Sabbath School is the heart of the church! It is a common thread that helps bind together Seventh-day Adventists from every part of the world. The Sabbath School Alive! initiative highlights three vital components of thriving Sabbath Schools:

✓ **BIBLE STUDY & PRAYER**
Discover the power of Bible study and prayer in Sabbath School

✓ **FELLOWSHIP**
Experience the joy of fellowship through study and service in Sabbath School

✓ **MISSION**
Gain world mission education and community outreach training in Sabbath School

The power of Sabbath School is that it follows the divine model for true discipleship—Bible study and prayer, fellowship, and mission. Sabbath School Alive! provides training and resources to help every local church:

- Teach inspiring and practical Sabbath School classes
- Effectively incorporate mission into Sabbath School
- Reclaim inactive members through Sabbath School
- And much more!

GROW Your Church is a **Personal Ministries** initiative highlighting five essential phases of making disciples:

- **PREPARE** the soil of the heart with friendship and service.
- **PLANT** the Word with spiritual conversations or literature/media.
- **CULTIVATE** spiritual interest with ongoing Bible studies.
- **HARVEST** decisions with appeals to follow Christ and be baptized.
- **PRESCRIBE** the harvest with ongoing discipleship training.

The GROW initiative provides training and resources for every local church to achieve the following 5 goals:

1) Church-wide Community Need-Based Ministries
2) Active Literature and Media Ministry
3) Vibrant Bible Study Ministry
4) Regular Public Evangelism
5) Systematic Discipleship Ministry

Intercession and Alignment

It challenges us to rise above whatever pettiness we own. The prayers of millions bring both joy and solemn obligation.

Just now, the delegates to the 61st General Conference Session have arrived in St. Louis, Missouri or made plans to join the Session virtually. Their hopes, their goals, are as varied as the great diversity of believers they represent around the globe.

Some have traveled from regions where Adventism is powerfully successful, where rapid growth and cultural awareness have given believers sturdy confidence.

Others represent those places where the gospel moves in single digits, winning one or two or five, but rarely knowing popular acclaim.

Some arriving in St. Louis speak of hardship, pain, and challenge, where resources are scarce and laborers are few.

Others talk of building programs, campus expansions, and new degree offerings at Adventist universities and colleges.

To all who now are being interceded for, let's be thoughtful, kind, and respectful.

To all who now are praying, hear our heartfelt gratitude.

To all who now are being interseed for, let's live to honor their requests.

COVERPHOTO: DIGIDREAMGRAFIX / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

JUNE 6, 2022 | ADVENTIST REVIEW 3
Welcome to the sixty-first General Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in St. Louis, Missouri, June 6 to June 11, 2022.

“Jesus Is Coming! Get Involved!”—this theme reflects the Advent hope in a soon-returning Savior, and the urgency of Total Member Involvement (TMI), everyone doing something for Jesus in winning souls for Him!

When the first General Conference Session was held in May 1863, 20 delegates met in a small, wooden church in Battle Creek, Michigan. The delegates represented a few thousand Sabbathkeeping Advent believers, mainly from the northeast and midwestern regions of the United States.

In contrast, the sixty-first GC Session, originally scheduled for 2020 but postponed twice due to the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic, is being held in a venue that can accommodate close to 67,000 attendees, including approximately 2,700 delegates, representing more than 21 million members from more than 200 countries!

General Conference Sessions provide wonderful opportunities for our worldwide family of believers to gather for worship and fellowship, and to gain a firsthand look at the way in which we conduct the business of the church, including the election of world leaders and voting on important items affecting the worldwide church.

Join me in praying for God’s leading, in a marvelous way at this Session, and praise Him for how He has blessed this last-day remnant movement. We plead for the outpouring of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit in anticipation of the soon second coming of Jesus Christ.

Let’s continue moving forward together as we focus on God’s Holy Word, on the three angels’ messages, on the Holy Spirit’s wonderful work of revival and reformation, and on Total Member Involvement, reaching millions with the hope we must share.

Jesus Is Coming! Get Involved!

Welcome again!

Ted N. C. Wilson, President
Seventh-day Adventist Church
HUMILITY IS NOT A VIRTUE

Confronting painful self-discovery

Vivian Pasquet, a native of Germany, showed an outstanding talent for language during her school years and won several writing competitions. However, each time she was supposed to receive the award and read a sample of her work in front of an audience, the girl faced a massive problem. Vivian stuttered. Beginning as a 5-year-old, Vivian belonged to the group of people who sometimes get stuck at the beginning of a word and need a few seconds until they can pronounce it.

Stuttering exists in all languages and cultures and is still associated by many who experience it with shame. For a long time people who stutter were either thought to be mentally impaired or to have suffered a trauma that triggered their speech problem. Vivian had to endure therapies as a child, with people digging deep into her psyche, looking for a possible cause.

Scholars have now recognized that stuttering is a neurological disorder of speech planning and develops because of a genetic predisposition. It’s thus not possible to prevent a child from stuttering by providing a supportive social environment. In everyday life we encounter people with this condition without knowing it. Even with celebrities, like the singer Madonna or U.S. president Joe Biden, one hardly notices their limitation. That’s because they have become highly adept at avoiding potential stumbling blocks.

In Vivian’s case, she got always stuck on the letters “g” and “y” at the beginning of a word. In order to avoid these letters, she would say “bring” instead of “give” and “OK” instead of “yes.” In spite of developing many helpful strategies designed to avoid these potential stumbling blocks, Vivian knew that she could get into an embarrassing situation at any time.

VIVIAN’S SOLUTION

At 16, Vivian attended a training program at a famous institute in Amsterdam that promised high chances of success. The method was based on the realization that even severe stutterers do not get stuck when singing because a different breathing technique is used. As a teenager Vivian learned to use this new rhythm over several weeks by strillinging-threee-woooords together as if she were singing. She got her stuttering under control.

Vivian became a journalist and eventually landed a prestigious position at GEO Magazine (a German equivalent to National Geographic). In the course of her work she had the idea of documenting how she overcame her speech defect. So she called the director of the institute and told her: “I attended your course 17 years ago. Now I’d like to write a comprehensive article about former participants.”

AN UNPLEASANT TRUTH

After a 30-minute conversation, the woman said kindly: “But, Mrs. Pasquet, you do realize you still have trouble speaking, don’t you?”

“Well, I speak a little inaccurately,” Vivian replied.

“No, no; I mean your frequently broken words, your irregular pauses. You don’t talk fluently. You’re still cheating.”

This observation struck the journalist to the core. She had completely repressed her defect. She was in her early 30s and had established herself in her profession. A disorder was no longer part of her self-image. She had developed enough strategies that she seriously thought the problem was long overcome. The woman on the phone offered that she take classes again.

But could she still see herself as a patient? Start with the basics? Now that she was able to cover it up so well?

MY PROBLEM

I can empathize with Vivian’s situation very well. She didn’t want to accept the analysis of a specialist, but preferred to continue to bumble through life with her well-practiced tricks. I feel the same way—in a much more serious area of life.

Many years ago I came to where I had to acknowledge that I was a sinner. I was terribly predisposed to selfishness, and many weaknesses resulted from that. Especially in my attempts to love other people, I was regularly “stuttering” and stumbling.
Because I’ve learned to cover up certain character shortcomings, I begin to live with the impression that I’ve overcome my problematic nature.

**MY SOLUTION**

In my helplessness I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ. This was the best decision ever, for He not only gave me hope for a glorious eternity but changed my heart to be softer and more open. His Spirit began His work in me and started to renew my thinking and feeling. I gained more understanding of other people; I began to listen more carefully to them; I was slowly learning to love.

My life has been on a good trajectory since then. I have started a family, found a church that appreciates my gifts; I even work in a ministry focusing on spiritual dimensions. Socially, I pass as a good neighbor, a good friend, a good Christian. It seems I have overcome my fundamental problem.

It only seems so, however.

**MY UNPLEASANT TRUTH**

From time to time I can hear the same irritating remark that Vivian heard from her former instructor.

“But you do realize that you still have problems with altruism, don’t you?”

