



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

OCTOBER 2019

Welcome to Annual Council!

Let me give you a quick tour of some of the items on the agenda.

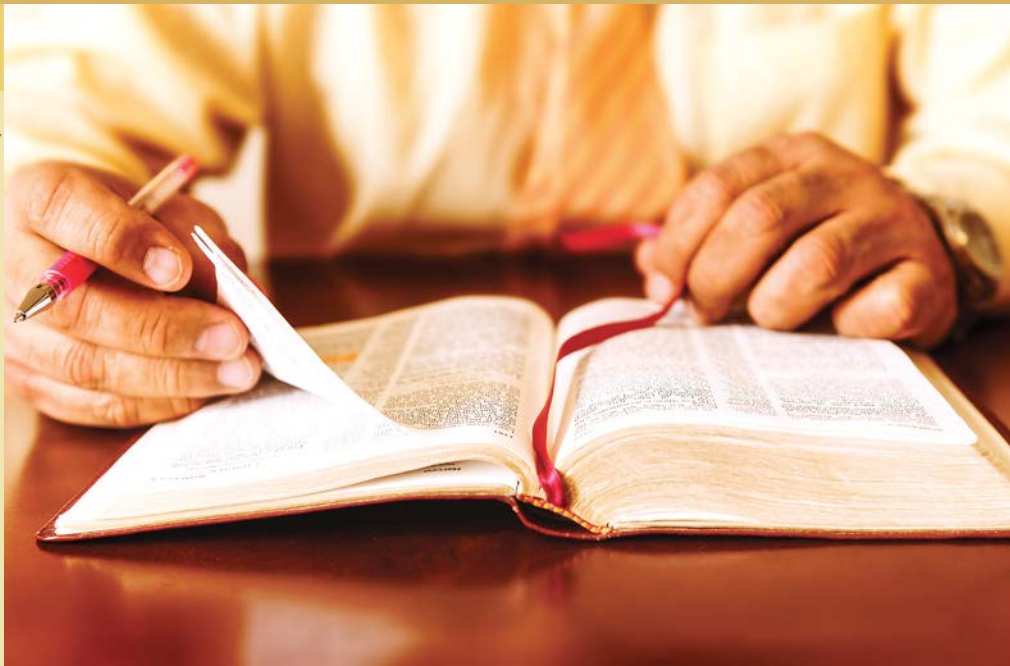
- First and foremost, is our focus on mission. We have included thrilling stories of members who, through the power of the Holy Spirit are accomplishing great things for God.
- An essential item is the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan for the world church—"I Will Go." It involves inspiring and equipping all church members to use their God-given spiritual gifts in witness and service for Christ.
- We will consider recommendations from the Nurture and Retention Summit, held in conjunction with the 2019 Spring Meeting and discuss proposals to the 2020 General Conference Session involving the General Conference Constitution and Bylaws and *Church Manual*.
- We will present a balanced statement on abortion, consider the tithe percentage adjustment, and discuss recommendations from the 2018 Annual Council action on compliance.
- A proposal will be made to attach the Chinese Union Mission to the GC.
- The Secretary's and Treasurer's reports will be presented, as well as G.T. Ng's presentation "Not for Sale" in preparation for the 2020 General Conference session.
- The new version of *adventist.org* will be introduced, and don't miss the Family

Ministries Centennial celebration on October 14.

Let's continue to invite the Lord to guide us as we focus on the mission of His church!

Hensley M. Mooroooven
GC Undersecretary

EDITORIAL



A THEOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP

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

Leadership is a topic on which many books have been written, numerous seminars presented, countless lectures given, and much discussion has taken place. Leadership can be a power for good—or evil—depending upon its use.

As a prophetic-led, last-day remnant movement, how important it is that we have a biblical understanding, a biblical basis for leadership—a theology of leadership that informs our practice.

The Bible is filled with instruction on what it means to be a godly leader. One of the most

instructive passages is found in Micah 6:8:

"He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?"

In the book *Principles for Christian Leaders*, the author states, "Solemn are the responsibilities resting upon those who are called to act as leaders in the church of God on earth."¹ She then refers to the situation Moses

—continued, next page

CHECK OUT LEADERSHIP TIPS ON PAGE 4!



