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**Mixed Reports from Lake Union Business Meeting: Education,
Healthcare Professional Challenges; Record Tithe, Membership
Growth Continues**

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▲ Ben Martin baptizes Keila Bowerman

“At Ruth Murdoch, there are lots of people asking questions like, ‘Would you like to get baptized,’ and ‘Would you like to choose Jesus?’ But who is asking the kids who go to public schools? Nobody’s even asked them. So there are lots [of students] in the community who nobody is asking.”

The idea of an evangelistic series to reach students outside the Adventist schools came to him while sitting in a seminary class.

“I immediately realized that this would be a terrible idea because it was going to be a lot of work,” he said. But he persisted and approached the Ruth Murdoch junior high teachers who acknowledged the amount of work but said, “Let’s do it!”

As he looks back, he reflected: “I couldn’t imagine that we thought this would still be going 10 years later, but I think it is an awesome opportunity for kids not only to think through what they believe and share it with others but also to find ways to get involved with ministry. I think it is incredible for all kinds of leadership.”

When asked what The Tent meant to him, Pastor Ben concluded that it’s evident that God has faithfully been at work. “I think it is a powerful reminder that God can use absolutely everyone and anyone who is willing. Seeing Him work through junior high students and seeing Him show up year after year and night after night is just a powerful reminder of His willingness to work with us when we give Him that opportunity.” ■

Briauna Skinner is an incoming freshman at Andrews Academy. She enjoys reading, writing and baking. Her dream is to become a writer.

Mixed Reports from Lake Union Business Meeting

EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES; RECORD TITHE, MEMBERSHIP GROWTH CONTINUES

ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 5, THE LAKE UNION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CONVENED IN BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN, FOR THE SECOND OF THREE MEETINGS HELD ANNUALLY.

The 37-member committee includes representatives from the five conferences who are tasked with helping to develop and direct the work of the church in the Great Lakes region. Members include local conference administrators, church employees, lay leaders, as well as the presidents of Andrews University and AdventHealth Great Lakes.

As president of the Lake Union, Ken Denslow chairs the meeting, which is focused on the day-to-day work, as well as long-term strategies for fulfilling the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

HIGHLIGHTS

Education Challenges, Strong Pathfinder Performances

One of the main focuses of the union for the next several years is school enrollment. As such, North American Division Vice President for Education Arne Nielsen was present to shed light on enrollment trends in the division. He said enrollment is almost back to pre-COVID levels.

Today, there are fewer schools but more students, and the reason is because there aren’t enough teachers. Smaller schools have closed, and some teachers went to larger schools.

More specific stats are available at v1.adventisteducation.org/stat.

A discussion ensued on how to address the teacher shortage. Nielsen said more studies are being done, but one factor is that COVID has taken a toll on teachers’ emotional wellbeing.

Youth Director Ron Whitehead spoke of Newsweek magazine naming Camp Akita and Camp Au Sable as two of the best summer camps.

Additionally, the Division-level Pathfinder Bible Experience hosted 16 teams from the Lake Union. The Stevensville Church put forth three teams who placed first, a first at the Division PBE. “The congregation invested in them, and we see amazing returns,” said Whitehead.

Dental clinics are back, starting with one in each conference. Randy will oversee the on-site clinics but since he is now busy running the Indiana ABC, Carmelo Mercado has accepted the role of planning the clinics.

Successful ASI Gathering

General Vice President Carmelo Mercado reported on the recent ASI Lake Union gathering featuring Neil Nedley and the new leadership voted. More than \$15,000 was raised for Karen refugees, Weimar Institute and FARMSTEW ministry.

Growth and Risks for AdventHealth Great Lakes

President Thor Thordarson says he is focused on making sure the U. Chicago AdventHealth partnership is working. Many things are going well, including high ratings and growth in market share. However, there are areas of risk, such as high turnover due to the heavy workload.



Photos by Kaite Fellows

▲ Lake Union President Ken Denslow presents a gift to Andrews University President Andrea Luxton for her seven years of service on the Lake Union executive committee.

▲ Top: AdventHealth Great Lakes Region President Thor Thordarson discusses the challenges and opportunities facing the health system.

Middle: Illinois Conference President John Grys (with scarf) listens to a report.

Bottom: Lake Union administrators administrators Ken Denslow (standing); left - Elden Ramirez, executive secretary; right - Glynn Scott, treasurer

Andrews University Deeply Embedded in the Mission of the Church

Andrea Luxton said she was grateful for the last seven years leading Andrews University and will move on to a role at the North American Division as VP for Education, focusing on higher learning.

The University is involved in the WAUS radio station, Center for Youth Evangelism, Center for Adventist Research, Adventist Digital Library (puts all of Adventist material online), Horn Archaeological Museum, Andrews University Press, International Center for Trauma Education & Care (trained about 4,000 people in the last year), Center for Prevention of Addictions, Global Leadership Center and Office of Innovation & Entrepreneurship. “We are a university day-to-day, but deeply embedded in the mission of the church,” said Luxton.

While enrollment is looking stronger than it did for years, there are headwinds. Luxton

noted, “K-12 education is the most stressful career. The second most stressful is higher education.” The reason for this is, “Children have been dealing with so much and it’s coming into the classroom, and it makes the job so much more stressful.”

She added that the average tenure of a university president is now three years, when it used to be between 7–10 years.

Growth in Membership

As of the end of March 2023: Membership stands at 89,080
240 baptisms recorded between January and March 2023

Candidates Voted for Ordination

Lake Region
Jimmy Lee Atkins, Evanston, Illinois
James Dogette Jr., young adult director
Alexander Cody Miller, conference evangelist who is finishing up at the Seminary
Kent M. Nichols, conference treasurer

Tithe Continues Its Record Climb

Tithe \$22.7 million, up 16.71 percent over March 2022, with one less Sabbath in 2023 vs 2022. This increase is due to extraordinary tithe of \$2.6 million received by the Illinois Conference.

Total income \$2.8 million, ahead of budget by \$298,000 due to tithe gain of 16.71 percent and other income \$45,000 greater than budget.

Total expenses \$2.7 million, under budget by \$277,000 due to program expenses year-to-date lower than budget.

Operating gain is \$185,000. ■

Debbie Michel is editor of the Lake Union Herald