“Well, I behave a little inaccurately.”

“No, no, I mean your inner thoughts and attitudes. How you ignore or judge people. Your language of selflessness is anything but fluent.”

Sometimes this recognition hits me to the core. Because I’ve learned to cover up certain character shortcomings, I begin to live with the impression that I’ve overcome my problematic nature. But looking honestly into my soul, I find a defect there that is genetic.

**PAUL’S OPEN CONFESSION**

The apostle Paul experienced a remarkable transformation in his life from hater to helper. He underwent an enormous healing process through his connection to Jesus. Nevertheless, he always remained aware of how unworthy and incapable he actually was without the Holy Spirit. He said: “For God, who said, ‘Let there be light in the darkness,’ has made this light shine in our hearts. ... But we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure” (2 Cor. 4:6, 7, NLT).1 I believe this attitude describes the core of the Christian faith: I have a fundamental disorder and depend on help from above every minute.

In the 1970s John Piper, a Baptist theologian and pastor, spoke to a group of students about the gospel. At the conclusion of his presentation one of his listeners asked an often-heard question: “Isn’t Christianity a crutch for people who can’t make it on their own?” Piper said: “Yes.” Period. That’s all he answered.

Isn’t his honesty amazing? Piper felt no need to defend himself against this view. He saw his own moral shortcoming in life as a fact. This was not some virtuous game for him. The Jewish philosopher Abraham Heschel came to the same conclusion: “Humility is not a virtue. Humility is truth. Everything else is illusion.”2

**MY CONFESSION**

I try to learn from Paul and Piper. Every morning (knowingly or not) I face this question: Do I want to accept the truth about myself? Do I still see myself as a patient? Am I willing to start with the basics—even though I can usually cover up my disorder quite well? Yes, I am willing. Because starting with the basics means letting my fragile vessel be filled with God’s light, God’s love. There is nothing like it!

Today, before you go about your work, meet people, make decisions: Accept the truth that you have a fundamental disorder and cannot make it on your own. It will not only free you from illusion; it will also fill your soul with power—and then give all the glory to God. “We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves” (2 Cor. 4:7, NLT).3

1 Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.


3 Judith Fockner works as writer and host for the show Shabbat Shalom at German Hope TV. She is married and has two sons.
Great things begin small and then grow larger.” So begins an article by Lora E. Clement in the first Bulletin of the 1926 General Conference Session. Her words might actually be considered prophetic, but I’m getting ahead of myself. Let’s return to when it all began.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized in 1863, during its first General Conference Session, held in Battle Creek, Michigan. The proceedings of the next Session, in 1864, were also duly reported in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald,* closing with this: “Voted, That the doings of this Conference be published in the *Advent Review.*” Thus began a tradition that has continued since the beginnings of this denomination—a relationship between General Conference Sessions and the *Review* as the official recorder for its members.

Sessions were held annually from 1863 to 1889. All of the meetings were held in Michigan, with but three exceptions: Rome, New York (1882); Oakland, California (1887); and Minneapolis, Minnesota (1888). Since the ability to communicate over long distances was limited to the written report and postal system, there was a delay before any reports appeared in the *Review.* For example, when the Session met in Oakland, California, in 1887, the first reports were printed about 10 days after they had been written. They consisted of an eyewitness account presumably written by editor Uriah Smith from Salt Lake City, Utah, on his way to the Session, and upon arrival before the meetings commenced.
picted, it was hurried to the typesetters. Each of these articles would be marked “telephone copy” to indicate its breaking news quality. Less-urgent material was sent via airmail. The combination of the telephone and airmail system allowed the Bulletins to be placed on a plane and sent to San Francisco in time to be read in California the next day.2

For more than four years prior to the 1946 Session, plans were to hold the General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri. A short time before the Session was to begin, administration was made aware that the city of St. Louis would not be able to accommodate the 900 delegates expected or the thousands of guests that would descend upon the city. After serious discussion and prayer, it was decided to hold the 1946 Session in Takoma Park, where the General Conference office was located. While this must have been joyous news for the Review staff, it would be disappointing to the many who wanted to attend. The “denominational public” were cordially asked to stay home, as this would be a “strictly delegated Session.” This development allowed the daily Bulletins to report the daily news within 24 hours, something that has remained until today.

TECHNOLOGY EXPANDS, MEN (AND WOMEN) RUN TO AND FRO

The 1950 Session brought even better technology when “scientific recording instruments” were making their appearance. This time, not for reporting, but for the transcription of each meeting. General Conference Secretariat was responsible for a word-for-word transcription of each meeting. Until this Session, proficient secretaries in amazingly rapid shorthand took the minutes. For the first time, a SoundScriber machine wrote on five-minute discs. Each disc was handed to a secretary who transcribed the proceedings using a typewriter. It was reported that 40 to 50 discs were needed per meeting.

The 1954 Session in Takoma Park, Maryland, outside Washington, D.C., while the Session was in San Francisco, California. The commitment to deliver timely reports now had the added complication of 3,000 miles. Undeterred, the staff, with help from the Dictaphone Company of Washington, D.C., created an ingenious system that allowed the daily Bulletins to be delivered with little delay in reporting Session events (see illustration on p. 10).

Similar to today, a portion of the Bulletins were completed before the Session actually began. Reports and features were designed and ready for the press. Each article was recorded on the Telex machine. The copy was then sent to the Review and Herald Publishing House for typesetting. The resulting product had two different typefaces that has remained until today.

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tated, he managed to get to another plane and fly
the magazines in to make the morning deadline.

Former assistant editor Steve Chavez has fond
memories of his work with <i>Adventist Review</i>. His best
memories come from the camaraderie of the staff.
While it was a stressful environment, the staff worked
together toward a common task that created strong
working relationships. One notable memory for him
was the 2000 Session in Toronto, Canada, where the
<i>Review</i> staff worked in a glass-walled enclosure in
the middle of the exhibit hall. Chavez remembers it
as something that sounded like a good idea, but in
reality caused much distraction and disruption.

A VIRTUAL FEAST

One interesting parallel in each Session is the
advance of technology. As was noted, while each
Session had something to overcome, new technology
would be available to resolve the challenges. It has
been seven years since the <i>Review</i> staff produced
daily Bulletins. While we had a modest digital pres-
ence in 2015, 2022 will prove to be a virtual banquet
for not only delegates but all members around the
globe. Producing a monthly magazine as a daily is
for not only delegates but all members around the
globe. Producing a monthly magazine as a daily is
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for not only delegates but all members around the
globe.

Not everyone can attend a General Conference
Session. Since the beginning <i>Review</i> readers have
read reports that serve as their eyes and ears at
the Session. Reporters made an effort to help
members experience their world church. You will
find this Session no different. We are committed
to using every technology possible to bring you
everything from St. Louis—the sights, sounds, and
and colors, in print, in video, and through amazing
photography. And, if we don’t see Jesus come
before 2025, I promise we will be here to serve
you again. That you can count on.

ADVOCATE TO THE WORLD

In view of the present uncertainty, postponing
a General Conference Session is justified on the
basis of the GC Constitution [see General
Conference Constitution, Article 14, paragraphs 1
3 and 4].

Seventh-day Adventists are prone to viewing current events as
exceptional. Both church leaders and church members regularly
decide there is no precedent in our past for some recent, pres-
ent-day development. In reality, few developments are truly without
precedent. And that is the case with the decision to postpone the
sixty-first General Conference Session, scheduled for June 2020, to
May 2021, and then to postpone it again until June 2022. There is not
just precedent; there are several precedents. This will be the fifth time
a General Conference (GC) Session has been postponed, necessarily
extending the terms of officials of the General Conference and its
divisions, and unavoidably deferring world church action on important
matters of common concern; it will be the second time that more than
five years elapses between Sessions and the second time that a GC
Session has been postponed for more than one year.

WORLD WAR I

It took more than a half century and 38 Sessions before the first
postponement of a General Conference Session. Originally Sessions
were held annually; after the twenty-eighth Session in 1889 they became
biennial, and then, after the thirty-sixth Session in 1905, quadrennial.
In 1913 the thirty-eighth Session in Takoma Park ended with the
expectation of meeting in 1917. But a year later World War I began.