In the well-known Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, we see church leaders working together as a committee, basing their decision upon Scripture (see v. 15-18) in resolving conflict and focusing on mission.

faced as a leader of God’s people, described in Exodus 18.

WISE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

Moses was “endeavoring to carry alone burdens so heavy that he would soon have worn away under them,”² but fortunately his father-in-law, Jethro, gave Moses godly counsel for a wise distribution of responsibility, appointing leaders over various groups of people—thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

Criteria were given as to who should be called to leadership. They were to be “able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness” (Ex. 18:21). Further, they were to “judge the people at

all seasons,” (vs. 22) taking care of more localized matters so Moses was able to concentrate on the larger, weightier matters affecting the entire nation of Israel.

Commenting on this providential arrangement, Ellen White states, “The time and strength of those who in the providence of God have been placed in leading positions of responsibility in the church, should be spent in dealing with the weightier matters demanding special wisdom and largeness of heart.”³

NEW TESTAMENT PRINCIPLES

In the New Testament we see the same principles of piety and justice that were to guide

the leaders of God’s people. Inspiration tells us, “In the work of setting things in order in all the churches, and ordaining suitable men to act as officers, the apostles held to the high standards of leadership outlined in the Old Testament Scriptures.”⁴

Some of the high standards are outlined in Titus 1:7-9. Those called to a position of leadership within the church “must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine,

both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

Much counsel is given in the New Testament on how spiritual leaders are to lead in a Christlike way. In 1 Peter 5:2,3 we read: “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” This is followed closely by the admonition toward humility, reminding us that “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (vs. 5).

And in the well-known Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, we see church leaders working together as a committee, basing their decision upon Scripture (see vs. 15-18) in resolving conflict and focusing on mission.

Both the biblical book of Acts and its inspired companion, *The Acts of the Apostles* by Ellen G. White, provide a wealth of information leading to a theology of leadership for the Church.

CULTIVATE HUMBLE DEPENDENCE

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we build our theology of leadership and practice firmly upon the Bible and the counsel given through the Spirit of Prophecy.

Christ is indeed the Head of this Church (see Eph. 5:23), and although we are elected as leaders in His Church, we are always subject to Christ, the Chief Shepherd, and are not to exercise “kingly power” over those we serve.

How does this work in practical terms? Inspired counsel invites us to cultivate humble dependence:

“Men whom the Lord calls to

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The beautiful truth and comforting thought about leadership is this—when you put something in God’s hands and move forward in what God has said, ultimately, the truth will prevail.

important positions in His work are to cultivate a humble dependence upon Him. They are not to seek to embrace too much authority; for God has not called them to a work of ruling, but to plan and counsel with their fellow laborers. Every worker alike is to hold himself amenable to the requirements and instructions of God.”⁵

The Bible tells us, “In the multitude of counselors there is safety,” (Prov. 11:14), so this is why committees are so important. The committee system is vital to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and it is the system under which the church operates. Committees are made up of people who each have a voice. They should come to committees with the intent to move the mission of the church forward, rather than any personal agenda. Everyone is to work together, allowing the Holy Spirit to impress him or her individually.

HOW COMMITTEES WORK

All committee members are empowered to contribute, based on

their personal spiritual connection with heaven as they ask the Lord to guide. They should not feel intimidated or held back but should be free to express their thoughts and vote in the way they believe God is guiding them. No one should be told how to vote.

When counsel is given from senior administration, it should be seriously considered and appreciated, but it is not the final word. The final word is the committee, and we do that through voting.

Of course, consensus is the ideal, and is worth striving for. When there is not a consensus, however, we must rely on the normal protocol of simple majority. That doesn’t always make everyone happy, but is the normal way that organizations operate, including religious ones. Today we do not have a living prophet, or the Urim and Thummim, as ancient Israel had, to determine the will of God, so the Lord works through committees.

