

The Sabbath Watchman

November-December 2017

YEARS OF REFORMATION



**GENERAL CONFERENCE
WORLD ASSEMBLY ISSUE**

Report and Meeting Summaries



Passing the Banner

Running up to the 500th-year commemoration of the Protestant Reformation, the descendants of those famous Reformers met in Europe–Italy–to hold the 17th General Conference World Assembly of this Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement. The delegates elected the twelfth different General Conference President since the first faithful members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were disfellowshipped in 1914 for refusing to bear arms and kill their fellow men.

September 12-30, 2017, was a historical time and a milestone in the history of God's people. While nominal Protestants were "stretching their hands across the gulf ... to clasp hands with the Roman power" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 588), believers from over 100 countries rededicated themselves to their divine calling. Following the example of the early Reformers, they accepted the sacred trust to hold aloft the banner of truth that was passed to a new group of hands.

"The responsibility for this great gift rests with those whom God has blessed with a knowledge of His word. We are to receive this word as supreme authority. We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God's word must be recognized as above all human legislation. A 'Thus saith the Lord' is not to be set aside for a 'Thus saith the church' or a 'Thus saith the state.' The crown of Christ is to be lifted above the diadems of earthly potentates." –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 68.

This issue of *The Sabbath Watchman* contains a record of that transition. May this written history serve as a reminder and encouragement to all who were present in Italy and to all who will read the record in these pages.

The crown of Christ
is to be lifted above
the diadems of
earthly potentates.

Beacon of hope, faith, and truth in a confused world.

We believe:

- The all-wise, loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ; He is its Owner and Sustainer.
- He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh.
- The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth, convicts of sin, guides into truth, and, when abiding in man, overcomes all unrighteousness.
- The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine; the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform.
- His people, in harmony with God's Word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.
- Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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Delegates, outgoing officers, and newly elected officers of the 2017 General Conference World Assembly.

Delegates' Meetings

The 2017 General Conference World Assembly Delegates' Meetings began on Tuesday, September 12, at the beautiful Salinello Camping Village in Tortoreto, Italy, a few minutes from the headquarters of the Italian Field and a 3-hour bus trip from the main airport in Rome.

The delegates were welcomed by the outgoing President, Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., who had completed two five-year terms.

Reports were presented by him, the other primary officers, and leaders of all the Divisions, Unions, Fields, and Departments.

The following pages contain summaries of the officers', Division leaders', and Department leaders' reports. The Division leaders' summaries provide a brief view of the work in each area of the world as well as a list of the countries

in each where there are members and ongoing labor.

A new feature in the delegates' meetings was electronic voting. This made a big difference in the amount of time that had to be spent on the mechanical operations, thus allowing additional time for the more important aspects of the meetings. There was also an electronic translation system with earphones.



Salinello Conference Center Meeting Hall, location of the delegates' meetings as well as some Wednesday and Thursday Public Conference meetings.

After hearing the reports, the delegates proceeded to the election of officers for the next five years (2017-2022) while simultaneously working through proposals and recommendations that had been submitted by Fields, Unions, Divisions, and the General Conference Committee.

The schedule was quite demanding, and often the brethren found themselves working late into the night. The total number of working days was just 13, two of them being half days for Sabbath preparation.

The activities on Sabbath, September 16, included regular services; the sermon was presented by Elder Henry Andrade,

who honored God in obedience and sacrifice.

In Germany are two large buildings holding thousands of miles of documents relating to individuals and government interactions with them. In World War II, when, of course, there were no copy machines or scanners, government officials and employees monitored the mail being sent to and from individuals of whom the government was suspicious in attempts to obtain incriminating information against them. The contents would be removed from an envelope, retyped, and filed, after which the original was placed back in the envelope and sent on

house produced a new book, *Du sammelst meine Tränen* (You Gather My Tears), which expands the history contained in the older book. The delegates were greatly impressed by what they heard and saw about individual believers and the church leaders who courageously upheld the truth in the face of such terrible conditions. Today persecution is still faced by faithful Christians around the world. Their example is a great inspiration to all who serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

The delegates went on a one-day excursion to Rome, where they had the opportunity to visit important sites, including the Colosseum, where Christians died for



Delegates and staff gathered for this picture in the amphitheater across from the Meeting Hall.

former General Conference President, from Australia. The afternoon was spent enjoying music from delegate ensembles and choirs along with stories and experiences from different countries.

On the next Sabbath, Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., presented the service, which was translated into English by his wife, Sister Linda Suarez. In the afternoon, a very special PowerPoint presentation was given by Brother Helmut Welker, from Germany.

He has been very motivated to research the lives and experiences of the faithful Adventists during World War I and their Reformer counterparts in World War II,

to the addressee. In searching through documents, Brother Welker and others discovered information concerning faithful believers about whom they had not previously known.

The delegates heard about and saw pictures of believers who endured unbelievably terrible torture because they refused to violate the holy Sabbath or take up arms against their fellow men. Some of the stories and letters of those who gave their lives for God are known from the book *And Follow Their Faith*, which has been translated into several languages. The German Union publishing

their faith, and the Catacombs. We marvel at the faith and courage of those who have gone the way before us, treading the self-denying path to the throne of God that Jesus Himself walked.

During the Delegates' Meetings and the Public Conference, there was a lot of music, showing that powerful voices and musical talent have been given generously to God's people.

May everything that was experienced and accomplished by the delegates honor the God of heaven, who promises to complete His work on earth and soon take His faithful children to their heavenly home.

REPORT SUMMARIES—Officers

President



Idel Suarez, Jr.

Under God's mighty hand, the primary goals under my leadership in the last five years, as well as the five years before that, were to:

- **Evangelize** as many new countries as possible with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Increase the **worldwide membership** through missionary outreach, including moving missionaries worldwide to existing and new mission fields and providing leadership, communication, and education to as many Unions and Fields as possible in coordination with the Division leaders.
- Lift the **standard** of truth and uphold the Principles of Faith, including the Biblical doctrines of Marriage, the Sabbath, Tithe, Health Reform, the Prophesied Reformation, and the Nature of Christ.
- Improve the **revenues** and assets of the church.
- Faithfully invest the **Special Sabbath School Offerings** and funds channeled through the General Conference by assisting as many Fields and Unions as possible.

During the last five years, the membership worldwide increased from 30,470 to 33,663, a 10.5 percent net increase. Over the last ten years, the membership increased by 6,115 members.

The total number of new countries reached over the last five years was 39, 19 of which have baptized members, while 20 have contacts only. Within the last ten years, 58 new countries were reached, and 36 of them have baptized members. In the last five years, missionaries were transferred to 68 locations around the world, and the number for the last ten years was 103.

During the term just ended, the General Conference received tithes, offerings,

and other income of \$7,470,102.11, primarily from Unions and Fields in the Americas and Europe. In addition to this, funds collected for Special Sabbath School Offerings totaled \$1,077,331.79 and \$1.9 million for the last five and ten years, respectively. Disbursement of Special Sabbath School Offerings totaled \$1,111,438.05 for the last five years. Total assets increased from \$2,301,578 in 2006 to \$3,029,636.43. The main recipients of financial help were in Africa and Asia.

In 2014, two representatives of the International Missionary Society gave presentations before attendees at a symposium at Friedensau Adventist University titled "The Impact of World War I on Seventh-day Adventism." A question-and-answer session allowed our brethren to praise God for the faithfulness of His people. At the end of the symposium, an official apology was made by the German Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the Reform Movement.

Also in 2014, a Centennial Commemoration was held at the General Conference headquarters with representatives from 33 countries and 340 participants. Other special events held at the headquarters

were a Spirit of Prophecy Symposium and a North American Symposium in 2015, and a joint international Family and Youth Conference in 2016.

Beyond this, many difficulties were faced, including corruption, lawsuits, and mafia assaults.

I spent an average of 136 days per year traveling abroad to supervise delegates' meetings and participate in conferences, symposiums, and Union and Field committee meetings.

Furthermore, I wrote 30 articles for *The Sabbath Watchman* during the last five years and taught courses at Bethesda Missionary Institute during two missionary training series.

The Internet was used to stream services from the headquarters and also for remote communication using Skype for General Conference Committee meetings.

Drafts of a revised *Church Manual* and a *Ministerial Manual* were developed. I recommend that the strong missionary emphasis of the last decade be maintained and the standard of truth be upheld. In addition, it is recommended that the Presidents of large Unions be included in the General Conference Full Committee and that legal counsel be added to the General Conference staff. "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." Psalm 118:23.



Idel Suarez, Jr., outgoing President, presented his report to the delegates.

Vice President/First Secretary



Pablo Hunger

"... And ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath

failed thereof." Joshua 23:14.

The following requirements and objectives guided the work of the Vice President/First Secretary:

- Support the General Conference President and Committee in the various projects.
- Record and maintain minutes of all Executive Committee meetings and Full Committee meetings.
- Support the various Ministries and Departments.
- Help promote the worldwide expansion of missionary outreach and foreign missions, particularly with documents, work permits, travel arrangements, and living and work arrangements.
- Promote the Youth Internship Program.
- Support the development of missionary schools.
- Maintain General Conference correspondence.
- Maintain General Conference archives.
- Facilitate activities among the Executive Committee, Full Committee, Departments, Divisions, Unions, and Fields.
- Assist with travel, supervision of delegates' meetings and elections, and event activities.
- Maintain statistics.
- Train and communicate with Union and Field secretaries.
- Maintain the legal framework of the organization worldwide through proper registration.

- Carry out the General Conference working plan.
- Coordinate events at the General Conference headquarters, including symposiums and conferences.
- Coordinate all aspects of the 2017 General Conference World Assembly.
- Supervise operations of the General Conference headquarters, including Cedar Christian School.
- Support local church activities.

By the grace of God, 158 countries have been reached with the present truth; of

these, 135 have members, and 23 have contacts. In 2012, the church had members in 116 countries, which means that the work extended to 19 more countries by 2017, representing a 16.4 percent growth.

According to the United Nations, there are 195 countries worldwide. If we consider that 158 countries have members and contacts, it is still necessary to reach 37 more countries with the message of the present truth. See the President and Treasurer's reports for basic statistics.

It is by the grace of God alone that so much was accomplished by so few people. May His blessing be upon each one!



Some of the instructors and students from Cedar Christian School presented a choir piece.



The General Conference headquarters houses the chapel, offices, conference room, multipurpose room with kitchen, sleeping quarters, Cedar Christian School, and gymnasium.

REPORT SUMMARIES—Officers

Treasurer



Douglas Francis

As in all past administrative periods, the Treasury Department of the General Conference experienced ups and downs over the last five years. The low

points were caused by delays when Fields and Unions were slow or unable to send their quarterly reports or transfer funds at regular intervals, while expenses for the support of developing missions, Fields, and Unions continued or increased.

The tithes and offerings received from Fields, Unions, and individuals from June 1, 2012, through July 31, 2017 were \$8.5 million. The total expenditures were \$7.3 million. The portion received for Special Sabbath School Offerings was \$1.08 million. The disbursement of the Special Sabbath School Offerings was \$1.11 million.

Division disbursements

The five Divisions established by the delegates became more involved in administration during the last five years. Each Division received the 2 percent of funds from their own Fields and Unions that gave a voluntary percentage, and each was also allotted means from funds that could be used more broadly, such as the Sabbath School Fund, Week of Prayer Fund, First Fruit Fund, and Miscellaneous Fund. The following percentages were used to disburse such funds to the Divisions, based on relative need and the membership in the Fields or Unions located within the given Division's jurisdiction.

Africa	24 percent
Asia	13 percent
Europe	18 percent
Latin America	38 percent
Oceania	7 percent
Total	100 percent

Funding of Ministries and Departments

The Committee approved most of the requests from the Departments. A long delay in receiving funds and reports from some larger contributors and meeting the ongoing expenses were major challenges.

"The president and the business manager are to work unitedly together. The business manager is to see that the expenditure does not exceed the income. He is to know what there is to depend on, so that the work here shall not be burdened with debt....." —*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 275, 276.

Please note that some Unions and Fields met the costs of the travel for certain Department leaders to visit conferences and events. We are very grateful to those generous Fields and Unions.

When the accounting, reports, and payments from Unions and Fields were brought current, the Committee saw imbalances in the Departments' spending and disbursed additional means from funds that may be used for broader purposes. Each fund was always disbursed in accordance with its limitations (restricted or unrestricted).

"It is not the will of God that any of His servants should move hastily and take shortsighted views. He would have them wait patiently, and manifest due consideration. Every movement should be made with judicious thoughtfulness, and after much prayer. Then our brethren will have a more even, tranquil experience, and will be able to be a greater benefit to the people; for the glory of the Lord will be their rearward." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 210, 211.

We remind ourselves and everyone everywhere, whether part of an established Field or Union or of a brand new fledgling area, that helping ourselves and each other to be faithful in giving the tithes and offerings is critically important to receiving not just physical but also spiritual blessings, as God Himself states in the Holy Scriptures.

The church is a family—the joining of heaven and earth—and what each person does or does not do affects the entire family. "If fathers and mothers are true Christians in the family, they will be useful members of the church, and will be able to conduct affairs in the church and in society after the same manner in which they conduct their family concerns. Parents, let not your religion be simply a profession, but let it become a reality." —*Signs of the Times*, May 8, 1894.



Delegates and officers in session.

African Division



Parmenas Shirima

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work." 2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17.