The NAD Committee voted to request the General Conference to
give “prayerful consideration” to holding the thirty-ninth Session early
in 1918 instead of in 1917. The GC polled leaders from around the
world by mail and “found that the vote by letter was unanimous in
favor of postponement.” The General Conference Committee (GCC)
accordingly took an action “to postpone the next quadrennial Session
from the summer of 1917 to the earliest convenient time thereafter,”
with dates to be determined, which they finally were in April 1917.
The thirty-ninth Session duly met in March and April 1918.

There was no basis in the GC Constitution as it then existed for

1 Lora E. Clement was then the editor of The Youth’s Instructor.
3 The name of this publication has changed so frequently through its
170-plus years, from here on out it will be referenced as the Review.
4 Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, May 31, 1864.
5 Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, General Conference Bulletin 3,
June 2, 1910, pp. 1-2.
6 Merle Poirier serves as operations manager for Adventist
Review Ministries.
such a postponement, but the church did confront unprecedented circumstances, including submarine warfare, which made it utterly unsafe to cross the Atlantic in 1917. Ironically, the war situation had not greatly improved by the spring of 1918; but voyaging to the United States was safer, and church leaders felt unable to postpone twice. The thirty-ninth Session thus took place in the spring of 1918.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The forty-second General Conference Session convened in May 1930, slightly more than six months after the Wall Street crash that kickstarted the Great Depression. Just how bad things would get was, however, not yet clear. But by the 1930s the interconnected nature of the world’s economy worsened the effects of the Depression and disrupted every part of the Adventist Church.

In the three years after the Wall Street crash, tithe receipts in the United States fell by 37 percent and mission offerings by 42 percent (though membership increased by 23 percent). GC treasurer J. L. Shaw had to find $200,000 (at least $4 million today) to hold a Session, even as he and President C. H. Watson were desperately trying to maintain foreign missionaries in place by cutting the workforce in the NAD, and cutting the salaries of the remainder. Overseas, at least four of the church’s 11 world divisions simply did not have the funds to send “representative delegations.” Postponing the Session gave the GC two more years to save the money needed for its budget and gave divisions two more years to find the money to send delegates. Yet when, at the 1932 Autumn Council, Watson raised the possibility of rescheduling, he first called an executive Session of only the division presidents and the GC headquarters staff members of the Executive Committee to present his case.

Committee members, however, saw the logic, not least because they recognized “the impossibility of the European and other divisions sending representative delegations if the conference is held in 1934,” and that the only way to pay for a Session then would be “by additional cuts in regular appropriations.” The GC Committee voted: “That the next session of the General Conference be postponed until 1936.” But the GC Constitution prescribed a four-year term of office, and so the terms of many “members of the General Conference staff” would expire before 1936. The Executive Committee, therefore, voted that these staff should “be asked to continue in uninterrupted service” up to the rescheduled Session.

In postponing the 1934 Session, church leaders had again taken the only sensible course of action, yet they had again done so in the absence of a constitutional mandate to do so. When the forty-third Session finally met in May and June of 1936, it amended Article VIII of the GC Constitution to enable the Executive Committee to postpone a Session up to two years, “where special world conditions seem . . . to make it imperative to postpone the calling of the session.” Although perhaps none guessed it, the next two sessions would both be postponed under the new terms of Article VIII.

WORLD WAR II

Church leaders firmly intended to hold the forty-fourth General Conference Session four years after the postponed forty-third Session, in the late spring or early summer of 1940. But in September 1939 World War II broke out. The following month, at Autumn Council, the officers posed the question of “whether or not it would be advisable to go forward with plans for holding the [GC] Session in 1940, in view of the present uncertainty.” There was also concern, as in the past, about whether “a representative conference” could be held given difficulties in travel for overseas division delegations. In light of disagreement, a subcommittee was appointed. But it recommended, “because of the prevalence of war [and] of our not being able to have a representative delegation from our overseas divisions,” that the Session “be postponed for one year.” This was then approved.

Twelve months later the war was continuing, and the possibility of “a further postponement” was discussed. After another subcommittee gave it brief consideration, however, the Executive Committee decided, without further explanation, to press ahead in May-June 1941.

After the 1941 Session the intention was to return to the constitutionally mandated quadrennial terms between Sessions. In 1943, the dates for the forty-fifth Session were set as May-June 1945. By the winter of 1945, however, disquiet was growing about the propriety of holding a major international event, for though the end of the war was clearly in sight, hostilities continued, as did travel controls, rationing, and government restrictions on conventions in the United States.

A special council was called in February “to consider whether or not we should go forward with plans for holding the . . . session in May.” While several GC Committee members “spoke of the disappointment that would be experienced if the session could not be held,” a consensus emerged for postponing, not least because (again) representation from “our overseas divisions” would be very limited. In the end, there was “general agreement that if a postponement would best serve the interests of our worldwide work, then it ought to be postponed.” The result was a voted action that “the General Conference Session that was to have been held in May of this year be postponed one year.”

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

This then is the Adventist history of rescheduling GC Sessions and accordingly extending the terms of office of those elected by Sessions. It is still the case that only the Executive Committee is empowered to postpone a Session and to extend what are now quinquennial, rather than quadrennial, terms. The decision to postpone has never been taken lightly and unadvisedly, and neither has it been taken without some sorrow or heartache.

However, in the face of truly exceptional circumstances—of two world wars and the Great Depression—Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders did not shrink from making difficult decisions that were in the interest of the denomination as a whole. The grounds included the expense in a time of limited resources, the safety of delegates, the public image of the church, and the capability of divisions to be properly represented.

The COVID-19 pandemic is not unprecedented, but it is utterly exceptional, yet the challenges it poses are similar to those that moved previous generations of church leaders four times to postpone GC Sessions.

Present-day church leaders acted with both resolution and compassion (given the potential for infection) in postponing the 2020 Session and then postponing again from 2021 to 2022, and in calling a special Session for January 2022 to allow for electronic “attendance” in June 2022. Church leaders also took the opportunity to rethink how the denomination’s “does” Sessions. Nobody was happy at the double postponement, as all had looked forward to meeting in Indianapolis in 2020. But the church took the most prudent and most responsible course of action, and, in doing so, church leaders of today walked—thoughtfully, carefully, and prayerfully—in the footsteps of past leaders, while still keeping their eyes on the future and our “blessed hope.”

Postponing GC Sessions need not entail delaying that future consummation for which we devoutly wish: the second coming of Jesus Christ our Lord.

David J. B. Trim is a historian, and serves as director of the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA.

Read more at: https://adventistreview.org/in-view-of-the-present-uncertainty-postponing-general-conference-sessions/
President’s Report

Message and Mission: United to finish God’s work

The clarion call of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 informs and directs the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. No matter what challenges we face, God calls us to move forward in His strength, reaching out in love and compassion, bringing a message of hope and forgiveness, revival and reformation, truth and faithfulness, to a world desperate in need.

Since the 2015 General Conference (GC) Session, the world has experienced significant crises and unprecedented change. As Seventh-day Adventists, we should not be surprised at this, as prophecy foretells the condition of the world just before Jesus comes, and we are told that “the final movements will be rapid ones.”

In spite of the challenges, we praise God that through His strength, His last-day remnant movement continues moving forward. Circumstances led to some very difficult decisions, including postponing GC Session twice. Nevertheless, God blessed in marvelous ways, and we praise Him for the assurance that He will continue guiding His church through whatever lies ahead.

While space and time does not allow this report to mention all the ways God has led during the past seven years, we will touch on some highlights, as you, God’s people, have answered His call to go and reach the world for Him.

