

FIRST BUSINESS MEETING

Sixtieth General Conference session, July 2, 2015, 9:21 a.m.

LOWELL COOPER: Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to San Antonio. For those relying on simultaneous translation services, I have one important announcement to make. Delegates received in their delegate packet at registration time an FM transceiver, and you received in your delegate package also a list of the languages that will be provided through the translation services. We're very happy to inform you this morning that an additional language has been added to that list. The Indonesian language will be provided through the simultaneous translation services, and you can access that at 99.9 for the Indonesian language simultaneous translations.

We've come from east, west, north, and south, and have arrived at San Antonio. First of all, we thank God for your safe arrival here. And I think we will also be thankful for the security people here at the dome in the convention center and in San Antonio. They are working with us and for us. Though it may seem at times that there's a point of inconvenience, let us thank them for their devotion to the success of our meetings here. Unfortunately, though some delegates have encountered visa difficulties, it appeared this morning that in our assembly we have a very large part of entire delegation to the session.

You may be interested to know that the first General Conference session in 1863 was conducted with 20 delegates. We will receive an up-to-the-moment report in just a few moments about the delegates registered for this session. However, the delegate total is 128 times the delegation of the 1863 session.

Here at the General Conference session we have an opportunity available nowhere else to experience the rich diversity and oneness of the Seventh-day Adventist world family. We come from around the globe, from different time zones, climates, cultures, currencies, circumstances, sometimes

even with differing convictions. Yet there is a deep and abiding realization that we have been called as sons and daughters of God, citizens of His kingdom, members of His family, partners in His mission. We meet here to celebrate this identity and to conduct our business in the light of His business.

We're privileged to have many guests. In fact, at many of our meetings, the number of guests may well outnumber the sum of delegates. Those who have been granted delegate status, meaning we have the right to speak and to vote in the business of the session, must see this as a special honor. To be entrusted with such a responsibility is a wonderful yet sobering, duty. For we are called to think not just of ourselves, but of our brothers and sisters who were not chosen as delegates.

If we consider the ratio of world membership to the delegation at this session, we would observe that each delegate represents more than 7,200 members. Let us then seize this opportunity by being present, on time, at every business meeting and addressing our agenda items in the spirit described by the apostle Paul, who wrote to the Philippians, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Just for a very quick outline of the day, we meet in business session this morning. We will adjourn at lunchtime or earlier. And the division delegations, division by division, will meet this afternoon at 2:00 for the recommendation of Nominating Committee members from each division. We will reconvene in this place for a business session at 4:30 this afternoon, at which time we will receive the reports on the recommendations for Nominating Committee members and vote the membership of the Nominating Committee. Then we will meet again this evening at 7:00.

With your help this morning, we aim to conclude by noon or earlier. Our business session has several fairly routine but essential formalities. Perhaps it's best for us to begin with a clear understanding of how to participate in the discussion of agenda items and how to use the voting

devices that have been made available for the session.

First of all, there are six microphone locations on the floor of the session. They're not easily identifiable from here, but I believe we have two in this aisle, two in another aisle, and maybe there's three. We'll have to determine. If you wish to speak to an item on the agenda, you will need to come to a microphone station and present your badge. There will be an attendant at the microphone station to register your badge.

When that happens, your name will appear on a monitor here at the platform, and we will be able to know that someone is wishing to speak.

I want to make it clear that I understand the microphones are being placed as we speak and should be operational in just a few moments.

But I want to make it clear that the chairpersons for the business sessions are authorized to recognize only those who have delegate status. These are the individuals who are authorized to speak and to vote in the business agenda.

If you wish to approach the microphone on a point of order, rather than a discussion on the motion that may be pending on the floor at that time, please notify the attendant when you present your badge that you wish to raise a point of order.

The attendant will then enable your name to come to the top of the list, and we will be notified here at the table that there is a delegate who wishes to raise a point of order.

I think many of you are familiar with the way we've done this in the past, and we trust that all will go well.

Now we come to the question of voting. We have made arrangements at this session for more than one voting methodology. However, we will defer and default to one. I wish to point out that in your delegate packet, in your delegate bag, you should have received a voting card. If you looked only at the zippered section of your delegate bag, you perhaps did not see this, because I

believe it was located in a side pocket of your delegate bag. Please be sure to bring this with you to every meeting.

Our default voting system will be the electronic voting device. The use of the electronic voting devices that you received at the time of registration.

Now, we want to understand how these can be effectively used. Every delegate has received one of these at the time of registration. We want to make it every clear that every delegate is responsible to bring this device to every meeting, for this will be our default system of voting. Wear it like a piece of clothing. If you have forgotten it in your hotel room, please go back to your hotel room in order participate in voting.

When a vote is called on an item, only the electronic votes will be counted. No hand signals; no voting cards. We are not combining methodologies in voting. Each delegate is fully responsible for the security of this device. Do not lend it to someone else.

When it comes to voting, you may exercise your right to abstain from voting. You are not required to vote. But if you wish to vote, when votes are counted, only yes votes and no votes will be counted. General Conference session does not accept responsibility for anyone claiming to be denied the right to vote because the voting device was left in the hotel room, or perhaps has been lost.

Now, if you hold that device in your hand, you will notice it has no on/off switch. Please take out the device, because in a few moments we will have some practice votes.

The device is always ready to work. All you need to do is press one of the numerical buttons. When you do that, the number will show up on the screen. If you do not press that button, eventually it will go off. These are long-term batteries, and the device will remain active throughout the session.

Now, questions have been raised about the security and the confidentiality of this voting system. To help us understand these details, we've asked Karnik Doukmetzian from the Office of General Counsel at the General Conference to give us some information.

Brother Doukmetzian, please.

KARNIK DOUKMETZIAN: Thank you, Elder Cooper. We have two concerns, as we're indicating: security, so that no one is able to tamper with the devices; and privacy, so that only you know how you voted. The electronic system that we're going to be using for this session is provided by a third-party vendor with wide experience in conducting large voting at business meetings such as this. The technicians who are operating these systems are here with us. They are employees of that company. They are not employees or involved with the General Conference in any way.

No one of the General Conference is involved in the voting system process. Security protocols for these voting machines are generated each and every day. They're changed every day to ensure the security of our votes. But you must be aware that your voting machine will work only if you are on the delegate floor. The signal will not be picked up if you are sitting in the stands, so you must be seated on the delegate floor in order to for the voting machine to work and for your vote to be registered.

Your vote is transmitted securely, accurately, and anonymously and in an encrypted fashion so that the vote cannot be tampered with.

The ones tabulating the votes during the time of voting, once the voting is completed, that record will be deleted. As you vote, be aware that the voting is secret and anonymous. Neither the serial number nor the electronic signal created by the devices is connected to any person's name. We cannot identify the individual who voted. No one but you will know how you voted.

Once each vote is tabulated, the record will be deleted.

We want to take this opportunity to thank the Meridia Company for being with us and for providing this service for the General Conference session.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, Brother Doukmetzian. Now, if you will, hold the device in your hand. How will you know that the device is working? Simply press any of the numbered

buttons, and the number will appear on the screen.

Now, when we are voting on items, we will use only buttons number 1 or number 2. Number 1 will be yes. Number 2 will be no. If you press any other number, your device will show that number, but the system will not record a vote on your part. We want that to be clear.

The only buttons we're concerned about when voting will be button number 1 or number 2. Now, how will we do the voting? When the chairperson for the business session states the motion and indicates that we should prepare for voting, a time counter will appear on the screen.

You can see on the screens before us that, down in the left-hand corner, there is a little block that is a counter. It will count down from 30 seconds to zero. During the time that it is counting down, we will be able to register our votes. You will know that your vote is registered when you press one of the number buttons 1 or 2, wait to see that the number blinks. When the number blinks, the signal has been received by the central computer. The numbers on your screen may go off after that. It doesn't need to remain on. But when you press the number, simply watch it for a second or two until it blinks, and you will know that your vote has been recorded.