COUNTRIES AND POPULATIONS

South Africa	56,717,156
Zimbabwe	16,529,904
Zambia	17,094,130
Kenya	49,699,862
Swaziland	1,367,254
Tanzania	57,310,019
Malawi	18,622,104
Mozambique	29,668,834
Uganda	42,862,958
Dem. Republic of Congo	81,339,988
Burundi	10,864,245
Rwanda	12,208,407
Ghana	27,470,168
Cameroon	24,053,727
Angola	29,784,193
Nigeria	190,886,311
Botswana	2,291,661
Madagascar	25,570,895
Seychelles	94,737
Liberia	4,731,906
Ethiopia	104,957,438
Sierra Leone	7,557,212
Guinea	12,717,176
Togo	7,797,694
Benin	11,175,692
The Gambia	2,038,501
South Sudan	12,575,714
Senegal	15,850,567
Ivory Coast	24,294,750
Mali	18,541,980
Burkina Faso	19,193,382
Lesotho	2,233,339
Guinea Bissau	1,861,283
Namibia	2,533,794
Djibouti	956,985
Congo Brazzaville	5,260,750
TOTAL	948,714,716

(Source: <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country/>)

MEMBERSHIP: 13,871



“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.” —*Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, p. 204.

My responsibilities in the African Division over the past five years included visiting Unions, Fields, and local churches for seminars, committee meetings, conferences, counseling of families and young people, writing, correspondence, and communication by Skype and other social media.

The two missionary schools under the General Conference in Africa (Bethel Adventist Missionary Institute in Nairobi, Kenya, and Gilead Adventist Missionary Institute in Accra, Ghana) have been very helpful in training and preparing missionaries for many places throughout Africa. So far, about 100 missionaries have graduated from these two institutions.

We believe that the efforts to advance the gospel message into the African countries, as well as all other countries in the world, support the following statement in a very important way: “A Firmament of Chosen Ones—Among earth’s inhabitants,

scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. In heathen Africa,... God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness,...” —*Evangelism*, p. 706.

Everyone who loves God and the heavenly kingdom will find some way to carry out His mission—by personal effort, by preaching, by contributing to the training and support of missionaries, by prayer, and by holding up the hands of those who bear heavy responsibilities in the name of God. May He bless every sincere effort!



Instructors, staff, and students at the BAMI graduation, October 22, 2017.

REPORT SUMMARIES—Divisions

Asian Division



Douglas Francis

"And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Malachi 3:17.

Asia is the most diverse continent on earth with the most number of different ethnic groups, languages, religions, cultures, castes, tribes, etc. All of the most popular world religions have their origin here. Every area has its own unique identity—lifestyle, food, dress, and marriage and religious practices. It is amazing to see the willingness of new believers to face even ostracism from their families and society when they give up established practices (such as jewelry and meat-eating) for the love of Christ and His principles. Also, this area of the world suffers the most from violence and cruelty between rival religious groups and is the breeding ground for all of the main terrorist groups in the world.

To spread the gospel house-to-house or by distributing literature is difficult and even prohibited by law in some countries when the society considers such activities a threat to the majority religion. Therefore, we offer health and educational assistance to such countries, praying that God will open the way for His Word in His time.

To find capable spiritual leaders in newer areas of the Division, the Philippine Union has been especially generous in allowing its trained workers to take on responsibilities in other Fields. The Philippine Union is like a big brother in the Division. Furthermore, many Philippine believers go to work in other countries, especially in the Middle East where the church has had no members or influence. Their little groups have lit a light in dark places; this is the case in Israel, and it has made it possible for brethren to visit there.



Those who have accepted the Lord with all their hearts in the Middle East face particularly difficult situations. A brother and his family from Iraq are now living in Lebanon, because they had to flee for their lives. A brother who wants to help in Yemen faces a similar challenge. Please pray for these faithful believers—for their safety, for their desire to be a blessing wherever possible, and for wisdom for those responsible for the missionary outreach.

The Asia Pacific Missionary School in Philippines completed one term with students from Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Myanmar, South Korea, and Philippines. Additional students wanted to attend from India, Yemen, Bangladesh, and Vietnam, but their visas were denied.

It was a joy to hold two Asian Division Symposiums—one in Sri Lanka and the other in Philippines. General Conference leaders and representatives from different departments provided training in theological subjects, principles of faith, health, finances, systematic benevolence, personnel and resource management, and administration.

Our supreme gratitude goes to God and to all—ministers, believers, and their families—who have sought to be a blessing in the Asian countries during the last five years and even before that—throughout the past fifty years in many different ways!

COUNTRIES AND POPULATIONS

Philippines	104,918,090
China	1,409,517,397
Bangladesh	164,669,751
Hong Kong	7,364,883
India	1,339,180,127
Israel	8,321,570
Japan	127,484,450
Lebanon	6,082,357
Malaysia	31,624,264
Myanmar	53,370,609
Nepal	28,304,998
North Korea	25,490,965
Pakistan	197,015,955
Saudi Arabia	32,938,213
South Korea	50,982,212
Sri Lanka	20,876,917
Thailand	69,037,513
United Arab Emirates	9,400,145
Vietnam	95,540,800
Yemen	28,250,420
TOTAL	3,810,371,636

(Source: <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country/>)

MEMBERSHIP: 2,692

European Division



Francesco Caputo



COUNTRIES AND POPULATIONS

Austria	8,735,453
Bulgaria	7,084,571
Estonia	1,309,632
Finland	5,523,231
France	64,979,548
Germany	82,114,224
Greece	11,159,773
Hungary	9,721,559
Italy	59,539,900
Kazakhstan	18,204,499
United Kingdom	66,181,585
Kyrgyzstan	6,045,117
Malta	430,835
Netherlands	17,035,938
Poland	38,170,712
Portugal	10,329,506
Romania	19,679,306
Russia	143,989,754
Serbia	8,790,574
Spain	46,354,321
Sweden	9,910,701
Switzerland	8,476,005
Turkey	80,745,020
Ukraine	44,222,947
Uzbekistan	31,910,641
TOTAL	800,645,352

(Source: <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country/>)

MEMBERSHIP: 1,443

My activities in the European Division over the past five years included the following: Attending conferences and leading delegates' meetings in which new officers were elected, participating in meetings of the General Conference Full Committee, conducting seminars both in person and by Skype, making presentations at symposiums within the European Division, purchasing and selling properties, and leading meetings of the European Division Committee.

I visited all of the countries listed in the "Countries" box between one and eleven times each.

The opportunity for the General Conference World Assembly to be hosted in Tortoreto, Italy, in the European Division, is a dream come true. There has been great enthusiasm over this event, and it is with great pleasure that I thank all who worked so hard to make it a blessing to so many. May the God of heaven put His blessings on His children everywhere as they seek to uplift and honor His holy name.



The Italian Field choir presented special music on Sabbath for the public meetings.

REPORT SUMMARIES—Divisions

Latin American Division



Danilo Lopez Monterroso

COUNTRIES AND POPULATIONS

Brazil	195,632,000
Mexico	118,419,000
Colombia	47,130,000
Argentina	41,350,000
Peru	30,476,000
Venezuela	29,760,000
Chile	16,841,000
Ecuador	15,779,000
Guatemala	15,440,000
Cuba	11,163,000
Haiti	10,671,000
Bolivia	10,517,000
Dominican Republic	9,745,000
Honduras	8,578,000
Paraguay	6,849,000
El Salvador	6,635,000
Nicaragua	6,216,000
Costa Rica	4,667,000
French Guiana	287,000
Panama	3,605,000
Uruguay	3,297,000
Belize	374,000
Aruba	106,000
Curacao	142,000
Suriname	551,000
TOTAL	594,230,000

MEMBERSHIP: 14,583

"And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark 16:15.

Before Jesus' second coming, the everlasting gospel is to be preached to all who "dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Revelation 14:6-12.

God "hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world...." Acts 17:31. It does not say that the whole world will be converted, but "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14.

Through the proclamation of the gospel to the world, it is possible for us to hasten the coming of our Lord. We are not supposed to simply wait for the coming of the day of God, but also to hasten it. 2 Peter 3:12.

"Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 633.

In this five-year period, the Latin American Division suffered when Elder Martin Lagunas became ill and was unable to continue as leader. I was asked to assist him and continued as Substitute Division Leader. Of the 25 countries that were part of the Latin American Division, five will become part of the new American/Caribbean Division.

Division activities that I participated in included 30 conferences with 25 delegates' meetings, 25 seminars, 7 symposiums, 1 music conference, 1 health conference, 2 General Conference Full Committee sessions by Skype and 4 in person, 3 Division Committee meetings by Skype, and 18 ordinations of ministers.



All of the Unions and Fields are up to date with their reports to the General Conference except for two, and all but three are up to date with their contributions. During this term, four Special Sabbath School Offerings were gathered for the Latin American Division (Cuba, Bolivia, Belize, and the school in Guatemala). Two headquarters and two parsonages were constructed (in Bolivia and in Belize).

We have a presence in almost all of the countries making up the Latin American Division. The challenge is great to reach the islands, the large cities, and the small villages that have not heard the present truth. "God's people must be a peculiar, holy people, distinct in character and practice from the world, distinguished from all the religionists of the day.... Christ has said, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' The Lord has set His church as a light in the world, to guide the world to heaven." —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 304.

Oceania Division



Antonin Salavyov



COUNTRIES AND POPULATIONS

Australia	24,450,561
New Zealand	4,705,818
French Polynesia	283,007
Samoa	196,440
American Samoa	55,641
Tonga	108,020
Cook Islands	17,380
Papua New Guinea	8,251,162
New Caledonia	276,255
Fiji	905,502
Vanuatu	276,244
Solomon Islands	611,343
Indonesia	263,991,379
TOTAL	304,128,752

(Source: <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country/>)

MEMBERSHIP: 333

“Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.” “Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare His praise in the islands.” Isaiah 42:10, 12.

During the last five years, we received great blessings from our Lord despite difficulties. Elders Idel Suarez, Jr., Douglas Francis, and Tzvetan Petkov visited us, along with Sister Raquel Orce Sotomayor. God blessed us with new souls, solved many problems, and poured

out His Spirit for the advancement of His work. In Australia, we are developing centers for missionary outreach in five cities. We also have a website (<https://imspacific.org>) for spreading the gospel, managed by Brother Ivan Salavyov. We invite everyone to visit the website regularly for news, inspirational articles, pictures showing what is happening among God’s people here, along with some very amazing stories.

We solicit your prayers and gifts for the advancement of the heavenly kingdom!



During the Public Conference, participants could sometimes choose between two concurrent sessions, such as this one.

REPORT SUMMARIES—Departments

Canvassing



By Raquel Orce Sotomayor

Please refer to the Summary for the Family Department and Social Ministry for additional materials that can support the canvassing work. Specifically four sets of PowerPoint presentations were compiled, along with supplemental materials for the administration and carrying out of the canvassing work. These materials will be passed along to the next leader of the Canvassing Department.

In addition to the above, I prepared five sets of PowerPoint presentations and supplemental materials for missionary schools. Four of those sets deal with the evaluation and accreditation of instructors. Another set encompasses subjects for Bible instruction.

PowerPoint presentations were also prepared for doctrinal seminars, particularly as related to basic Adventist teachings, such as the 144,000, the sealing, the Holy Spirit, the Sunday law, the latter rain, Revelation 17, Daniel 11, and various points of prophecy. These subjects have been dealt with before, and they are brought together in these presentations.

Miscellaneous activities that I carried out included cooperation with my husband, Elder Tzvetan Petkov, in recording weekly Sabbath School Lessons instruction for teachers and ministers, in Spanish and English, regular correspondence, editing and proofreading of some *Sabbath School Lessons* in Spanish, and writing thirteen miscellaneous articles in Spanish and two in English for various publications.

Thank you to all who assisted in every area of the work. May our heavenly Father be honored in everything.

Education



By Danilo Lopez Monterroso

“We must educate, educate, educate, pleasantly and intelligently. We must preach the truth, pray the truth,

and live the truth, bringing it, with its gracious, health-giving influences within the reach of those who know it not.” —*Medical Ministry*, p. 262.

My activities for the Education Department in the last term are summarized as follows:

- Support and supervision of the primary and high schools (Peru, Ecuador,

Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, U.S.A.).

- Attendance at primary and secondary school graduation ceremonies (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador).
- Visits to missionary schools (Eminel in Peru, Berea in Argentina, Insetes and Gilgal in Colombia, Berea in Mexico, and Bethesda in the U.S.A.).
- Attendance at missionary school graduations (Insetes in Colombia, Berea in Argentina, and Bethesda in the U.S.A.).
- Education seminars at youth camps and conferences (Mexico, Colombia, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Venezuela, Honduras).
- Education seminars at family conferences (Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala).
- Incorporation of motto into the school logos—“Educating for Eternity.”
- Assignment of a chaplain in each primary and high school to take charge of Bible instruction.
- Implementation of parental education in the schools.
- Seminars for teachers.

Financial support in the amount of \$30,870 was granted to nine primary, high school, and missionary schools from regular funds and Special Sabbath School Offerings.

The following Fields and Unions maintain primary, secondary, and/or missionary schools: Burundi (1), Cameroon (1), China (1), Colombia (3), Congo (280), Ecuador (1), El Salvador (1), Guatemala (1), Haiti (1), Honduras (1), Kenya (6), Liberia (4), Madagascar (1), Peru (4), Philippines (1), Tanzania (4), U.S.A. (1), Uganda (3), Zambia (2). The total is 317.

