

Adventist Conference on Family Research & Practice

The theme of the conference was "Families Then and Now: 100 Years of Family Research and Practice"

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Willie and Elaine Oliver, directors of the Department of Family Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, presented the inaugural Spalding Medallion for Lifetime Service to John and Millie (posthumously) Youngberg on Thursday evening, July 18. (Photo by Darren Heslop, University Communication staff photographer)

By: David Sedlacek, ACFRP faculty coordinator

The 2019 Adventist Conference on Family Research & Practice (ACFRP) took place from July 18–20 on the campus of Andrews University. The theme of the conference was “Families Then and Now: 100 Years of Family Research and Practice.”

Thursday evening began with the presentation of the inaugural Spalding Medallion for Lifetime Service to John and Millie (posthumous) Youngberg for their exceptional service in the field of family ministry. The Youngbergs began Family Life International in 1975, and it evolved over the years into the current Adventist Conference on Family Research & Practice. Thursday evening was capped off by a challenging plenary session given by Trevor and Edith Fraser, family life facilitators and leaders, titled “You’ve Come a Long Way Baby: An Overview of the Family.” In this session, they explored the history of families over the past 100 years, particularly from cultural and societal lenses.

In Friday morning’s practical plenary session titled “Win, Lose or Draw: Resolving Conflicts in the Home,” the Frasers explored the various reasons for family conflicts and provided excellent strategies for processing conflicts in healthy, growth-filled ways. The plenary was followed by five hours of breakout workshops. NAD Family Ministries co-director Pamela Consuegra commented, “This year’s research and practice workshops were all excellent—it was hard to

choose which ones to attend.” A total of 16 workshops were presented with topics that included healing trauma in families, secondary analysis of at-risk factors in youth, marital disruption in immigrant Nigerian families, and cohabitation and the church. Workshop participants were challenged by the presentations. As Julius Everett, pastor, commented, “Now it’s time to take this information and make real changes.”

At Friday evening vespers Willie and Elaine Oliver, directors of the Department of Family Ministries for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, took participants on a journey titled “Adventist Family Ministries: A Retrospect.” They thoughtfully reviewed the history of family ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

On Sabbath morning David Sedlacek, professor of discipleship and family life in the Seminary, and his wife, Beverly Sedlacek, facilitated a stimulating discussion of the varied meanings of “Sabbath” as it relates to relationships, especially to those who are hurting, in bondage or oppressed. The worship service began with the GC Spalding Medallion award being presented to Claudio and Pamela Consuegra, directors of the Family Ministries Department for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. The NAD Family Ministries Distinguished Service Award was presented to Buford and Carmen Griffith for their 30 years of service as Family Ministries directors in the North American Division.

The worship service included a message by the Olivers titled “Hope for Today’s Families.” They helped those in attendance to think about not only the struggles of today’s families in churches but presented tools that family ministry leaders can use to bring healing and bridge the gaps that exist in many churches and institutions. Their afternoon session, the final one of the conference, was titled “Adventist Family Ministries: Who? What? Where?” They engaged the participants in a discussion of the subject of LGBT policy in the church by dividing the participants into discussion groups for several minutes and asking them to report on the group conversation. This highlighted the varied positions and opinions that exist in the church and the difficulty that the church has coming to consensus on challenging topics.

The 2020 Adventist Conference on Family Research & Practice will feature internationally recognized speaker Ron L. Deal, president of Smart Stepfamilies™ and director of FamilyLife Blended®, a division of FamilyLife, as the Thursday evening and Friday morning plenary speaker. The Sabbath speaker will be Elizabeth Viera Talbot, speaker/director for the Jesus 101 Biblical Institute, a media ministry of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, designed to offer in-depth, Christ-centered biblical studies resources. The dates for the 2020 ACFRP are July 23–25. Mark your calendars now and make plans to receive a great blessing.