If you change your mind, if you have pressed button number 1, and while the timer is still counting down you change your mind and decide to vote number 2, or no, the system will take your last button—press—as your vote. We don't encourage you to play around with the buttons and keep changing your vote, because that will complicate the system in terms of the number of entries to be provided. But the system will record as your vote the last number that you press.

Before we start with a practice question, when the counter begins counting down from 30, 29, down to 0, let me encourage that you register your vote before the counter gets down to 10. If we all wait until the last five seconds to register our votes, there may be some votes that are not captured when the counter reaches 0. Those of us who chair the meetings will try to guide you. If you are too far away from the screen to see the counter, we will help to indicate to you when it's down to 15

seconds and 10 seconds or so. But the suggestion is register your vote early in the voting window.

When the counter reaches 0, electronic voting will be disabled. You can press whatever number you want after that, and your vote will not be registered. When the vote has been tabulated by the computer, the vote result will be projected on the screen, and we will see the number of delegates voting yes, number of delegates voting no, and the percentages of yes or no, because there are some votes during the session that will require a two-thirds majority, and this will be automatically calculated by the system.

So, with that, perhaps we are ready. Here is a practice question. If you're ready to vote, the question will be this. I will announce the question, and then I will say, "It is now time to begin voting."

Here's the question: Is this your first time to be a delegate at a General Conference session?
1 for yes, 2 for no. We are now ready to begin voting. Is the counter on the screen?

OK. I guess we're now ready to vote. The question: Is this your first time being a delegate at a General Conference session?

We're down to 10 seconds. We hope your vote has been registered. Six, five, four, three, two, one. Voting is finished.

Isn't that interesting? We have 138 votes. Did you forget your voting device?

[Laughter.]

This is a bit puzzling. I think we better declare a new vote. Can we refresh the screen?

The question will be the same. Is this your first General Conference session as a delegate?
Voting can begin now.

Twelve seconds, 10, down to five. Voting has ended.

Well, this is an unexpected turn of events. We understand that more than 1,800 delegates registered.

Thank you very much. We're going to do some more practicing. And this time I would like to ask all of you who have a device to stand. If you have a voting device, please stand.

Well, thank you. You may be seated.

There are many, many voting devices. We're going to clear the screen. We're going to clear the screen and take another attempt. This time we're going to— Let's not start the counter yet. This time we're going to ask you to indicate your vote and then to stand. If you abstain from voting, remain seated.

The question is the same question: Is this the first time that you are a delegate at a General Conference session? Please wait for a moment until the counter begins.

You may vote now. And when you have voted, please stand.

We're down to 10 seconds. Voting has now finished. Thank you. You may be seated.

We will not continue with this electronic voting this morning until we can proceed with another test and have some confirmation that all of the signals are being received.

So I'm going to ask if you would turn to your bag and take out the voting card. For those of you who didn't find it with the other materials, it was located in the separate side pocket of your delegate bag. I see several have this in hand. I'm going to ask you now if you would raise that voting card.

All right. Well, it looks like we have the vast majority, if not everyone, at least the vast majority of our delegates have the voting card with them, and for the balance of our business this morning we will use the voting card.

Now, agenda items for the morning are fairly routine, but they are essential formalities in bringing this session to order and receiving a registration report and dealing with the voting of new member units.

To lead us into this portion of the agenda, we will turn to our General Conference secretary,

Elder G. T. Ng.

G. T. NG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The General Conference Constitution, Article 5, Section 1, says the General Conference shall hold annual sessions at such time and place as the General Conference Executive Committee shall designate and announced by a notice published in the *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* in three consecutive issues at least four months ahead of time.

Mr. Chairman, the *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* have indeed complied with the requirement that published the notices on February 12, February 19, and February 26, 2015, issues of the *Adventist Review* and in the April, May, and June issues of the *Adventist World*.

Another requirement from the constitution is that we should send out letters of invitation to all delegates, and this has been duly complied with. Letters of invitations were sent out beginning in May 2014. And the registration of delegates began in August 2014.

The General Conference Constitution also outlines how delegates to the General Conference should be selected. Divisions, in consultation with their unions, prepare the list of delegates of their division with criteria found in our constitution. We certify that the distribution of regular and at-large delegate quota to the 13 divisions of the General Conference, the two attached territories of the General Conference, and the 14 General Conference institutions, associations, and services was done in harmony with Article 5, Sections 7 and 8, of the constitution; and further, that the session registration process is in compliance with Article 5, Section 9, of the constitution, which states that all delegates are comprised of Seventh-day Adventists in regular standing.

And, number two, at least 50 percent of the delegates from divisions are laypersons, pastors, teachers, and nonadministrative employees of both genders, representing a range of age groups and nationalities. And of this 50 percent, the majority of them should be laypersons.

As far as registered delegates are concerned, we have 2,566 regular and at-large delegates.

And of this number, as of about an hour ago, 1,868 delegates have registered on site. And so the number exceeds the requirement of the General Conference Constitution, Article 5, Section 3, which states that at the beginning session of the General Conference session, one third of official delegates should be present.

So, Mr. Chairman, because more than one third of the members are present today, we await your call to order for the business meeting of the sixtieth General Conference session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I invite you to declare the 2015 General Conference session officially open.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, Pastor Ng, for the report on the official notices of the session and the registration report as of a few moments ago this morning. I am pleased to state that based on that report, the sixtieth General Conference session is now open for business.

And we will turn back to you, Brother Secretary.

[Applause.]

Thank you. We'll turn back to you, Brother Secretary, for the next item in our agenda.

G. T. NG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is customary for us to reread the Seventh-day Adventist Mission Statement. Our mission: The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to call all people to become disciples of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the everlasting gospel embraced by the three angels' messages in Revelation 14:6-12, and to prepare the world for Christ's soon return. Our method: Guided by the Bible and the Holy Spirit, Seventh-day Adventists pursue this mission through Christlike living, communicating, discipling, teaching, healing, and serving. Our vision: In harmony with Bible revelation, Seventh-day Adventists see as the climax of God's plan the restoration of all His creation to full harmony with His perfect will and righteousness.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, Pastor Ng. We use the mission statement as a guide for us as we begin the business of this session. We trust that all of our business will be conducted in light of

our mission, our method, and our vision.

Now, Pastor Ng, we turn back to you for the program.

G. T. NG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As previously announced by e-mail, the 2015 General Conference session program and agenda materials are now available electronically. This is in the interest of not killing more trees than necessary. And out of the 2,500 delegates, about 800 have requested hard copy to be given, and those have been distributed to you. And the daily programs are found on page A of your agenda item.

So, Mr. Chairman, I move that we adopt the daily program of the 2015 General Conference session.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, Pastor Ng. The motion is to adopt the daily program as shown in the agenda.

We need to have a second for the motion.

Yes, we have so.

Now, in case there is any need to ask questions or discuss items this morning, let me clarify the placement of the microphones. There are two microphones here at the front: one in the aisle to my right, and one in the aisle to my left. Two microphones. There is a cross aisle in the delegation section several rows back. I cannot see it clearly, but I think it's behind the audiovisual platform equipment there. There are four microphones placed across that aisle: microphones 1 and 2 here, 3, 4, 5, and 6. You may want to familiarize yourselves with the microphone that's closest to you, should you wish to speak on any item of business.

Now, before we vote on approving the daily program, let me say that when we call the vote, we will do so and have a short delay, because the English instructions are translated into several languages, and we want to make sure that those who are relying on simultaneous translation will also receive the indication of when to vote. As we indicated, we will be using the voting card, and we will

call for a vote on the motion to adopt the daily program.

All of those in favor, please raise the voting card.

Thank you.

All of those opposed, please raise the voting card.

It seems that that is a unanimous decision [in favor of the motion]. Thank you very much.

Pastor Ng?

G. T. NG: Mr. Chairman, the next item is about approving the agendas. The agendas are found in the following pages. The yellow section has to do with the general agenda; the blue section has to do with the constitution and bylaws agenda; the pink section, nominations/elections agenda; and, finally, the lilac section will be for the *Church Manual* agenda.

