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Year-End Reports Highlight Ministry Activities Across the Union

Debbie Michel

Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, editor@lakeunion.org

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expressed a consistent preference for non-degree and skills training options.¹ The certificates offered through this new partnership speak to this trend, as they are non-degree and non-credit.

“These short-term certificates teach skills necessary to be successful in entry-level positions,” Sweeney explains. Programs range in length from 6-33 weeks. “It’s the perfect opportunity for people to upscale their careers, and for employers to upskill their employee base—especially if the pandemic forced employers to promote workers who weren’t quite ready.”

AdventHealth, for example, has put over 300 of their employees through certificate programs so far, with hundreds more enrolled.

Healthcare certificates are by far the most popular of those offered, though there are dozens available in several areas, many of them through Andrews. These include project management, cyber security, EKG technician, health unit coordinator, software development, data science, and healthcare administration, among several others.

“According to our research, the Lake Union region is in need of entry level workers particularly in jobs such as medical assistants, behavior technicians, phlebotomists and patient care technicians,” Sweeney says. All of these certificates are available through Andrews.

The beauty of this program, though, is that students don’t have to be anywhere near Andrews (or any of the other participating schools) to participate. Students are self-directed and can learn online on their own schedule, and if outside connections—such as clinical placements—are needed, Core helps students find what they need in their own home area.

And it’s not just about improving one’s marketability in a particular field; it’s also about mission.

“Through this program, anyone can further their skills in professions which allow them to more fully serve their communities,” Andrea Luxton, associate director for higher education for the NAD, comments. “This can open additional doors for different and greater service.”

The seven participating schools are in discussion about ways they can offer students in the Core programs more directly mission-related courses.

Janine Lim, associate dean for online higher education at Andrews University, sums it up well: “Enabling more people to engage in career-focused training is just one more tool in the belt of those following in Christ’s footsteps as witnesses to and in service of their local communities.” ■

For information about the workforce certification program at Andrews University, visit workforce.andrews.edu, call 877-413-0075, or email workforce@andrews.edu. Special non-profit, zero-based interest loans are available specifically for students, faculty and staff at Adventist colleges and universities. ■

**Participating NAD schools: Andrews University, AdventHealth University, Pacific Union College, Southern Adventist University, Union College, Walla Walla University, Washington Adventist University.*

¹*Strada Center for Education Consumer Insights Public Viewpoint Surveys, April 15-Oct. 29.*

Year-End Reports Highlight Ministry Activities Across the Union

STRONG EMPHASIS ON EVANGELISM; TITHE HIGHER; DISCUSSIONS ON LOOMING PASTORS AND TEACHERS SHORTAGE

ON WEDNESDAY, NOV.15, THE LAKE UNION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CONVENED IN BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN, FOR THE LAST 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 UCHICAGO MEDICINE ADVENTHEALTH.

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

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED:

Presidents’ Reports

North American Division President G. Alexander Bryant was in attendance and reminded the group of the Division’s focus on the “3Ms” – Multiply (growing through baptisms and church plantings); Media (spreading the gospel in the digital/broadcast sphere); and Mentorship (preparing the next generation for leadership).

The teacher and pastor shortage are areas the union is looking to address, according to **Lake Union** President Ken Denslow. Discussions are underway in terms of how the union can further support students who



▲ From left to right: Carmelo Mercado, multicultural ministry vice president; Elden Ramirez, executive secretary; Ken Denslow, president, and Glynn Scott, treasurer.

incur debt for these careers which generally don't pay very well.

Andrews University President John Wesley Taylor V said mission is going forth, as the university gets ready in 2024 to celebrate 150 years of the founding of Battle Creek College.

- Each week, 540 students gather in 40 student-led groups to deepen their faith.
- The number of student missionaries has doubled since the pandemic drop.
- Some 1,200 students participated in "Change Day" by engaging in 40 service projects across Berrien County.
- The seminary is involved in evangelism around the world and also not too far, in South Bend, Indiana.
- The International Trauma Care Center is intentionally involved in extending the ministry of Jesus.
- The seminary received a Lily endowment grant to train pastors.
- Andrews is ranked the #1 private university and #1 for student experience. (See more on p. 23)

He concluded, "You can go to Andrews and meet the world – 100 countries and 48 states!"

