

# From the G.C. President

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Robert S Folkenberg

**1. DATELINE WALLA WALLA:** Global Mission was the focus during last Sabbath's concurrent meetings in the Walla Walla Village and the College churches. All morning and afternoon members listened to exciting reports of their church in action. The day's program was broadcast live over the community television cable system, as well as by the College FM radio station. The effect was wider because the Upper Columbia Conference has secured FM repeaters (remote transmitters) over which the College radio programs are broadcast. Thus almost all of the members of the conference were able to listen in to the afternoon, live, "call-in" program, in which the topic was also Global Mission.

The program in Walla Walla was the first of a series of nine, scheduled across North America, designed to not only present the broad objectives and accomplishments of Global Mission, but also the opportunities to be addressed by the General Conference Session offering. With the objective of establishing 2,000 new congregations in unentered areas by the year 2000 and a worldwide goal of US\$15 million, this is the single most ambitious General Conference Session project ever undertaken.

**2. ASBESTOS LITIGATION CONCLUDED:** In 1971, the General Conference built the "North Building" at its former Takoma Park campus. Unknown to the General Conference, asbestos was used in the construction. Asbestos was determined to be a toxic substance. In 1980 the General Conference hired an industrial hygienist who inspected the building and certified it was asbestos-free. On contracting to sell the building the new owners hired another hygienist to do their own examination. When this hygienist discovered asbestos fire-proofing on the steel beams on the 2nd through 10th floor the buyer threatened to sue the GC unless they were released from their contract. The GC released the buyer from their contract. After repeated and unsuccessful attempts to sell the building, with full disclosure of its asbestos contamination, between March and December of 1990, the asbestos was removed at a cost of about US\$4 million.

Subsequent investigation revealed that the manufacturer of the asbestos-containing fire-proofing material knew as early as 1969 (two years before the "North Building" was constructed) that their product was toxic and their correspondence revealed an admission of an ethical obligation to remove asbestos from their fire-insulating material. Other companies, having the same information, began to manufacture asbestos-free fire-insulation material prior to the time the asbestos was installed in the "North Building." With this information, contact was made with the

manufacturer, who refused to accept any responsibility. After considerable deliberation litigation was initiated to reclaim these losses. The jury, in the January 1993 trial, ruled in favor of the Church and awarded the GC US\$4.5 million.

The manufacturer twice appealed the decision. On November 10, 1994, the Court of Appeals of Maryland, the State's highest court, declined to grant the request of W.R. Grace to reconsider the verdict and the manufacturer has indicated that it will not pursue any further appeal. The GC expects to receive the proceeds plus accumulated interest from the litigation award this week.

**3. NEW DAY IN ETHIOPIA:** Pastor Jim Zachary of the GC Ministerial Association just shared his exciting report of the Quiet Hour Evangelistic campaign in Addis Ababa. Seventeen pastors baptized nearly 300 candidates in a swimming pool in one of four baptisms. As these persons were baptized, Pastor Truneh Wolde-Selassie, Ethiopian Union president, said, "It is wonderful. It is wonderful."

This was the first public evangelistic meeting ever held in the 86-year history of the Adventist Church in Ethiopia. Opposition from the national church and later from the communist government prevented public meetings and baptisms. God richly blessed this endeavor. Seventeen cottage meetings were held under the direction of a Filipino missionary, Pastor Edwin Gulfan, a Bible teacher at the Ethiopian Adventist College. All those attending the cottage meetings were invited to the open-air stadium where attendance grew from 1,500 to 3,000. As the meetings closed, 596 persons were baptized and over 700 had joined the follow-up baptismal classes.

Pastor Truneh's village had been destroyed by a religious mob when he was 12 years old. He watched as two church leaders were shot; then the gun was pointed at his father, and he waited breathlessly. A man leaped forward and pushing the gun aside shouted, "Two deaths are enough." Truneh's father recognized the man. Several months before he had saved this man's life when he was seriously ill. The terrified group of Adventists made their way to the mission office with only their clothes on their backs. As they walked into the night, their way was lighted by the fire that destroyed all they owned.

Restrictions and persecution made evangelism very difficult. Baptisms were held secretly during the night hours. A group of communists discovered a secret baptism and proceeded to "baptize" the pastor. But by God's grace, he escaped their plan to drown him.

Elder Truneh commented, "At last we are free. We must work while we have the opportunity."

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