And there is one thing I would like to mention, Mr. Chairman, and that is that some information has been left out of the general agenda. Under item number 141(k), titled Theology and Practice of Ministerial Ordination, the information of the voting time has been left out. And so I'd like to add that the voting will be done on that day, which is July 8 at 4:30 p.m. So this is to be added to the agenda.

Mr. Chairman, I move to adopt the agendas as listed in the General Conference session material.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. Do we have a second to the motion?

Yes, we do. Thank you very much.

I believe that no one is at the microphone to speak, so we will ask you to vote again with the voting card.

Those in favor of adopting the agendas as printed with the added clarification made by our secretary. Please indicate by lifting the voting card.

Thank you very much.

G. T. NG: Mr. Chairman.

LOWELL COOPER: Those opposed to the motion, please indicate with the lifted card.

Again, that is passed unanimously.

Yes, Pastor Ng?

G. T. NG: Mr. Chairman, the next section has to do with several committees. The 2015 General Conference session standing committees are found on pages 22 and 23. The first one is the Steering Committee, the second one is the *Church Manual* Committee, and third one is the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

The membership of these committees come from the recommendations of the General Conference Committee. The *Church Manual* Committee and Constitution and Bylaws Committee, with representatives from each division, have been functioning throughout the quinquennium. These two committees will meet through the session as needed in connection with the discussion of agenda items. A separate process for the Nominating Committee will be implemented today in the business session at 4:30 p.m.

So, Mr. Chairman, I move that we approve the standing committees as stated for the 2015 General Conference session.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, Pastor Ng. We'll ask for a second to the motion.

Yes, we have that.

The motion is to approve the appointment of the standing committees as listed in the agenda.

Now, obviously your agenda may make mention of the Nominating Committee. There is a separate process for that committee.

It looks like we are prepared to vote. Those in favor of adopting the standing committee assignments, please raise the card.

Thank you.

And those opposed, by the same sign.

That appears to be unanimous [in favor].

G. T. NG: Mr. Chairman, the next item has to do with the adoption of rules of order. In order to conduct the business at this session in an orderly manner, I move that we adopt the General Conference rules of order as a guide for our business meetings.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. Is there a second to the motion to adopt the rules of order?

Yes. Several have done so.

It is not evident to me that anyone is approaching a microphone, so we will ask you to vote. Those in favor of adopting the rules—I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Yes. We don't have that information here, but I believe someone is at microphone 6. Do we have that microphone live?

And would you identify yourself, please, since we do not yet have the ability to know that information here. At microphone 6.

FINN ECKHOFF: Good morning, Chair. My name is Finn Eckhoff from the Trans-European Division, Norwegian Union. I would like to comment on the rules of order. I'm impressed that you have managed to make them very clear, much better than last time, but I have one point I would like to comment on. In a discussion on items, we generally use just a majority vote, but when it comes to constitution and bylaws, in some of the instances we ask for a two-thirds majority to be required.

In our discussion this time, we will have a big discussion on fundamental beliefs. And to my understanding, the fundamental beliefs are just as important as the bylaws. And, therefore, I would like to move that we add to the rules of order a section telling that there is a requirement for a two-thirds majority when we vote on adding to or changing the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. Before you leave the microphone, just let me see if I'm

restating the motion correctly. As I understand it, the motion is that we add to the rules of order a provision that requires a two-thirds majority vote on matters relating to the fundamental beliefs.

Have I captured that correctly?

FINN ECKHOFF: That's correct.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you very much. Well, is there a second to that motion? I think that's a motion we need to entertain at this point. Yes, the motion is seconded.

Let's just take a moment to think this one through in terms of process.

[Parliamentarian discussed item with chair.]

Thank you for the patience with our delay here. The question that arises is in respect to the rules of order. And the approval of the rules of order come under the authority of the General Conference Executive Committee.

The motion that is before us this morning is to use these rules of order here.

I would like to suggest that this particular item be referred to the Steering Committee, which meets every morning and will be meeting at least three times before we deal with the fundamental beliefs issue. And it may be appropriate that, in the course of determining how we go about addressing this matter, we would be able to come back to this body with a report, or proceed with an action. That would be the counsel that we have.

I think someone else is standing at a microphone, which we will recognize at microphone 1, please.

LARRY BOGGESS: Larry Boggess, North American Division. I believe that because this is the world church and these fundamental beliefs are the world church's, we have to have as many approve it as possible, so I would support the two-thirds.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. I'd like to ask if the body would consent to a referral to the Steering Committee and that the Steering Committee bring this back to us with the report on how to

proceed in terms of the authority of the General Conference Executive Committee in establishing the rules of order, or if we need to adopt a temporary rule of order for dealing with fundamental belief issues. If there is no objection to that, could I ask if you would grant your consent?

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. We don't have the badge information recorded here on screen, so I was almost proceeding without acknowledging that we have someone, I think, at microphone 5.

Would you identify yourself, please? Microphone 5 in this aisle.

Is no one—someone was waving a hand, and I'm sure someone is there. Yes. Please.

KEVIN NWAIGWE: My name is Kevin Nwaigwe from the West-Central Africa Division. I want to add to the motion that has been raised, particularly as it concerns the fundamental beliefs of the church.

I want to draw from the little experiment that was carried out this morning with the voting cards and the poor response or the faulty output. While you will be referring to two-thirds [special] to this territory, it will also be important that the Steering Committee considers how to separate the votes if we were to use the voting card so as to achieve two-thirds majority. While supporting the two-thirds majority is used, efforts should be made to confirm that the voting card or the electronic voting system will be perfectly in order.

Thank you very much.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you very much, brother.

When we use the voting card on items that require a two-thirds majority, and it is not clearly evident that there is a two-thirds majority, we would need to have a counted voting process, so there would be a way of confirming a two-thirds majority.

All right. I see that there's a point of order at microphone 4. Microphone 4, please.

BOB CUNDIFF: Yes, sir, Bob Cundiff, North American Division. I'm just noting on page 10 of our rules of order, the paragraph that says, "The rules of order may be changed by a two-thirds

vote of the General Conference Executive Committee.”

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. That’s the question that we were looking at here and the reason that I was suggesting this go to Steering Committee. Because the appeal of the brother who made the motion was for a particular agenda item here at the session.

OK. Thank you very much. There is at microphone 5 Mario Veloso, please.

MARIO VELOSO: Brother Chairman, I would like to hear your ruling to the point of order. Because if we are allowed to discuss this item, I would like to say something.

LOWELL COOPER: On the point of order, we brought the motion into discussion. And as soon as it was entered for discussion, we recognized that establishing the rules of order as a document is a responsibility of the General Conference Executive Committee. I suppose that doesn’t mean that the session at a particular vote could not require a particular majority. That’s the question that, in the chair’s view, would be helpful if we could defer to the Steering Committee to take a look at how best to process this, whether or not it becomes a part of the General Conference rules of order.

MARIO VELOSO: So now we are allowed to discuss the item with some meaning, or we just discuss it for the sake of—

LOWELL COOPER: What the chair would request, Dr. Veloso—thank you very much. What the chair would request is—there are two people who wish to speak—that these two people make their presentation to the Steering Committee, and the Steering Committee, in working through the process, would take that into counsel.

MARIO VELOSO: Thank you, Brother Chairman. That seems very fair.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you very much.

Yes. We have at microphone 1, Louis Torres, please.

LOUIS TORRES: Louis Torres, North American Division. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Since you asked the floor to approve the rules of order, you are, by asking us, placing us as the final word on that. Therefore, I believe that to refer it to the committee and allow one person to speak or two people to address the Steering Committee, you are then shifting the authority to the Steering Committee.

In my understanding the floor has a final authority. And if I'm incorrect, please correct me. If we have the final authority, then I would recommend that the floor actually vote this now. Thank you.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you very much, Brother Torres.

The question that is before us is that the session adopts the rules of order for use at this session. The question about who creates the rules of order is a different question. That's the matter that came to our attention. And because the rules of order indicate that the General Conference Executive Committee is that authority to create the rules of order, we really shouldn't entertain a motion here to change the rules of order.

