



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

MARCH 2020

The gospel is a Person—

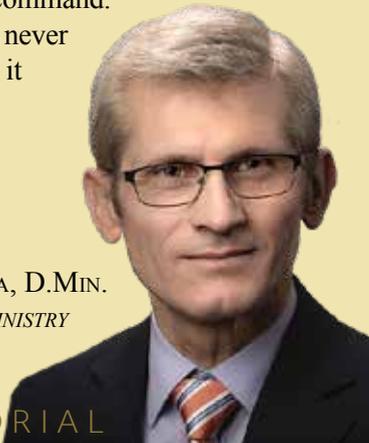
Jesus Christ. The good news of salvation is found in Jesus. He came to save all who believe in and accept Him as their personal Savior. He invites all into His presence daily, through prayer, studying the Word, surrendering to Him, and serving. When we do that, through His Spirit He grows us into His image. This is the best news ever given to humankind.

He then calls us to preach the gospel, and that is an urgent imperative. We have the undeserved privilege to work with Him, and we have no time to lose—precious souls are at stake!

While going to school as a child I'd pass by a man selling ice cream. "Today you pay, tomorrow it's free!" he promised. I bought some ice cream, and the next day asked for my free treat. He said, "Son, today you pay, tomorrow it's free. I said, "But I paid yesterday, so today it should be free." "When is tomorrow?" he asked. "Tomorrow never comes."

God calls us to use every opportunity to share the good news— this is an urgent command.

Tomorrow never comes. Do it today!



PAVEL GOIA, D.MIN.
EDITOR, *MINISTRY*

EDITORIAL



WHO ARE WE AS A CHURCH, AND WHERE ARE WE GOING?

BY ROBERT COSTA, ASSOCIATE MINISTERIAL SECRETARY AND
WORLDWIDE EVANGELISM COORDINATOR FOR
THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

*I*s our church just one more church? What sets us apart from the rest of Christianity? Where are we now, and where are we headed? What justifies our existence?

God answers all these questions. He sees us in the context of the Great Controversy that is raging on planet Earth: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you

may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" 1 Peter 2:9.

This statement defines our identity and purpose. But can't the rest of the Christian world claim the same thing? Yes, in part, but not in its entirety—and that small margin is what makes all the difference.

PRESENTING THE WHOLE TRUTH

Many churches do an excellent

—continued, next page

job of leading people to Jesus. But if the great truths for this hour are excluded, it's an incomplete, watered-down gospel. The Bible should always be presented as a whole—only by studying the Old Testament can we understand the New. And deceiving is not merely lying—it is also mixing the truth with error, and more subtly, not telling the whole truth. We can guard against this by refreshing our origins, identity, message, commitment and mission from our homes, pulpits and classrooms.

NOT JUST ONE MORE CHURCH

We are more than a church—we are the final movement that God raised in a prophetic time, with a prophetic message centered on Jesus and His grace, to restore the whole truth and to prepare the world for His return.

God's messenger reminds us, "Seventh-day Adventists have been chosen by God as a peculiar people, separate from the world. By the great cleaver of truth He has cut them out from the quarry of the world and brought them into connection with Himself. He has made them His representatives and has called them to be ambassadors for Him in the last work of salvation. The greatest wealth of truth ever entrusted to mortals, the most solemn and fearful warnings ever sent by God to man, have been committed to them to be given to the world" (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 7, p. 138).

Or as Paul said, the church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). For that purpose, God called Israel (Deut. 7:6-9; 14:2; Isa. 60:1-3), not to be just one more people group, but His special people.

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At the precise prophetic moment, when somewhere beyond the stars and out of the reach of human vision, something big was about to happen in heaven.

He placed them at the crossroads of civilizations with a sacred purpose. He revealed to them through the earthly sanctuary how He acts in His rescue plan, and He did not leave it up to them to choose how to live, how to worship, and how to evangelize, but gave specific instructions.

Unfortunately, they failed, but God's plan didn't end. At the precise prophetic moment, when somewhere beyond the stars and out of the reach of human vision, something big was about to happen in heaven that would affect every human being—something "as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 489)—God opened the books. The world had to know!