Our work is to finish the work that God has given us to do, and every person will receive a reward according to his or her labor. “And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Revelation 22:12.



These Latin American brethren were happy to share their music.

REPORT SUMMARIES—Departments

Evangelism



By Alfred Ngwenya

"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." Psalm 34:8.

A well-balanced work can be carried on best in the cities when a Bible school for the training of workers is in progress while public meetings are being held. Connected with this training school or city mission should be experienced laborers of deep spiritual understanding, who can give the Bible workers daily instruction, and who can also unite wholeheartedly in the general public effort." —*Gospel Workers*, p. 364.

In line with the above counsel, the Evangelism Department focused its activities on two areas during the past five years: (1) Public evangelistic meetings and (2) training seminars for church leaders, workers, and lay members.

A system was begun that connected all evangelism activities, from the General Conference down to the local church. This was begun with crusades, seminars, and training in different Fields and Unions in the following countries: Madagascar, Nigeria, Philippines, Mozambique, Peru, Colombia, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Zambia, Lesotho, South Africa, Malawi, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Togo. Many of the details of the visits to these countries have appeared in *The Sabbath Watchman*.

During my visit to the General Conference headquarters, I recorded 7 videos for training new workers and members how to do missionary work as well as 14 more that can be used for crusades and presented directly to the public, titled "An Opportunity to Know God." Links for these videos can be found on the General Conference website at www.sda1844.org under the Evangelism Department.

I was also asked to serve on the General Conference Full Committee and did so

mostly online through Skype. In addition, I served as the Swaziland Field President.

May God bless everything that has been done in His name and through His great power.

Family



By Raquel Orce Sotomayor

The Family Department and two others (Youth Department and Education Department) formed the Social Ministry, which I supervised during the last five years. I prepared instructional materials, gave technical advice, and encouraged spiritual activities.

Ten PowerPoint presentations were prepared for the Youth Department in Spanish, French, and English for each of two levels titled "The Way to Christ" and "Following Christ"; and ten presentations were prepared in Spanish and English for two additional levels titled "Characters Like Christ" and "Maturity in Christ." In addition, devotional and inspirational books were prepared for the young people—one in French, four in English, and three in Spanish.

For the Education Department, nine compilations were prepared in Spanish, French, and English as textbooks for primary and middle school-age children. Contact the General Conference Publishing Department regarding these materials.

I traveled to a number of countries in Latin America, North America, Africa, Australia, China, and Finland to participate in seminars on education, family, women, prophecy, and canvassing.

For the Family Department, I compiled six devotional and inspiration books for the family and wrote three (nine books in Spanish, with one translated into French and six translated into English). In addition, ten sets of PowerPoint presentations were prepared variously in Spanish and English. The topics of the sets are: (1) Family Fundamentals, Family Challenges, Family Ethics, The Family and Children

(Parts 1 and 2), The Ministerial Family, Family Topics, Family Counseling, and The Healthy Family. Nine compilations and books were written for small children. In addition, a basic family website in Spanish was set up at www.smifamilia1844.com.

Family seminars were prepared and placed on YouTube, and information concerning these can be obtained from the General Conference Publishing Department or the General Conference Family Department.

God bless all of the work that was accomplished for His glory and for the blessing of the family.

The Good Samaritan



By Stefano La Corte

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unsponsored from the world." James 1:27.

God gave directions so that among His people there will be neither some rich beyond measure nor the miserable poor without the necessities of life. There were no poor in the land when Israel remained faithful to God.

"In the balances of the sanctuary the gifts of the poor, made from love to Christ, are not estimated according to the amount given, but according to the love which prompts the sacrifice." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 398.

"The offerings of the poor, given through self-denial to aid in extending the precious light of saving truth, will not only be a sweet-smelling savor to God, and wholly acceptable to Him as a consecrated gift, but the very act of giving expands the heart of the giver, and unites him more fully to the Redeemer of the world." —*Review and Herald*, October 31, 1878.

The Good Samaritan non-governmental organization is the General Conference department that aids those who are poor,

REPORT SUMMARIES—Departments

orphans, widows, and sick within the church worldwide.

We thank the Lord for His great blessings and all the brothers and sisters and friends for making it possible to share resources with our brothers and sisters in time of need, including poverty, illness, and natural disasters. When we have the opportunity, we present our requests to those outside the faith, and they are happy to help relieve suffering.

We have provided food and medicines in emergency situations, and we have also set in motion work projects to help families provide for their own subsistence. We have also invested heavily in education, especially on the African continent.

The General Conference invested heavily in many countries that the message had not yet reached. Great efforts have been and will be made. It is certainly positive that so many new countries have been entered over the last five years. All the brothers and sisters who sacrificed to engage in missionary outreach in a country other than their own are thanked wholeheartedly.

However, when their service is completed and they return home, some may encounter difficulties that they never imagined, in which case they frequently contact The Good Samaritan Department for assistance. In fact, there have even been cases in which a spouse died in a foreign country and the General Conference provided transportation of the body back to the home country, at a cost of thousands of dollars!

Sometimes the needs are beyond belief. By contributing to the Foreign Missions Fund, believers can make a big difference in the advancement of the gospel work; and donations to the Good Samaritan Department will help those who are sick and in distress.

Total income from all sources for The Good Samaritan Department for the calendar years 2012-2016 totaled 484,270.50 Euros (approximately US \$566,600). Disbursements totalling 543,851.02 Euros (US \$636,300) provided assistance for the

poor, orphans, sick, department expenses, educational projects, and disasters.

The operations of the Department are located in Italy and are carried on with great sacrifice by those who keep their fingers on the pulse of suffering in this world. Let everyone in God's cause seek ways to use his or her abundance for the Master who told the rich young man, "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." Mark 10:21. Now is the time to look on high and use our resources for the purpose that Heaven desires.

Health/Medical



By Roland De La Paz

"That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations." "Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and

I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth." Psalm 67:2; Jeremiah 33:6.

"The medical missionary work is to be to the work of the church as the right arm to the body. The third angel goes forth proclaiming the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. The medical missionary work is the gospel in practice." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 77.

Quite a lot of activity was carried out in the five-year period from 2012 to 2017. A highlight was a meeting of the Medical Board, held March 13-15, 2013. Seven brothers and sisters, most of them medical professionals, laid out plans, projects, goals, and a schedule of activities for the department and discussed doctrinal issues related to health, medical procedures, and financing.

Educational activities were carried out, including seminars, preparation of literature, and various forms of multimedia presentations, in Africa, Latin America, Europe, and Asia. Sometimes these were combined with evangelistic campaigns.

I corresponded with people around the world, both believers and unbelievers, about health issues, dentistry, natural medicine, and registration of the International Health Organization (IHO), as well as General Conference resolutions relating to dress reform, nutrition, and exercise.

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa occurred from 2014 to 2016 and impacted the missionaries and their families and the gospel work itself. There were many very tragic situations that affected the newly developed church communities. The prayers of the believers worldwide and the efforts of all who were close to critical areas are a testimony to the grace of God and His watchcare over His precious children.

Some Fields and Unions were blessed to be able to present health topics on the radio and television, and I participated in some of these. The Asia Pacific Missionary School held its first term from November 2015 to June 2016.

Health clinics in Latin America, Africa, and China (a home for the aged) were visited, evaluated, and encouraged. This type of activity is especially important in countries that limit religious activities; and here, too, God was gracious to His people and called those who long for His blessings.

Let all who have interest in health use the divine principles to advance the heavenly kingdom.

Ministerial



By Tzvetan Petkov

"And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Revelation 8:4.

The Ministerial Department members met right after the General Conference in South Africa to develop their working plan, calendar, and budget. The delegates had requested the study of certain subjects, and these were included.

REPORT SUMMARIES—Departments

However, various extenuating circumstances required the plan to be revised during the February 2013 meeting to concentrate on particular projects not requiring funding and that could be integrated with the plans of the General Conference Full Committee.

The ongoing activities included preparing weekly Sabbath school videos, in addition to work on websites, online seminars, and email correspondence. I was employed full time for the American Union, and it donated 6 weeks per year for me to travel and work for the General Conference. In addition, the American Union sponsored the Sabbath school video program, and the General Conference compensated my wife for helping with these videos.

Research was carried out on numerous doctrinal subjects that required intensive study and interviews. A list of the topics can be obtained from the Ministerial Department. A few books were updated or written on leadership ethics, administration, and finances. Seminars, classes, and symposiums were conducted in countries on every continent. Drafts of a new *Ministerial Manual* and revisions of the *Church Manual* were prepared for presentation to the delegates.

I pray that rich fruit will result for God's kingdom from the activities that were done.

Multimedia



By Noe Chappa

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Colossians 3:17.

In the last few decades, communications technologies have changed dramatically from books and media being produced and distributed by large companies to social media platforms where individuals share information and news. This makes possible the rapid sharing of

the truth of Jesus Christ with the whole world, even as enormous amounts of information clamor for people's attention.

It is our responsibility to uplift the eternal principles of truth, publishing "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report" (Philippians 4:8) so searching individuals may come to know Jesus and accept Him as their Lord and Saviour before He returns.

The church's multimedia arm seeks to:

- Proclaim the gospel through the Internet and various forms of media so those who do not know the truth may discover it.
- Proclaim the eternal gospel on the radio in numerous languages.
- Support the General Conference departments in publicizing their activities.

Fulfilling our first objective has been the establishment of the official English (www.sda1844.org) and Spanish (www.asd1844.org) websites and the use of social networks. Thus the teachings of Scripture have been published, especially our principles of faith in all possible languages for various devices—computers, tablets, smart phones, and HDTV. Current and archived publications, such as *The Sabbath Watchman*, *Sabbath School Lessons*, and other official publications are available on these websites.

The Centennial Commemoration of the Reformation was broadcast live from the General Conference headquarters in July 2014; and the Latin American Division music event, "Latin American Sacred Music Encounter," in August 2016. Recordings of numerous broadcasts are available from the General Conference Publishing Department and on the website of the General Conference. Equipment was purchased for an online sacred music radio station under the name Hosanna International Radio.

To support the General Conference departments, various materials were pro-

duced and published for the dissemination of present truth. These materials are available in Spanish at www.asd1844.org/mision2017/es.html.

Some of these materials are being developed in other languages. Volunteers who have the gift of translation are encouraged to contact the General Conference to offer their help. Thank you to all who helped with the various projects in different countries; your enthusiastic participation is greatly valued.

Publishing



By Larry Watts

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning...." Mark 13:35.

"There are so many to be warned, and yet how few sympathize with God sufficiently to be anything or nothing if only they can see souls won to Christ!" —*Gospel Workers*, p. 116.

Although my primary responsibility in the last five years was in the Publishing Department, as leader of the Missionary Ministry, I supervised in varying degrees the Multimedia, Evangelism, and Canvassing Departments in addition to serving on the General Conference Executive Committee and traveling internationally for administrative and education purposes. The General Conference leaders constantly face the challenges of distance, language, culture, finances, and doctrinal differences, and all of these were met and overcome solely by God's grace and for His glory.

The Publishing Department operates as IMS Publishing Assn., a business owned by the General Conference. Its accounting is separate from that of the General Conference, and its income is from the sale of products. Of all the departments, the Publishing Department is the only one that operates under constant deadlines. All those who helped to produce

REPORT SUMMARIES—Departments

the periodicals (*Sabbath School Lessons*, *The Sabbath Watchman*, and *Readings for the Week of Prayer*) are greatly appreciated, especially Elder Antonino Di Franca, Past General Conference President. God bless you, Brother Di Franca, for all your efforts in preparing originals of the *Sabbath School Lessons* and other publications.

During this term, the Publishing Department supervised the creation, editing, design, proofreading, and distribution of publications for both internal church use and external outreach, upholding the holy Scriptures and the testimony of Jesus. The publications include magazines, books, and various forms of multimedia. In addition, encouragement was provided to Fields and Unions for the expansion of their publishing and multimedia efforts.

Dedicated translators around the world translated the *Sabbath School Lessons* and *Readings for the Week of Prayer* into approximately 45 different languages, with the Publishing Department providing designs in English, Spanish, and French. The translators carry a very special responsibility for these basic sources of education as they interpret the heavenly message into words that reach the minds and hearts of those living in varying cultures with differing styles of thought. This can be accomplished only by the Holy Spirit working mightily in the translators' humble hearts. God bless you all!

Historically, Adventism placed a high priority on accuracy and excellence in doctrine, content, and graphics, and that is still critically important.

The church of God carries out its mission through the communication of divine thought. Here, too, it can be seen that the great adversary is doing everything possible to captivate people's minds and steal them from their Maker. Regardless, the church has the great responsibility to be subject to what God desires of and for His people and to be conscientious in life and example, humbly relying on Jesus in everything and being filled with His Spirit.

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Galatians 6:13.

Youth



By Joel Barnedo

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My spirit." Joel 2:27, 28.