I allowed the motion before recognizing that the authority is in the General Conference Executive Committee. But by referring it to the Steering Committee, we would want to take into account the essence of the appeal made by the brother who presented the motion.

So I would like to ask for the consent of the body to allow this to be referred to the Steering Committee for further consideration and the opportunity to hear those who wish to have a discussion about the issue that was raised.

If you would grant that consent, would you indicate so by raising the voting card?

All right. I had better ask if there are those who are opposed to that consent.

Consent is granted. Thank you very much.

So that gets us back to the motion that is before us, which is to adopt the rules of order to use in our business session. This will not override the consideration that the Steering Committee may

want to come back and give some consent.

We have a motion on the floor to use the document that has been provided to you for the session.

I don't see anyone at the microphone. We'll ask you to vote on the adopting the rules of order. Those in favor of, please raise the card.

Thank you.

Those opposed, the same sign. That is carried.

All right. Pastor Ng, back to you.

G. T. NG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chair, as a way of ensuring proper protocol is followed, I move that Todd McFarlane be approved as a parliamentarian for this general session.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. We have a motion to appoint Todd McFarlane, who works in the Office of General Counsel, as the parliamentarian for the session. Is that motion—it is supported. Thank you. I see no one coming to a microphone.

Those in favor of the motion, please indicate, up with the card.

Thank you.

Those opposed, by the same sign.

Thank you very much.

That appears to be unanimous [in favor]. It's a privilege to introduce Todd McFarlane, who has already been sitting here by my side and providing some very valuable assistance. He will serve as the parliamentarian for the session. And with the privilege of introducing him, may I also introduce our recording secretary for this session, Tami Boward, who works in Secretariat at the General Conference, and she represents a large team of people who are very skilled at keeping track of the decisions we make and the minutes of the General Conference session.

We turn back to you, Dr. Ng.

G. T. NG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The next section relates to session delegate responsibility. We have a number of counsel in the *Church Manual* regarding the duty of delegates in the conference session. Some of this language we may borrow and apply to the general conference session delegates as they perform their duties for the world church.

And I'd like to read what is in the *Church Manual* in this regard. "Delegates to a conference session are not chosen to represent merely the church or conference. They should view the work as a whole, remembering the responsibility for the welfare of the worldwide work of the church. It is not permissible for church or conference delegations to organize or attempt to direct the votes as a unit, nor is it permissible for the delegates from the last church or conference to proclaim preeminence in directing affairs in a conference session. Each delegate shall be susceptible to the direction of the Holy Spirit and vote according to personal convictions. Any church or conference officer or leader attempting to control the votes of a group of delegates would be considered disqualified for holding office" [*Church Manual*, p. 110].

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, Pastor Ng.

I believe that we are fully advised and fully intentional of performing at this level of responsibility. We ask you to lead us in the next item.

G. T. NG: Mr. Chairman, there are a number of Seventh-day Adventist workers who have passed into rest during the past quinquennium. And at this moment we'd like to take a moment of silence to remember their work, to remember them having faithfully served in the church for many years. So at this moment I'd like to invite all delegates and guests to please stand for a moment of silence, after which I will close with a short prayer.

[Moment of silence observed.]

Gracious Lord and Eternal Father, we want to thank You for these thousands of dedicated Seventh-day Adventist employees who have fallen asleep in Jesus. Thank You for the many years of dedicated service they have rendered to the church. And as the Bible says, even though they may be asleep in Jesus, their works follow them. May the legacy that they have left behind continue to inspire us who are living, who are active in our church services, and we will press on to finish the work which You have assigned for us. Console their family members, and may the hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the saints when Jesus comes again be encouragement to them and to us. Thank You for hearing and answering our prayers. In Jesus' name, amen.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. Please be seated.

We will now move into another section of our agenda that deals with the formalizing of membership for newly created units during the past quinquennium. What we're going to suggest in terms of the efficient use of time is that we will hear the recommendations, and at the end of the total set of recommendations deal with the matter in terms of one vote rather than some 29 or 30 separate votes. So if we can prepare for that.

I understand we have a point of interest at mike—a point of order at mike 1. Yes, please.

DANIEL JACKSON: Dan Jackson, North American Division. I have a question of clarification. I apologize for not standing earlier, but I would just like a clarification relative to the vote on the *Church Manual*—or on the rules of order; pardon me.

I wonder why the second motion was permitted when there was a motion on the floor and if that does not rule the second motion as being invalid.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, Dan. The chair received that as a motion to amend the rules of order, and that's what led to the question of at what point—who have we granted the authority to create the rules of order. And because the rules of order currently state that it's the Executive Committee that does that, the chair felt that the Steering Committee should entertain the

essence of the person's concern without having to address the amendment of the rules of order here.

DANIEL JACKSON: I guess my question was: Was the motion stated as an amendment or a motion? You accepted it that way. I'm just asking relative to the technicality of that.

Was that motion stated as "I would like to amend the motion" or "I would like to move"?

LOWELL COOPER: I believe, Brother Jackson, that the motion—I don't recall the exact wording—was to add a section to the rules of order. And on that basis, I received it as a proposal to amend by addition. Thank you very much.

We have someone at microphone 1. Is that individual available to speak, microphone 1? Perhaps—I'm looking for Comfort Abali. Well, perhaps we can remove that name from the list.

OK, and this is—have you registered? Yes, sir. But you'll need to register each time you speak.

LOUIS TORRES: I did.

LOWELL COOPER: I'm sorry. It has just come now. Thank you. Sorry. Yes, Brother Torres.

LOUIS TORRES: Following up on the question of Mr. Jackson. Louis Torres from the North American Division. If the second motion was an amendment that was seconded, it was never voted on. So normally speaking, when an amendment is made, it should be voted up or down. Is that correct?

LOWELL COOPER: Brother Torres, we asked the body to grant consent to send the question to the Steering Committee and then to receive again the counsel of the Steering Committee as to how to handle both the essence of the request and the procedure to facilitate a decision on it. And the body granted the consent to refer it to the Steering Committee.

LOUIS TORRES: I recognize that. My point of order is: Isn't it normal for us, if there's a motion on the floor and it's seconded, either for the person who made the motion to take back the

motion, or for it to be voted up or down, and then to pass to the next motion to ask the floor to give the—refer it to a committee? I'm just asking, because, in the future for other votes, are we going to follow the normal procedure, or are we going to make exceptions? Thank you.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you very much. We will try not to make exceptions. But there are times when the essence of a question that comes before us perhaps gives us an opportunity to look at different ways to address it. And we have not tried to divert the attention of the delegation from dealing with the essence of the question, but are seeking to understand what might be the best procedure to do so. And thank you for that permission.

We indicated that we will move into—we have at microphone 4 Jerilyn Burtch. Microphone 4, I think, is over here.

JERILYN BURTCH: Good morning.

LOWELL COOPER: Yes.

JERILYN BURTCH: It would seem that the creation of new unions would result in more administrators and fewer boots on the ground in ministry. So I'm just wondering: Are these unions self-supporting to fund that access administration?

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you for a very fine question. The growth of organizational units in the denominational structure comes as a result of growth in membership and the entrance into new territories. There is a very, very thorough and complicated process that is undertaken before a new unit is approved. No unit can bring itself into organization.

And what we have before us this morning will be recommendations for units that have gone through this process of organization or authorization to function as conferences, etc. And we are receiving the end of that whole process by way of formalizing these units as members of the General Conference session.

Before we move into that section of the agenda, I would like to draw to your attention that,

during the next few moments, you should be receiving financial statements of the General Conference. This is a document that we want to hand out today because it will be one of the items for discussion tomorrow morning, and we want the delegates to have this information in advance. If you are carrying the financial statement with you today and wish to speak to it when it is discussed tomorrow, we urge you to bring the document back with you, because there will not be a second batch of distribution tomorrow morning. But we do want to make sure that you get the financial statement at least several hours in advance of its reaching the session agenda so that if you have questions, you will be prepared to speak to them.

