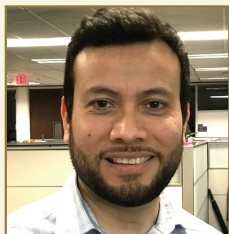
*All plans are subject to change



LIVING PICTURES

The General Conference is experiencing some new “growth.”

BY MERLE POIRIER, OPERATIONS MANAGER, ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES



An invitation was made this past Annual Council, that in honor of the 2018 Annual Council in Battle Creek, Michigan, men think about the possibility of growing beards for the occasion.

If you take a quick tour of the General Conference building you will note the photographs of leaders near each department. Certainly, they remind us of our Adventist past, but also of the presence of beards. Most individuals pictured, if serving prior to the 1900s, sport some sort of beard.

A Theological Question

The history of beards doesn't just reside in historical photographs. Uriah Smith, editor of *The Review and Herald* (now *Adventist Review*) responded to a reader's question in the July 8, 1858 issue about whether the shaving of beards mars “the image of God.” Smith wrote a fairly detailed biblical study regarding beards ending with this conclusion:

“We wish our position distinctly understood on this question. On the question itself, as some of our readers will recollect, we have taken the ground of neutrality: that is we care not whether a man wears a beard or not. The Bible says nothing against it, and it says nothing for it. If a person thinks that health or convenience, one or both, demand the undisturbed development of his beard, we shall regard him no differently on that account from one who does not do this. Perhaps we ought to say however . . . that on the subject of making it a *Bible* matter, and regulating it by *religious* scruples, we are *not* neutral. Against such a course, since the Bible is silent thereon, we still feel as we have ever felt, earnestly and strenuously to protest.”

Voted Policy

The discussion of beards, however, doesn't end with Smith. David Trim, director of General Conference Archives and Statistics, reveals that in August 1866, the Battle Creek Church adopted (and published) “Resolutions on Dress.” In it we find this admonition:

“But while we have no objections to a growth of beard on all parts of the face, as nature designed it, yet where any portion of the beard is removed, we think the brethren greatly err from the sobriety of the Christian in donning the moustache or goatee.”

Later the 1866 General Conference Session took an action regarding these resolutions, voting “That this Conference adopt these resolutions as amended, and earnestly recommend our people to live them out.” They followed this by printing a pamphlet containing the resolutions for all to read.

Still not left to rest, the 1867 General Conference Session also took an action to “earnestly entreat” members to regard the subject of dress as set forth by the pamphlet, which included the statements on facial hair. It should be noted, however, that these resolutions were only *recommendations*, not requirements.

Thereafter, according to Trim, they appeared to have given up the “beard battle,” for no further resolutions appear recorded.

Making Old New Again

Now, back to Annual Council 2018. It would appear if you take a tour of the building (as our intrepid photographer did), beards aren't only found in pictures these days. Beards seem to be sprouting up all over—a revival, if you will, of facial hair in all its glory. Stay tuned. In six months, Annual Council will be upon us, and so may the multiplication of bearded faces. For now, enjoy the “new looks” among us. Who knows? This trend may last. The walls of the future may show a distinct change as the photos that are added bring back what was old, making it new again.

“

Beards seem to be sprouting up all over—a revival of facial hair in all its glory.



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COMING UP! SPRING MEETING 2018

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Final Educational
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GC Departmental
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Mission Advance
(previously known
as Counsel on
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Witness)

Nominating
Committee Reports
and Personnel
Changes

1 After attending Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic meetings in another community, four families in the town of **San Miguel Chiptip, Chiapas, Mexico**, suffered religious persecution from the Catholic townspeople. The families' homes were destroyed, the four men were evicted and their families forced to stay in the town. The men have since been reunited with their families and plan to one day return and share their new-found faith with the people there.

2 "We have a living God who hears prayer," Mika Forsman, a retired Seventh-day Adventist pastor told Finnish media in **Nummela, Finland**, following his harrowing ordeal. Forsman would have most probably frozen to death after taking a bad fall and breaking his hip, had it not been for prayer, his dog, and a couple who answered the dog's barking.

3 More than 200 lay members gathered for the first-ever "Hope Ambassador" regional training, held in **Vanualevu, Fiji**. Hope Ambassadors volunteer to work with Hope TV and radio studios to champion media evangelism in Fiji. The training was designed to show members how to

use radio and television as a tool to connect with people and introduce them to Jesus.

4 A Seventh-day Adventist medical student earned the top spot on the Philippines Physician Licensure exam. Jerald Pelayo is the fourth Adventist medical student to take the top spot on the national exam in 12 years. Pelayo attended medical school at the University of the East Memorial Medical Center in **Manila, Philippines**. He plans to complete a residency program in neurosurgery and become a medical missionary.

5 Leading up to a TMI evangelistic series in **Cameroon**, ADRA Cameroon partnered with the Health and Evangelism departments of the Cameroon Union to provide free medical care through a mobile medical clinic. The team came across several desperate cases, including a newborn found left in a plastic container in the bushes. Although ants had attacked the infant's face, the medical team was able to save its life and eyesight. Following the evangelistic meetings, nearly 4,000 people were baptized. Meetings were held at more than 4,000 locations, including 611 public sites, and 3,482

small group meetings inside homes, on porches, and in other outdoor spaces.

6 Following heavy rains and mudslides in **Bolivia**, the country's government declared a state of emergency. Seventh-day Adventists opened all 390 Adventist churches in that country to serve as centers for the collection of food, clothing, blankets, and materials for the victims. In addition, several young Adventist volunteers went to the affected areas to help distribute food and non-perishable items, and to search for missing people.

7 During the 2018 Winter Olympics, the **Daegwallyeong, Korea**, Seventh-day Adventist Church was a beacon of light. Located behind Olympic Plaza and across the street from the main Olympic stadium, tens of thousands of athletes and tourists passed by and saw the name of the Church. The Adventists pitched a tent in the church yard and invited passersby in, where they received hot red ginseng drinks, hand warming packets, and a friendly smile, along with *Steps to Christ* and other Adventist literature.