A PROPHETIC BIRTH CERTIFICATE

For that, God raised a people from a disappointment—prophesied by Jesus in His vision to John centuries ago (Rev. 10:5-11)—to a sacred appointment, to restore all the light of his truth "to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe,

tongue, and people," presenting "with a loud voice" the last three most solemn messages of love ever given to mortals (Rev. 14:6-12).

That disappointment was actually the birth certificate of the true people of God. Moreover, if the last church hadn't arisen from a disappointment during the prophetic moment by studying Daniel's prophecies, it could not be the true church, and would still be part of Babylon. When our pioneers understood—after the disappointment—by diligently studying the Scriptures to discern what happened on October 22, 1844, they situated themselves by faith where Jesus was ministering. From there, they began to preach all the truths of the plan of salvation revealed in the earthly sanctuary services.

Shortly thereafter, God Himself granted the gift of prophecy to this people, thereby defining the two outstanding characteristics of the remnant at the end: they keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 12:17; 19:10). These two components



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But there is a Present Truth for this hour, and it comes to us from the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary.



always appear together in the Scriptures, and they define the true people of God (Isa. 8:19, 20).

In Ellen White’s first vision, God clearly established the rise, course and destiny of this movement that would later be called the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A “narrow path, cast up high above the world.” The evangelical world does not have this light we have received. And if the truth of the Heavenly Sanctuary is not understood, then the plan of salvation is not fully understood. It ends at the Cross. But there is a Present Truth for this hour, and it comes to us from the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary.

BEWARE OF DISTRACTIONS

There are certain distractions and dangers that can undermine our identity, purpose and mission as a remnant.

Distraction No. 1: To stop presenting the Present Truth.

The everlasting gospel was the plan of salvation presented to Adam and Eve from the very beginning. But there is also the Present

Truth—a specific message that each generation has been commissioned to present, all within the context of the everlasting gospel. Ellen White emphasizes that what we need to preach in the Adventist Church today is the Present Truth. And what is the Present Truth for this hour? The truths centered on the Most Holy Place, where Jesus ministers. If you want to preach the Present Truth today, simply find out where Jesus is now—what He is doing today—and then preach it. Sadly, there are winds of change in this approach that have distracted us from our peculiar message and our distinctive mission.

Distraction No. 2: To focus only on social justice and humanitarian aid, without leading people to Jesus and the full gospel message.

Many secular entities do excellent social work in helping communities. But social aid and social justice are not our final mission as a church. Passages in Micah 6, Isaiah 58, and James emphasize we should help others, but that’s more about Christian living. Jesus himself did good works, but His mission was not just to relieve suffering, but to

save the human race. And yet, He lived his religion—showing love and compassion within the context of His mission. We highlight “Christ’s method alone,” and this is good. It is very important to help people with their temporal needs, but we cannot stop there. We need to move even further, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to lead people to the foot of the cross and the full Advent message focusing on the three angels’ messages. We must urge people to take steps to follow and obey Him.

Distraction No. 3: To imitate other denominations in their liturgy, music and growth methods.

For Israel, it was with catastrophic results (Num. 22-24). Some are seeking ideas from contaminated sources, which deny great biblical truths, and then apply those methods in our churches. Although not everything that others do is wrong, the question still remains: have any of these Protestant churches accepted the Three Angels’ Messages and the truth about the Heavenly Sanctuary that is the foundation of our faith? Does this

sound like a place where we should acquire our lifestyle, musical style, worship, and evangelizing methods? I think the answer is obvious!

More perplexing is that with the abundance of light we have, what motivates us as Adventists to adopt the style of worship and growth methods of churches that the Bible describes as “Babylon” or the “synagogue of Satan,” when these churches despise the message of Present Truth? Why would we want to go back from the Most Holy Place, to the Holy Place, or to the courtyard in our approach of presenting the message to the world? God never suggested that Israel adopt the methods or worship style of the surrounding nations in order to reach them.

Distraction No. 4: To emphasize an existentialist Adventism where discipleship is separate from doctrine. If we speak only about the Master and His virtues and do not teach what the Master asks us to teach, how good a disciple can we actually be? How can new believers teach others the truth that they themselves did not learn?