Thank you very much. We'll ask our distribution team, whenever that materiel is ready, to do the distribution.

And we'll turn to Dr. Ng to return to the approval of new membership units.

G. T. NG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

During the past five years the church has grown rapidly. This has made it necessary for the church to reorganize and to realign itself. And today we're going to vote 35 new unions into the sisterhood of our church. Some of the unions that we updated from union mission status to union conference status. Some have been divided into two. So this morning we will begin with Africa, then we will move on to the Latin-American divisions, and follow by the European divisions.

So Dr. Rosa Banks, who is the associate secretary of the General Conference, as well as the liaison officer to Africa, will introduce the new unions in the three African divisions. She will be followed by Elder Agustin Galicia, an associate secretary of the General Conference, and he will introduce the new unions in the Inter-American Division as well as the South American Division.

And finally, Elder Harald Wollan, General Conference associate secretary, will introduce a new European union, as well as the Middle East and North African Attached Union. We would like to suggest that we will not applaud at the conclusion of the recognition of each union. We will

applaud only once, after all 35 unions have been voted. Thank you very much.

ROSA BANKS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to present to this body 22 unions that were reorganized within the three divisions of Africa during this quinquennium, with the recommendation that they be recognized, reported, and accepted as presented into the world sisterhood of unions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We begin with East-Central Africa Division. And I have asked Dr. Nathaniel Walembe, the executive secretary, to join me in the introduction of the presidents of the six new union conferences and union missions, the first one being the Burundi Association. It is now a new union mission.

NATHANIEL WALEMBA: The president of the Burundi Union Mission is Brother Jethron Nsabiwaremye.

ROSA BANKS: The next one is the North East Congo attached territory. It is a new union mission.

NATHANIEL WALEMBA: The president is Noah Kasereka Musema.

ROSA BANKS: Then we have the East Kenya Union Mission, to be divided into two union conferences.

NATHANIEL WALEMBA: The president of the East Kenya Union Conference is Brother Jonathan Maangi.

The second union in Kenya is the West Kenya Union Conference. The president is Pastor Kenneth Maena.

ROSA BANKS: Then we have the Tanzania Union Mission, to be divided into one union mission and one union conference.

NATHANIEL WALEMBA: The president of the Northern Tanzania Union Conference is Dr. Godwin Lekundayo.

The second union in Tanzania is Southern Tanzania Union Mission. The president is Pastor Magulilo Mwakalonge.

ROSA BANKS: Mr. Chairman, I so move this recommendation for the East-Central Africa Division.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. Let's proceed to the next.

ROSA BANKS: We now move to the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, and we welcome Dr. Solomon Maphosa, executive secretary, to assist me here at the microphone, and the new unions that have already been organized, Botswana Union Mission into a new union conference.

SOLOMON MAPHOSA: The president of the Botswana Union Conference is Dr. Kenaope Kenaope.

ROSA BANKS: Then we move to Indian Ocean Union Mission to be a new union conference.

SOLOMAN MAPHOSA: The president of the Indian Ocean Union Conference is Elder Jasmin Herinirina.

ROSA BANKS: Then we move to Malawi Union Mission, which will be a new union conference.

SOLOMON MAPHOSA: The president of the Malawi Union Conference is Elder Frackson Kuyama.

ROSA BANKS: The Angola Union Mission, to be divided into two union missions.

SOLOMON MAPHOSA: The president of the North-Eastern Angola Union is Dr. Passmore Hachalinga, and the president of the South-Western Angola Union Mission is Elder Manuel Pacheco.

ROSA BANKS: And, Mr. Chairman, I so move this recommendation.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. We'll move to the next division.

ROSA BANKS: All right. The next recommendation involves the Zambia Union

Conference, which has not yet been organized.

SOLOMON MAPHOSA: We have Dr. Harrington Akombwa representing the North Zambia Union Conference, which has not yet been organized, and—

ROSA BANKS: The recommendation is to recognize, record, and accept the reorganization of the Zambia Union Conference into two union conferences, subject to the organization meeting on September 20-23, 2015.

Mr. Chairman, I so move.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you.

ROSA BANKS: All right. We go on to the West-Central Africa Division, which is the last—thank you, Mr. Secretary.

We conclude with the organization of the nine unions within the West-Central Africa Division. And I present to you Dr. Onaolapo Ajibade, the executive secretary. The unions in the West-Central Africa Division are, first of all, Sahel Union Mission, to be divided into two union missions.

ONAOLAPO AJIBADE: The Eastern Sahel Union Mission president is Salomon Assienin. The Western Sahel Union Mission president is Brother Guy Roger.

ROSA BANKS: Now the Central African Union Mission, to be divided into two missions.

ONAOLAPO AJIBADE: The Cameroon Union Mission president is Pastor Valere Assembe. The Central Africa Union Mission president is Joseph Randriamampionona.

ROSA BANKS: OK. The Ghana Union Conference, to be divided into one union mission and one union conference.

ONAOLAPO AJIBADE: The president of the Northern Ghana Union Mission is Pastor Kwame Boakye-Kwanin. The president of the Southern Ghana Union Conference is Pastor Samuel Adama Larmie.

ROSA BANKS: Now the Eastern Nigeria Union Mission, to be a new union conference.

ONAO LAPO AJIBADE: The president of the Eastern Nigeria Union Conference is Pastor Bassey Effiong Okon Udoh.

ROSA BANKS: Now the Northwestern Nigeria Union Mission, to be divided into two union conferences.

ONAO LAPO AJIBADE: The president of the Northern Nigeria Union Conference is Pastor Stephen Bindas, and the president of the Western Nigeria Union Conference is Pastor Oyeleke Owolabi.

ROSA BANKS: Mr. Chairman, this ends the recommendations coming from Africa.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. We will proceed to the next division.

AGUSTIN GALICIA: Mr. Chairman, I would like to present the names of the new units in South America and Inter-America, respectively. And after the presentation I will move that they will be accepted in the sisterhood of unions in the world church.

The first one is the South American Division, with Magdiel Perez Schulz as secretary, and we have a new union, the East Brazil Union Mission, and the president is Geovani Queiroz. I move that it be accepted into the sisterhood.

And then the Inter-American Division, the largest division in the world, and also the division with more unions, 24 of them. And we have 10 of them now to be accepted into the sisterhood of the world church.

First of all, we have the Chiapas Mexican Union Conference, and the president is Ignacio Navarro Perez.

Then we have the Dominican Union Conference, and the president is Cesario Acevedo.

Next is a new—very new—created union, Dutch Caribbean Union Mission, and the president is Shurman Kook.

And then we have the El Salvador Union Mission, and the president is Abel Pacheco.

Next, the Honduras Union Mission, and the president is Adán Ramos.

And then we have the Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union Conference, and the president is Moisés Reyna.

And then the Panama Union Mission, also a newly created union, and the president is José De Gracia.

The South Central American Union Mission, and the president is Wilfredo Ruiz.

The next is the South Colombian Union Conference, and the president is Juan Caicedo Solis.

And the last one on the list is the Southeast Mexican Union Mission, and the president is Isaias Espinoza.

Mr. Chairman.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. Let's move to the next division.

HARALD WOLLAN: Thank you.

In the Trans-European Division, Audrey Andersson is the secretary. And in that division the Finland Union has been reorganized into the Finland Union of Churches, and we have the president, Kalervo Aromaki. Thank you.

I would like to move the acceptance of the Finland Union of Churches into the sisterhood of churches.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. We move to the Middle East.

MR. WOLLAN: The Middle East and North Africa Union is a new union organized for the sake of mission. And the reason all these are here is for the sake of mission. But in the Middle East and North Africa Union, two fields have been united into one mission field. The president of this new union is Pastor Homer Trecartin. And I'd like to move the acceptance of the Middle East and North Africa Union into the sisterhood of unions.

LOWELL COOPER: All right. Thank you very much.