“Light is stronger than darkness”

Nowhere has dedication to this call been more apparent than in the country of Ukraine, where our faithful team at Hope Channel Ukraine has continued broadcasting hope-filled, Bible-based programs despite the conflict surrounding them. On April 18, 2022, a day they planned to relaunch their Morning Hope program, multiple missiles bombarded Lviv, the city in which they were broadcasting. Nevertheless, the team released the program as planned. Their director, Maksym Krupskyi, posted this on his Facebook page:

“Rocket shelling, killing of civilians, injured children, seriously injured adults in intensive care—that was the morning in Lviv. I thank you for the courage of the team that, despite all this, continued to serve and found the strength to go forward… Maybe we smile with sadness, with [pain] in our eyes. But hope does not die, and light is stronger than darkness!”

What an example for us all! Thank you to all of our media outreach ministries for what you are doing to bring light into this dark world.

Life Hope Centers

In South America at a Life Hope Center in Chile, light was penetrating the darkness surrounding a young woman named Consuelo.

Deeply depressed, Consuelo had abandoned her belief in God. Then someone referred her to the Life Hope Center in the city of Talca, where she met Michelly and Angie, youth volunteers in the One Year in Mission (OYiM) program. Over time Consuelo became friends with the volunteers.

“I felt the presence of God in everyone at the center,” Consuelo said. “In what I saw, how they acted, what they said, and everything they did. They welcomed me with open arms.”

The OYiM volunteers invited Consuelo to study the Bible together, and gradually she developed a new understanding and relationship with God.

If it were not for the Life Hope Center and OYiM volunteers, Consuelo stated she would be dead by now. “I tried to kill myself multiple times,” she admits. “I couldn’t think of the future. I just thought of the present and what was tormenting me.” But, she says, “I saw the love of God that I hadn’t seen anywhere else.” As a result, Consuelo was baptized and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She now volunteers at the center. Urban Centers of Influence are an important part of Mission to the Cities.

MESSAGE AND MISSION INSEPARABLE

Based on the Bible, our message and mission are inseparably linked, and the way we read the Bible—hermeneutics—is vital to our understanding. Recognizing this, a request was made during the 2015 GC Session for a specific hermeneutic to be developed for the world church. This request was entrusted by the Session steering committee to the Biblical Research Institute (BRI).

In 2020 Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach was released in response to this request. This 488-page book contains 14 chapters written by 12 respected Adventist scholars who tackle important aspects of biblical hermeneutics from an Adventist perspective.

The BRI also produced 14 videos introducing issues addressed more fully in the book. Both resources have been translated into multiple languages and are being used in classrooms and shared on social media.

New Doors for Ministry

The year 2020 was a time of shock and uncertainty as the COVID-19 pandemic grasped the world in its deadly grip. Nevertheless, the mission of God’s church continued as He opened new doors for ministry.

Many special resources were developed, such as “Youth Alive,” a mental health initiative developed especially for youth by Health, Youth, Education, and Family Ministries departments, and Global Mission.

A highly engaging video series—#dearcoronavirus—offering healthy ways of dealing with unwelcome situations brought by the pandemic, was produced jointly by the Inter-European and Trans-European divisions.

The West-Central Africa Division produced a video for the deaf, providing important COVID-19 information through signing and subtitles, and the youth department of the Euro-Asia Division organized a prayer marathon focusing on God’s power.

Multiple online evangelistic meetings took place, including Adventist World Radio’s “Unlocking Bible Prophecies With Cami Oetman.” The
series was translated into 35 languages and to date has had nearly 16 million views. Many young people participated in online evangelism, including 60 students from four schools in the Lake Region of the North American Division who presented, “Countdown to Eternity,” focusing on the book of Revelation and end-time events. In Brazil, Adventist young people in Sao Cristovao reached out through “balloon evangelism.” Two hundred families were surprised to find balloons with notes containing biblical messages and words of comfort fixed on their doors, gates, and windows.

PROVIDING SUPPORT
While most of the news in 2020 focused on the pandemic, other tragic events took place, including the deadly explosion in Beirut, Lebanon, on August 4, 2020. Following the explosion, students, faculty, and staff at Middle East University and staff from the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission helped clean up and offered spiritual support following the blast which killed at least 219 people and injured more than 7,000.

The disaster displaced 300,000 people and caused more than $15 billion in property damage. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) was there, providing emergency food, water, and essential supplies. This was one of many interventions by ADRA, whose worldwide impact more than doubled since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when they served 35 million people, as compared to 14 million in 2019. Their ongoing work continues to have lifesaving impact, most recently with the refugee crisis in Ukraine and surrounding Eastern European countries.

ONLINE BIBLE STUDY GROUPS
New opportunities for small groups opened as Adventists embraced electronic meeting platforms such as Zoom. Many took advantage of this opportunity, including Pastor Ely Magtanong, who lives near Chicago, Illinois. In addition to pastoring two churches, Magtanong leads out in multiple international online Bible study/prayer meetings he calls care groups. The groups have grown exponentially as friends invite friends. One such case involved a member in the Philippines who invited Katrina, who lives in the U.S. Katrina was looking for a deeper purpose in life and was delighted to join the group, which was going through a series of evangelistic videos by Pastor Mark Finley. Katrina deeply appreciated the series and became close friends with Henry and Esmer Taylor, a couple from New York who also attended the group. When Magtanong learned Katrina lived in Virginia, he encouraged her to visit the Living Hope church, and to her delight Finley was preaching! She continued Bible studies with the church pastor, Christian Martin, and Finley. On October 2, 2021, she was baptized, and the Taylors were there, meeting her in person for the first time.

Technology paved the way for millions to access the writings of Ellen White. Since 2015 the number of electronic users has grown tremendously, with White Estate websites and apps averaging 7.5 million visitors every month, representing users from almost every nation on earth!

In addition, the White Estate averaged 225 million search requests and 24 million download requests per month. That represents more than 2.5 billion search requests and 275 million download requests just during 2021. We praise God for the tremendous way He is blessing these inspired writings!

POWER OF THE WORD
Publishing Ministries plays a vital role in encouraging Total Member Involvement through literature distribution, and this year marked 15 years of the Missionary Book of the Year project. During this time more than 700 million books were scattered through the hands of members! And in 2021, for the first time, a video version of the Missionary Book of the Year was produced in conjunction with the GC Communication Department.

Two other exciting projects include the translation of electronic evangelistic tracts into 85 languages for distribution in the 10/40 window, and the upcoming Great Controversy Project 2.0, a plan to personally distribute a billion full-version copies of The Great Controversy as the Missionary Book of the Year in 2023 and 2024.

But some are not waiting until then. Pastor Jerry Duvall from the Iowa-Missouri Conference in the North American Division, along with his church members, dedicated a day for distributing The Great Controversy to their community. “We had been looking for years how to reach out in our community,” said Duvall, “and handing out The Great Controversy was exactly what we needed.” In one day, church members distributed 1,408 hard copies. “They’re excited,” said Duvall. “It brought this church back together in unity—this is something we can all get behind.”

More than 500 young adults helped spread God’s end-time message as they presented the Three Angels’ Messages Global Proclamation Project. This series, created by Hope Channel International, is now available in 30 languages, aiming for 70 languages by 2026.

The Women’s Ministries Department created a series of 12 Bible studies focusing on the three angels’ messages, and Children’s Ministries partnered with the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI) to create a Creation’s Detectives illustrated book to help children understand evidence for creation. Recognizing the importance of developing strong families, Family Ministries has focused on the end-time “Elijah message” found in Malachi 4:5, 6, and the last-day events heralded by the three angels of Revelation 14.

“I WILL GO!”
Each quinquennium the world church develops a new strategic focus, and during the 2019 Annual Council, Reach the World: I Will Go was voted as the new focus for 2020-2025. The I Will Go theme, originally developed by evangelistically minded young people in South America, was quickly adopted by young and old alike, and is supported by rigorous research conducted by the GC’s Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.

One young woman who heeded God’s call to “go” is Melissa DePaiva Gibson. DePaiva Gibson was only 8 when she and her family moved to the Pacific island nation of Palau, where her father served as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, and her mother worked at the Adventist school. Melissa and her brother quickly made friends and felt at home.

Tragically, in 2003, just 18 months after arriving in Palau, Melissa’s father, Pastor Ruimar DePaiva; her mother, Margareth; and her brother, Larisson, were brutally murdered. Melissa was kidnapped, strangled, thrown down a ravine and left for dead.
Providentially, she survived. The perpetrator, Justin Hirosi, was sentenced to three life sentences for his heinous crimes.

