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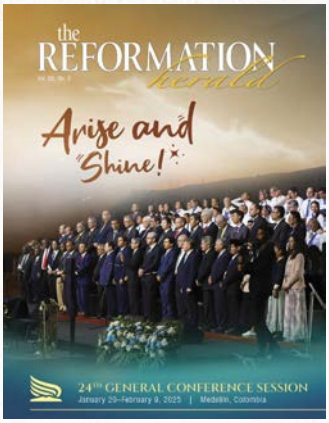
Arise and "Shine!"



24TH GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

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Volume 66, Number 3



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Have you ever thought of distributing ***The Reformation Herald*** among those you meet or already know?

More and more, this magazine is being designed to answer the real spiritual hunger of people in today's society, tapping into the exact train of thought being triggered by current events.

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GATHERING FOR A PURPOSE

Editorial

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

In an age of polarization and alienation, it is indeed good, pleasant, and even extraordinary for brethren to dwell in unity. Yet we know this unity is not to be shallow nor superficial. It must be based on the principles of the law and the testimony (Isaiah 8:20). We enjoy pure, genuine fellowship with another only as we truly walk in the radiant light of God's gracious presence and His all-wise teachings. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:7, first part).

"**As trials thicken around us, both separation and unity will be seen in our ranks**."[1]

What causes separation, and what causes unity? The reality is that the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus cause both. Jesus bids us to "walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light" (John 12:35, 36).

When Christ was on earth, "the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (Mark 3:32–35).

Yet, the Lord further declared, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:34–37). Those who rebel against God's law dwell in darkness.

So, in considering the need to assemble in General Conference capacity every five years, we think of the reason why we are gathering. As always, various decisions were made for the furtherance of the Lord's work, and individuals were entrusted with specific tasks, but the most important aim is to press together in the present truth.

"**God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms**. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support."[2]

Every doctrine must be based on the light that God has graciously bestowed upon His people. Every decision must be guided by how best to implement His—not our own—agenda for the last days.

This issue of *The Reformation Herald* provides some brief highlights memorializing the gathering which recently occurred in Medellín, Colombia. Regardless of whether you were able to attend in person, we trust that through these pages you will enjoy a sweet taste of the event and share in the unity of heart and mind which God provides to His faithful people all over the world. *R*

References:

[1] *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 400. [Emphasis added.]
[2] *The Great Controversy*, p. 595. [Emphasis added.]



Arise and Shine!

Adapted from the Divine Worship message on Sabbath at the Spiritual Meetings of the 24th General Conference

by Eli Tenorio da Silva

We are blessed as we have traveled from different countries to be here today in this special meeting. For every one of you that arrived here, there was a cost. For some, the financial cost was a problem; for others, various cares and concerns had to be left behind.

But you came. Thank you very much for coming. You make a difference here. You are not here by chance; God had already planned it a long time ago. "I am going to meet this child of Mine in Medellín on February 8, 2025." I pray that you will be abundantly blessed by God who knows how much effort you invested to make your presence here a reality.

Many of you watching online wanted to be here in this beautiful meeting with the members of our church family from around the world, but were not able to make it. One day God is going to have a magnificent gathering on the sea of glass . . . with no visa, no plane ticket required.

The invitation

The theme of the message this morning is "Arise and Shine." And Isaiah 60:1, 2 is the theme text: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee."

"Arise and shine" is an invitation to step into the light of God's presence and reflect His glory in a world darkened by sin and despair. It's a message to serve! The fourth angel of Revelation 18 is here. It is in this world to shine! But we have no light in ourselves. How can we shine? The psalmist prayed, "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9).

There is an old story of a salesman who came to a village, advertising that he was selling a special kind of stone in a small box—a stone that would shine brightly at night. The stones were expensive and only the rich could afford to get one. Those who bought one were excited, inviting relatives and friends to see it shine at night. When it was very dark, they would open the box, but nothing. The stone was dark; it would not shine. They were quite disappointed, but

the salesman had gone—moving on to another city to sell more of his stones. The next day in the morning, one of the buyers looked disappointedly into bottom of the box, where he saw the instructions: "For the stone to shine at night, during the day you have to expose it to the sunlight."

Do you understand what the Lord is telling you? If you want to shine in this world of darkness, you must expose yourself to the Sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2), Jesus Christ. How do we do this? By reading His word, the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. The Lord is constantly sending rays of light to your life. When you pray, you are going to come out of prayer with a different countenance because Christ is going to be shining brightly through you.