During the last five years, the General Conference Youth Department provided encouragement to the young people in four primary ways:

- Regular communication through Skype, Facebook, text messages, and emails. In addition to spiritual encouragement, this communication encompassed counseling, answering questions, and Bible- and Spirit of prophecy-based instruction in daily witnessing, marriage, canvassing, and education.
- Preparation of materials (the annual *Studies for Youth Inspiration Week*, news and photos, weekly Nuggets of Wisdom, updating of the youth website in English and Spanish, and a workshop on marriage).
- Participation in thirteen youth conferences in Asia, North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.
- Encouraging spiritual growth (such as urging ministers and members

to refer to Sister Ellen G. White's writings as the "Testimony of Jesus," as stated in Revelation 19:10, so visitors to our churches will know that the church is founded on Jesus, not man).

Let everyone—parents, ministers, teachers, and every believer—encourage the youth to prepare their hearts to receive the promise of the Holy Spirit's blessings. In these five years, the young people were encouraged and inspired to attend missionary school and to participate in colporteur work. Most of the young people in the church today are college educated, and many speak more than one language, and that is very good for the future of God's work.

Two months of my time every year were spent in full-time service for the Youth Department, and everything else was done voluntarily day by day. May this work, as seeds planted in the young people's hearts, bear blessed fruit for the heavenly kingdom, for their youthful acquaintances and contacts, and for themselves. "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12.



Idel Suarez, Jr., transfers the chairmanship of the delegates' meetings to Tzvetan Petkov, newly elected President.

President: Tzvetan Petkov (Bulgaria/USA)
Vice President: Humberto Avellaneda Blanco (Colombia)
First Secretary: Douglas Francis (Sri Lanka/USA)
Second Secretary: Yony Delgado Cotrina (Peru)
Treasurer: Evance Mtikama (Malawi)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The five officers listed above

GENERAL CONFERENCE FULL COMMITTEE

The five officers listed above, plus:

Jose Vicente Giner Hernandez (Switzerland) (Social Ministry Leader)
 Idel Suarez, Jr. (U.S.A.) (Ministerial Department Leader)
 Morris Lowe (Canada) (Help Ministry Leader)
 Pablo Hunger (Austria/U.S.A.) (North American/Caribbean Division Leader, Missionary Ministry Leader)
 Francesco Caputo (Italy) (European Division Leader)
 Anton Salavyov (Bulgaria/Australia) (Oceania Division Leader)
 Alfred Ngwenya (Zimbabwe) (African Division Leader)
 Danilo Lopes Monterroso (Guatemala) (Latin American Division Leader)
 Roland De La Paz (Philippines) (Asian Division Leader)
 Elijah Zwane (Swaziland/Madagascar) (African Division Vice President)

DIVISION LEADERS AND COMMITTEES

Africa

President: Alfred Ngwenya
 Vice President: Elijah Zwane
 Secretary: Sevith Moyo
 Treasurer: Parmenas Shirima
 Member: Bright Fue
 Member: Leonardo Jastiva
 Member: James Mbaka

Asia

President: Roland De La Paz
 Vice President: Arnolfo Cortez
 Secretary: Mathivannan Sypherion
 Treasurer: Yujie Wang
 Member: Ruben David

Europe

President: Francesco Caputo
 Vice President: Jose Vicente Giner Hernandez
 Secretary: Vladimire Marinov
 Treasurer: Stefano La Corte
 Member: Adalicio Fontes Souza

Latin America

President: Danilo Valdemar Lopez Monterroso
 Vice President: Luis Mestanza
 Secretary: Alfredo Carmelo Fisicaro
 Treasurer: Manolo Najera
 Member: Lauro Clever de Souza Vasconcelos
 Member: Rafael Angel Acuña Sanchez
 Member: Argemiro Astudillo

North America/Caribbean

President: Pablo Hunger
 Vice President: Idel Suarez, Jr.
 Secretary: Teofilo Palacios
 Treasurer: Morris Lowe
 Member: George Gowie

Oceania

President: Anton Salavyov
 Vice President: Andrie Jules Kalengkongan
 Secretary: Sanaila Ravia Kenivale
 Treasurer: Michael Graham Brewer
 Member: Tony William

DEPARTMENT LEADERS

Ministerial Department: Idel Suarez, Jr. (U.S.A.)
 Evangelism Department: Pablo Hunger (Austria/U.S.A.)
 Canvassing Department: Joel Barnedo (Philippines/U.S.A.)
 Youth Department: Jose Vicente Giner Hernandez (Switzerland)
 Health/Medical Department: Morris Lowe (Canada)
 Good Samaritan Department: Stefano La Corte (Italy)
 Publishing Department: Raquel Orce (Spain/U.S.A.)
 Education Department: Margaret Seely (U.S.A.)
 Family Department: Adalicio Fontes Souza (Portugal)
 Multimedia Department: Jose Fernando Leon (Mexico/Italy)
 Architectural/Engineering Department: Edison Martinez (Peru)

MINISTRY LEADERS

Help Ministry

Leader: Morris Lowe (Health/Medical Department)
 Stefano La Corte (Good Samaritan Department)
 Edison Martinez (Architectural/Engineering Department)

Missionary Ministry

Leader: Pablo Hunger (Evangelism Department)
 Raquel Orce (Publishing Department)
 Joel Barnedo (Canvassing Department)
 Fernando Leon (Multimedia Department)

Social Ministry

Leader: Jose Vicente Giner Hernandez (Youth Department)
 Adalicio Fontes Souza (Family Department)
 Margaret Seely (Education Department)

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE

Idel Suarez, Jr.
 Orlando Florez Moreno
 Alfredo Carmelo Fisicaro
 Parmenas Shirima
 Albert Mpawenayo

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Evance Mtikama
 Hans-Peter Fleschutz
 David Cabrera

LEGAL ADVISORS

Wendy Araujo (Venezuela)
 Beatriz de Cabrera (Venezuela)
 Linda Kolyn (Canada)
 Jenifer Campos (Costa Rica)
 Marvin Giron (Guatemala)

AUDITORS

Maria Oliva Peña
 Elizabeth Cabrera

"The Time of Reformation"

Hebrews 9:10



Public Conference

Wednesday, September 27

"The Great Reformers and Themes Before Luther"

A bright, beautiful day greeted the attendees as the General Conference World Assembly Public Conference began in Tortoreto, Italy, under the theme, "The Time of Reformation." Hebrews 9:10. It was a joy to greet beloved fellow believers from so many different places. Some people arrived in the early morning hours, and others were still on their way.

There were many meetings on Wednesday and Thursday, often with two presentations going on simultaneously in different halls.

Morning worship

Fittingly, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" was the first hymn that was sung together in the Meeting Hall to begin the day.

Elder Felipe Acuña Sanchez, President of the Costa Rican Field, reminded everyone present that

it had been five years since we met together for the General Conference World Assembly in South Africa. We have been about our Father's business, privileged as no other people in being able to share the eternal gospel with people who are searching for answers to life's biggest questions.

Genesis 13:10 tells of Lot, who chose the verdant valleys in the plain of Sodom when he and the patriarch Abraham had to go their separate ways. Lot saw the opportunity to do business, to have night life and pleasure, and to gain wealth.

When the destruction of the wicked cities of the plain was imminent, Lot had to leave immediately. What did he have to show for the years he spent in that place? He lost all of his possessions and his wife. The two daughters who went with him had been fully educated in the corruption of Sodom. Their unnatural offspring produced two corrupt nations, the Moabites and the Ammonites, that created enormous problems for Israel.

Today, parents can make the same choices that Lot did, supposedly supplying their children with all the benefits that cities have to offer—business



opportunities, education, culture, and the good life—but at what price? Lot’s family was destroyed, and that is the high price that such places exact from those who would seek the “good life” that is really an enchanted, corrupt environment. Let us get far away from the corruption of this world as we prepare for the heavenly home.

Conference opening

Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., welcomed everyone attending the opening service. In the last five years, more than 6,400 members have been added to God’s church. The organization is operating in 135 countries. In 2014, the Centennial of the Reform Movement’s beginning was held at the headquarters in Cedartown, Georgia. Live broadcasting from the headquarters chapel began four years ago.

Other highlights included a symposium in Friedensau, Germany, sponsored by Seventh-day Adventists to discuss the actions of the church during the World Wars. An apology was issued to the Reform Movement for the mistreatment of the

faithful Adventists. On behalf of the outgoing officers, Elder Suarez praised God for what was done.

John the Baptist—the Great Reformer

Elder Suarez spoke about the 400-year period of silence between the last prophet of the Old Testament and the appearance of John the Baptist. This was a time when many in Israel questioned what was happening, especially in the light of Malachi 4:5, 6, where God promised to send Elijah and turn the hearts of the parents and children to each other. In being sent as the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah to waken those who were sleeping and dead in trespasses and sins. The prophet pointed people to the Lamb of God and came to restore all things concerning God’s kingdom.

It was pointed out that every person has a throne and a cross. If one sits on the throne, then Jesus is on the cross. If one is on the cross, Jesus is on the throne. We were urged to see ourselves crucified with Christ and to put Him on the throne of our hearts.

Every person has a throne and a cross. If one sits on the throne, then Jesus is on the cross. If one is on the cross, Jesus is on the throne.

John was also a symbol of the last generation on earth that will be part of the 144,000 and proclaim the Lamb of God as coming soon in glory. From Genesis to Revelation, He is the first. Let us find Him here at this conference and take Him wherever we go. Like John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease." John 3:30.

Columba—the great missionary from Ireland

Presented by **Elder Pablo Hunger**, outgoing Vice President and First Secretary, a chronological sketch of Columba revealed a man who was very close to the Lord. Living from A.D. 521 to 597, he descended from royalty. His parents gave him the best education they could in northern Ireland.

Frequently involved in political strife, Columba went into exile on the little island of Iona, Scotland—which was just three miles long and one mile wide—after recognizing that war is not the way to bring about changes in society. With a small group of followers, he set up a facility to serve as a training center where important Bible manuscripts were hand copied and decorated. The monastery became a missionary school from which 300 books were sent throughout Europe. The seeds of truth that were planted in Scotland never completely disappeared.

Now we live in the last days, and we have a mission similar to that of Columba. Let us be people of faith and prayer so the gospel will go everywhere. The Lord is calling us to surrender our lives to Him and to preach the gospel so it will be a witness throughout the world.

The Sabbath, church festivals, and the fourth commandment

This presentation was given by **Elder Manola Najera**, Mexican Union President. There was spiritual darkness during the reign of the papacy, but the light of holy truth was not completely extinguished. Faithful men and women in all of the ages were Heaven's witnesses who kept their faith and held the Bible as the only rule of their lives. Faithful individuals maintained their integrity before the Lord. Whole churches kept the faith and observed the commands of the Lord.

What were the main causes of the separation of the faithful people from those who followed human ideas and edicts? One was the Sabbath; another was the refusal to worship images. Those who kept the holy faith in spite of persecution often hid in the mountains. They were persecuted and oppressed and found refuge in the rocks for a thousand years. God cared for them there, and no human hand could touch them. In the same way, God has established His law; and man can never change it, no matter how hard he tries.

When His holy day is honored, God is honored, even while Satan continues to attack the holy law and His people through deception. Missionaries to and in England, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and other European countries maintained the ancient faith. They were examples for us. We can and are privileged to be repairers of the breach and Reformers for God in the last days.

The Lord is calling us to surrender our lives to Him and to preach the gospel so it will be a witness throughout the world.



The Palazzetto hall was the second location when simultaneous presentations were held.

Peter Waldo and the Waldenses

Elder Douglas Francis, outgoing Treasurer, told about Peter Waldo and the Waldenses, who appear to have been named after him. In Daniel 7:7 is the symbol of the fourth beast, which is terrible and dangerous, representing first pagan and then papal Rome. Up until the Fourteenth Century, Rome was the greatest persecuting power, the worst part being the Inquisition, which was active in Peru, India, and Europe. One person wrote, "The noon of the papacy was the midnight of the world." Not to convert to Catholicism meant death. Nevertheless, the Waldenses wanted nothing more than to keep the Holy Scriptures as they were and obey the instructions found there. Their lifestyle was very similar to that which we teach and practice.

The same truths that were important to them, and for which they were persecuted, are important to us today:

- Christ's atonement on the cross
- The righteousness of Christ
- The Godhead
- Man's fall
- The incarnation of God's Son
- Rejection of the doctrines of purgatory and an eternally burning hell

The Waldenses have been called the "Israel of the Alps." It was recorded that they were recognized by their modest, yet cultured speech. After enduring so much persecution, the Waldenses were finally granted rights of citizenship on February 17, 1848. We were cautioned that, especially in first-world countries today, we are easily enslaved by the world's systems and must be very careful; otherwise we may have problems when the Sunday law comes.

Girolamo Savonarola—the great Italian Reformer

It was fitting that **Elder Francesco Caputo**, European Division Leader, Italian Field President, and Greek Field President, spoke about this preacher who wanted God to lead in an age when the popes were extremely corrupt. Girolamo Savonarola preached concerning the terrible moral condition of the church and confirmed that Rome was the Babylon of Revelation. He also preached against the papacy and longed for a kingdom in which Jesus is King, knowing that his ideas would lead to more persecution. He preached practical Christianity that springs from the heart and is born of love and righteousness.



The beach on the east side of Salinello Camping Village.

When he was condemned to death, Savonarola was told that he was losing both his earthly life and his eternal life. But he immediately disagreed, stating, "You have no power in heaven." Such great Reformers as he were men of integrity and courage who had Jesus as the center—the alpha and omega—and hope of their lives. It is clear that man is the worst kind of animal when he does not keep God's law; corruption is in his heart.