Some half-truths are heard that sometimes confuse: “We must be inclusive.” “We must appeal to what people like.” “We must give people what they feel they need.” “We must be pluralistic.” “We must not judge anyone.” “We must love and accept people unconditionally.” “What matters is love.”

This change in approach has caused some to become anthropocentric rather than theocentric. It seems that the concern in some churches is that secular people feel comfortable in worship, and a “Thus says the Lord” has been replaced by messages of motivation, convenience, and cultural

contextualization. And the revelations from God and Ellen White are replaced by quotes from specialists.

When preaching ceases to be prophetic, doctrinal, and Christ-centered, and is based only on grace without compromise, it leads to personal conformity and satisfaction where genuine revival is impossible. A gospel of grace produces liberalism, and a gospel of warning produces fanaticism. We are neither fanatical



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In some pulpits and institutions, we have gone from one extreme to another, from doctrinal formalism to a subjective existentialism. Some people have begun to assume an anti-doctrinal stance, in which the basic pillars of the Adventist faith are seen as mere requirements of an obsolete legalistic religion. The outcome? Mass apostasy. This could well be classified as ministerial and teaching malpractice. Millions are in

the secularism of Babylon, waiting to be invited to leave, but we cannot help them if we repeat the mistake of the Christian church that lost its identity when flooded by the unconverted world and adopted their pagan customs.

OUR GOD-GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY

Do we grasp the responsibility placed by God on you and me in these last days of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan?

“In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention. The most solemn truths ever entrusted to mortals have been given us to proclaim to the world. The proclamation of these truths is to be our work. The world is to be warned, and God’s people are to be true to the trust committed to them” (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9, p. 19).

What a privilege, and what a responsibility! We know how things will end. There will be one last generation that will stand firm and love the Lord so much that they will obey Him. They will be sealed for eternity, established in all biblical truth so that they cannot be moved. That generation will participate in wonderful things—the latter rain and the completion of God’s work—and the earth will be illuminated with the glory of God (Rev. 18:1). My prayer is that we will be that last generation. Maranatha.

INSPIRED COUNSEL FOR LEADERS

THE LEADER GOD SEEKS

Calebs have been greatly needed in different periods of the history of our work. Today we need men of thorough fidelity, men who follow the Lord fully, men who are not disposed to be silent when they ought to speak, who are as true as steel to principle, who do not seek to make a pretentious show, but who walk humbly with God, patient, kind, obliging, courteous men, who understand that the science of prayer is to exercise faith