"If ever there was a time in the history of Seventh-day Adventists when they should arise and shine, it is now."[1]

Now is the time for Reformers to shine as never before. This is our challenge. We are called to shine in our families, schools, sanitariums, publishing houses, bookstores, and restaurants.

"No voice should be restrained from proclaiming the third angel's message. Let none, for fear of losing prestige with the world, obscure one ray of light coming from the Source of all light."[2]

We are also called to shine individually, when we are apart from our church family. There is a time when we will not be able to be together as we are here today. Some will be in prisons; some in the woods. But wherever the Lord takes us, we are called to shine. Today, we have brethren in prison because of their faith, and they are shining there, because nothing in this world can make us sad when Christ makes us glad by His presence.

Different tests

Brethren, persecution is not the problem. Wars and imprisonment are not the problem—because these things can isolate us physically from those whom we love, can isolate us from the church meetings. But we will still be praying for one another. In our hearts, we will be shining for God wherever He leads us, because His grace is sufficient for us.

Things such as wars and persecution—these are not the most dangerous things for us. The problem is not pandemics. Actually, during the pandemic, I believe the church problems diminished. If it were not for so many people having to suffer and die, perhaps we would call on the Lord to ask Him to send a pandemic again, because we came closer to the Lord in those days of trial. In those days, we missed meeting with the brethren in the church as never before. During such times of trial, we come closer to the Lord.

So, the time of prosperity is the most dangerous. Spiritually, the time of peace is the more dangerous moment. When we are in peace and prosperity, the devil tempts us to fight over small things.

I was counseling a couple that was having difficulties in their marriage. When we came together for the counseling, we sat down and I was listening to them. One of them complained. Do you know what the problem was? He was upset with his wife because she was messing up the toothpaste tube. Instead of pressing from the end of the tube, she was squeezing the middle and it bothered him. Then she said, "But he also has a problem. Instead of putting the toilet paper to drape forward, he puts it the opposite way and it bothers me."

I looked at them and said, "This is what is wrong?" They said, yes, these are the problems. I said, "You don't have problems. You really need some actual problems. I might pray to the Lord to send you some real problems—then you are going to forget these things."

Thank God that after some sessions, they understood they had no problems and they are now living together happily.

But brethren, sometimes peace and prosperity are more dangerous! May the Lord be merciful to us and help us to use this time of peace and prosperity to preach the gospel. We can share with our relatives and friends what the Lord has done in our lives and draw them closer to Jesus. May the Lord bring us to the foot of the cross and make His light to arise and shine in us.

Our need today

But you know, to shine in this world of darkness, something is necessary. "It requires moral courage to do the work of God for these last days."[3]

To shine in this world requires moral courage, to live the way the Lord wants us to live, to do the work the Lord wants us to do—because it goes contrary to the current of darkness.

And there's one thing: Nobody likes to be rebuked. And when you live according to God's will, when you shine for Jesus, even if you don't say a word, some people will feel rebuked. They will notice that you don't eat like they eat, that you don't talk like they talk. They will be aware that you don't accept bribes, because you don't do business as they do, or get involved in corruption. They will notice that you don't dress as they dress, that you rest on a day when they don't rest, and you go to church when they don't go to church. Be aware that it's going to disturb some people. Though you love and care for them, they are blind because light disturbs them.

Let's consider one parable:

The story is about a firefly. The firefly was shining and a serpent started persecuting it and the poor firefly was already getting tired. Then the firefly stopped and asked the serpent: "I know you're going to catch me if I continue shining, but I want to ask you something: Did I do anything wrong to you? " No." "Do I belong to your food chain?" "No." "Then why are you persecuting me and trying to destroy me?" And the serpent answered, "I cannot bear your light. It disturbs me."

Dear brother, dear sister, dear youth: Do you understand? You are called to shine in this world of darkness. The Lord has a purpose for you. But don't think that when you start living the way God wants

you to live, that your way is going to be peaceful, that your way will be smooth. Your light is going to disturb someone. God has given you gifts to enable you to shine and glorify His name. But persecution is going to come to you. We have some young people with great talent here, helping us to operate in different departments. The devil is going to persecute you. The old serpent will try to destroy you—and sometimes the serpent will try to use people from outside, and sometimes people from inside. Don't concentrate your attention on the persecution. Look to Calvary, and Christ is going to show you those who are being influenced for good by your life. Some are going to be disturbed, but many are going to be blessed by your light.

Do you want to want to shine for Jesus? Then, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11). Don't do the wrong things that this world is calling you to do. But rather expose those things, condemn them by the way you live. By the light of Jesus shining through you, you are going to expose the darkness of this world.

