



General Conference

North American Division

Lake Union Conference

Michigan Conference

Servant to the World Church

Andrews University as a
General Conference
Institution

by Niels-Erik Andreasen
with quotes from Andrews faculty

Most readers of this magazine are familiar with the organizational structure of the Seventh-day Adventist world church, but some younger alumni may not be. For the benefit of those valued readers here is “Adventist Church Organization 101.” It begins with the local congregations where two important responsibilities lie, first, support of the entire world church through the giving of tithes and offerings, and second, admitting (or dismissing) members through baptism and in some cases profession of faith or (in the case of dismissal) through church censure. The chief officer of the local congregation is the local church elder (either a man or a women), a position that becomes very important in cases where no full-time pastor is assigned to that congregation.

Local churches in a state, a country or a region band together into what is called a conference. A pastor named a conference president (along with other officers of that

organizational unit) is elected by delegates from the local churches at regular intervals, generally 3-5 years. The conference is an administrative unit that receives the tithes and some offerings from the local churches and allocates those funds according to strict church policies. It also assigns pastors to serve the local churches, though nowadays the congregations, especially large ones, may have some say in the matter. It generally provides support to local churches, their programs and any schools operated either in the local church (a church school) or in the conference territory, generally a secondary school (or academy). Finally, a conference typically forms a legal corporation that holds title to its real property and other assets. Andrews University is located in the state of Michigan and therefore its local congregation that worships in Pioneer Memorial Church belongs to the **Michigan Conference**.

A number of conferences in turn form unions of conferences that cover larger territories. Andrews University is located in the **Lake Union Conference** comprising five conferences covering the states of Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan. In a few cases around the world the conferences of churches have been eliminated (generally due to low membership) and unions of churches have been formed, but that is exceptional. The union is essentially an administrative unit. It receives tithe funds and some offerings earmarked for the world church, and after keeping what is allocated



I believe we are a powerhouse of scholarship and experience and expertise that the church can use as a resource.

Denis Fortin
DEAN, SDA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Andrews University has, since its very beginnings in Battle Creek, been a school that was looking out towards the world, that had a vision of service for the world. That long tradition, has prepared Andrews University today to be an institution that still welcomes the world and desires to serve and change the world.

Meredith Jones-Gray
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH



for its own use, passes the rest on. The union is headed by a pastor called a union president (along with other officials) who is elected by delegates from the conferences every five years. In addition to supporting the ministry within its conferences, the union may operate colleges, universities and other institutions. For that reason the unions also form legal corporations that can own and administer property. At one time the Lake Union operated Emmanuel Missionary College, but when that college became Andrews University the Union turned most of its responsibility for Andrews over to the General Conference.

The unions of conferences and the few unions of churches all belong to the **General Conference** which is the world headquarters of the Adventist church. Because of the growth and expansion of the world church the General Conference has divided itself up into 13 divisions. Here in the United States we are part of the **North American Division**. Some think of these divisions as forming a discrete organizational level between the unions and the general conference, and in some practical ways it may work that way, but strictly speaking these divisions are extensions of the world headquarters, and the division presidents, elected every five years along with the General Conference president, are de facto General Conference vice presidents. Like the unions, the General Conference and its divisions are administrative units giving oversight and leadership to the whole church. Some divisions also operate colleges and universities. The General Conference headquarters operates six. They are the Adventist University of Africa,

AIAS (in the Philippines), Griggs University (a distance learning unit), Oakwood University, Loma Linda University and Andrews University. Accordingly, like the conferences and unions, the General Conference also forms a legal corporation that holds title to property and manages some of its legal and business activities.

What does it mean for Andrews University to be a General Conference institution? The answer to that question is not the same for each General Conference institution, at least at the operational level, so we will now focus on Andrews by making a short list of particulars.

1. On the governance level it means that a vice president of the General Conference chairs the university's board of trustees and the university president is an ex officio member of the General Conference executive committee (a very large international group). Since the Lake Union does not operate a college of its own and since the church members living in that Union rightly consider Andrews University to be their local "Adventist college," the president of the Lake Union serves as vice chair of the university board and the university president also holds membership in the Lake Union Conference executive committee.

2. Adventist-owned and -operated institutions generally receive financial subsidies from church funds and Andrews also receives such funds from the Lake Union Conference in support of undergraduate programs and the university schools, Andrews Academy and Ruth Murdoch

Andrews University is named after John Nevins Andrews, who was our denomination's first missionary and first real scholar. By adopting his name, Andrews University has taken on the role of being a lighthouse for education to our world church. And that's the role, under God, which we would like to continue to offer to the church, for his glory and for the completion of his mission in the whole world.

Niels-Erik Andreassen
PRESIDENT



Elementary School. The annual subsidy for operations and capital expense from the Lake Union and its conferences is currently \$3.34 million. The General Conference provides subsidies for graduate, theological and some special educational services provided by Andrews for the world church. The annual support, mostly for operations, and a little capital, from the General Conference for fiscal year 2007 was \$4.01 million.