The lesson for today is that, when the Sunday law comes, each of us will need to decide whom he will serve. It is easy to be a Christian when things are going well. But it is when things are not going smoothly that we learn the most, especially that evil is overcome through the power and strength of Jesus in His people.

Celibacy, marriage, and the family

This subject was presented by **Elder Alfonso Reto**, outgoing Ministerial Department Member, from Peru. There is a blessing in obedience, especially when it comes to honoring the marriage vow. A deeper understanding of the Scriptures (comparing important Bible texts on this subject in different versions) provides a foundation so the marriage institution will accomplish the purpose for which God gave it. Problems will always present themselves in marriage; but, with God's help, each one can be overcome within the marriage and deepen one's Christian experience.

The Bible does not condone leaving a marriage because of problems and beginning another marriage. Some advocate celibacy instead of marriage, but the Bible does not require this. Celibacy is a choice, not a requirement. It is asserted by Catholic doctrine that Peter was the first pope, but he was a married man whose mother-in-law was healed

Evil is overcome through the power and strength of Jesus in His people.

A deeper understanding of the Scriptures provides a foundation so the marriage institution will achieve the purpose for which God gave it.

by Jesus. No matter if we're married or single, we must remain faithful to God in all things.

John Wycliffe—the morning star of England

Also referred to as “The Heretic of Litterwort,” John Wycliffe was depicted by **Elder Larry Watts**, outgoing Missionary Ministry Leader and outgoing Publishing Department Leader, as one who came from a wealthy family and was given an excellent education at Oxford University. At the time (about 120 years before America was discovered), people had little more than did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They did have paper, eyeglasses, firearms, the compass, and the sextant; but they were mostly illiterate and were being held in spiritual darkness by the established church.

Wycliffe resisted the power of the church to impose its will on the people. Oxford became his center of influence, where he fell in love with God, with His word, and with his fellow man. His great desire became to make the Scriptures available to the common person, who could then know God's word directly for himself. He believed that the Bible was simple enough for all to read and determine His will. In contrast to the popes and clergy, he called for ministers to live simply and for the Scriptures to be the supreme authority of

truth and practice. He preached that the Catholic Church was the antichrist, and as a result he suffered rejection, slander, and persecution.

When he was less than 60 years old, Wycliffe became very sick and was visited by members of four different religious orders along with the civil authorities. They insisted that he was going to die, so he must retract his teachings or he would face the fires of hell. The Reformer listened patiently and then asked to be raised up in his bed. He replied that he would not die but rise and declare the evils of the friars. He lived another six years, during which he translated the Bible into English. Thirty years after his death, his bones were dug up by the established church and burned; the ashes were cast into a brook that carried them to the sea, just as his teachings went to the whole world.

Moravian brethren and Bible translation

Elder Antonin Salavyov, Oceania Division Leader and Oceania Union President, who is originally from Bulgaria, reviewed the history of the Christians living in that region, beginning with the persecution of Stephen right after the time of Jesus and going up to the time of John Huss, who was burned at the stake for his faith. Filled with the love and power of the Holy Spirit, Huss helped to drive back the darkness of the Middle Ages by revealing the light of the simple but deep gospel of Jesus Christ.

He believed that the Bible was simple enough for all to read and determine His will.



Salinello Camping Village Conference Center (Meeting Hall on the third floor, and Dining Room on the second floor).

That was a time of great evil. The church became corrupted by pagan teachings. But God had a remnant who kept His teachings pure during this time of apostasy and compromise. Descendants of the disciples of the apostle Paul reached Moravia; they translated the Bible into the Slovak language with the Cyrillic alphabet, which lit a fire in Eastern Europe that could not be quenched. It spread throughout Europe and around the world. May we have courage to stand for truth even though the world hates us.

John Huss—the Reformer from Bohemia (Czech) and the time of the end

In his presentation, **Elder Tzvetan Petkov**, outgoing Ministerial Department Leader, showed that as the Fourteenth Century closed and the Fifteenth Century began, the gospel covered Bohemia, a portion of Europe that included today's Czech and Germany, as well as Moravia. That area was home to men who were advanced in religious thought.

Although John Huss was poor and orphaned at a young age, he qualified to enter the University of Prague, where he studied very hard and was blessed by God to discover the Bible and learn to trust it. Even as a child he was mocked, so he simply ignored the criticism of his ideas concerning the Scriptures. Besides, in 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23, the apostle wrote that “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;” “unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.”

Huss was impressed by the artist preachers who visually contrasted the Saviour's humility with the pride and pomp of the popes. He connected with Wycliffe and Jerome and saw that he was not alone in his views of Scripture. He preached against corruption of the clergy and war, widely influencing religious thought. When he was called to the Council of Constance in 1414 to give account of his doctrine, he was immediately arrested, even though he had been granted safe conduct. He thought that the authorities would listen with honesty and change, but this proved not to be the case. He died at the stake. His courage in preaching against the abuse of authority gave others courage to take up the battle for God.

Purgatory, immortality, and the resurrection

The practical importance of the truth concerning what happens when one dies was presented by

Elder Joel Barnedo, outgoing Youth Department Leader, who spoke of his personal experience when two cousins died within six months of each other. It was a shock to the family, and questions arose about why such things happen. Satan is at hand to inject his deceptions into such situations, and spiritualism is rampant across the world on many fronts. Some are subtle, but many are overt and openly destructive, all of them calculated to ensnare the people's minds.

The Scriptures document examples of individuals—even among God's people—who turned from clear Scripture to the doctrines of devils. Rebellion and lack of faith lead to disobedience and entrapment in the occult. Satan has been given a free hand in the media, in churches, and in government.

It is the Bible alone that counteracts such evil. It shows clearly that death is the exact opposite of creation. When God created Adam, He took the elements of the earth and formed them into the shell of a man. Only when God breathed into Adam the breath of life did he become a living soul. When death comes, the breath of God leaves the body and returns to God, leaving the elements of the lifeless body to return to the earth. The resurrection is the restoration of life to the sleeping soul. The world says, “Death is the end.” But the apostle Paul says that death is the beginning. Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me.” John 14:1. Praise God that, even when faced with death, we have hope.

Jerome—the knight from Bohemia (Czech)

Elder Roland De La Paz, outgoing Help Ministry Leader, Health/Medical Department Leader, South Korean Field President, and Philippine Union President, continued the stories about the Reformers before Martin Luther with an account of Jerome, whom John Huss mentored. Jerome's rhetoric and oratory attracted many people, who then demonstrated against the established church. He called for the church to serve as Jesus did, not to make the Catholic Church wealthy by taking from the people. He also advocated freedom in preaching and wine in the Lord's Supper to be served to the laity, not just the clergy.

Jerome had multiple degrees from universities in Prague, Paris, Cologne, and Heidelberg. He insisted that the Bible's teachings were for all the people and that all should obey them. He was in and out of prison for preaching as he did. In 1414, he traveled with Huss to Constance, but without a safe conduct. He was arrested on his way back

He called for the church to serve as Jesus did, not to make the Catholic Church wealthy by taking from the people.



Running on the beach in the morning. Ramiro Ruelas, from Mexico, offered exercise classes from 6:15 to 6:45 every morning.

Both Huss and Jerome prepared for their death as if going to a marriage feast, singing and praising God.

to Bohemia and kept in a cold, filthy prison for many months.

Called to appear before the Council of Constance, as Huss had been, Jerome recanted and agreed to adhere to the Catholic faith. However, he immediately was sorry for having done this and pleaded with God for strength to defend Him. When he was brought before the Council again—because the church authorities weren’t convinced that he meant what he had agreed to earlier—he renounced his former recantation. Jesus’ words guided him; and, speaking with power despite his physical weakness, he confirmed that his belief was the same as that of Wycliffe and Huss. “I am ready to die,” he said; and as he was burned at the stake, his last words were, “Lord, have pity on me. Pardon my sins.” His ashes were scattered on the Rhine River. Both Huss and Jerome prepared for their death as if going to a marriage feast, singing and praising God; and this greatly encouraged others to follow them in defending the ancient faith.

The debate over the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper

Elder Antonino Di Franca, past General Conference President (1997-2002), presented some history concerning Jesus’ words to the disciples when He instituted the Lord’s Supper, which replaced the passover in the Christian church that He set up. There was a big discussion about this among the Reformers. Calvin preached something different,

but Zwingli had a correct interpretation. The bread and wine symbolically represent the body and blood of Jesus. From Zwingli, we inherited this great truth about the wonderful meaning of the Lord’s Supper.

The broken bread and the pure juice of the grape give a picture of the broken body and spilled blood of Jesus. Bread that is leavened will not come to the communion table. It does not rightly represent the Lord, His life, or His death. Let us not be confused about this.

“He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me.” Luke 22:19. Jesus did not say that the Lord’s Supper was a celebration or repetition of His sacrifice. Rather, its purpose is to remind us of what He did for us. Look at 1 Corinthians 11:24-26, where the apostle Paul quotes Jesus’ words. “Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me.” We are to remember Jesus Christ, His obedience, and His sacrifice. “This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.” This is the true meaning of the Lord’s Supper. The above three verses all speak about remembrance. As Reformers, we must stay true to the teaching of the Bible. And in 1 Corinthians 10:16, it says: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” When we take the body and blood of Christ, we come into communion with God and with our fellow believers. We should never go outside of this teaching. “This cup is the new testament in My blood.” Luke 22:20.

His one sacrifice is effective for man’s salvation. Hebrews 9:11, 12. He entered into the Holy Place through His own blood once. Hebrews 10:28. The sacrifice was made one time, not repeated daily or weekly or yearly. Just once for all time was sufficient. The Lord’s Supper is not a repeating of the sacrifice. It is for the purpose of remembering Jesus Christ and being in communion with Him and our fellow believers.

Evening worship

“The Enemy Within” was the subject of the evening worship, presented by **Elder Morris Lowe**, Canadian Field President. He explained that all of us have an enemy within. At his creation, man was made in God’s image and given ten gifts: life, a sinless nature, a marriage companion, reproduction, a healthful diet, a beautiful home, domin-

ion, employment, the holy Sabbath, and God's commandments. But he forfeited these gifts by choosing to sin against God.

Exiled and no longer able to commune directly with God, he bore children in his own likeness. Sin is a tremendous evil, for the mind is perverted and the imagination is corrupted. "The flesh profiteth nothing," Jesus said in John 6:63. The flesh is the human nature, man's basic character, the sum of who he is. "At its very source, human nature is corrupt." —*Review and Herald*, April 16, 1901. And Abraham Lincoln said, "Human action can be modified to some extent, but human nature cannot be changed."

To return to Eden is not easy, and most people will not make it. Why? Because of the enemy within—human nature. It cannot be changed unless God changes it. Man cannot. "... Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Romans 6:6. Clinging to one evil trait or even one sinful desire will neutralize the gospel. We can rejoice that through Jesus the enemy within can be destroyed. That is a powerful incentive and a great hope.

Thursday, September 28

"The Great Reformers and Themes of the Sixteenth Century"

Thursday morning was another beautiful day as the attendees gathered in the Amphitheater for morning worship. As on Wednesday, there were many meetings, with people choosing between two options as meetings were held simultaneously in two different locations. There was a lot of beautiful special music, and the congregational singing was wonderful.

Morning worship

Elder Masahiko Matsumoto, Japan Field President, referred to Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." He told a story of a violinist whose son told him, "When you die, I will put your violin in your coffin with you."

The father became very angry at this idea, explaining that the violin had been made with the very best technology 100 years before and that others needed to inherit the instrument after his death. It cost several hundred thousand dollars. The son then agreed that he would not put it in the coffin.



Masahiko Matsumoto presented Thursday morning's worship in the amphitheater, translated by Makoto Matsumoto and Wikler Moran.

To some people in Japan this is a beautiful story, as if the father could play the instrument in heaven. This is because there people worship spirits; they even make a meal for the dead, believing that the spirits return.

Foolish thinking leads to death, as the wise man said. But there are other foolish ideas. Democracy—rule by the majority—seems to have benefits, and even the church decides many things in this way. But history shows that this has also produced a lot of evil, as in Pilate's case in Matthew 27:24. The majority is not always right, and great intelligence is not always just. In fact, very intelligent people made the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. Anything that is done that is not God's will is evil.

God's people are always in the minority, and the church and Adventist history show that. God will be His people's refuge. And let us be reminded that on the universal scale, His people actually have a huge majority. They are willing to suffer persecution and disappointment so they can be part of the heavenly kingdom through their walk with Jesus.

Casiodoro de Reina—the great Reformer of Spain

As presented by Elder Danilo Lopez Monteroso, outgoing Substitute Latin American Division Leader and outgoing Education Department Leader, Casiodoro de Reina followed behind Martin Luther in Germany. The question was asked, "Why were there such great Reformers at that time in history?" Amos 3:7 says: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His

They are willing to suffer persecution and disappointment so they can be part of the heavenly kingdom through their walk with Jesus.

He led men to find,
open, and study
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languages of the
people.

secret unto His servants the prophets." It was time for the darkness to be dispelled, and the light that would bring that about was the translation of the sacred Scriptures into the languages of the people.

Everything is under God's control and part of prophecy, and the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century related to the prophecy of Revelation 11:3, concerning the two olive trees. God has a special truth for His people in every age, and light comes from His word. The darkness became more intense, and the holy Scriptures were almost unknown by both clergy and people. At the same time, science, art, and civilization made very little advance progress. But God did not allow His word to be destroyed. In different countries, He led men to find, open, and study the Scriptures. Then they were compelled by God's Spirit to translate them into the languages of the people.