Ultimately, the beautiful truth and comforting thought about leadership is this—when you put something in God’s hands and move forward in what God has said, ultimately, the truth will prevail. The challenge for leadership is to be patient, knowing that ultimately, “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

¹ Ellen G. White, *Principles for Christian Leaders*, p. 32.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 95.

⁵ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 270.

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST LEADERSHIP TIPS

1 Study and Believe in the Literal Word of God. Daily study the Bible and allow the Word to soak into your very being. (2 Tim. 2:15)

2 Know the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. Recognize they are based on the Word of God. Know, support, teach, promote, and stand up for them. (John 21:16)

3 Study and Trust the Spirit of Prophecy. The Spirit of Prophecy is one of God's greatest gifts. (Rev. 12:17)

4 Have an Active Prayer Life. Pray often. Ask God to be with you in every activity of your day. (1 Thess. 5:17)

5 Believe in Revival and Reformation. Be willing to humble yourself before God as you seek the power of the latter rain through the Holy Spirit. (Rev. 3:18-20)

6 Share Your Faith. Be willing to be used by the Holy Spirit to personally share your faith. Hold public evangelistic meetings, which will bring others to Christ and increase your faith. (Matt. 28:18-20)

7 Lift Up Christ, His Righteousness, and the Sanctuary Service. Speak of Christ often. Help others recognize the value of Christ's ministry as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. (Dan. 8:14)

8 Proclaim the Three Angels' Messages. Realize that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a unique message to proclaim to the world through the Holy Spirit's power. (Rev. 14:6-12)

9 Have a Sunny Disposition and Be a Unifier. Be positive in your approach to life bringing encouragement to others. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem. (2 Cor. 5:18-19)

10 Be Observant and Affirming. Be aware of the activities and accomplishments of others and affirming in your appreciation. (Prov. 15:23)

11 Deeply Trust in God's Leading. Do not doubt that God is leading the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Advent movement. Have an abiding trust in the promises of the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy. (Rev. 12:17)

12 Enjoy Physical Exercise and Proper Eating Habits. Realize that what you eat and drink and how you conduct your physical life (exercise, sleep, rest, recreation) greatly affects your spiritual life. (3 John 2)

13 Be Fair and Balanced. Evaluate situations carefully and impartially. Make reasonable decisions based on principles and counsel from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. (Phil. 4:8)

14 Be A Good Listener. Learn the art of listening. Reserve comments after hearing the entire story. Don't jump to conclusions. Wait and listen. Be willing to learn. (Prov. 1:5)

15 Seek Counsel from Others. Ask for counsel from other godly people. Do not think you know all the answers. Earnestly seek guidance and instruction from those who know the Lord and you trust. (Prov. 11:14)

16 Stand for the Right. Do not fear to stand for something even if it is unpopular. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead as you form your opinion and belief. Let the Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy give you understanding. Be respectful and honorable as you share what you believe. (Heb. 10:23)

17 Stand for Those Who Cannot. Be willing to stand for individuals or causes that have no voice but need to be heard. (Luke 4:8)

18 Ask for Wisdom Every Day. Realize you are powerless without the wisdom of heaven. God will give you what you need to accomplish your tasks. (James 1:5)

19 Be a Humble Servant. In your dealings with others, remember you are God's servant. (Micah 6:8)

20 Believe Christ's Coming Is Soon. Shape your thinking and actions in accordance with the imminent return of Jesus. Speak about His coming and preach about it. (Matt. 24)

ALWAYS PRESSING FORWARD

BY ANDREW MCCHESENEY, ADVENTIST MISSION



Joeli Rabo, an insurance agent in Fiji, looked up from his hospital bed and into the face of his distraught aunt.

“Son, you have to leave that church. Don’t bring it to the village,” she said. “It’s a curse to you. Much more bad luck will come if you bring that new belief into our village. You worship on a different day. It’s the wrong day. Now you are suffering the consequences.”

Joeli looked down at his bandaged arms. Both had been broken in a car accident. Two of his nephews had died.

When Joeli was baptized earlier, he had a burning desire to share his faith with his home village, Nabouciwa. But he received a hostile reception from the villagers, many of whom were relatives and belonged to another Christian denomination. Still, Joeli organized evangelistic meetings, and 10 people were baptized. Then he secured a plot of land to build a church. He scheduled a day for the new church members to join him in clearing the land for the building.