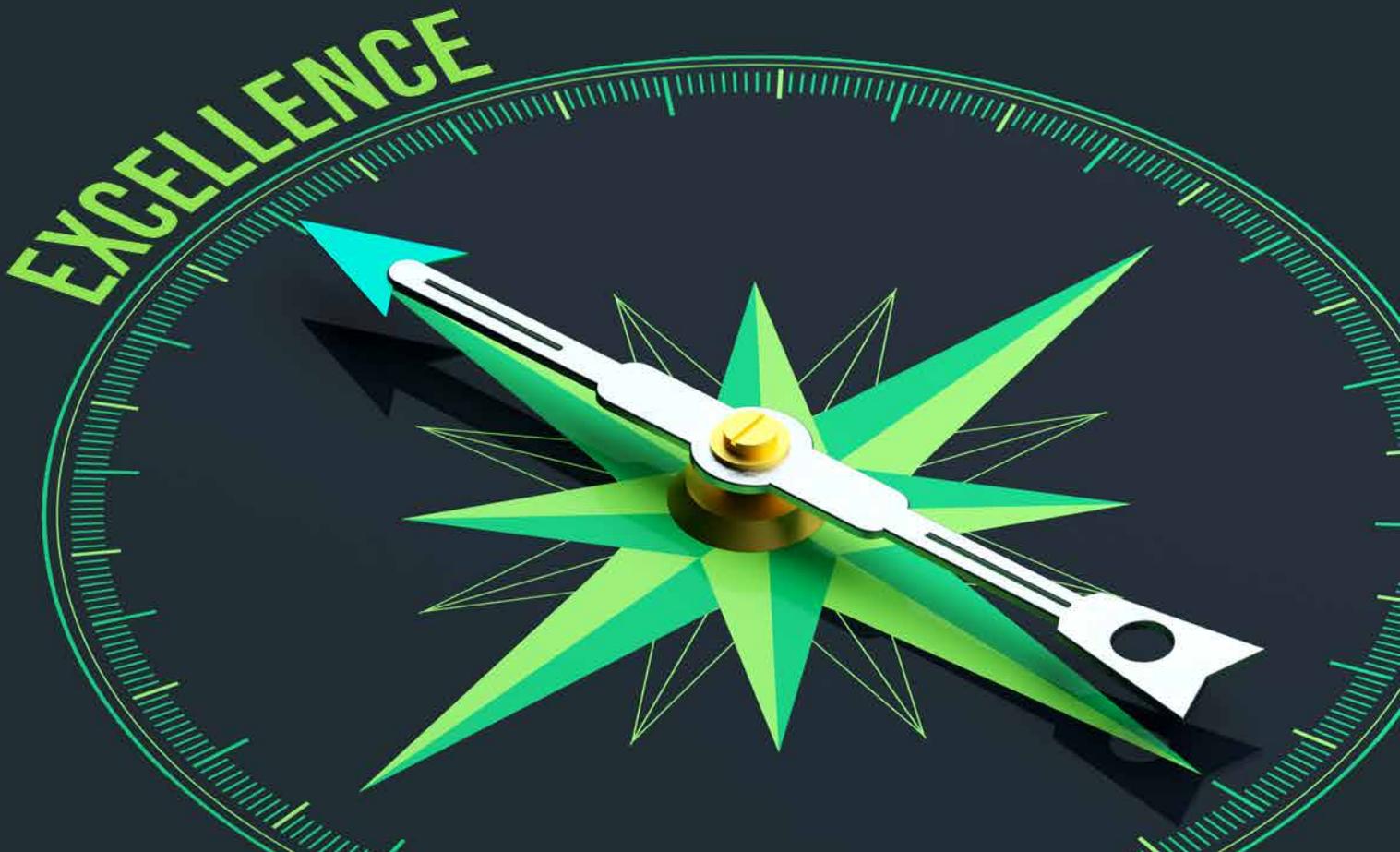
and show works that will tell to the glory of God and the good of His people. . . .

The principles of entire consecration must be maintained. Christ Himself has said, 'Ye can not serve God and mammon.' 'He that is not for me . . . is against me.' God will have no men in His work who offer divided service. His servants are to take the position that they will not sanction any evil work. To follow Jesus requires wholehearted conversion at

the start, and a repetition of this conversion every day."

God's work must have workmen connected with it who have solid principles who will in all their lines of work do right because it is right. They must be led by the Lord in all their methods. They will then take the right path because they are doers of the words of Christ."

—Ellen G. White, *Principles for Christian Leaders*, pp. 86, 87



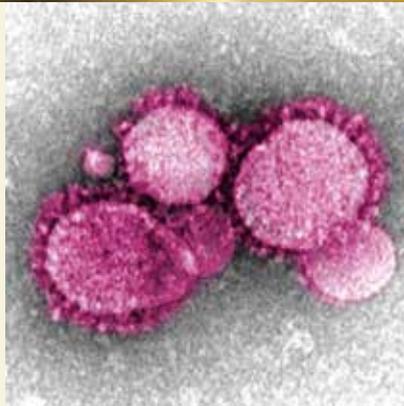
BY DR. PETER N. LANDLESS, M.B., B.CH., M.MED. FCP(SA), FACC, FASNC
DIRECTOR, GENERAL CONFERENCE HEALTH MINISTRIES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ICPA

I'm worried about the new virus beginning to make its way around the world. Can we avoid being infected?

In December 2019, a new and aggressive form of respiratory infection was discovered in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, and recently has been named COVID-19.

The causative virus is a coronavirus named severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and of the same family as the virus that caused the SARS epidemic in 2002-2003. By March 11, it was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization.