Dear young people, shine for Jesus in your school, your church. You're not always going to be understood. Sometimes people will misunderstand your love for Jesus and for them. But when it really gets difficult, remember that Christ never promised that we would walk in a sea of roses here. We may walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but He will be with us, and that is sufficient for us.

Courage to stand

It has always been a challenge to shine for Jesus in this dark world. Let's go back and think about the beginning of Christianity—those faithful Christians taken to the Coliseum. The whole family was brought and they would throw the children to the lions. They would tell the parents, "You can save your child. Just deny your faith."

Brethren, when someone touches us, it can hurt. But when they touch our children, it hurts much more. How about if you were put in this situation today? Your child is here. The lions are there. And they come and say to you, "You can save your child. Just deny your faith."

What would you do today? Those faithful Christians lost their lives. They allowed their children to die because they were looking beyond this world. They exchanged their life in this world for a life in Heaven.

Today, we are not yet faced with this kind of trial. The test today for you and me seems so much lighter! But why does it sometimes seem so difficult when we are called to choose between genuinely sacred music and the worldly style of music? Why is it so difficult to choose what God wants us to choose? When we are called to shine for the Lord with our dress reform, why does it seem so difficult? We know what the Lord wants us to do. We know the truth God has given His church. Yet sometimes we think it's too difficult to do what God wants us to do. We think the principles God has given are too harsh. Some wish that we would change the principles of the Reform Movement a little bit. If we would change the principle about marriage. If we were not so strict about Sabbathkeeping, about diet. Oh, we could bring many more people to the church and it would be so much easier for us.

Why do the small things of this world seem so difficult for us sometimes? It is because we don't understand the purpose for which God put us here. When you and I understand the purpose for which God called us here, the purpose He has in calling us to be a Reformer and what it means to shine for Jesus, then we'll be happy to serve Jesus and be His ambassador, no matter what the cost, no matter the sacrifice, even if it means dying in this world as by faith we see a better world than this one.

The message in Isaiah to arise and shine is an invitation to serve. But its more than that. It is also a promise that if you allow Jesus into your heart—if you allow Him to give that true happiness that He alone can give—there's a promise for you.

My dear brethren and friends, if you go to see a psychologist today and tell them you're not feeling happy, most of them will tell you, "If you want to be happy, don't worry about others. Just think about what you want. Go and enjoy life."

But the gospel of Christ comes to us and says "If you want to be happy, stop looking for happiness. Start making others happy."

Maybe you have been trying to find happiness in many places—maybe in alcohol, drugs, adultery and fornication, prostitution. And you know how you are feeling right now. Miserable as never before. And God is telling you now, "Stop, my daughter, my son, stop trying to make yourself happy. Stop looking to yourself. Serve Me and serve those around you."

The secret for happiness for happiness is to make others happy, according to the advice of God.

Darkness everywhere

"Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isaiah 60:2 first part).

What is this darkness? Just pause and look at the world around you. Consider the church you are attending. Think about your workplace. Inspect your own home. Think about your college, your surroundings wherever the Lord has placed you. Is there darkness in any of these places? For sure, you're going to find that. You can see it. But now the promise: "The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isaiah 60:2, last part).

Oh yes, there is darkness in this world, but there is also a promise from God saying you don't need to be walking in darkness. But more than that—you can shine in this darkness.

Crime is rampant in this world. There is darkness, gross darkness, deep darkness.

What causes this darkness? "It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted."[4]

Our church is small, but it can make a difference in this world. "In comparison with the millions of the world, God's people will be, as they have ever been, a little flock; but if they stand for the truth as revealed in His word, God will be their refuge. They stand under the broad shield of Omnipotence. God is always a majority."[5]

Brethren, the churches are not teaching the people about the true character of God. The reason why Christianity has been getting weaker and weaker is the lack of the knowledge of the true God. Few Christians are willing to die for Jesus. People are misunderstanding God. Many people in state hospitals, have lost their minds because of misunderstandings about God.

When I was a child, before I came to the Reform Movement, what had been presented to me was a severe God always watching me, waiting to destroy me in the flames of hell. That's the God many people are seeing, a God that is misunderstood. There is a danger of seeing God as a very severe Being trying to destroy us. That is not the God of the Bible who sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross of Calvary to save you and me.

But there's the other side of this story. Many churches today are presenting God as that grandfather that lets the children do whatever they want to do, that spoils the children. There are churches presenting God as a Santa Claus that cares for you occasionally but has no power to change your life. But the God of the Bible loves you more than anything else in this world, a God that was willing to risk the universe to save you. And He is such a powerful God that He can change your life. He can change your tastes and can use you to shine wherever He takes you.