The day before the land clearing, Joeli got up early to drive his 27-year-old nephew to the Nadi airport. Also in the Subaru sedan were the nephew’s mother and two

younger brothers, and Joeli’s own 13-year-old son.

Around 4:00 a.m., Joeli fell asleep at the wheel, and the car veered off the road. The 27-year-old nephew and his 16-year-old brother were killed instantly. Their mother and the other nephew, who was 13, were hospitalized with serious injuries. Joeli’s arms were broken. Somehow, his son escaped uninjured.

Joeli’s aunt came to the hospital to talk him out of his plans to build the Adventist church.

“Auntie,” he said, “You have only one son. If I died on this hospital bed for your son to become an Adventist one day, I’d thank God for the opportunity to give my life for your son’s life.”

The aunt turned away. She had tears in her eyes.

Although Joeli had spoken with confidence, he wasn’t sure about building the church. He prayed during his month in the hospital, “Dear God, I don’t know whether I am doing Your will.” But when he left the hospital, he had no doubt that the church must be built. He realized that suffering can happen while spreading the gospel because the devil is angry. The church opened within a month.

Joeli was happy that his village had a church, but he longed to plant another church, this time in a

village called Kiuva. But he didn’t want tragedy to befall anyone. So, he and other church members decided to pray and fast twice a week as they went door to door in the village.

To Joeli’s astonishment, one of the villagers took a liking to the Adventists and invited Joeli to hold Sabbath worship services in his home. He later donated a plot of land to build an Adventist church.

Then he went to a third village, Buretu. Again, he and the church members prayed and fasted. To their joy, the village chief and his family were baptized.

But tragedy struck before Joeli could construct a church building. The chief died of diabetes. Villagers wondered whether the chief was being punished for becoming an Adventist.

Joeli said the devil used the chief’s death to attack the Adventist work, but he believes God will prevail and the church building will go up. He remembered what happened after he told his aunt that he was willing to die for her only son. Later, her son and his four children were baptized and became Adventists.

“When I visited my auntie before she died, she thanked me for sharing the message with her only son,” Joeli said. “God controls everything.”

Good News! “Researchers are finding a diet that helps the body fight inflammation can reduce a person’s risk of heart disease, dementia, Alzheimer’s and cancer,” according to Patty Guay-Berry, registered dietitian for the Shady Grove Adventist Aquilino Cancer Center.

INFLAMMATION AND YOUR HEALTH

Inflammation is part of your body’s defense against outside threats, which may include stress, infection or toxins. The immune system senses these dangers and activates proteins from white blood cells and other substances to help protect your cells and tissues. A little inflammation is good for your health.

Chronic inflammation, however, is bad for the body. The immune system can overreact and constantly trigger inflammatory responses from factors like:

- Poor diet choices
- Lack of physical activity
- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Lack of sleep
- Chronic stress

“This inflammatory cascade is what can lead to serious health issues—including cancer,” Patty said.

HOW THE DIET WORKS

“What we put in our bodies changes how our cells respond,” Patty said. “Certain nutrients in food that contain vitamins and minerals are proven to fight inflammation, while others—like processed foods, refined sugar and simple carbohydrates—can trigger an inflammatory response in the body.”

Antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids, resveratrol and curcumin are all nutrients and compounds with inflammation-fighting properties.

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DIET TIPS

EAT MORE WHOLE FOODS

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and skip processed foods.
- Start reading food labels and stick to foods that have five ingredients or less.
- Visit a local farmer’s market and try new fresh fruits and vegetables.

CUT BACK ON SUGAR

- Sugar sneaks its way into many foods—including bread, tomato sauce and packaged snacks.
- Men should have only nine teaspoons of added sugar and women need to stick to six teaspoons of added sugar or less in a day.

ADD MORE WHOLE GRAINS AND PROTEIN

- Whole grain options often have less sugar and fewer refined carbohydrates. High quality protein is also likely to have fewer additives. Beans are a very affordable source of protein. When purchasing canned beans, make sure the cans are BPA-free.