At the state funeral held in the Palau National Gymnasium, Ruth DePaiva, mother of the slain pastor, invited the mother of the perpetrator to come forward. Putting her arm around Hirosi’s mother, DePaiva said, “Here we are, two mothers. I am sure the mother of Justin has prayed so many times for her son, and I am sure she heart hurts terribly. We train them, we educate them, but they have their own minds.”

DePaiva, who visited Hirosi in jail, offering him forgiveness and hope in Christ, urged that no one hold this crime against his family, but instead encouraged reconciliation. Her actions changed and healed the heart of the nation.

Fifteen years later, in 2018, DePaiva Gibson, now married and a nurse, followed in her grandmother’s footsteps, returning to Palau where she went to the prison and met Hirosi face to face, extending her forgiveness.

This amazing story is told in the newly released film, Return to Palau, which premiered on March 16, 2022, in Palau. Through her forgiveness and allowing her story to be told through this powerful film, DePaiva Gibson is answering God’s call to “go,” and reach a hurting world for Him.

FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

Another amazing story of forgiveness and reconciliation took place in the Philippines. For a half century, war raged between the Philippine Communist Party’s New People’s Army (NPA) and the Philippine government, causing the death of more than 40,000 people. In the remote mountains of Mindoro, one of the many Philippine islands, the Communist rebels planned and carried out their violent campaigns.

In 2017 Adventist World Radio (AWR) began broadcasting evangelistic sermons and Bible studies across Mindoro in preparation for a Total Member Involvement evangelistic series. By 2019 even the rebels hiding in the jungles were listening. The Holy Spirit worked profoundly, and in 2020 the rebels surrendered their hearts to God and their guns to the Philippine government. Incredible reconciliation took place as former rebels and Philippine soldiers embraced. The former rebels were given amnesty by the government, and on November 13, 2021, 2,000 former NPA rebels, clad in blue “I Will Go” T-shirts, along with their leader and his wife, were baptized.

Taking “I Will Go” seriously, these new believers returned to their former jungle hideouts, where they preached to their rebel comrades. Again, the Lord moved mightily as an additional 1,219 NPA rebels were baptized on April 9, 2022.

Friends, we will face serious challenges as we come to the end of time. Christ is coming soon, and what an opportunity we have to meet emergencies, not through our own power, but through the power of God! He will guide us and bring what He has promised. God’s Word is foundational in all that we do and to live out His ministry found in Luke 18.

Ruth DePaiva and Melissa Gibson DePaiva offered forgiveness under incredible circumstances, bringing hope and healing to a nation.

FROM WITHIN


It’s harvest time!

An old African proverb says, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” This perfectly expresses the spirit in which the East-Central Africa Division (ECD) launched its quinquennial theme: “Mission Priority: It’s Harvest Time!”

God’s love for the lost and His passion to reach them, combined with the call for His people to work together in unity, drove the division to establish a strategic and distinctive approach to Total Member Involvement (TMI) as the foundation of all our efforts.

TOTAL MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

ECD’s first two-week TMI campaign of the quinquennium, which took place in the Rwanda Union Mission in 2016, was a prime example of this distinctive approach. It involved thousands of speakers, presenters, musicians, and supporters both from within ECD and around the world serving in unity across the nation for Christ.

The Holy Spirit blessed that campaign with tens of thousands of additional baptisms in the division. In addition, the innovative use of radio, Internet, and television broadcasts impacted more than 100,000 people.

UNITED IN MISSION AND CRISIS

God blessed the division by granting them unity, both in mission and in times of struggle and challenge. For example, as a result of their TMI campaign in 2016, Burundi Union Mission grew in membership by more than 30 percent when more than 43,000 people were baptized. Just as the believers in that nation savored God’s victory, the enemy attacked their unity by launching a serious effort to separate the Burundi Union Mission from the world church.

In response, Pastor Blasious Ruguri, president of ECD, and Pastor Ted Wilson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, called on all members around the world to unite in prayer and fasting against these attacks.

God heard the prayers of His people, and by the end of 2020, faithful church leaders in Burundi were released from prison, church properties were returned, and the union was blessed with sought-after harmony and strong leadership. During the two years of crisis God blessed the spirit of unity among believers by using house fellowships and personal evangelistic efforts to lead more than 10,000 new believers in Burundi to Christ.

MISSION EXTRAVAGANZAS

ECD’s Mission Extravaganza events were another strategic tool that God used to develop a spirit of mission-focused unity within the division. During the quinquennium each union hosted the rest of the division at one of these special events, during which pastors, members, leaders, institutions, and ministries from the union rallied together to celebrate how God is using the Seventh-day Adventist Church to bless the world.

At each event the world witnessed thousands of members, young and old, march, sing, pray, and fellowship together. Remembering that Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people, members from across the division served the Mission Extravaganza host cities through community service projects, medical camps, and evangelistic outreach.

The final Mission Extravaganza for the quinquennium was held in 2020 in Kampala, Uganda, just before crippling lockdowns because of the COVID-19 crisis closed church doors across the region. The two-week TMI evangelistic campaign was conducted at 337 sites. Through this event God blessed the people of Kampala and the division with powerful encouragement that sustained them during the difficult times that followed.

The four-day Mission Extravaganza attracted crowds of up to 50,000 people. Adventists as well as community members were blessed by free medical services, Adventist ministry exhibits, and powerful evangelistic messages on righteousness by faith from Pastor William Cox, Sr. More than 8,600 people chose to follow Christ, and 41 new churches were planted in and around Kampala.

INNOVATIVE OUTREACH STRATEGIES

God was with those 41 new churches and their tens of thousands of sister churches across the division despite pandemic lockdowns. As mission-focused unity remained a priority for the church, members used innovative strategies to reach more than 250,000 additional souls for the kingdom after COVID-19’s arrival.

For example, ECD launched an online campaign called “Hope for Uncertain Times,” featuring hundreds of sermons, teaching, music, stories, and more. Established programs, such as Hope Channel’s popular Women Engage program, created weekly live broadcasts through Facebook and YouTube.

Social media and other online platforms were used to host live evangelistic campaigns in multiple languages, in which thousands of people found shelter in Christ during those troubled and uncertain times. Online Sabbath services were offered to the public by every level of the church from unions to local congregations. Miraculously, some governments, even within the 10/40 window, invited the Adventist Church to share the everlasting gospel and the three angels’ messages on national television broadcasts.
The ASOME project was launched in 2016 because, despite 12 Adventist hospitals and 187 Adventist clinics and dispensaries within the division, the region still faces a severe shortage of physicians. The new medical school is designed to produce world-class doctors who will be well-equipped to heal, teach, and preach as a means of bringing hope to the nations.

ASOME was created with the same TMI spirit that has graced the division throughout the past seven years. ECD members and church employees from across the division united to lay the financial foundation for the school. Members sacrificed to give and hundreds of church employees donated a portion of their salaries to the project. Once again, God used His people to raise nearly $4 million.

ADVENTIST SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

At a time when all attention was focused on a global health crisis, God providentially ordained that the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s seventh medical school would be launched in Kigali, Rwanda. On September 2, 2019, just months before the pandemic’s arrival, His Excellency Paul Kagame, president of the republic of Rwanda, joined Pastor Ted Wilson from the General Conference, and church leaders from across the division, to inaugurate the state-of-the-art Adventist School of Medicine of East-Central Africa (ASOME).

When His people are united, Christ always produces miracles. Although the state-of-the-art science building, dormitory, student center, and guest lecturer apartments were completed, new government requirements would not allow the school to officially open until a teaching hospital could also be added to the campus.

The division responded to the challenge by uniting in prayer for a miracle. God answered those prayers at the inauguration when President Kagame was moved to donate a complete teaching hospital to the school. ASOME opened its doors for instruction in January 2021. Now in its second year, ASOME is preparing 79 medical students to become qualified medical professionals that excel in service, providing wholistic Christlike care.

