



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

DECEMBER 2017

Season's Greetings!

During this special time of year, we send you our warmest wishes and deep appreciation for your service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a member of the General Conference Executive Committee. Your service is important to the church and your influence significant. Thank you for your faithfulness.

After a break due to some graphic design issues, we are happy to bring you another issue of the *GC Executive Committee Newsletter* (ECN). In this special year-end issue, you will find the inspiring story of how God led one couple who “happened” to drop-in during the Annual Council Sabbath worship service to be at the right place, at the right time, just a few days later. We also have an Annual Council highlights section and an article introducing an exciting new tool for mission called “VividFaith.”

Finally, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to my friend, Audrey Andersson, executive secretary of the Trans-European Division and a member of the GC Executive Committee, for her willingness to share her personal journey of pain and loss, and yet unwavering hope for the future.

As 2017 comes to a close may we each reflect on how God has led in our own lives this past year, and look to Him in confidence for the future. May the Lord bless you and yours as together we look forward to His soon return!



MAGDIEL PÉREZ SCHULZ
Assistant to the President
Field Secretary

EDITORIAL



SANS SUVANKHAM

TMI LEADS TO SPECIAL DELIVERY

BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER STAFF

*H*arold and Yvette Hebron were on their way to church when they drove by the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, and noticed that the parking lot was full. Wondering if special services were being held, the couple went to the building’s front entrance and learned that it was Annual Council Sabbath—October 7, 2017.

Deciding to stay for the worship service, the Hebrons entered the auditorium and found it difficult to find a seat.

“It was quite invigorating to know that so many had gathered for something that promised to be spirit-filled and quite important,” Dr. Hebron later recalled.

The Hebrons own and operate a medical practice near the General

Conference, where Yvette Hebron serves as a physician and her husband, Harold, as administrator. Both are Seventh-day Adventist.

AN OVERWHELMING URGENCY

“As the service progressed, it was quite evident that we were in the right place for this particular Sabbath and God had led us there for a purpose,” said Dr. Hebron. “We were increasingly inspired.

“As Dr. [Ted] Wilson presented his sermon, ‘Work the Cities Without Delay,’ I felt this overwhelming urgency to do more with our medical practice. As he spoke of the need for physicians and health care professionals to reach the people, I questioned what it is that

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God sent an angel to help me. I don't know where she came from; I just looked up and she was there.



Left: Dr. Hebron holds the “special delivery” that arrived in the General Conference parking lot. Right: Dr. Hebron and the new mother, total strangers, were brought together by God and now share an amazing experience.

we can do better, different, and more of, to reach individuals and bring them into the faith. I left the service with a mind that would not shut down in exploring how we could reach more than the patients that we see on a daily basis.”

Impressed with the need to reach others through their medical ministry, the Hebrons prayed that God would show them how. It was not long before God answered their prayer with an unusual Total Member Involvement (TMI) opportunity.

“THE BABY IS COMING!”

The following Thursday, as the Hebrons were driving to their office, they noticed an unusual situation taking place outside the General Conference. A car hurriedly pulled into the GC driveway. Then the driver jumped out of the car and began running around it, screaming. Dr. Hebron explained further:

“I put my window down and heard the man screaming into his cell phone: ‘The baby is coming!’ I then heard the screams of a woman.

“My husband and I immediately pulled into the driveway and I ran to the other car, telling the father that I was a doctor and could help. . . . As I knelt at the

passenger side of the car, I told the mother that I was a doctor and was going to help her. Looking, I could see that the top of the baby’s head was visible, and I cupped the baby’s head to guide its passage. Within one push the entire baby emerged with the most beautiful cry that could be heard in such a tenuous situation.”

Meanwhile, Harold Hebron attempted to calm the father, and brought a blanket from his car to help keep the mother warm. The baby was wrapped in a large towel that the parents had in their car. GC Security came and helped foster a calm environment. Before long, paramedics arrived and took a healthy, stable mother and baby to a local hospital.

“GOD SENT AN ANGEL”

When Dr. Hebron made a follow-up call to the hospital, a nurse reported how the mother excitedly told her: “God sent an angel to help me. I don’t know where she came from; I just looked up and she was there.”

Later, the Hebrons visited the hospital and found a very appreciative mother and contented newborn. “The baby was cradled once again in my arms, reminding me of

the goodness and mercies of God,” said Dr. Hebron.

In recounting the list of miracles God performed, the Hebrons are grateful that God allowed their attendance at the 2017 Annual Council Sabbath church service and how He “inspired and re-ignited us by what we heard there.”

Total Member Involvement is a powerful way to reach others for Jesus. As leaders and GC Executive Committee members, let’s encourage others by word and action to participate in TMI—everyone, everywhere, doing something for Jesus!

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INSPIRED COUNSEL FOR THE NEW YEAR

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Let the remnant of this year be improved in destroying every fiber of the root of bitterness, burying them in the grave with the old year. Begin the new year with more tender regard, with deeper love, for every member of the Lord's family. Press together.

“United, we stand; divided, we fall.” Take a higher, nobler stand than you ever have before.”