Andrews University has a unique role to play in this church and has already done so, and I would say primarily in its role as educator of the world. When you go to the seminary, when you go to different departments around the campus, the number of students who come from overseas is just amazing. And these are the leaders in the world church.

Leonard Gashugi
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS & FINANCE



I think the reputation of Andrews is based not only on the people that go out, but on the teaching faculty, the experience and diversity that is the teaching staff that is here. The faculty are deeply committed to Adventism, they are deeply committed to training the best possible church leaders that we possibly can—that's exciting.

Bruce Bauer
PROFESSOR OF WORLD MISSION



to introduce graduate programs (other than in the health sciences) and the Adventist university that has done more than any other to offer extension and affiliation educational programs abroad. Because of that it is sometimes called “the mother institution” or the “flagship institution”

3. A few years ago the General Conference took action that the education of pastors is the responsibility of its respective divisions. At about the same time the North American Division of the General Conference became more independent of the world church headquarters and established a special relationship with the Theological Seminary of Andrews University. The president of that division chairs the seminary executive committee of the university board for seminary affairs. That division also provides financial support to the seminary by paying for the tuition of MDiv students preparing to be pastors and Christian workers. That support at present is \$2.8 million.

4. Andrews is the oldest Adventist university, the first

in Adventist higher education. While that designation remains accurate in so many ways, it is not a position Andrews owns or can take for granted. It must be earned every day. To keep this leadership position the faculty, staff, administration, governing board, yes even students, must live up to that high standing by the way the university does its educational work and conducts its affairs. The following are some indications of the special position this General Conference institution occupies in the Adventist world church and among its other educational institutions.

A. This year (2007–08) Andrews enrolled 3,221 students in its campus programs and 3,212 students in its extension and affiliation programs serving the world

Meet SAGE

“What can we do to provide advanced graduate education to some of our faculty members in the West Central African Division?” C. Ikonne, educational director from Nigeria, asked that question a few years ago while we were talking in my office. The need is great, he added, and it is critically important that the participating faculty

members return to their posts after their graduation from Andrews. Let me introduce you to SAGE (Service to Adventist Graduate Education), I replied.

Some decades ago the great need in our Adventist educational institutions around the world was to offer accredited undergraduate programs. Andrews helped get that

underway with its many affiliation programs around the world. But now graduate studies need attention and SAGE is Andrews’ response—supporting faculty development and research in our worldwide family of Adventist higher education.

So Ikonne and I made a plan to bring selected faculty members from Africa to Andrews for



For years, students have come to Andrews University from around the world, and they go back. So Andrews, as a General Conference institution, is really supporting the world church.

Charles Tidwell
DEAN, AFFILIATION & EXTENSION PROGRAMS

church for a total of 6,433 students served from around the world. Nearly half of the on-campus enrollment is comprised of graduate students.

B. Each year Andrews hosts visiting faculty members, scholars, researchers and educational administrators from sister institutions around the world. They come to learn, conduct research, expand their horizons, use the university resources and consult (*see sidebar*).

C. Andrews operates or hosts several institutes that tie directly to the work and service of the world church and, in some cases, are funded by the General Conference. Among them are: The Institute for Prevention of Addiction (dealing with addictive behavior), The Institute of Biblical Archaeology (excavations and research in the ancient Near East), The Institute of Church-State Relations (dealing with religious liberty), The Center for Youth Evangelism (dealing with ministry to youth and young adults), The Institute of World Mission (engaging in mission research and holding workshops for new and returning missionaries), and NADEI (North American Division Evangelism Institute).

As a result of this special role in the world church, Andrews continues to be a General Conference institution of higher learning, not only in name and governance, but in fact. It attracts students from all the divisions of the General Conference and educates them for generous

service to Church and society. It has become a melting pot of Adventists, both students and teachers, from around the world, helping to shape the Adventist family of the future, and it remains an anchor point for its nearly 34,000 alumni who look to Andrews as the university where the world church comes together for learning and reflecting upon the great gospel commission given to us by our Lord Himself, namely to go, make disciples of all nations, baptize them and teach them. That is Andrews University today.

Niels-Erik Andreasen

Has been the president of Andrews University since 1994. He wrote this feature in Toronto, Canada, while attending an Adventist Education Day and meeting with Canadian Andrews alumni.

To view the entire DVD presentation that was made to the guests attending the GC spring meeting, visit the following link.

www.andrews.edu/president/gcvideo

master's and doctoral degrees. Each applicant must be ready and all prerequisites must have been met. No employment by the student is allowed during the short, intense period of study for the degree. Quality study and speed are the expectation. The tuition charges are covered entirely, and are split three ways: Approximately one-third

is covered by Andrews graduate scholarships, one-third is covered by the students and the church institution or organization to which the graduate student will return following completion, and one-third is met by donors to the SAGE program at Andrews.

This past spring Ikonne and I took stock of the program thus far

and we noticed with satisfaction that about eleven students have entered the program, five have graduated and all have returned to continue their educational work in West and Central Africa. The program has been a complete success thus far, thanks to SAGE.