With the completion of ASOME, ECD is home to 3,123 educational institutions serving more than 762,000 students. These institutions include nine tertiary schools, 15 vocational schools, 936 secondary schools, and 2,163 primary schools. At a time when many nations saw 15 percent or more of their private schools close permanently as a result of the financial impact of the pandemic, 100 percent of the Adventist schools in ECD have recovered, to the glory of God.

A TESTIMONY TO FAITHFULNESS

Isaiah 65:24 says that “it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.” God’s leading was revealed through the timing of the scheduled rollout of ECD’s Church Finance Management System (CFMS). It began just as the pandemic lockdowns were forcing churches to close their doors across the division.

God timed the culmination of this two-year effort perfectly so that members could use their mobile devices to continue faithfully returning tithes and offerings when they could no longer gather as congregations. In some areas, giving actually increased during the time of the pandemic, as nearly a half million members took advantage of this new service.

The record of God’s dealing with ECD in this quinquennium bears witness that “we have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.” In fact, while membership in the ECD has increased by 45 percent, the tithe in that same period grew by 62 percent. This is explained in part because of increased spiritual maturity within the membership as indicated by a 12 percent increase in per capita combined giving from the start of the quinquennium through 2021.

The ECD family is now home to more than 4.7 million members, worshipping in 31,052 congregations, organized within 12 unions, the South Sudan Attached Territory and the Eritrea Mission Field. Eighty-one percent of these audited membership records are also being electronically managed using the General Conference’s online Adventist Church Management System. During the quinquennium 17 new fields have been organized, and the former Ethiopian Union Mission has been restructured into the Eastern Ethiopia Union Mission and the Western Ethiopia Union Mission.

The record of God’s dealing with the ECD in this quinquennium is a testimony to His faithfulness. God has united His people to work together in unprecedented ways for His glory. Within the ECD territory there are hundreds of languages, thousands of clans, and 11 nations. But among the people of ECD, all 4.7 million members are working together, proclaiming the three angels’ messages, and worshipping one Savior. The ECD has one mission priority: to work in God’s fields, making disciples who reveal hope in a world lost in darkness, saying, “I Will Go!”

The Euro-Asia Division (ESD) covers a large territory from central Europe to eastern Asia, from South Asia to the North Pole. There are millions of people within the ESD territory studying, working, creating new families, and traveling. But at the same time, they are always searching: searching for a better place, a better future—searching for hope!

Adventist pioneers first came to this area at the end of the nineteenth century. They believed that people’s lives and the fate of nations were in God’s hands. The Adventist message of salvation spread rapidly, and now the division consists of 13 countries, eight unions, more than 1,700 congregations, and 100,000 church members.

During the past seven years the division celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The Adventist Church used the opportunity to remind people of the main principles of the Reformation that changed the whole world.

Speaking at a meeting of church and political leaders in Moscow, Russia’s capital, General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson emphasized the commitment of the Adventist Church to the cause of the Reformation and the preaching of the three angels’ messages. In Ukraine, church members took part in a yearlong commemoration, culminating in a national celebration that brought together about 500,000 believers, all united in worship of the Lord! A few years earlier such freedom of assembly would have been only a dream.

**YOUTH TAKE THE HELM**

In the summer of 2017 Zaoksky Adventist University hosted 1,350 participants in the Pass the Baton Youth Congress. The name describes what is happening in the church now. Even in difficult times of a pandemic and armed conflict, youth and Pathfinders are eager to take the initiative and preach about Christ, serving God with their talents, abilities, and time. Similar congresses were held in all of the local unions. The division joined the world church’s One Year in Service youth program with two local initiatives: “Mission of Jeremiah” and “Mission of Abraham.” Fulfilling the Mission of Jeremiah means taking an active part in the evangelistic initiatives of a community. The Mission of Abraham calls for volunteers to interrupt their lives for a year by moving to a new city or even another country to serve.

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, the Mission of Jeremiah and Mission of Abraham programs have blossomed. More than 2,000 young people have participated in the Mission of Jeremiah program. They conducted 200 evangelistic programs, resulting in 450 baptisms. Seventy people joined the Mission of Abraham program, leading to 10 evangelistic programs and 35 baptisms.

During the pandemic the Youth Ministries Department organized a special program called “Who?” Every Sabbath youth leaders and youth from all over the division gathered online to meet a new guest, listen to the guest’s experience in life and ministry, and share their own experiences. At the beginning of 2022 a youth initiative called “112” was launched. In it 12 people participated in community and missionary service for 40 days in one city.

**EDUCATION A PRIORITY**

Education is a priority in making disciples for Christ. Zaoksky Adventist University, the flagship Protestant educational institution in Russia and the first Adventist institution of higher education in the former Soviet Union, celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2018. Since its inception the university’s motto has remained unchanged: “Learn! Serve! Inspire!” Its 6,000 graduates (including pastors) currently serve worldwide.

In Ukraine, the Ukrainian Adventist Center for Education is a priority in making disciples for Christ. Zoaksy Adventist University, the flagship Protestant educational institution in Russia and the first Adventist institution of higher education in the former Soviet Union, celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2018. Since its inception the university’s motto has remained unchanged: “Learn! Serve! Inspire!” Its 6,000 graduates (including pastors) currently serve worldwide.

In Ukraine, the Ukrainian Adventist Center for Educational Programs has welcomed hundreds of students for the past 20 years. Leaders have regularly held major evangelistic, missionary, and educational programs on its beautiful campus. In addition to these two institutions of higher education, there are 77 Adventist schools in our division today. Of special interest is the school in Kyrgyzstan, a unique institution in a majority Muslim country. Local children gladly attend the school, and teachers and volunteers remove walls of religious prejudice, creating an atmosphere of peace and harmony. We thank God for this!

Thanks to the support of church organizations and members, during the past two years 12 schools and one online school were opened and a new school building built. Adventist teachers have improved their education. Together with the General Conference’s Education Department, work has been carried out on the accreditation of higher educational institutions in the division. Through Adventist education 75 people were baptized in 2021 alone.

**EVANGELISTIC EMPHASIS**

Many local churches are thriving centers of influence. In many cities charitable programs have been held to serve low-income families, children, people suffering from serious illnesses, and those impacted by military operations. Various centers for teenagers are opening.

Adventist Health Centers are developing, and medical missionary outreach is experiencing a particularly large growth. Currently 28 Adventist sanatoriums and health centers are operating in our division.

A missionary program called “Europe and Asia for Christ” has set the tone for the division’s ministry efforts. The initiative seeks to engage every church member in an annual evangelistic program in every congregation in the division. Between 2015 and 2020 more than 5,000 evangelistic programs were held, and more than 8,000 people baptized. Despite COVID-19, more than 800 evangelistic programs took place across the division during the past two years.

Literature evangelism also has been a success. Today the Adventist magazine Hidden Treasure is the largest Christian periodical in circulation in
Russia. More than 1 million copies of the *Hidden Treasure* magazine and related publications *Your Keys to Health, Wonderful Pages* for children, and *7D Format* for youth are distributed monthly division-wide.

During the pandemic, people’s interest in spiritual matters soared, and church members distributed more than 350,000 copies of *The Great Controversy* in multiple languages from 2019 to 2022.

**INNOVATIVE OUTREACH**

As an heir to the Reformation, the Adventist Church continues to profess the principle of sola scriptura, the Bible alone. A modern translation of the Bible into Russian, carried out under the auspices of the church several years ago, was released as an audio recording in 2022.

In 2020 the Adventist Church in the ESD witnessed an important historical event: the publication of a new hymnal, *A Source of Praise*. For the more than 130 years of an Adventist presence in our territory, only two collections of hymnals had been published, in 1927 and 1997. *A Source of Praise* is a unique collection of hymns by Adventist composers and poets from across the division.

The hymns reflect the spiritual experience of a modern generation and are filled with the three angels’ messages of faith and hope.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the church to find new and innovative ways to accomplish mission. Because of a pandemic lockdown, the division began to use information technology to preach the gospel. Every pastor can now address church members via the Internet. In 2021 and 2022 two international Bible conferences were held online with the support of the General Conference’s Biblical Research Institute.