This was the case in Spain. Casiodoro de Reina, a monk in a monastery, came in contact with the Lutherans and was part of Jerome's movement. His translation, known because of its cover as the *Bear Bible*, was the first in the Castilian language. He was ordained in 1562 in England and also wrote a book against the Inquisition.

Where did these faithful men get their faith? Above all, they taught faith in Jesus, the marvelous center of the Holy Scriptures. When the Bible was being persecuted, people were eager to have

it. But Satan changed his tactics. Now there are many Bibles and many versions, and often they stay on people's shelves unread. We must each take responsibility for our own experience and walk with Christ by studying His word diligently.

Sola scriptura (by scripture alone)

The first of the five "solas" that came from the time of the Protestant Reformation—*Sola Scriptura*—was the topic presented by **Brother Timo Martin**, outgoing General Conference Auditor and outgoing member of the Ministerial Department, from Canada. He gave the examples of Nadab and Abihu, Achan, and Satan to explain that there is no such thing as a small disobedience or a small sin that God regards as unimportant. After all, small things grow to be very big things.

In the case of Achan, even though it was only one man who had gone against what God commanded, His words were: "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff." Joshua 7:11. The entire Jewish nation was held accountable for what one man had done. No one should think that what he does is of no consequence, no matter how small. Everything has an effect—even an eternal effect—not only on the person but also on everyone he meets and even on all of society.

The Bible is full of instructions; indeed, it contains everything necessary for eternal life. All who love it and follow it will receive great blessings. Matthew 6:9-13. After our responsibilities have been carried out, Jesus tells us to go the extra mile. The moral principles encompassed in the Ten Commandments are required from everyone, but Christ's righteousness is not only about keeping the commandments. It is also about going the extra mile—loving God with the entire body, soul, and spirit. That is what Jesus did, and He did it for every person.

God will multiply every loving effort. When Jesus blessed the 5,000 men besides women and children with food, what did He ask for? He requested everything that the little boy had, and it was enough for the whole multitude. When we give all that we have, God's blessings will follow. Think of the Bible as His love letter to each person. Eternal life is offered and waiting. With faith we can move mountains, and nothing is impossible with God. Let everyone give up everything he has and reap everlasting life.



*General Conference World Assembly
Public Conference Program.*

Martin Luther—the great Reformer of Germany

Elder Daniel Serban, outgoing European Division Secretary and German Union President, brought greetings from Germany, the country of Martin Luther, whose message went around the world. The presentation focused on the turning points and principles in the great Reformer's life. Luther wrote, "The whole being of any Christian is faith and love. Faith brings the person to God; love brings the person to people." The practical application of faith and love includes three action verbs: Pray, study, and work.

When Luther appeared before the Imperial Diet and the emperor (representatives of church and state) on April 17, 18, 1521, he was calm, peaceful, brave, and noble as he witnessed to the great ones of the nation. He was both spiritual and well educated. The Bible, and the Bible only, was the principle that he and other Reformers followed. He unlocked the door from the Dark Ages to a new era; and others helped, including Johann Gutenberg, who developed the first printing press. Luther's New Testament was printed on that press in 1532, and the complete Luther Bible followed in 1534.

Earlier, Luther's mentor, Johann von Staupitz, had urged him to stop tormenting himself and to cast himself into the loving arms of Jesus, his Redeemer. This, and his trip to Rome, where he was struck by the words, "The just shall live by faith," were powerful experiences that inspired his work.

Sola fide (by faith alone)

Many people can give a definition of faith, said **Elder Jose Vicente Giner**, Swiss Field President, but that is not enough. We must study the Bible and believe its words, even if it means giving up the way we have believed all our lives. Sometimes the things one holds on to and the way one thinks are actually a sentimental type of faith—only feelings that make a person feel good.

Faith must be based on God's will. Marriages fail because the partners have not consulted God—because they do not call on God. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21. True, active faith is founded on something solid, so it is sure of things that are to come. This means to believe in things that are not visible. This is not something complicated; rather, it is based on what is revealed.



Daniel Serban, translated by Raquel Sosa, told of important events in the life of Martin Luther.

If you lose your passport, you have lost your identity. The same is true for the church. What is our identity? Who are we? What are the church's beliefs based on? If we don't know the answer to these questions, we are in danger of losing our identity. God needs men, women, and children who know who they are in Christ and are willing to defend that identity.

Martin Luther was a man who was used to paying for salvation. But he became a man of joy when he realized that salvation was a gift from God. True faith in God will not allow us to be happy in sin. True faith requires complete obedience to all of God's commandments, including the fourth. In the last days, many will lose their faith because they did not connect with Jesus Christ and were not interested enough in their salvation to put their hearts and souls into it. Let us remain faithful to the end, no matter what the cost. Faith is a gift from God. Let us value it, accept the gift of faith that He gives, and develop it for His honor and glory.

Julianillo—the great canvasser of Spain

Elder Alfredo Fisicaro, Latin American Division Secretary, told about Julian Hernandez (nicknamed Julianillo because he was so short), a little man with a hunched back. He wasn't particu-

True faith in God will not allow us to be happy in sin. True faith requires complete obedience to all of God's commandments, including the fourth.



The choir of Spanish-singing delegates.

There is no everlasting life without God's grace. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection showed that through faith in Him all can be saved.

larly attractive, strong, or wealthy. He is not even well known among the Reformers, but he did a great work for God by secretly distributing Bibles throughout Spain.

Still today, the publishing work requires the dedication and talents of many. Writers, editors, translators, and printers all play important parts in creating literature. But none of this work benefits anyone unless canvassers share these publications far and wide. This is what Julianillo did. Against many odds, he traveled between Switzerland and Spain to smuggle in Bibles right under the noses of the Catholic authorities.

Eventually he was arrested and delivered into the hands of the Spanish Inquisitors. He was imprisoned and tortured for three years. Many of his bones were broken when his interrogators tried to force him to reveal where he had hidden his Bibles. Finally, he was condemned to burn at the stake. On the day of his execution, Julianillo, the little canvasser, sang hymns to God, grateful for the opportunity to live and die for Him.

Sola gratia (by grace alone)

One of the great principles that came out of the Protestant Reformation was the concept of salvation by grace alone. God's grace is great, as presented by **Elder Anton Tanucsev**, outgoing European Division Member. This is what was taught as the darkness gave way to the light of the Reformation. There is no everlasting life without God's grace. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection showed that through faith in Him all can be saved. Never should one deviate from the truth, and all should know how to read the holy word.

Everyone lives in an ocean of sin, but the Saviour will forgive all who come to Him and grant them everlasting life. The church is the channel of grace; it is responsible to impart the light to everyone. This is possible as each believer is one with Christ.

We are nearing the end of this world's history, and there are warning signs all around us. If we plead with God to cleanse us, we will not be toxic to anyone but will radiate light and blessing. We are thankful that we still live in the time of grace. Jesus is coming soon as King of kings to claim His own, who will exclaim with joy, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Isaiah 25:9.

Philipp Melanchthon

Elder Arnolfo Cortez, outgoing Asian Division Secretary, presented a summary of the man who stood at Martin Luther's side. Born in 1497, Philipp Melanchthon was the first systematic theologian of the Reformation. As such he played a very important role in the religious life of Germany. He was only twelve years old when he entered the University of Heidelberg, studying philosophy, rhetoric, and astronomy / astrology, and became known as a scholar of Greek. Denied the Master's Degree in 1512 on the grounds of his youth, he went to Tübingen, where he studied jurisprudence, mathematics, and medicine.

After gaining a Master's Degree in 1516, he began studying theology. He was quick to discern the difference between the law and the gospel. Along with Martin Luther, he called the believers to accept justification by faith and denounced transubstantiation—the idea that the body of Christ is recreated from the bread and wine during the mass—the idea of the immaculate conception, and the church's assertion that the sacraments have value in one's salvation. These staunch Reformers believed that every Christian should know what he believes directly from the Scriptures and hold them above the teachings of men.

Melanchthon formulated the Augsburg Confession of June 25, 1530—a central definitive document of the Reformation. He died in 1560, having been used mightily by the Lord in placing a strong intellectual and Scriptural foundation of faith under the Protestant Reformation of the Sixteenth Century.

Solo Christo (Christ alone)

Another principle from the Reformation, as presented by **Elder Luis Mestanza**, outgoing Latin

American Division Member and Peruvian Union President, was salvation by Christ alone. God made man in His own image—dignified, intelligent, holy, righteous, and perfect, with love and possessing conditional eternal life. Perfect obedience was expected of the first pair, and they were able to obey; but they lost this ability when they chose to transgress God’s command.

However, Genesis 3:15 showed that the Messiah would step in and make it possible for the first pair to overcome and regain the lost paradise. The system established immediately for man to seek redemption was the sanctuary with all its ceremonies and sacrifices, pointing to Jesus as the Saviour of the world. He would accomplish everything that was necessary not just to forgive man but to remove sin from him, the world, and the entire universe. Then the kingdom of God would be secure forever.

Jesus is man’s Example and Substitute. He is the reserve of perfect obedience, which is required of man. Indeed, each of us has a reserve in heaven of perfect obedience—Jesus Christ. When we surrender to Him and plead for His indwelling presence, the Father sees us as if we had never sinned; we are covered with Christ’s righteousness. Our prayers receive the fragrance of His obedience.

First, we have to be forgiven. Then, Jesus’ obedience and death make it possible for us to obey His holy law through His indwelling presence; faith leads to perfect, lasting obedience. There is no merit in anything that man does on his own, but the gospel shows that Jesus is active in us through the Holy Spirit. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12.

The Reformation in Africa

Elder Parmenas Shirima, outgoing African Division Leader and Tanzanian Union President, told what he called “an interesting but sad story” about Africa. In the beginning, this continent was very blessed. The Bible records that it received the light of truth. In Ethiopia and all across to the west, the light shone brightly at the beginning.

There was light from heaven during the time of Abraham; and Simon of Cyrene, who was compelled to carry the cross of Jesus, came from North Africa. After Jesus ascended to heaven, the people in this area were the first to receive the gospel. It is said that King Solomon commissioned the use of wood from Madagascar in building the temple.

Despite such advantages, problems arose. In a Seventh-day Adventist textbook, we read that

Africa suffered much, and that must bring sorrow to the heart of God. From a land once favored with the learning and culture of the Pharaohs and the gospel truth from Abraham, Joseph, and the Israelites, it became a symbol of spiritual darkness. Christian missions face appalling conditions—animism, fetishism, voodooism, witchcraft, social injustice.... At the same time, it is a land of many cultures. —*The Story of Our Church*, p. 289.

The Protestant Reformation propelled Christianity into Africa through European and American missionaries, many of whom gave up their lives, including Dr. David Livingstone. What they encountered was heart rending, especially the horrendous slave trade. Adventists entered Africa in the Nineteenth Century, and the Reform Movement pushed into the continent from South Africa in the Twentieth Century. Today, we have a presence in 50 African countries, but 15 are still to be entered. Regardless of the country one lives in, the message is the same: True reformation begins with soul cleansing, and now is the time for reformation.

Soli Deo gloria (glory to God alone)

Elder German Aldana, outgoing European Division Committee Member and Spanish Field President, read Ephesians 3:12 to open his presentation: “Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.” Because of man’s sinful nature, everyone is off balance, seeking to attract people to himself. Everything in the universe was created by and is for God. No one has anything by himself. Therefore, everything is rightfully God’s; it all belongs to Him.

God understands the sinful human being’s tendency to glorify himself, even when God is the

Because of man’s sinful nature, everyone is off balance, seeking to attract people to himself.



*Two of the hard-working translators—
Jason Climaco and Jonathan Figueroa.*

Glory for man's being and salvation belongs to God alone; man's duty is to obey, in which case he will be a blessing to God, to himself, and to everyone around him.

One who has done the work and won the victory. He explained this in Judges 7:2: "And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me." God won the victory with just 300 righteous, humble, brave men.

Jesus said, "I receive not honour from men." John 5:41. Every time a person is lifted up in pride in himself, he is stealing glory from God, who is higher in power, thought, spirituality, and purity than any created human being can imagine. Everyone who takes glory to himself is making a huge mistake, even taking upon himself the image of the great adversary. As King Nebuchadnezzar learned, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase." Daniel 4:37.

Glory for man's being and salvation belongs to God alone; man's duty is to obey, in which case he will be a blessing to God, to himself, and to everyone around him.

John Calvin—the great French Reformer

In presenting the life of John Calvin, **Elder Alfred Ngwenya**, outgoing Evangelism Department Leader, drew direct parallels between Calvin's and other Reformers' lives and what God needs His people to be and do today. Born in 1509, Calvin was educated primarily in law and philosophy. He died of illness in 1564. Concerning his conversion in about 1533, he wrote: "God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one



Alfred Ngwenya presented the life of John Calvin with translation by Gabriel Porras.

at my early period of life. Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that although I did not altogether leave off other studies, yet I pursued them with less ardor."

Although circumstances drove him to different places, his efforts were centered in Geneva, Switzerland, where he ministered especially to French refugees. He communicated with other Reformers, such as Philipp Melancthon, Theodore Beza, and William Farel. A very committed preacher, from 1541 onward he conducted services every day, devoting attention to the Old Testament; and then on Sundays he preached from the New Testament in the morning and the Psalms in the afternoon.