*Adapted from *Adventist Healthcare & You*, September 9, 2019. Used with permission. blog.adventisthealthcare.com/2019/09/09/make-an-anti-inflammatory-diet-work-for-you/

61st Session

IN
DY 2020



GENERAL CONFERENCE

SESSION

JUNE 25 - JULY 4, 2020

Indiana Convention Center & Lucas Oil Stadium
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

2020

WHAT IS SESSION?

The General Conference Session is the forum for electing world church officers and voting changes to the church's Constitution. Delegates also hear reports from each of the 13 administrative regions of the church. Voting delegates for Session represent world regions both by church population and the self-sustainability of administrative regions. The Constitution states that at least 50 percent of delegates shall be laypersons, pastors, teachers, and non-administrative employees, of both genders representing a range of age groups and nationalities. Church members also have the opportunity to reconnect with friends from around the world.

TRANSFORMATION OVER TIME

While Sessions are now held in football stadiums, pictures from early Sessions show delegates lined along the entrance to a small church. Back then, the movement's leaders came to Session in the U.S. state of Michigan mostly from the Midwest and Northeastern United States by train or by horse and buggy. Today, about one-third of the movement's membership now resides in Africa, with another third residing in Central America and South America. Brazil now has more Adventists than any other country—1.3 million.

SESSION BEGINNINGS

Seventh-day Adventist leaders met in Battle Creek, Michigan in 1863 "for the purpose of organizing a General Conference." The meeting began on the evening of May 20, during which delegates chose a chairman and a secretary. During the Session, delegates drafted a constitution and bylaws. They also established leadership of the Conference comprised of a president, secretary and treasurer. The same officer structure remains at all levels of church administration.

Battle Creek, Michigan, U.S.A., was the site of 26 of the first 31 General Conference Sessions. The first Session held west of the Mississippi River was in November

1887, in Oakland, California. Session has been held outside the United States three times—in Austria in 1975, the Netherlands in 1995, and in Canada in 2000.

FREQUENCY

The time between Sessions has lengthened over the years. Session was held every year until 1891. Session was then held every other year until 1905. Session then took a four-year break followed by another hiatus during World War I before meeting again in 1918. Afterward, Session was held every four years until the Great Depression. Session was held in 1930, but then not again until 1936 and then in 1941. Since 1970, Session has been held every five years, as mandated by the Adventist Church Constitution.

MEETING VENUES

Recent General Conference Sessions have been held in baseball and football stadiums in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Few other venues in the world offer the necessary amenities for such an event: seating for 70,000-plus attendees, venue support staff who speak English (the official business language of the church), reliable and cost-effective transportation, and food safety for a large group.

*Visit the official 2020 GC Session website, session.adventist.org



1901 GC Session: Battle Creek, Michigan



BACK PAGE BLESSINGS

We asked the Division presidents to identify ways they saw God's blessings in their part of the world. Read below how they responded. To learn more about each division, click on the corresponding number.

1 IAD: Elie Henry, President

New centers of influence were initiated by our 13 universities, featuring innovative projects that helped the community. In West Venezuela, more than 12,000 members participated in the 4th Annual "Close to You, Venezuela" program. Thousands were fed, clothed, and cheered; medicines provided; Bible studies given; music and prayer shared. The Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union added more than 15,700 new members, including those living in 240 areas where there has previously been no Adventist presence.

2 NAD: Daniel R. Jackson, President

We are grateful and excited about the great diversity of our membership. From every nation, kindred, tongue, and people our members are engaged in our mission to extend hope and wholeness to every person.

3 SAD: Erton Kohler, President

Recently, 3,661 young people from 20 countries attended the "I Will Go" congress held at Adventist Peruvian University, with 665 youth accepting the call to be volunteer missionaries. There are 1.39 million people enrolled in Bible studies in the new digital Bible School, with 8,000 Bible studies sent out daily. We celebrated the 125th anniversary of our organized church. The church in South America started in Argentina with a pastor and 36 members. Through God's blessings, there are now 28,341 churches and companies, 4,823 pastors, and 2,523,015 Seventh-day Adventists across South America.