Through the use of modern technology, more than 1,500 pastors, elders, and community leaders attended each of these video conferences. The division’s church administrator training also took place for the first time online in 2021. This training covered various aspects of strategic thinking and planning to proclaim the three angels’ messages, to complete the gospel work, and achieve the goals of the world church strategic plan “I Will Go.”

**INNOVATION IN MISSION**

Innovation and unity is at the heart of the development of a new 2020-2025 strategic plan called “Let’s Go Together.” The strategy assumes that the local community is at the center of church life and includes four objectives: to create an atmosphere for spiritual growth; to fill the church with young people; to involve members of the church in evangelistic and social service; and to hold inspiring worship services.

Today mission is inconceivable without the use of modern technology: radio, television, and the Internet. The past two years have been filled with major online evangelism events featuring prominent preachers. These efforts are bearing fruit. The number of social media subscribers to our missionary initiatives is growing rapidly, as well as the number of students in our online Bible school.

Thanks to the support of Adventist World Radio, the small country of Moldova is 80 percent covered by the Adventist message. In the countries of Central Asia, radio programs in local languages are being broadcast every day. Sponsored by Hope Channel International in Russia, the Nadezhda TV channel has been broadcasting 24 hours a day for more than seven years. In Ukraine the Nadiya TV channel became the number-one Christian channel in the country. Almost 500,000 people have watched Nadiya TV programming every month since the start of the pandemic—twice as many as before COVID-19.

Pastors involved in the Revelation of Hope evangelism program also held well-attended online meetings on various social media platforms.

**HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS**

The social and humanitarian work of the church is inextricably linked with the activities of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). ADRA staff and volunteers were among the first to respond both during the pandemic and numerous armed conflicts in our division. We witnessed protests in Belarus, military conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Tajik-Kyrgyz military conflict, military conflict in Afghanistan, protests in Kazakhstan, and the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict.

With the help of ADRA, 88 projects were implemented and more than 250,000 people were assisted during the past two years. In addition, more than 450 tons of products were distributed in Russia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Georgia.

Recently the life and ministry of the church drastically changed in one of our largest unions, Ukraine. With more than 4.5 million refugees, thousands of dead and wounded, destroyed houses and church buildings, the church in Ukraine and the ESD has risen to a new level of ministry. The church has provided assistance in lodging, transportation, food and medicine, clothing, and hundreds of tons of humanitarian aid. In addition, many schools and educational institutions have offered shelter for displaced people in Ukraine. At the Ukrainian Humanitarian Institute in Bucha, employees spent weeks feeding and caring for hundreds of people who found shelter from bombs and shells in the basements of the institution's buildings.

Especially important was the spiritual and emotional assistance provided by church members to displaced people and others who suffered as a result of the hostilities. “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matt. 25:40).

Despite the grief, the church lives with hope in the ESD, trusting its present and future to the hands of God and proclaiming His goodness and forgiveness to a weary world.

Driven by faith and hope, we do not stop; we move forward step by step. We strive by life and ministry to bring closer the long-awaited manifestation of the glory of God—His coming. Our main task is to turn the hearts of people to God, the Creator. Let’s press ahead! We go with hope.
The Chinese Union Mission (CHUM) is focused on “kingdom growth,” calling people to become disciples of Jesus Christ, proclaiming the everlasting gospel embraced by the three angels’ messages and preparing those living in its territories and around the world for Christ’s soon return.

**HISTORY**

The work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in China began with layperson Abram La Rue. La Rue was a seaman who became an Adventist late in life. He longed to carry the Adventist message to China and, in 1888, boarded a ship to Hong Kong. He labored there for 14 years until he contracted pneumonia and passed away. La Rue now awaits Christ’s soon return in a quiet grave on a Chinese hillside.

By the end of 1904 there were 64 Adventists in China. When the China Division formed in 1930, it had six union missions, 29 local missions, 156 churches, and 103 schools. Heaven must have smiled at its membership included 297,232 precious souls.

By the end of 2000, 20 years after China opened its doors, the number of Adventists continued to grow. From the 1950s to 1986 no official church records were kept, but membership grew to nearly 200,000. By the end of 2000, 20 years after China opened its doors, membership included 297,232 precious souls.

**TODAY**

According to a 2021 report, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in China has grown to 476,194 members. CHUM is thankful for ongoing opportunities to serve and support God’s mission. The CHUM operates and oversees several institutions in its territories, including the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital, Hong Kong Adventist College, and Hong Kong Adventist Academy. Additionally, the local Hong Kong Macao Conference serves 21 churches and four companies, and oversees four large mission schools.

To serve and support God’s children in this vast region and the growing Chinese-speaking population outside of China, the CHUM produces printed material, websites, smartphone apps, videos, and more, in traditional and simplified Chinese. Radio and TV programs are also produced in Mandarin and local dialects. Missionaries are even being sent to share the good news with Chinese nationals living outside of China!

**RESOURCES:**

The CHUM is passionate about providing Seventh-day Adventist resources in Chinese that are accessible worldwide by downloading an app or interfacing with a website.

Chinese resources will soon be accessible through multiple language interfaces. Non-Chinese-speaking individuals can access specific books, tracts, Bible study materials, and video programs to share with Chinese friends and neighbors who need to learn of Jesus’ love and saving truths.

More than 200 Ellen White books have been translated into Chinese.

The Chinese Union is developing a theological library, initially focusing on translating 70 of the best Seventh-day Adventist theological books into Chinese. Completed books can be downloaded for free and used by leaders and members worldwide.

For an extensive list of Chinese resources, visit https://www.chumadventist.info/ or our Facebook page, Chinese Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.

**TESTIMONIES**

Beautiful manifestations of God’s redemptive grace occur every day across the CHUM territory as God’s disciples engage in His mission. Here are a few testimonies:

**IT STARTED IN A TAXI**

Mei* grew up without religion in her life, but when her mother became sick, she connected with some Christians and learned a few Bible verses. Five years later her mother died.

One day she and her sisters were chatting in a taxi when they spontaneously decided to find a Christian church that teaches truth. They asked the taxi driver if he knew where such a church might be. It happened to be a Saturday. The taxi driver drove them to a Seventh-day Adventist church and dropped them off. Amazingly, the woman standing at the door to greet them was someone they already knew, and they received the warmest welcome. That day Mei decided to become a Christian, and one year later she was baptized and became very active in her church.

Life has its challenges, unfortunately. Eight years after becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, Mei was diagnosed with uterine cancer. She was worried and tried to connect with specialists. Mei spent 19 days in a health center run by Adventist members. In the bed next to her was an atheist suffering from a stroke. She could not walk or talk. Mei tried to help— to give her hope by sharing the love of Jesus. While focusing on the needs of this hospital roommate,
she forgot that she was also a patient. She forgot about the pain in her abdomen. Praise God, one day, when the doctors examined her, they discovered that the tumor was gone. She was healed!

Since that day Mei has been more committed to sharing Jesus with others, primarily through health ministries. When talking to people in her community, she discovers that many have health problems. Once they trust her, she is welcomed into their homes. Last year God allowed her to give Bible studies to three people who decided to be baptized. Two more are planned for the immediate future.

**A CHINESE TEACHER FINDS JESUS**

Linda came to Hong Kong Adventist Academy to teach regular Chinese classes as well as to instruct students in Chinese as a foreign language. She knew little about Jesus or the Bible, so around Christmas, when one of her colleagues invited some students to study the Bible, Linda joined the group out of curiosity. She became intrigued with this man, “Jesus,” and wanted to know more. She embraced the invitation for Bible studies with the school principal and his wife. Linda’s relationship with God began to grow.

Linda faced some real difficulties. Frustrated and not knowing what to do, she went to the church to pray. After praying, Linda felt a sense of peace in her heart. She was confident that God was with her and would take care of her burdens. Eventually Linda decided to give her life to Jesus and be baptized. She says it was “the best decision” she ever made!