He believed that man was created in God's image, which has been marred by the fall, although not totally destroyed, and that man is totally unable to seek or choose God unless God chooses him first. Indeed, no man can come to God on his own. All who believe in Jesus and follow His guidance will do that which pleases God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Justification by Faith

Elder Lauro Vasconcelos, outgoing Latin American Division Committee Member and Brazilian Field President, read Philippians 2:12 as he began his presentation of this fundamental truth of Scripture: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." And the next verse shows how that is done: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

God invites every human being to raise his sights and look on High. What is justification? It is the grace that makes man a friend of God. Man tries to obtain peace through his own efforts; but Martin Luther made it clear that if heaven could be attained by works, he most certainly would have attained it. But his works only made him more desperate.

Adam was created in God's image. But choosing to sin, Adam could give his offspring only that which he had—a sinful nature. We are all born with this and can do nothing about it by ourselves. Elder Vasconcelos gave the example that, no matter what, a pig will always be a pig—never a dog, even if it is treated like one. Man naturally is without God, does not understand God, and has no knowledge of God. In fact, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an

evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.” Mark 7:21, 22.

But man can hear the voice of Jesus and fall into His loving arms, accepting the righteousness that He will give. Jesus in man’s works gives them value, so they are His works, not man’s.

Theodore Beza—hero of the faith

Elder Yapci Trujillo, outgoing European Division Committee Member and Netherlands Field President, provided a glimpse of this Reformer’s life, particularly his spiritual side. It is clear that today the world needs men and women like him.

Born into the upper class of Sixteenth Century France in 1519, Beza died in 1605. He was renowned as a poet and had a degree in law that was granted on August 11, 1539. The Reformers of the Sixteenth Century were virtually all well educated and had a great deal of influence, especially when they were people of means. Beza came from a family of governors—and means.

An illness triggered his search for meaning in life that led him to God. Around this time, John Calvin came into his life, and eventually Beza became Calvin’s right hand. Beza took an interest in the persecuted Waldenses, Huguenots, and other Reformers. Furthermore, he prepared what is known as the Beza Codex in Greek.

When Calvin died, Beza became his successor. He understood that the church of God is like an anvil that has worn out many hammers. Founded on Christ, the church needs heroes of faith and men and women who are truly the salt of the earth and ready to reach all different classes of people.

Indulgences

Elder Sevith Moyo, African Division Secretary and Congo Union President, presented the definition of an indulgence: Remission of punishment for sin, granted by the pope or church, for some or all transgression.

Martin Luther fought against the church’s promising forgiveness of sin through the payment of money or the performance of some action mandated by the clergy. The apostle Paul wrote: “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” Romans 1:17. Salvation is not granted on the basis of one’s works.

Indulgences destroy souls. Why? Because payment of money to a church for any purpose at all does not change the sinful nature. That change is a miracle performed by God as a free gift when



Damaris Hunger helped in the information booth.

one responds to Heaven’s call, recognizes that he is separated from God, repents of the sin that brought about the separation, and under the influence and through the power of the Holy Spirit turns away from sin with abhorrence.

Let God’s people be clear on this point, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16.

Evening worship

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” These words of Jesus are found in Matthew 11:12. **Elder James Mbaka**, Kenyan Union President, thanked the Lord for the topics that had been presented. Whoever pays close attention will receive new thoughts and blessings from these presentations.

What can we do to inherit the kingdom of heaven and have eternal life? This is not a group work but an individual work. Everyone has to pass through many trials, and such trials are not easy. They are guided by God Himself and His Spirit. There are many temptations that must be faced—just as Jesus did—and no one will make it without God. The kingdom is gained by force, but Heaven works in many hearts, bringing about repentance, a changed life, and reform. God’s means of purification are trials and persecution, through which His character is revealed. The church is purified in the furnace of affliction. It must pass through such trials, through which the patience of the saints is implanted in the soul.

Everyone has to pass through many trials, and such trials are not easy. They are guided by God Himself and His Spirit.

"I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jeremiah 17:10. Angels will protect all who trust in God. Right now almost every country is permeated by the spirit of war. We need to want to be separated from sin—to be pure before God. Only through a personal connection with Him will anyone endure in the time of trouble. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Matthew 5:8.

Friday, September 29

"The Great Themes of Adventism"

It was not yet completely light on Friday as we walked to the big tent that had been erected for the Friday and Sabbath services. In addition to the presentation of the newly elected officers, a baptism, Sabbath preparation, and a photo session were on the program for the day.

Morning worship

Elder Carlos Lopez, Nicaraguan Field President, read Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." A common saying is, "All roads lead to Rome," meaning that it doesn't matter what path one follows, for everyone will end up in the same place, no matter what.

But the above Bible verse contradicts such ideas. God has placed signs showing the right way to go, and the promise is that rest will be the result. Regardless, rebellious Israel at the time of Jeremiah

and mankind in general defy this godly instruction. The Lord asks, "Where are you going, and why?" He places stop signs in strategic places and especially at crossroads to keep anyone who will listen from the danger of the path he is traveling.

Jesus' cry was, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matthew 23:27. Over and over again, the same warning is sounded. The meetings we are attending give the church an opportunity to stop and reconsider its spiritual condition.

We are in danger, for new theology is permeating the religious world and Adventism. All of the basic landmarks are being corrupted or obliterated. It is totally foolish to put away old standards that are based on universal principles and God's law. We should not be surprised at this, because Satan wears a mask to hide his evil purposes. Meanwhile, signs in the natural world are warning people everywhere to pay attention to God's "old paths" and "good way" so they will be safe in the day of trouble.

Presentation of incoming officers

The outgoing General Conference President, **Elder Idel Suarez, Jr.**, greeted the participants with the words, "The grace of Jesus Christ be with you." This gathering in Italy is a joyful one, as it commemorates five hundred years of Reformation—the time since Martin Luther stunned the religious world by posting his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany.

Approximately 125 delegates met for two weeks to discuss proposals, make resolutions, and elect new officers. The organization has baptized members in 135 countries, and people are waiting for baptism in 20 additional countries.

In Isaiah 11:1, 2 is a listing of the seven qualities that will be given to those who are led by the Holy Spirit: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." We pray that these qualities will fill the new officers.

Elder Suarez called the new officers to the front one by one. They will serve for five years, 2017-2022. Also elected were members of the Division Committees. Elder Suarez charged Elder Tzvetan Petkov and then all of the newly elected officers

God has placed
signs showing the
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the result.



There were opportunities for fellowship during the World Assembly.



Incoming General Conference Full Committee: (left to right, front) Yony Delgado, Douglas Francis, Antonin Salavyov, Tzvetan Petkov, Morris Lowe, Jose Giner; (back) Idel Suarez, Jr., Francesco Caputo, Elijah Zwane, Alfred Ngwenya, Roland De La Paz, Danilo Monterroso; not shown: Humberto Avellaneda, Evance Mtikama, Pablo Hunger.

with upholding the doctrines and principles of Scripture, as outlined in the *Principles of Faith*, as well as following the guidelines of the *Church Manual*, and the *Ministerial Manual* for the protection and advancement of God's cause on the earth. Brother Suarez called forward two past General Conference presidents, Elder Henry Andrade (1993-1997) and Elder Antonino Di Franca (1997-2002), to greet the incoming officers. There are now three past General Conference Presidents alive.

Elder Tzvetan Petkov spoke a few words, stating that we think things will go a certain way, but God carries out everything according to His will. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Philippians 2:3. We are all equal before God, therefore we need to resist the temptation to consider ourselves better than another. If we strive for anything, let it be to have the mind of Christ.

See the complete list of new officers on page 19.

The second coming

Elder Humberto Avellaneda Blanco, incoming Vice President and Colombian Union President, stressed that the teaching of Jesus' second coming is the main theme of the Scriptures. The promises of redemption and restoration were given to Adam and Eve when they left Eden, and ministers of the gospel presented those promises down through

time to the first advent. Enoch, Moses, Isaiah, and Jesus Himself preached those things; and the angels who stayed behind when the Saviour ascended to heaven said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Acts 1:11.

Jesus' promise in Revelation 22:20—"Surely I come quickly"—sustained the thousands of people who gave up their lives to defend the Bible as the

Jesus' promise in Revelation 22:20—"Surely I come quickly"—sustained the thousands of people who gave up their lives to defend the Bible as the sole source of truth.



The incoming officers vowed to uphold the Scriptural foundation of God's church.



On Friday, eight souls were baptized in the sea.

sole source of truth. The Reformers were ready to enter the tomb and be resurrected at the last day; they were moved by the hope of seeing their loving Lord. They were attacked and persecuted in many different ways, but they clung to the pillars that stand as firm as the eternal hills.

Jesus' coming is nearer than when we first believed. What God wants of His people today, as in the time of Noah, is to practice and preach the present truth. He will come, and will not tarry. Let us practice the patience of the saints, knowing that giving our lives now will result in saving them for eternity.

He was dead, for
when one is far from
God, he is dead.

Baptismal ceremony

Elder Francesco Caputo presented eight candidates for baptism, expressing his great joy that they had chosen to follow God's way. Often especially young people look for things that are far away from God, thinking that making their own choices will make them happy. But this is not so. The things of earth are temporary, and life can change and even end very suddenly, with eternal consequences. We are here in this world for just a moment. The prodigal son discovered for himself the follies and dangers of going away from his father; he came to the point where even pigs would not share their food with him.

Without God's righteousness, every person has nothing. The day came when the prodigal son made the best decision of his life: "I will go back to my father." That was the most beautiful moment. He was dead, for when one is far from God, he is dead. The father welcomed him and covered his rags with the best robe, representing justification,

or imputed righteousness. Imparted righteousness—sanctification—followed, for everyone needs to work constantly and take good care of his own character. The most important decision in one's life is to choose to go home; it is a covenant between him and God, who promises always to be with him.

Everyone walked to the beach for the baptism. It was a little windy, and the waves were strong enough to knock someone over. However, the four ministers and their helpers successfully laid the candidates in the watery grave, after which all returned to the big tent, where the hand of fellowship welcomed each person into the fellowship of God's family.

The afternoon was devoted to Sabbath preparation and the taking of official pictures.

Sabbath begin—the great gospel commission

For the Sabbath beginning service, **Elder Pablo Hunger**, incoming Missionary Ministry Leader and North American/Caribbean Division Leader, stated that the reason we were at this conference was because we have received a commission from the Lord. A lady in Mexico City was in a building with several stories when an earthquake struck. She was caught between two floors in a small space that was totally dark. She waited for 36 hours and was then rescued. Now she says that she had two birthdates. Disasters of different kinds are increasing around the world, along with political problems and strife.

Just as the lady was in the dark and could only wait to be rescued, thousands of people are in spiritual darkness, waiting for someone to show them the light. Every believer needs to work as a Reformer to preach the message of the gospel and



Humberto Avellaneda (right), incoming Vice President, presented the Sabbath morning worship service, translated by Gabriel Porras.

Jesus' soon return—to shine heavenly light into darkened minds and hearts.

Why has Jesus not yet come? He will not return until the church is fulfilling the gospel commission, for which the Spirit of God is required. But we cannot wait for the latter rain; the time to proclaim the truth for this time is now. Hold on, for Satan wants to destroy the church. Hold onto your wife, children, family, neighbors, and fellow believers, being willing to suffer and be a light to those who are lost.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” Romans 1:16, 17.

Evening worship—the health message

Elder Morris Lowe, incoming Help Ministry Leader and Health/Medical Department Leader, repeated the principle that the health message cannot be separated from the gospel. The brethren desire to break down prejudice through introduction of those heavenly principles that need to be followed and preached.

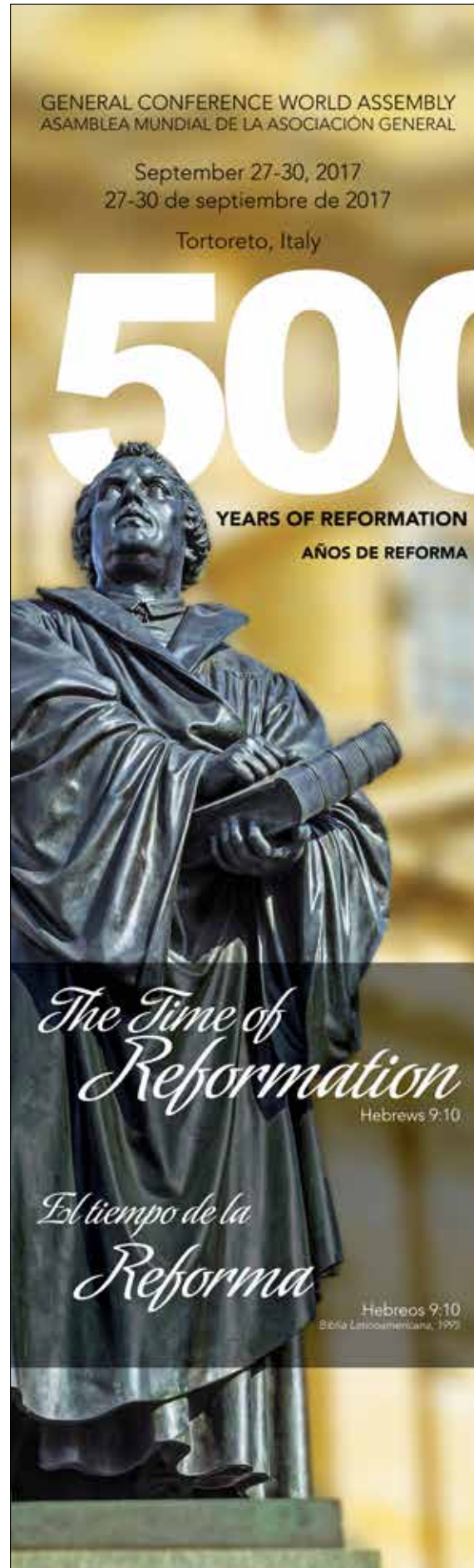
Health is defined as the state of complete physical, mental, and social well being, not just the absence of disease or infirmity; and God wants His people to be blessed and to represent Him properly to others. The diseases of modern society come from different causes, including improper diet, inadequate hygiene, environmental factors, and failure to get adequate sleep. There are also social factors that cause people to be sick, such as the home environment, social standards or lack of them, education, unemployment, and constant stress.