Our High Calling, p. 370

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VIVIDFAITH: MATCHING NEEDS WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE

By FYLVIA FOWLER KLINE, *Project Manager, General Conference Chief Information Office*

The Seventh-day Adventist missionary movement began in the 1800s with missionaries leaving the United States for other countries. Today, missionaries crisscross the globe in all directions and are employed not just by the General Conference. Missionaries now come under several categories—International Service Employees, volunteers, and many other types from local churches, supporting ministries, and other entities.

If your organization depends on missionaries, you've probably found yourself in at least one of these situations:

- Your job opening requires a specific skill set and you have a difficult time finding someone with all the necessary expertise.
- You find the right missionary family, but before the contract is signed, they accept another, more attractive position.
- You struggle trying to find time for all the paperwork and correspondence needed to process the call.
- Your missionaries often arrive with little or no knowledge of work and life in your country.
- Your missionaries often leave before the contract period is complete

because they feel disconnected from their family and friends back home.

VividFaith launches in 2018 to address these scenarios and other complexities of the current recruitment processes.

A virtual community with a website and a mobile app, VividFaith will collect and vet potential applicants, and then match your job opening with the best candidates. It will also generate all the forms, references, and documents you need from applicants, making sure you stay connected with them. Additionally, VividFaith will provide resources and training to prepare new missionaries to work efficiently and enjoy living in their new home country. Family and friends of missionaries will also use VividFaith to stay connected with and encourage loved ones serving far from home. As VividFaith grows, it will also be a place to raise funds for projects.

VividFaith is being created for you. If you haven't already done so, join the mailing list on vididfaith.com and be notified of new developments. Next, between now and June 2018, identify all your upcoming needs (volunteers, ISE's, projects, etc). Finally, when vididfaith.com is launched, make it yours. Use it. Promote it. Participate in it. Make it your place to find the people who are the best fit for your organization.

**QUESTIONS? EMAIL
INFO@VIDIDFAITH.COM**

ANNUAL COUNCIL 2017 HIGHLIGHTS



LEAD CONFERENCE

- The Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) Conference focused on Global Mission, inviting leaders to be personally involved with mission outreach and to encourage members within their territory to be active in mission.
- A “Global Mission Toolkit” filled with resources was given to each attendee. Special emphasis was given to reaching people living in large urban areas.
 - ▶ More than half of the world’s population lives in urban areas.
 - ▶ Growth trends indicate 70 percent of the world population will live in urban areas by 2050.
 - ▶ Currently, there are 89,167 urban dwellers for every one urban Adventist congregation.
 - ▶ Goal is to find ways to reach these urban dwellers for Christ.
- All were invited to watch the 13-episode television program, *I Want This City*, featuring Doug Venn in Bangkok, Thailand. Watch at: thiscity.adventistmission.tv.
- Ellen White had much counsel on reaching city dwellers. Read *Ministry to the Cities* here: bit.ly/MinistrytoCities.

SABBATH SERMON

- Adventist Church President Ted N.C. Wilson’s sermon emphasized “Reaching the Cities,” and urged all to participate



in Total Member Involvement (TMI) to reach the “massive secular fortresses with the life-giving message of the gospel.”

- Many TMI methods were mentioned including training and evangelistic centers, centers of influence, home Bible study groups, community initiatives, comprehensive health ministry, vegetarian restaurants, and more.
- According to Peter Landless, US\$600 million in charity health care is provided by church members around the world each year, and 50 million health-related books are distributed. “We can be part of this if we believe the message, live the message, and teach the message,” he said.

SECRETARIAT REPORT

- Seventh-day Adventist worldwide membership is growing at an increased rate. As of June 30, 2017, there were 20,343,814 baptized members in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, reported David Trim, director of the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research.
- Membership audit will continue. It is “a vital tool in pastoral ministry,” Trim said. “Knowing the real numbers helps us to be good stewards, and assists us in our strategic planning.”
- Member loss is 39 percent, or two out of each five new members.
- Despite losses, total accessions are going up, as many places around the world are experiencing missional success.
- Every 23 seconds a person is baptized into the Adventist Church.
- For the past two years baptisms have averaged more than 3,000 a day.

- The number of new churches is growing, one of the best indicators of steady growth.
- Great challenges remain in the 10/40 window (includes 69 nations).
- Number of regular missionaries serving in regions other than their own: 814 adults, plus their families



- Adventist Volunteer Services (AVS)—1,200 intra-division volunteers currently serving
- Global Mission pioneers serve and plant churches in isolated areas, often with no Adventist presence, total more than 2,000 in 130 countries.
- In 2016, Adventist Mission allocated US\$2.3 million to 687 church planting projects around the world.
- In the Executive Secretary’s Report, titled “Adventist 9-1-1,” G.T. Ng, reviewed several crises faced throughout the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and how God brought His Church through each one. These past experiences inform the present as they demonstrate God’s guidance through all circumstances.

TREASURY REPORT

- GC Treasurer, Juan R. Prestol-Puesán, reported on the 2016 and 2017

financial activities of the Church, offered an update on relevant exchange rates, reported on tithe and mission offerings by division, and gave a report on the status of the world headquarters building. He also commented on the status of the Review and Herald property sale, shared the treasurer's view of the operations for 2017 and 2018, presented the recommended budget for 2018, and expressed the objectives of the church's financial function.