**CHURCH MEMBERS AND THE PANDEMIC**

During the pandemic Seventh-day Adventists across our territory served their communities in many ways. Volunteers assisted medical workers, helping to keep things organized and running smoothly. In China’s fiercely cold northeastern region, churches purchased and donated heaters and heating pads for the many who lined up at outdoor clinics waiting for testing. Churches partnered with local governments to identify and serve needy families. They raised money so elderly and disabled people who lived alone could be visited and given food and other necessities.

Community service volunteer teams already in place purchased and distributed large quantities of sanitation supplies and masks. They distributed them to local schools, nursing homes, and low-income families. When church members noticed that frontline workers did not have time to purchase groceries or prepare meals, they formed teams that made boxed meals. Day after day, team members prepared food and distributed it to exhausted workers.

At the worst point in the pandemic, though affected and physically drained themselves, church members in China raised at least US$230,000 for other parts of the world, touching the lives of nearly 80,000 people and their families.

**YOUR PRAYERS**

We long for the day when Jesus will take us all home for eternity. While we wait for His return, please consider engaging in God’s mission to China and the Chinese people around the world. Pray for kingdom growth in China, reach out to Chinese neighbors, and access Chinese literature and media resources to prayerfully share as the Holy Spirit leads.

Now, you and millions of people with no computer access can download our FARM STEW app on their smartphones, thereby receiving all the tools needed to promote holistic wellness and freedom from dependency.

Will you help FARM STEW share the recipe of abundant life through your gift today? With this app, and through Christ, the possibilities are endless!
The Virtual Exhibition Experience at GC Session

Participation doesn’t require travel.

The sixty-first General Conference Session has a Virtual Exhibition Experience in which members from around the world can participate. The exhibition features more than 150 exhibitors involved in mission, ministry, health, and education. Attendees can talk to church and ministry leaders and be inspired to get involved in mission.

This Virtual Exhibition Experience takes place on an innovative digital platform that connects our global church organization. The interactive features provide real connections with people through text, audio and video chats, webinars with live questions and answers, poster presentation halls, interactive games, and contests. There is a networking “lounge” where people can get together, meet up with old friends, or make new ones. Possibility Ministries will hold deaf chats twice daily in American Sign Language, to create community for those with hearing impairments.

The pandemic continues to have a lingering effect on the world, and this hybrid GC Session is a first. Delegates can attend business sessions in person and online. Members can watch the livestreamed business meetings and visit the Virtual Exhibit Hall all from the comfort of their home or hotel room. The vFairs platform is a market leader in innovative virtual events, working with hundreds of large multinational corporations, major universities, and nonprofit organizations. Adventists from every corner of the globe will participate in the GC Session and see what God is doing through our church.

Getting Around the Exhibition

To navigate around the virtual exhibition, members first need to register at exhibithall.gcsession.org. Once registered, members will log in and explore the event. This can be done on a computer, tablet, or smartphone using a web browser. Please note that the dedicated GC Session app is for the business session only and is not used for the exhibition. Getting around the site is much like navigating any website, and visitors will discover a “one-stop shop” of all things Adventist. You can access multimedia presentations (videos, documents, social media, games), engage with other people, and experience spiritual renewal.

The virtual platform provides the experience in four languages: English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese. Visitors can select the language of their choice to explore the event. In addition to these languages, exhibitors represent the world church, so look for booths from South Korea, Hong Kong, India, and more. Additionally, accessibility features will make it much easier for those with sight or hearing deficits to fully enjoy their experience. The virtual platform offers the following features:

- **Color Contrast:** All features on the virtual platform can be customized to enhance color contrast for easier text readability.
- **Captioned Webinars:** The closed-captioning option will make participation in webinars or other live presentations accessible.
- **Event Navigation:** All on-screen menus are clearly labeled. Attendees will not be disrupted by unexpected flashes, sounds, or popups.
- **Text Character Size:** On-screen fonts can be enlarged or reduced, depending on user preference.
- **Page Narrations:** Attendees can simply click on the headphone icon to access text narration.

When you enter the Virtual Exhibition Hall, you will see an image of the lobby. There are two main ways to get around. First, you will see several “doors” that you can click on to enter into an area of the exhibition. Second, there is a blue menu bar above the lobby image. You can enter virtual exhibition areas directly from the blue menu tabs to navigate around the event.

Exhibition Areas

There are eight exhibition halls containing booths from church organizations and supporting ministries. These exhibitor halls are arranged to make it easy for a visitor to find booths that may be of interest. The eight halls are:

- Education and Health
- Media and Publishing
- Ministry 1
- Ministry 2
- Mission
- North America 1
- North America 2
- Inter and South America

This is an exciting way to see the comprehensive and collaborative ministries of the church. Each booth represents the unique methods they utilize to fulfill the Great Commission and make new disciples. Experts are at every booth to answer your questions. Other booth features include daily webinars, seminars, and thousands of downloadable PDFs and media resources. Interact with booth representatives using the chat function (texting, or audio or video chat). Maximize your experience by visiting all eight exhibition halls.

To view booth schedules of events, use the tabs below the booth image. Click the white tabs to learn more about the organization. Click the red tabs to watch videos or download documents available at the booth. Scroll down to the white box below the red tabs to view specific information and scheduled events unique to the booth.

Special Features

**Poster Hall**

The Poster Hall is a place where some of the brightest academics, researchers, and innovators share their leading-edge research, knowledge creation, and innovation being done at many of our organizations. These are multimedia presentations prepared and shared in a unique poster presentation format which can be downloaded and kept by visitors. Best of all, you can ask questions or comment on these works.
and interact with authors. It may be a great way for prospective students to see what faculty are doing at our universities, or health-care practitioners to see advances in medical research. Poster presentations will be available for browsing at any time.

Prayer Room
Perhaps one of the most important rooms to visit is the Prayer Room. The Prayer Room will be available 24 hours a day during the entire event and is for everyone. In the Prayer Room visitors can find many other attendees from around the world engaged in earnest prayer. This is one of the most wonderful experiences of the event; join in a worldwide prayer session and see the power in collective prayer. Make this a priority during your time with us!

Networking Lounge
This is a space where visitors can meet up with friends, colleagues, or even family members from around the world 24/7 throughout the event. However, there are several scheduled events in the lounge, so check out the daily schedule.

Games, Social Media, and Contests
One of the other features is Kahoot games, scheduled throughout the event. Games range from Bible trivia to knowledge about countries, Adventist ministries, Adventist forefathers, and more! Join in, play, and win a fantastic prize.

No event would be complete without a social media wall. Use the event hashtags to post about organizations, presentations, or your favorite purchase or game. GC SessionVirtual Exhibition Experience hashtags are: #GCVX22 and #CVirtualEXHIBITION2022

The virtual marketplace will be hosted by AdventSource, the North American Division’s official leadership resource and event registration organization. Visit the marketplace to view thousands of quality Christian resources for purchase.

One more thing—the Virtual Exhibit Hall will be open for an entire month following the event! That’s right; if you don’t have time to see everything within the GC Session time frame, you can come back and take your time.

We hope you love your GC Session Virtual Exhibition Experience! Attend every day, bring your family, and invite your friends! Connect, learn, and be inspired! I Will Go!

Tim Aka serves as an associate treasurer and investment manager at the General Conference. His wife, Sharon, is a full-time consultant and serves as a graduate learning coach in the Global Leadership Institute at Andrews University and as team member of the Virtual Events team for the General Conference.
This list is supplied and maintained by General Conference Secretariat, and is current as of May 17, 2022, at this time issue went to press. The list may have changed because of visa or travel complications. The delegates will officially be seated and voted at the first business session. Only delegates speak to issues and vote.
Facts about the gender

44 years

45 years

46 years

Statistics as of April 27, 2022.

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Pastor/Teacher/Church Employee

Over 70 4%

50-59 37%

Statistics as of April 27, 2022.

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Statistics as of April 27, 2022.
“The soul that gives is always refreshed.”

—Ray Hartwell
Director at Grateful Living
(Trust Services, Stewardship)
Georgia Cumberland Conference

Planned Giving & Trust Services

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