The Health/Medical Department is requesting that every health professional in the church send an email to health@sda1844.org as the Health / Medical Department seeks to develop an army of medical missionaries.

Sabbath, September 29

“The Great Themes of Today’s Reformation”

The high day at the World Assembly was the Sabbath. The number of attendees swelled to fill the tent. There was a lot of beautiful music from different countries. Our thoughts rose to the glories on high as we heard the soaring music from well-prepared choirs, notably the



The 30-foot banner hung at the front of the big tent where the Public Conference took place on Friday and Sabbath.



Sabbath school teachers—there were classes for different languages and age groups.

German choir, the Colombian choir, the delegate men's choir, and the International Choir, as well as the International Orchestra. We were blessed beyond measure by them, smaller choirs, ensembles, soloists, and other musicians.

Morning worship

Elder Humberto Avellaneda presented the Sabbath morning worship, drawing important

thoughts from the apostle Paul's description in Acts 22:4-10 of Jesus' meeting him on the way to Damascus. Every part of one's life has a reason, and everyone has a purpose to fulfill.

Paul needed to leave one way and go to another. Usually such a change is marked by pain and intense lessons, and this can be seen in the apostle's experience. The blindness with which he was left after seeing the light made him analyze his way and see that there was a better way marked by sensitivity to the Master's voice.

This same sequence can be seen in the life of Jacob, who left home to escape his brother's wrath, only to have to return later to face him. Just as Paul's experience was marked by an encounter with Jesus, so was Jacob's. In both cases, the painful episode was a great blessing in preparing them to carry out their commission. This was expressed, in the case of Paul, by Jesus' reply when Paul asked Him, "What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do." Acts 22:10. Jesus had Paul's attention now, and the apostle became sensitive to the Master's voice and instructions.

Furthermore, it became clear to Paul, as it had to Jacob, that his human strength was gone. God cannot empower a person who trusts himself instead of the heavenly voice. At this conference, we are being asked to leave our own way and to ask



The International Choir, directed by Caress Prado of Colombia and Chile, sang very wonderful music.



Tzvetan Petkov, incoming General Conference President, spoke on Friday after the new officers were presented by Idel Suarez, Jr., outgoing President, and also gave the Sabbath service.

God to show us His way, the appointed way that is all light for oneself and others who are waiting for someone to come and tell them of the gospel.

Sermon: "The Time of Reformation" ***(Hebrews 9:10)***

After a meeting for the Sabbath school teachers and the Sabbath school, the service was presented by Elder Tzvetan Petkov, incoming General Conference President.

However, before he spoke, Elder Francesco Caputo, host for the World Assembly and President of the Italian Field, welcomed the approximately one thousand believers present, and a story was told to the children. Very beautiful special music was presented by the International Orchestra, the Spanish choir, the United States choir, the Italian choir, the German choir singing "The Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's "Messiah," and the International Choir.

Elder Petkov greeted the congregation with the words, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Hebrews 9:9, 10 has three themes: (1) conscience, (2) gifts and sacrifices, and (3) reformation. Impressive as they were, the sanctuary

services were not able to perfect the human conscience. Jesus illustrated this with the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. It is not sufficient to clean the outside of a cup that is full of greed and self-indulgence. This is what happens when one clings to forms because one does not want to see inside—wants to silence conviction.

Revelation 3 shows the sickness of Laodicea. The people in this period think they are rich and good, but the reality is quite different; they are blind, because they are rich in forms. The parable of the good Samaritan shows that, if the Holy Spirit is not present in a person to bring about change, his religion is worthless. Similarly, if we do not change—reform—church rituals and participation in them make no sense.

In Matthew 13:52, Jesus spoke about the scribe who is like a householder taking from his treasure new and old things. For the conscience to be purified, the Holy Spirit needs to be active in it every day. Jesus said that He gave a new commandment—that His disciples should love one another—but that commandment was really old. Such treasure is rich. If the believer pleads for the Holy Spirit's guidance every day, his conscience will grow upward until the person becomes a new creature.

The afternoon program began with the children's and youth program, hosted by Elder Joel Barnedo, outgoing Youth Department Leader, and Elder Jose Vicente Giner, incoming Youth Department Leader. The special music presented by the children and young people was wonderful and a great blessing.

For the conscience to be purified, the Holy Spirit needs to be active in it every day.



The International Orchestra's beautiful music and accompaniment were a great blessing!



These five boys participated in the children's Sabbath school class.

Incoming Division Leaders' forum

Elder Parmenas Shirima moderated the Division Leaders' forum, which consisted of the leaders of the now six Divisions presenting both the potential and the dangers in their areas. For the African Division, Elder Alfred Ngwenya explained that there are 55 countries in Africa, and the message of Reform has reached thirty of them. There is a wide variety of different languages, religions, and cultures in the African continent. The plan is to



Pablo Hunger, President of the new North American/Caribbean Division, told about the new Division and its challenges.

have each worker train another, each leader train another, and each minister train another.

The Asian Division will be led in the new term by Elder Roland De La Paz. Asia is the largest continent, and there are 4.5 billion people in China alone—59.7 percent of the world's population of about 7 billion people. There are plans to train leaders, make Fields and Unions autonomous, and inspire the young people to participate in church activities.

Elder Francesco Caputo, re-elected Leader of the European Division, explained that the countries of Europe have about 25 different languages. The plan is to have a headquarters office for the European Division. Prayers are solicited for this Division.

Elder Danilo Monterroso will lead the Latin American Division again, as he has as a substitute for the last four years. Of the 18 countries in the region, 15 speak primarily Spanish, with Brazil speaking Portuguese, Belize speaking English, and French Guiana speaking French. Out of 180 million people in the Division, there are 14,583 members—a small percentage. The plan is to hold symposiums, streamline the administration, preserve the Biblical doctrine, raise the standards of health, and plan music encounters.

The North American/Caribbean Division is new. It will be led by Elder Pablo Hunger. With about 1,000 members, this division has only about 2.8 percent of the total church members. Besides the United States and Canada, the territory encompasses 28 small countries in the Caribbean that speak six different languages. Prayers are requested especially for the Puerto Rican Field, which suffered the loss of two churches in the recent hurricane.

The Oceania Division, led once again by Elder Antonin Salavyov, is the smallest of all the divisions in size and population. It contains thousands of islands, which makes travel expensive and complicated; indeed this is where the gospel reaches to the ends of the earth. May God bless every effort and sacrifice to advance His kingdom in the world.

Testimony and experience hour

Led by **Elder Stefano La Corte**, Good Samaritan Department Leader, and **Sister Raquel Orce Sotomayor**, incoming Publishing Department Leader, experiences and music from many areas showed how God has protected His people. The Good Samaritan Department has been very busy in the last five years on two main fronts—countries suffering from natural disasters and newly opened mission fields.

We listened to stories from Peru, Mexico, Turkey, Ukraine, and Tanzania; and we heard music from Ecuador (harp with guitar), Asia, Germany, and Switzerland. Another musical highlight was when the Swiss choir joined Elder Jose Vicente Giner in singing “The Holy City” in Spanish.

Sabbath close

Elder Adalicio Fontes, incoming Family Department Leader, explained that it will not be possible to visit every country, but the Department would like to organize teams to provide family counseling and produce online materials.

It should be clear to us that there is a difference between a house and a home. When God made man in his own image—male and female—and performed the first wedding, He provided the structure for the best place where learning takes place for both parents and children. Purity, warmth, love, happiness, and kindness should rule in the home, making it the foundation of society and the church. In fact, the Spirit of prophecy writes that the church and the nation depend on the influence of the family.

The great enemy of God and man is very angry with families and is doing everything possible to destroy them from the inside and from the outside. But God turned on the fire of love in the home, and He wants to keep that fire burning. The church needs ministers with a strong sense of the spiri-



Stefano La Corte, left, Leader of the Good Samaritan Department, introduced Santina Mascera, who, with dedicated volunteers in Italy and around the world, worked tirelessly for many years and still does to be a blessing to those in need.

tual standards found in the Scriptures to protect individuals, families, and churches. Every effort to uphold the divine pattern for the family and the church will weaken the attacks of evil.

Farewell

After dinner, it was time to say good-bye. **Elder Douglas Francis**, serving as moderator for the meeting, reminded the congregation that we cannot forget the past—indeed, we must not. Brother Norbert Gutknecht, son of Elder Siegmund Gutknecht, who served several terms as President

We cannot forget the past—indeed, we must not.



Norbert Gutknecht, center, enjoyed taking a picture with Tzvetan Petkov and the delegates from countries in Africa that he and his father, Siegmund Gutknecht, worked in for many years, even when Brother Norbert was very young.



Special music from Ecuador included a harp built by Marcos Moran (right).

of the General Conference and traveled extensively in missionary service, expressed his joy at being present at the conference and read Romans 8:28. From his youth, Brother Norbert accompanied his father and helped establish the headquarters and missionary school in Nairobi, Kenya, as well as other schools. Elder Gutknecht passed away about six years ago, being preceded in death by his wife. Brother Norbert encouraged the gospel workers to go and preach the gospel.

Elder Henry Andrade, General Conference President from 1993 to 1997, was also called forward to give his blessing, and he urged the people to be humble so God can work. There should never be any compromise of Biblical principles. His final words were: "Go with God."



The Curacao musical ensemble sang dynamic music for the Sabbath school.

Elder Antonino Di Franca, General Conference President from 1997 to 2002, came to the front to read Revelation 22:17, "Behold, I come quickly." Those who study the Scriptures are blessed. All who are preparing for the Saviour's coming will be blessed. Let all be united in His promises, word, and service.

After two more choir presentations, Elder Francesco Caputo related that he had had a dream to host the General Conference World Assembly in Italy, and now it had been accomplished. He thanked the Lord and everyone who made it possible, including the Italian Field Committee and members and the outgoing General Conference Committee.

Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., likewise thanked all who had contributed to the blessings of the conference and added some others, including Brothers Fernando Leon and Esteban Hunger for online, technical, and media support before, during,



These musicians from Peru presented versatile music!

and after the World Assembly; the brothers and sisters who prepared wonderful meals at the Tortoreto mission house; the musicians, conductors, and choirs; the translation team; the Publishing Department; and all who spoke, presented specials, and supported the World Assembly with their offerings. Referring to the reformation under King Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 31:1, Elder Suarez focused on what the people had done. They went home to put away the images. The church will be strong when everyone is involved in some form of missionary outreach. Just as the people of Judah removed the idols and images from their homes, so we need to do the same, removing from our homes and lives everything that can defile the mind and heart.

The following chapter of 2 Chronicles documents the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem and how God delivered His people. That siege was similar to what will happen under the coming Sunday law. It has been reported that on October 31, Protestants will declare that there are no Protestants any more,

having all embraced the Catholic faith. But we need to continue protesting against everything that is contrary to God's way and character and the purity of His people. Let us ask Him what idols need to be thrown out and ask Jesus to come into our hearts. Will we be ready when the siege comes?

Elder Suarez called his wife and three daughters to the podium and declared, as did Joshua: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve;... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15.

Elder Tzvetan Petkov then expressed his gratitude to all who attended the conference, the delegates, all who worked to make the World Assembly a blessing, the previous administration, the translators, the media team, the choirs and musicians, and the presenters.

"With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26. There is strength in unity; let us return to the original Adventist teachings and help especially the young people with this. Let us increase the membership by each one winning one and being active in missionary endeavor.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:31. The last text was Malachi 4:5, 6: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."



Idel Suarez, Jr., with his family, expressed his gratitude to all.

The next day, about 250 people left for the tour of Italy, and final "good-byes" were said.

Thank you to all who sent pictures for the General Conference website galleries and for this special issue of *The Sabbath Watchman*: Elder Tzvetan Petkov and his daughter, Sister Anna; Brother Gabriel Porras and his wife, Sister Sandra; Brother Gadiel Macias; and Elder Douglas Francis. God bless His people in every land and place!

—Barbara Watts, with note-taking assistance from Margaret Seely and Larry Watts

There is strength
in unity.



The benediction of three former General Conference Presidents and the incoming President: (left to right) Idel Suarez, Jr., Henry Andrade, Tzvetan Petkov, and Antonino Di Franca.



Attentive brethren from Africa and Europe (above) as well as many different countries rejoiced to experience the blessings of the Public Conference.



The German Choir, directed by Jaclyn Hunger, praised God with beautiful, thrilling music.