We have a series of motions here from several divisions embracing the changes in organizational structure and the addition of new units. With your permission, we'll take this as a collective motion rather than individually for each unit. And we'll ask, first of all, if there is support to the motion to adopt these changes in membership of the General Conference.

G. T. NG: Second, Mr. Chairman.

LOWELL COOPER: Yes. It is supported.

Now, do we have questions? I think someone is at a microphone, but we don't have any record of it here. Microphone 5, Kathryn Proffitt.

KATHRYN PROFFITT: First of all, I just want to say how thrilling it is to see our church growing. My question, Mr. Chairman, has to do with, as we add new organizations, new unions, what administrative or legal steps are taken to assure the unity of God's church, to assure that new unions are in compliance with the actions taken by the body?

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you very much. Perhaps we could turn to our General Conference secretary to help us with that.

G. T. NG: Mr. Chairman, new unions have been formed as a result of exhaustive studies over an extended period of time. The two main criteria have been financial viability and leadership viability. So the finances have been scrutinized, as well as the existing manpower. They have gone through a series of extensive training as leaders, so they have been properly certified as worthy of the new unions that have been created.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you very much. I don't see anyone else at a microphone and no names on our list here, so we'll ask you to prepare to vote.

Those in favor of the motion to adopt, please, raise the—

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. There is someone at a microphone. Brother Christopher Annan-Nunoo,

microphone 1, please.

CHRISTOPHER ANNAN-NUNOO: Mr. Chairman, with these reorganizations, who qualifies to be a union president?

LOWELL COOPER: Pastor Ng, would you like to comment on that? That's kind of a tangential consideration in the process of creating new organizations.

G. T. NG: It depends what kind of union you're talking about, whether it is a union mission or a union conference. If it is a union mission, the supervising organization, which is a division, will have a say in the selection of leaders, including the union president.

If it is a union conference, then you will have a constituency meeting where you have representation from the different missions and conferences coming together making their choices. This is the usual process for selecting union leadership.

CHRISTOPHER ANNAN-NUNOO: I would like us to refer to the constitution of the church. What does the constitution of the church say?

LOWELL COOPER: With respect to?

CHRISTOPHER ANNAN-NUNOO: To the election of a union president.

LOWELL COOPER: I think, brother, the constitution—the General Conference does not deal with that question. That would be dealt with in the model constitutions and model bylaws for union conferences and union missions. But even there, it is dealt with in the context of the appointment of officers. I'm not sure that those documents deal with a specification of the qualifications for one that would hold the office of president. That would be up to the body authorized to make that decision. Thank you very much.

CHRISTOPHER ANNAN-NUNOO: Thank you.

LOWELL COOPER: I believe we have at microphone 3 Clinton Wahlen.

CLINTON WAHLEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a question regarding the

various effective dates for these organizational units and how that relates to selection of delegates for the session.

LOWELL COOPER: Dr. Ng, would you care to respond to that?

G. T. NG: Mr. Chairman, many of these unions have been voted throughout the quinquennium. Some have been voted in Annual Council, and others have been voted by Spring Meeting. So as soon as they have been voted, they are, in fact, beginning to function as new unions, subject, of course, to the final vote in the General Conference session.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you. We have at microphone 1, yes, Brother Onyebuchi.

ONYEBUCHI NWANKPA: Mr. Chairman, Onyebuchi Nwankpa from the West-Central Africa Division.

We want to thank a lot for what is happening in the reorganization system of the church, which, of course, is invaluable in the hands of the Lord to advance His cause.

When we talk about the leadership of the unions, the leadership of the church, the president of a union is not only an administrative leader, but also a spiritual leader. And as a spiritual leader of the church, the president has heavy responsibilities. I guess that one of the items on the agenda of this session has to handle the issue of ordination. And as a spiritual leader, a president of a union must be an ordained minister.

LOWELL COOPER: Brother, I'm sorry to interrupt. The motion before us on the floor relates to the acceptance of organizational units into membership of the General Conference.

ONYEBUCHI NWANKPA: I understand, Mr. Chairman.

LOWELL COOPER: The question that you are raising deals with another matter outside of this motion. So either I would invite you to speak to the motion, or perhaps we can find some other venue and opportunity to hear the concern you have over the question of leadership.

ONYEBUCHI NWANKPA: Mr. Chairman, the reason for this concern is that the presidents

are standing behind you. And we can see some women, and I wanted to find out why they are there.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, brother. I'm sorry, but the comments are not germane to the motion that is before us. So I will ask that we proceed with the consideration of the motion on the floor, which is to accept into membership the organizations that have been reported to us this morning. Those in favor of the motion, would you kindly raise the voting card?

And those opposed, the same sign.

All right. That is approved.

[Applause.]

I'm sorry to acknowledge—there's a bit of delay in receiving a message here that somebody is at a microphone. And in the course of the voting, we received word that Pacas Sylvia is at microphone 5. Is that individual still wishing to speak, even though we have proceeded with the vote? Microphone 5.

Yes, sister, please.

PACAS SYLVIA: [Speaking Spanish.]

LOWELL COOPER: Sister, I'm sorry. Can I interrupt you?

Is someone able to go to the microphone to provide the translation that many of us will need? We certainly do not want to not hear what our sister wants to say.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I can help.

LOWELL COOPER: All right. Thank you. Yes, we can proceed, sister.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER [translating]: Yes. Good morning, everybody.

We have benefited with this new union, and we feel very blessed by God for the leadership that we are allowing to have in our field. The Holy Spirit is the one who leads when new leadership is selected, and we should keep praying that this process will go through this way.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you very much.

TRANSLATOR: God bless you all.

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you very much, sister, and for the one who provided the translation.

I believe, Pastor Ng, that that completes the formalities of organizational structure, and we will move into another section of our morning agenda and invite Elder Wilson to come to the microphone.

TED N. C. WILSON: Good morning, brothers and sisters. What a privilege it is to meet together in this sixtieth General Conference session.

At this session we have representation from our 13 world divisions, but we have only 12 division presidents, the reason being that Elder Alberto Gulfan of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division has been ill for many months. Many of you have prayed for Pastor Gulfan. To my right and to your left is Sister Helen Gulfan, the wife of Alberto. Alberto has been improving, and we thank God for that. And Helen wants to thank you for your prayers. We want to ask that you will continue to keep Pastor Gulfan in your prayers.

[Applause.]

Pastor Gulfan is a wonderful soldier for the Lord. He loves evangelism. He loves the expansion of God's church. And he would dearly love to be here, but he chose, himself, to remain at home in order to preserve His strength and to look to the future for God's blessing on him and his family. He has chosen to retire at the end of this year and will not be standing for reelection. But at this time we want to honor Pastor and Mrs. Gulfan. Nancy will share some beautiful flowers with Helen, and I would like for you to show appreciation to Pastor Gulfan.

[Applause.]

I would like to you bow your heads for a moment. I would like to ask God's blessing on this precious couple.

Our loving Father in heaven, we come to You asking that You will continue to bless Pastor Gulfan with good health. Be with Helen also. And, Lord, we entrust this wonderful, dedicated Christian couple into Your hands. Bless the Southern Asia-Pacific Division in a marvelous way. And we thank You for the example that Alberto and Helen have given to each of us. Bless them in an unusual way. In Jesus' name, we ask it. Amen.

Thank you very much, Helen.

I have one other special greeting to bring before we move to another special section, and that is that we have a number of representatives from the Chinese Union Mission, CHUM, as we refer to it. We have a number of delegates and special guests.

And the distinctive and very positive thing about our session here this time is that, in addition to the regular delegates from the Chinese Union Mission, which is in the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, we have with us at least 80 special guests who are sitting with their delegation from the country of China. And I would like to invite those who are delegates and special guests from the Chinese Union Mission. I would like you to stand where you are right now so that we can recognize you.

[Applause.]