Illinois Conference President John Gryns said he is encouraging everyone to follow John 10:10 – live life and live it to the fullest. "As we serve joyfully, we will be a light into our territories." He pointed to these areas of note:

- Ten baptisms resulted from lay-led

evangelistic meetings in the Peoria area.

- The Chicago area continues to see a significant influx of refugees, in addition to the large numbers already there displaced by the war in Ukraine.

Vic Van Schaik, **Indiana Conference** president, said God continues to work in the state.

- Two Haitian congregations were birthed, one with an average of 200 in attendance.
- The Ghanaian church purchased a building.
- INspire Academy, the new online school, launched with 14 students in grades 1 through 8.
- The last-standing Adventist Bookstore Center (ABC) in the Lake Union continues to operate with a part-time supervisor. Randy Griffin had been managing the store but he accepted a call to another position.

Lake Region's President Garth Gabriel reported many bright spots in the four-state conference, including:

- Over 100 baptisms conducted to date.
- Conference is targeting the 18-44-year-old demographic.
- School enrollment is up.
- Efforts to upgrade school and church infrastructure continues.
- Setting aside funds for struggling churches.

On the heels of **Michigan's** constituency session, Jim Micheff said the conference launched a state-wide evangelistic series on

Oct. 2, partnering with Voice of Prophecy's Shaun Boonstra. Seven hundred churches participated and 1,000 non-Adventists attended.

Titus Naftanaila, president of **Wisconsin Conference**, expressed his gratitude to the Lake Union for their support, in areas such as Education or mentorship. "We are here because of you." He continued by saying he is praising God the conference was able to replace three of four treasurers. "We have great individuals who have joined the team." He commented on how pleased he is to see a high level of participation around the state: churches feeding people every week, having Bible studies and interacting with the community. One focus in 2024 is lay evangelism training.

Membership

In the secretariat's report, Executive Secretary Elden Ramirez said the Lake Union membership, as of Sept. 30, 2023, stood at 89,446; baptisms to date were 1,167. Going forward, he said, the plan is to begin tracking local church attendance. (More statistics available in the online version.)

Three retiring pastors were granted emeritus ministerial credentials, which allows them to keep their credentials current. (Retired ministers sometimes serve as chaplains at a local hospital or prison, and may be asked to provide proof of their church credentials.) The pastors receiving emeritus status are: Robert Joseph from Michigan Conference, and Leeroy Coleman and Felix Hurtado, both from Lake Region Conference.

Financials

According to Treasurer Glynn Scott:

- Tithe is \$66.1 million, up 11.28% over September 2022. This increase is due to strong tithe across all five conferences, plus an extraordinary tithe received by Illinois Conference of \$2.6 million.
- Total income is \$8.7 million; ahead of budget \$808,000 due to tithe gain of 11.28% and investment income \$105,000 ahead of budget.
- Total expenses are \$7.5 million; under budget by \$733,000 due to program

expenses year to date lower than budget.

- We have a break-even budget, 12 month ending Dec. 31, 2023.

Multicultural Ministry and ASI

After a very busy year, Multicultural Ministry Vice President Carmelo Mercado said they're in the process of planning next year's events. Save these dates in 2024:

- Sabbath, March 2 – Prayer summit in Detroit.
- Sunday, March 10 – Michigan and Lake Region Conferences teaming up with Adventist Medical Evangelism Network (AMEN) for a dental services outreach in the Detroit area.
- April 26-27 – ASI Lake Union Spring Fellowship at the Detroit Metropolitan church, featuring Evangelist Ivor Myers.
- July 12-14 – Hispanic Women's Conference at the Blue Gate Inn in Shipshewana, Indiana.



Near the conclusion of the meeting, Lake Union President Ken Denslow was recognized for his 10 years of serving on the North American Division's Native American and First Nations Ministries advisory group. He was draped over the shoulders with a star quilt, symbolizing honor and respect. ■

▲ The citation to Denslow read: "You have been a leader and a friend to all of us. Your assistance in furthering the goals of the advisory has been invaluable and your presence and support are going to be sorely missed."

Debbie Michel is editor of the Lake Union Herald.

LAKE UNION REVOLVING FUND GOING PAPERLESS

- ✓ Compatible with any device
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*Revolving fund account holders will transition to the new system in 2024, with additional details forthcoming.