Transmission occurs through droplets spread when infected people cough or sneeze, and it gains access to the body through the respiratory tract (lungs). The symptoms include fever, cough, muscle pain, shortness of breath, and fatigue; some patients may have diarrhea, and others very mild to no symptoms at all. It may present the same way as does influenza. Progression of the disease may lead to severe pneumonia, with lung-tissue destruction and death. It has rapidly spread outside China, and there's no way of predicting how severe this outbreak may yet become.



Despite the measures many countries have implemented to contain the spread, including quarantine, the disease has become a pandemic.

The infectious period is between two and 14 days. The time period for quarantine (isolation from others) is two weeks.

No vaccine is yet available, and treatment is symptomatic and supportive therapy. For the sickest, breathing support may be required to sustain and save life. No known COVID-19 antiviral medications are presently available. The production of a vaccine—although a priority—may take up to a year to prove efficacy and safety. It's difficult to accurately assess the death rate from COVID-19, as not every case has been reported, but it's presently estimated conservatively at over 3 percent (statistics vary and data is changing hour by hour).

We talk about immunity

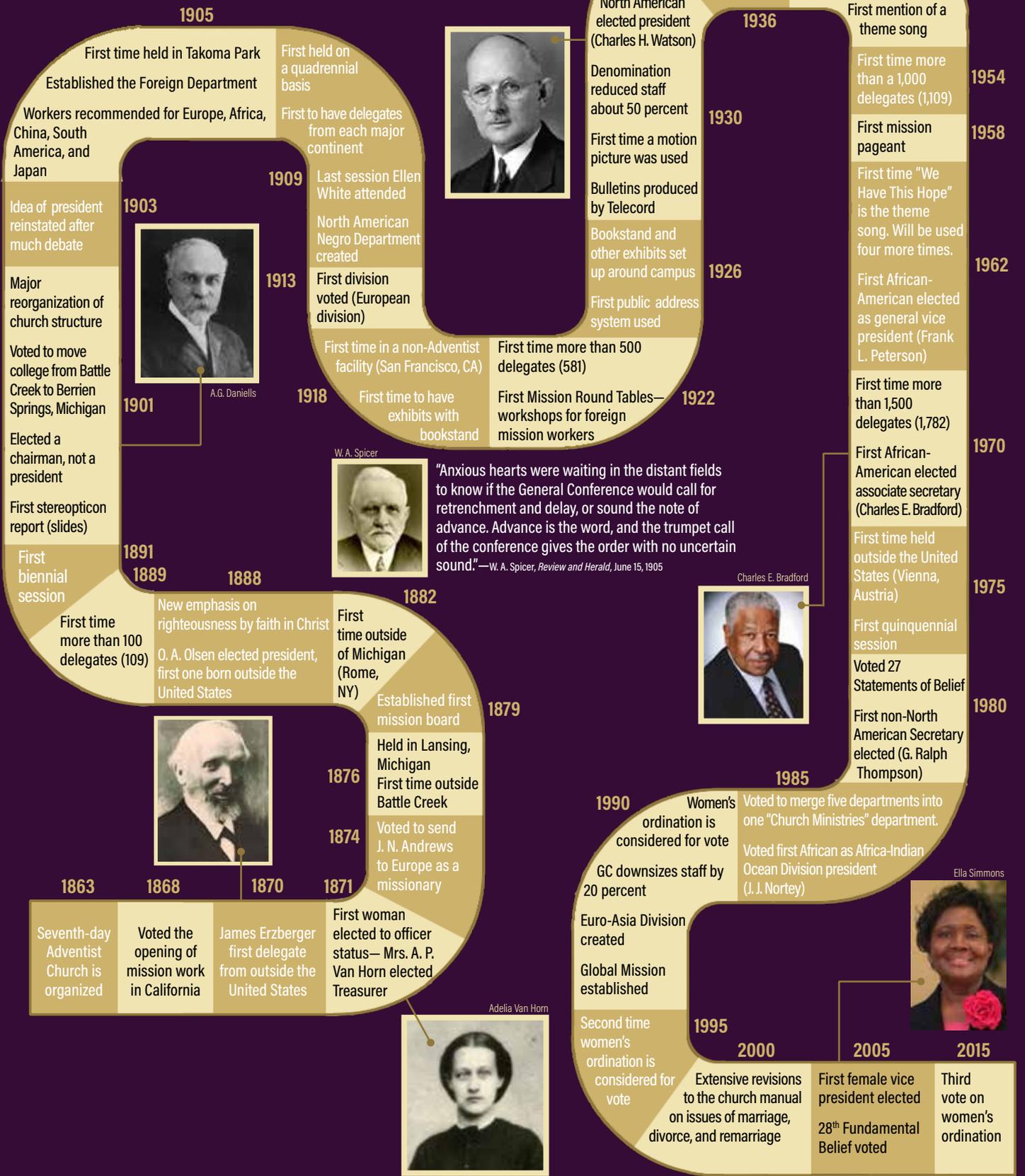
HOW DO WE STAY HEALTHY?