4 TED: Raafat Kamal, President

In August, about 40 GYC young people from around the world came to Iceland to reach the inhabitants of the capital city, Reykjavik. They knocked on doors, offered to pray with the residents, and distributed GLOW tracts. The objective was to connect with the locals, sharing

our Adventist hope. They distributed 152,000 GLOW tracts, made 12,000 home visits, received hundreds of prayer requests, and had 10 Bible study requests.

5 WAD: Elie Weick-Dido, President

Our territory is 85 percent Muslim. By God's grace we impacted 75 percent of the Muslim countries through Global Mission, ADRA, and WAD Impact programs. Our coordinated membership outreach effort added more than 200,000 members since 2016. Considering our mission challenges, this is a blessing! Our membership nurture and retention ratio is 96 percent.

6 EUD: Mario Brito, President

Many members and leaders are committed to mission, investing time and resources in several mission approaches. The main emphasis of our Year-end Meeting will be evangelism. Our schools are training pastors with greater sensitivity for mission and its implementation.

7 SID: Gideon Reyneke, Executive Secretary, on behalf of Solomon Maphosa, President

Church members in SID have been through a lot during the last few years—politically, financially, spiritually and environmentally. God has been absolutely faithful through it all. Many countries in SID have had huge financial/economic challenges, but our members' faithfulness has increased instead of decreased! The passionate and personal lifestyle of TMI in so many members' lives—personal invitations to church, sharing literature on a regular basis, giving Bible Studies and more—continues to be a blessing.

8 ECD: Blasius Raguri, President

Reaching a membership of 4 million within ECD is a great blessing! Inaugurating our Division's dream—a School of Medicine—on September 2, 2019 is a miracle God did for us.

9 IF (Israel Field): Daniel Stojanovic, President

We praise God for the many baptisms, including Muslims and Jews from Eastern Europe. During the last four years, more than 200 souls have been baptized. Thousands of Israelis are stopping by the "Life and Hope Centers" spending time in health activities and chats.

10 MEnAU: Rick McEdward, President

We are daily receiving contacts through social media from people who want to establish their faith in Jesus. Each evening, theology students at Middle East University work at the union office giving Bible studies to scores of media contacts from the 20 nations of MEnAU.

11 ESD: Mikhail Kaminisky, President

We are blessed by the dedication of our young volunteers! We continue with the "Abraham's Mission" project, where young people take academic leave from university to devote a year to ministry away from home. This is a terrific experience for the church and for young people. After a year of serving as volunteer missionaries, more than 40 young people from this team have entered Adventist schools. Praise God!

12 SUD: Ezras Lakra, President

We were blessed by the Wilson's visit to Kolkata, for the series of meetings, and the 43 souls accepting the truth. The Adventist World Radio 360 program was conducted in the cities of Chennai, Pune, and Kolkata. Thousands benefited physically and spiritually, and many accepted the truth. Through TMI, about 15,000 souls have found a better way of life. We thank God that in spite of political challenges, the work is still progressing.

13 NSD: Kim, Si Young, President

God is performing a miracle in the territory of NSD through the TMI Evangelism project in 2019. All of the leaders, pastors, and members are working together for God's mission through Total Member Involvement.

14 SSD: Samuel Saw, President

We are thankful for the joy, inspiration, power, and commitment of members' participation, contributions, and involvement in mission and evangelism (TMI). The Lord blessed with an unusual number of baptisms last year, and a significant increase in tithes and offerings compared to previous years. We praise God for progress in our 10/40 window countries, especially Vietnam and Cambodia with Centers of Influence, and Timor Leste where, in partnership with SPD and SAD, we are building an academy school for reaching the capital city of Dili.

15 SPD: Glenn Townend, President

Avondale College is now an accredited University College. Women in the Trans-Pacific Union Mission led a public evangelistic reaping program in July which saw more than 6,000 baptized. The Papua New Guinea Union is preparing well for the TMI Harvest May 1-16, 2020, with Discovery Bible reading groups, community service projects, radio evangelism and the building of new churches.