What a wonderful family we belong to. In another part of the world, in the Trans-European Division, in the country of Hungary, we have faced some unusual challenges and some difficulties, a need to reconcile, a need to bring people together. There has been a particular group that has been disconnected from the Seventh-day Adventist Church for some decades, at some distance. And at this time we are extremely grateful that we have found the Holy Spirit working in a very powerful way. Some years ago I asked Pastor Ben Schoun, who is also with us here on the platform, to work closely with Pastor Bertil Wiklander, then the pastor of the division, and Pastor Raafat Kamal, who was a field secretary in charge of focusing on that particular situation.

Pastor Kamal has since become the division president of the Trans-European Division. Pastor Kamal, please come and share with us this unique and wonderful reconciliation that is developing in the country of Hungary.

RAAFAT KAMAL: Thank you, Elder Wilson and Mr. Chairman.

It's quite exciting to celebrate with our Hungarian brothers and sisters the signing of a joint declaration concerning the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Christian Advent community, also known as KERAK. This took place on April 23, 2015, when God blessed the process over the past years to heal and reconcile a division, between family members for the past 40 years. It formally opened the door for many members from KERAK to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

At this point I'd like to introduce to you our Hungarian leaders, starting from the first person on my side here, János Cserbik. Next to him is Zoltan Modele, the second chairman. Next is Tamas Ocsai, the president of the Hungarian Union, followed by Robert Chismedia, the secretary of the union, and Renata Zolyomi, who is the treasurer of the Hungarian Union.

I just want to encourage you, if you see them, to embrace these brothers and sisters and pray with them. They have been on a journey, sometimes a difficult journey, where God gave them boldness to take these big steps, for healing, for reconciliation of a broken family, a family of more than 6,000 members.

So it's been a turning point in the life of the Adventist Church, where they put behind them the pain and the challenges, and they're moving forward to fulfill God's mission together as one family.

It's worth noting that in the KERAK constitution it's enshrined there that they've always wanted to come back to the mother church. There have been multiple attempts over the 40 years by three GC presidents, two GC vice presidents, four division presidents, and five union presidents to make this reconciliation happen. And we praise God. We're grateful for the foundation that has

already been laid through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Following a meeting with Elder Wilson in Paris in early June 2011, representatives of the Christian Advent Community, or KERAK, expressed an initial interest or dialogue to be part of the recognized Seventh-day Adventist Church. A series of talks followed. Elder Ben Schoun was appointed by Elder Wilson, and we had very fruitful meetings over the past four years.

So we praise God. We praise God for His healing power as He continues to bring these communities in Hungary together where Christlike forgiveness, healing, and love continue to take over minds and hearts. Christ is coming soon, and He is uniting our Adventist believers in Hungary to be of one mind and focusing on the end-time mission to be solved and loved. To God be the glory.

At this point I'd like to ask our delegates and special guests from Hungary to stand up, to stand as Elder Wilson leads us in a word of prayer.

[Applause.]

TED N. C. WILSON: I would like to ask all of us to stand for prayer. We are so grateful for the reconciling power of the Holy Spirit, and we praise God for what has been happening in the country of Hungary. Let us pray.

Our loving Father, we come to You in a very quiet and humble manner asking that the beautiful reconciliation that You are nurturing and fostering in the precious country of Hungary will also be seen all over the world and in each one of our hearts this morning. As we look forward to this session, may the precious power of heaven enter into our actions, our speech, and our demeanor. And, Lord, we ask in a special way now that You will bless our brothers and sisters in Hungary as this reconciliation takes place and the proclamation of the three angels' messages gains in intensity in that important country. Bless our members and bless our church workers in Hungary and all over the world. In Jesus' name, we ask it. Amen.

Please be seated.

LOWELL COOPER: Brothers and sisters, before we proceed with the next agenda item, we are going to ask if you will join us in once again testing the electronic voting system. Some adjustments have been made. We are going to have a couple of practice questions here. And one of the things that we will do is extend the voting time to 60 seconds from 30. This will be one of the ways we begin to sort out what may have been part of a problem.

So if you will get that device ready, we will once again return to the question: Is this the first time you have the opportunity of being a delegate at the General Conference session?

Now, don't vote until we get with the matter on the screen, and I will give you a signal when we can begin voting. Number 1 is yes. Number 2 is no.

Let's wait a moment. All right. It's on the screen. The countdown has begun. Please vote now.

We're down to 31 seconds.

We're down to 15 seconds.

Voting is closed. We'll wait for the result.

Well, we're better, but 828.

All right. We still have some work to do on this, and so there will be some later testing. And thank you for helping us with another test. We think we understand some of the issues, but there's more work to do.

We'll turn back to Elder Wilson, please.

TED N. C. WILSON: Many people have been praying for this session. We've had the 100 days of prayer. And in addition to that, people have been focusing on what the Holy Spirit can do in our midst. We will be hearing reports; we will be seeing various presentations; we will be hearing various aspects of protocol and pageantry; we will be debating and discussing various things.

The most important thing that we must carry from this General Conference session on July

12, when people leave San Antonio, so that we are united in God's mission of proclaiming the three angels' messages and Christ's soon coming. It is with that end in mind that I introduce to you Pastor Armando Miranda, the chair of our Revival and Reformation Committee, and Pastor Jerry Page, the secretary of that committee. That committee has been working diligently to help people all throughout this vast globe to find a closer relationship with Christ and to prepare for Jesus' soon coming. Today we will make an appeal to you, to, along with all of us, humble our hearts before the Lord.

Pastor Miranda, Pastor Page, lead us into this special section of our morning program.

ARMANDO MIRANDA: Thank you, Elder Wilson. Our church was experiencing a troubled time in the late 1800s and onward. Leaders discussed in an open and heated manner about their disagreements on the law in Galatians, righteousness by faith, and also the pantheistic views of John Harvey Kellogg. Our publications, *Signs of the Times* and *Review and Herald*, were in total opposition. In 1901 President G. A. Irwin was feeling as if his presidency had been less than successful. Later the *Review and Herald* was burned to the ground, destroying the plates for Kellogg's book. But they were going to pray despite the prophet's warnings.

There had been repeated calls to the leadership to become humble so that God could work with them, but they were all ignored. It was a difficult time.

Thus, in that environment, on April 2, 1901, the General Conference celebrated its thirty-fourth session at the Dime Tabernacle in Battle Creek, Michigan. Months later, on January 5, 1903, Sister Ellen G. White wrote to the Battle Creek church the following: "One day at noon I was writing of the work that might have been done at the last General Conference if the men in positions of trust had followed the will and way of God. Those who have had great light have not walked in the light. The meeting was closed, and the break was not made. Men did not humble themselves before the Lord as they should have done, and the Holy Spirit was not imparted. I had written thus far when I

lost consciousness, and I seemed to be witnessing a scene in Battle Creek.” Then Ellen G. White was taken in a vision. And in that vision she witnessed a powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit that brought humility, confession, repentance, and unity to the church as never before. They experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, that was not a reality. It was a vision. Ellen G. White said later that if the leadership of the church and our brothers and sisters had accepted the admonition of God, the Holy Spirit would have been poured out in a special way, as the latter rain.

So, my brothers and sisters, today, 114 years later, we are here at the opening of the sixtieth General Conference session. One hundred fourteen years, and we are still here on earth. We long for the day when we see Jesus coming to take us to heaven.

There is still work that needs to be done, and we need the presence of the Holy Spirit. We need the anointing of the Holy Spirit in a special way. And the Lord is ready to do that for us. Let me tell you, my brothers and sisters, that the General Conference has reenacted the vision in a video that we will show in a moment, with the purpose of reminding us that the Lord is ready to send the Holy Spirit of the latter rain in order to prepare each one of us for the fulfillment of the mission and to be ready for God in heaven. So, my brothers and sisters, in a few moments we’re going to see this video, and let’s accept the message of the Lord to each one of us.

JERRY PAGE: The Lord said, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14).

You know that well. With millions of people, Seventh-day Adventists around this world, praying for this GC session, praying for you and for me, don't you think God is going to do something great here? Do you believe that He can actually take us individually and as a group into an upper-room experience where we really love each other, where we have the mind of Christ, where

we can reconcile any differences? We're going to be disagree, but to leave here loving people who may be to us the most unlovable, the ones we disagree with perhaps the most strongly. God can work that miracle—I believe that with all my heart.