Please practice the standard universal precautions:

- 1** Clean hands frequently with soap and water or minimum 60 % alcohol-based hand rub.
 - 2** Follow the coughing and sneezing etiquette: sneeze into the folded arm; cover your cough. Take masks with you when traveling. In situations where people persist in coughing and sneezing in a confined space and you cannot leave, you may wish to use a mask. Remember that the use of a mask has been shown to prevent those who have infection from spreading the virus but is not protective generally.
 - 3** Maintain a social distance—at least one meter (three feet)—between yourself and other people. Avoid close contact with those who are coughing or sniffing.
 - 4** Avoid touching/rubbing your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- If you develop a cough and experience changes in your breathing, seek medical help early and share your travel history with health-care providers.
- 5** Avoid open markets and direct contact with animals/animal products.
 - 6** Follow careful food-safety practices (well-cooked food, clean produce, pasteurized milk, etc.).
 - 7** Get the flu vaccine.
 - 8** Avoid travel to endemic areas; check out the WHO and CDC travel advisory regarding travel restrictions.*
 - 9** Respect and follow the health directives from your local and national jurisdictions
 - 10** If you think you've been exposed by travel or contact with an affected individual, seek advice from your primary-care physician.

THE ROAD TO INDY

HIGHLIGHTING PAST GC SESSIONS



ATHEIST MISSIONARY

BY ANDREW MCCHESENEY, ADVENTIST MISSION

Nothing thrilled Jan Haugg more than saving the environment. As an 18-year-old high school student, he joined a German political party to tackle global environmental problems. At the university, he invited friends to watch environmental films and tried to make his own life greener through choices in food, travel, cleaning agents, and hygiene. He even went through apartments that he shared with roommates and turned off unneeded lights, much to the annoyance of others.

He was a missionary, but without Jesus. His religion was saving the environment.

As an international business student, Jan secured an internship at an environmentally friendly bank and decided to fulfill an international work requirement in Norway's capital, Oslo. But he had trouble finding an affordable place to stay in Oslo. Then he remembered a family he met two years earlier while, in an attempt to learn how to be more self-sufficient, he had spent a summer on a Norwegian farm. He e-mailed the family and they replied that they had found a place for him in Oslo.

Soon after Jan arrived in Oslo, he realized he was surrounded by Seventh-day Adventists. His new roommate, David Mikkelsen, was an Adventist living in a small room in a church-owned home for Adventist students. Jan was a die-hard atheist from the former East Germany, which has the highest concentration of atheists in the world. More than 60 percent of the east German population identifies as atheist.

Although grateful for a place to stay, Jan thought, "They will try to convert me, but they won't get me. I know what I believe."

Nothing happened for three months. Jan liked the Adventist students, and they treated him kindly, even when he violated the rules with alcohol. They gained his confidence by taking care of his needs.

One day, Jan was invited to join 50 young Adventists on a boat trip to southern Norway. He



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enjoyed the outing and was pleased the youth showed interest in his desire to protect the environment.

Then one of the youth leaders, Joakim Hjortland, invited Jan to study the Bible with him. Jan wasn't interested, but he didn't want to offend Joakim. He tried to come up with a good excuse.