- Fluctuation of currencies in relation to the U.S. dollar has some effect on world church finances.
- The GC is strengthening the Stewardship Ministries program worldwide by covering the salary, benefits, and travel of a full-time department director at the division level.
- Regarding operations for 2017 and 2018, Prestol-Puesán noted, “Our expectation at the end of this fiscal year . . . as a best-case scenario, is to reach a break-even point.
- “Our financial management philosophy is simple,” Prestol-Puesán said. “We see ourselves as stewards of the financial resources entrusted to this level of the Church.”

OTHER ITEMS

- During the “Mission Advance” presentations, reports emphasizing mission were presented by the presidents of each of the world divisions. Following each report, prayer was offered by a General Conference officer.
- It was voted to reorganize the Zimbabwe Union Conference in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division into three union conferences.

- It was voted for each division and union to establish an Administrative Publishing Committee.
- A report from the Unity Oversight Committee was given by the chair, Tom Lemon, and a document, “Procedures for Reconciliation and Adherence in Church Governance, Phase II” was introduced to the Executive Committee. Following several hours of discussion, it was voted to return the document to the Unity Oversight Committee for further review.
- *Life-Changing Bible Studies*, a new curriculum on practical topics written for small group use by Mark Finley, was introduced by Bill Knott, executive editor and director of Adventist Review Ministries.
- Mark Finley reported that Adventist Laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) has donated US\$30 million for the mission of the Church.
- Clifford Goldstein, editor of the *Adult Bible Study Guides*, presented his new book: *Baptizing the Devil: Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity*. Available at bit.ly/BaptizingtheDevil.

- Ann Hamel, an Adventist psychologist working with the International Service Employee Support Team, gave a presentation on conflict resolution.
- David Trim shared a video clip of Herbert and Henry White, grandsons of James and Ellen G. White, who were missionaries in China in the 1920s. The video clip was compiled from old films donated to the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research. Historical videos may be seen at: www.adventistarchives.org.

- Andrew McChesney, editor of *Mission Quarterly* for Adventist Mission, encouraged executive committee members and guests to use resources available at adventistmission.org when looking for stories, mission videos, and more.
- Ganoune Diop, Director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, gave an overview of current ecumenical trends, including the endorsement of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) by many Christian denominations. According to Diop, the JDDJ does not match the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of justification of Christ alone as our Mediator.
- During the Ellen G. White Estate presentation, Darryl Thompson, assistant director, shared the resources available at EllenWhite.org and on their app, EGW Writings 2, available at bit.ly/EGW2app for iPhones, and bit.ly/EGWApp2droid for Androids.

All presentations from the 2017 Annual Council may be viewed on the GC Executive Committee website at executivecommittee.adventist.org.



PHOTOS: NYLON MEDLEY



ON A JOURNEY

BY AUDREY ANDERSSON
Executive Secretary, Trans-European Division

It was October 23, 2016. Nothing in this life prepares you for the phone call: “I’m so sorry. Lars is dead. He was killed in an accident.” Twelve short words. With terrifying power, they changed my life of joy and happiness to darkness and despair. The hopes, dreams and plans Lars and I had evaporated in that instant. Where there had been confidence, certainty, direction, a road map, instead there was uncertainty, an emptiness stretching as far as I could see.

As news spread, I was moved by how many people around the world reached out giving support, comfort, and strength. Being part of a worldwide church family took on new meaning. This was not an empty concept, but something real, tangible, divine, and practical.

As my husband rests in the grave, I have the hope of the resurrection. I have begun a new journey. An unwanted journey. A lonely journey. A painful journey. A journey washed in tears. A journey of discovery: self-discovery, but more importantly, a God discovery. A journey of healing. A journey of restoration. A journey of change. A journey of joy and laughter. A journey of thankfulness.

Most of all, it is a journey where I have come to a better understanding and experience of the goodness and love of God in ways that are difficult to describe, but amazing to experience. God has

blessed my life beyond all measure, making me a stronger, more resilient woman, who loves God more than anything else and who wants to live a life which brings honor and glory to Him.

Time brings a different perspective. People talk of closure, but I am not sure that closure is possible, desirable, or even what it would look like. Rather, I have begun to learn to accommodate, but recognize that there will always be times when loss and pain will rear their ugly heads. The difference is to recognize and accept that these times will come, and when they do, to pause, reflect and move on.

As I look forward, slowly the shadows and shapes of a new future are beginning to form. I don’t know exactly what it will look like, or where it will take me. However, I recognize I am not alone. God is ever present, but I am also grateful for the people who have been God’s extended eyes, ears, voice, hands and feet.

I draw strength from the love that we shared, courage from the kindness and compassion of others, and hope from the goodness, grace and mercy of God. I want to continue to try to live each day to the full—trusting in God, His goodness, and mercy. During the past 15 months, I have been blessed beyond measure. God has not failed me in the past. He has demonstrated that He is with me in the present, and I have confidence that He will not fail me as I look to the future.

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