We want to give you a short time right now to pray silently, talk to your Lord Jesus about whatever you want to talk to Him about, but giving permission, in these next few minutes watching this video or whatever happens during this session, that He can touch your heart and help us in answer to all of our prayers. What He needs us to hear right now. Let's pray silently together in this moment.

O Lord, we need You to fill us with the mind of Jesus, with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And You are to do exceedingly abundantly over anything we could ever ask or dream or think according to Your power, which works in us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Playing of video.]

TED N. C. WILSON: My brother and sisters, it has been 114 years since the historic 1901 General Conference session, but we are still here. Unfortunately, we haven't entered the Promised Land. We've been shown that we are like the children of Israel, who look to themselves and then turn back to the wilderness.

Joshua, that great leader, attended many unnecessary funerals over the next 40 years of desert wandering. His greatest desire was not to become a leader, but rather to seek the heart and the mind of his heavenly Father. God is seeking men and women today who, like Joshua, treasure above all else complete allegiance to God.

This General Conference session could potentially become our last if we act in accordance with God's will. It's time for the mighty rushing power of the wind of the Holy Spirit to shake this place and stir our hearts with humility and commitment. It's time we press together as God has instructed us. It's time to put away every contention, every difference, as did the disciples in the

upper-room experience.

God revealed His will through His prophet Ellen G. White, and unfolded to her the vision of what might have been, what could have been, had the leaders of that day fully surrendered all of self to Jesus Christ.

By saying this, in no way do we claim to control God. He is omniscient and omnipotent. All is in His control. But he does not force Himself on people, because He created us with the power of choice and wishes all to be saved. Unfortunately—and I speak for myself and probably for all of us—our improper actions or our inaction can influence what God wants to do.

Second Peter 3, verse 9: He “is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (NKJV).

In verse 12 we’re told that we should be looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. In the section called “The Reason for the Delay” in the book *Evangelism*, we read on pages 695 and 696, written in 1883, and I quote: “Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God. The Lord would have brought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people for their reward.”

Continuing on with the quote: “It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be delayed. . . . For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord’s professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.”

On page 450 of volume 6 of *Testimonies for the Church*, written in 1900, we read the following: “Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the

message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to earth, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God.”

As we humble ourselves in full commitment to Him, He will use us to accomplish His final mission to the world. We don't know when the Lord will come, but everything points to His soon return. Let no one become discouraged or skeptical, joining in with the scoffers who say in 2 Peter 3:4, “Where is the promise of his coming?” (KJV).

As our General Conference session theme says, “Arise! Shine! Jesus is coming!” To those seated here today in this dome, to those viewing around the world, I humbly, personally submit myself to you and to our powerful God, asking that you do the same as we enter into a spirit of Christlike love and forgiveness through the Holy Spirit's power.

Our greatest desire should be that we become one in Christ, one purpose, one mission, one goal. The final movements of destiny can begin this morning as we allow God to set our agenda. It's imperative that we become all that He desires of us, delegates and members following His voice and advancing to the Promised Land in humility and in prayer.

Our marching orders are very clear: Take the gospel to the entire world, proclaiming the three angels' messages, lifting up Christ and His righteousness; then Jesus will come. But only through the outpouring of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit will it become a reality.

Ellen White indicated in the *Review and Herald* on March 19, 1895: “The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church is looked forward to as in the future; but it is the privilege of the church to have it now. Seek for it, pray for it, believe for it. We must have it, and Heaven is waiting to bestow it.”

For the past 100 days God's people around the world have been praying for you, for me, for all of us, that our hearts will be changed, melted by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's not disappoint them or God or the angels who are here in our midst today. What might have been can be, through a

humbling of ourselves before the Lord and each other.

Behind me you see the General Conference and division officers. During the time of the 2015 Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee, this group prayerfully voted a special appeal to all of us and to ourselves and those who participated in the vote, a special appeal to this session, an appeal that should be in your hands at the present time and will be shown on the screen as well. Let me read that special appeal.

“We, the General Conference and division officers, appeal to all 2015 General Conference session delegates and attendees to accept each other as brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of some differences of opinion that may be evident on certain subjects. We ask for Christlikeness and humble respect for each other in our words and activities during this General Conference session and beyond. Our humble demeanor and attitudes, through God’s power, will speak volumes to those who are watching. We earnestly appeal that we do all in our power to strengthen the church—this precious Advent movement. We lean completely on Christ for the unifying spirit that we need in proclaiming the three angels’ messages in these last days of earth’s history.”

My fellow delegates and members everywhere, will you join us as General Conference and division officers in accepting this special appeal? If so, would you stand to your feet right now?

Amen. Amen.

I’m asking you to seal this commitment in prayer groups—a group of two or three, not a large group. And during the next few minutes, pour your heart out to the Lord in commitment to Him. I earnestly ask the Holy Spirit will be in our midst this morning, this afternoon, tonight, throughout the session, and as we look forward to the Lord’s soon return. We want to go home.

I ask that, as you kneel in prayer, where possible, you will pray together and remain on your knees until you hear the music start; that at that time we will sing that beautiful chorus “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus.” I ask you to remain kneeling until we sing together that beautiful chorus. We’re

going to take time to pray. This is not just two or three minutes. We want to plead for the Holy Spirit. Please kneel together and find one or two other people to pray with.

[Prayer session.]

Let's sing together.

[Singing.]

LOWELL COOPER: Thank you, brothers and sisters. We had expected that we would be able to adjourn by this time, but we'd like to ask for you to stay just a few extra moments as we care for a couple of other items. We want, once again, to test our voting. I'm going to give a moment or two for the General Conference and division officers to return to their delegation areas. When we dismiss, the next obligation for delegates will be to attend the division delegation meetings, which will not be held in this room. You will find on your delegate badge beneath your name a room location, I believe all except one or two will have room locations in the convention center.

The division delegations will meet starting at 2:00 this afternoon and work through the process of making recommendations for members from their division to be elected as members of the General Conference session Nominating Committee. So please look at your badge and find the meeting location that is indicated just beneath your name.

Now, as we started the last agenda item that Elder Wilson introduced earlier on, there was a person standing at the microphone. We will record that name as someone who wishes to speak at a later time. We're somewhat beyond our time limits for this session. And we thank you very much for your assistance.

Now, as we come to test the voting again, we're going to do two things: number one, we will ask you a question and give a time countdown of 60 seconds. On the basis of what we learn from that result, we will come to you with a second question and reduce the time to 30 seconds. I suppose we need to be very honest with you that it seems that the issue has been the overwhelming power of the

Alamodome's Wi-Fi system. It is not the problem with the voting system. So let's try it.

Take your voting devices. We'll once again return to that question: Is this the first time for you to serve as a delegate to a General Conference session?

And we're ready for the countdown to begin.

You may vote now.

We're at 30 seconds, 15, 10, five.

All right. Let's do one—OK. Our signal is that we'll try again later. We won't go with a second question. Still working on it. And we'll have opportunity to test it out again. So we'll conclude our business session.

We'll invite Brother Suresh Sidayia from the Southern Asian Division to have our benediction. I'm not sure if he is here.

Brother Suresh, are you here?

Yes. If you would step to a microphone. Let us stand. And after the benediction, we will be dismissed.

SURESH SIDAYIA: Shall we pray? Our gracious, loving Father in heaven, I want to thank You, Lord, for this beautiful morning. . . .

Lord, bless the session that is being held in here, the sixtieth General Conference session. All the divisions, the unions, the conferences, the units, the sections, let the Holy Spirit call upon each of us, on Your great leadership of the church. This is a church that You have chosen, that You promised that You would come back soon. O Lord, we want to praise You and honor You. And help us to arise and evangelize. . . .

Lord, we want to thank You for every blessing. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to accomplish the task that is given each of us, Lord. We praise and honor You. . . . We ask You to bless each of us now and forevermore. Amen.

[End of morning session at 12:10 p.m.]