"We don't have time today," he said. "Maybe tomorrow."

The next morning, Joakim said, "Hey, remember what we talked about yesterday? How about studying the Bible?"

Jan tried another excuse. "I can't study the Bible because I don't have a Bible," he said. Within moments, he was holding a Bible.

Joakim opened the Bible to Daniel 2. Jan listened with shock to Daniel's prophecy about the rise and fall of the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia,

Greece, and Rome. He saw that present-day Europe was fragmented as shown in the statue's feet of iron and clay.

He decided the Bible contained supernatural information and bought one for further study. In Olso, Adventist friends helped him find biblical answers to questions about the origin of sin, why God hadn't destroyed Satan, and how the biblical account of Creation could be believed over evolution. The day came when he decided to give his heart to God.

"I never wanted to become a Christian, but the weight of the evidence was too heavy," he said. "There must be God. And if God is there, and He is who He says He is, then there is no logical consequence but to follow Him. Who wants to join the losing team that has already lost the battle? That would be stupid. I wanted to be on the winning team."

Today, Jan is 30 and training to be a pastor at Bogenhofen Seminary in Austria. After graduation, he hopes to share the gospel with atheists in eastern Germany as well as with environmental activists. "I especially want to minister to the green movement people who want to save the world with their own strength," he said. "If they would just get Jesus into the picture, their efforts could be channeled into the right direction. They are missionaries, but without Jesus, their work will not result in eternal life."

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THE BACK PAGE

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

1 Nearly 10 percent of church members in two northeast Brazilian states volunteered with the **South American Division's** Caleb Mission program during the recent Southern Hemisphere summer. The number of volunteers—20,761—was nearly double from the previous years. The volunteers, consisting primarily of young people, served in about 950 service posts where they led out in health fairs, cleaning drives, blood donation drives, and Bible study sessions. During January and February, community outreach was combined with evangelistic programs in several cities and towns.

2 Commemorating 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet troops in January, 1945, the **Trans-European Division** has released a short video highlighting the role two Seventh-day Adventists in Riga, Latvia, played in

saving the life of a 17-year-old Jewish boy by sheltering him at great risk to their own lives. Their kindness led to his acceptance of Christianity. The young man, Ysack Kleimanis eventually became an Adventist minister and one of Latvia's most effective soul winners. Watch the video here.

3 The women of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in **Taldykorgan, Kazakhstan**, organized a special outreach event to which they invited non-believing spouses, friends, relatives and neighbors. The festive gala evening featured a delicious meal, as well as contests, quizzes, team games, and an interactive presentation by the pastor on the topic of true courage. At the end of the program, guests were presented with gifts and books on practical Christianity. The church reports that the gala evening was very well received.

4 More than 400 delegates recently attended the first Mental Health Summit offered through Southern Asia-Pacific Division's (SSD) Health Ministries department. The summit, held at the newly established Manila Adventist College in **Pasay City, Philippines**, focused on empowering medical missionaries and practitioners with mental health education. According to the World Health Organization, one in four people will be affected by mental or neurological disorders, including more than 264 million people facing depression. Summit organizers aim to establish more mental health care groups assigned in Adventist hospital, with hopes of one day having an Adventist facility dedicated to addressing anxiety disorders in the Philippines.

5 An historic ordination took place in the

South Pacific island nation of **Tuvalu** on Feb. 22. Pastor Vaguna Satupa is the first Tuvaluan citizen to be ordained by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. His wife, Sunia, family, friends, and community packed the Funafuti Seventh-day Adventist Church for the special occasion. The ordination was conducted by Pastor Bob Larsen, secretary for the Trans Pacific Union Mission. Tuvalu has at least 11 inhabited islands, with three of the islands having an Adventist presence. For seven years, Pastor Satupa has served on Niutao, a very isolated island with no airstrip and only a monthly boat service. "Now that we have a Tuvaluan ordained pastor, someone who understands the local culture and context, it will help us with our goal to reach the unreached islands," said TPUM president Maveni Kaufononga, quoted in the *Adventist Record*.