Brethren, sometimes even in the church we say things that don't make sense. How many times have I heard from the pulpit, people saying, "You know, you have to fight to be saved, you have to fight to be among the 144,000. And if you don't do your part, God is going to remove you and bring someone else to replace you."

There's a mixture of truth and error there. It makes it seem that it is so easy for God to casually remove you and just replace you with someone else. I want to tell you it's not so simple for God. If it were that simple, Jesus would not have died on the cross on Calvary for you.

Meeting your Maker

"If there had been but one lost soul, Christ would have died for that one."[6] Realize that you are so valuable to be irreplaceable in His sight! When the devil comes to you and tells you it's too late for you; you have gone too far, listen instead for the voice of the Holy Spirit telling you, "My child, I love you more than anything else in this world." You are considering giving your life to Jesus, but that other voice is telling you it's too late—you have gone too far. And I'm here in the pulpit, struggling with you, telling you, no, it's not too late.

And maybe you are there thinking, "Brother, you do not know how far I've gone." And that's true, I don't know. But God knows and the message coming to you now is not from me; it's coming from God. And the message is, "It is you that I am talking to, My child. No matter how far you have gone, I still want you and Heaven is not going to be the same without you." Then the enemy will come and tell you it's too late. Don't argue with Him. Look to Calvary and see the great Sacrifice that Christ made for you. Let Him come into your heart and He will transform your life.

Do you understand what God is telling you? One day, we are going to have a big gathering on the sea of glass and receive crowns there before the throne of God. Oh brethren, how I am looking forward to that day! But if you are not there, the feast will not be the same.

God loves you more than anything else in this world. Don't let anyone tell you that the small snares in this world—a piece of jewelry, a few minutes from the Sabbath, or a few pieces of clothing, or coffee, or anything else—can take first place in your life before Jesus Christ.

Jesus is looking to give you the crown of life. Don't leave this place without giving your heart completely to Him. Don't leave this place without assurance of your salvation. Tomorrow may be too late. Some of us will not be at the next General Conference. Time is short; we don't know how long we have. So don't leave this place without Jesus. Give your heart to Him right now, and I pray that He may be a reality in your lives and in my life and that we might be together on the glassy sea by His grace.

Arise and Shine. It's a message to serve! This is the key to happiness.

Shine brightly!

We are challenged to shine brightly. God wants to take the Reform Movement and its members even higher. New steps forward in promoting missionary work, welfare ministry, health reform, Sabbathkeeping, tithing, offering, dress reform, the marriage covenant. A shaking is coming, but the prophet Isaiah's message is echoed by Paul: it is time to awaken from spiritual lethargy.

"God has called us to glory and virtue. We have no right to assimilate with the world—dressing, talking, and living as worldlings do. God has given us a high standard to reach. To enable man to reach this standard, God sent into the world His only begotten Son."[7]

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Romans 13:12).

This is a call to rise from spiritual slumber in the strength of Jesus Christ. Shall we arise and shine to the call? ℛ

References:

[1] *The Upward Look*, p. 171.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 415.
[5] *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 590.
[6] *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 187.
[7] *The Upward Look*, p. 172.








Capturing an Event:

The 2025 General Conference

By Dorval Fagundes

"They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage" (Isaiah 41:6).

The ring of the smartphone echoed through the room. On the screen, the name "Rudolfo Gessner" appeared. It was November 2023. Brother Gessner's voice sounded from the other end of the line: "We need someone to be the editor of the "Arise and Shine" special magazine for the next General Conference meetings, which will take place in Colombia in January 2025. Do you accept?"

At that moment, while holding the phone in the silence of my editorial office in Itaquaquecetuba, SP, Brazil, I could hardly imagine that this question would trigger a 15-month journey. It wasn't just about creating a document but about freezing in time a piece of history of the world's most important community: God's people living in these last days.

I accepted, without foreseeing the web of stories and challenges that would unfold in the following months.

Why a magazine?

A magazine is a paper object in an era dominated by bright screens, streaming services, and social media. It's a type of media many already consider obsolete—except for me. But why do printed images and texts provoke so much fascination?

The answer may have begun with daguerreotypes, the first photographic devices created in the 19th century. When Louis Daguerre captured his first image in 1838, a street in Paris gained widespread fame. Soon, people were rushing to studios, paying fortunes, and posing for long minutes under harsh lights with their heads fixed in steel holders, all to see their faces replicated on metal plates. Back then, at least 15 minutes of stillness were required for the photograph to appear. This was why the photographed subjects had serious, stern expressions.

Part of this feeling wasn't vanity—it was the ancestral desire to stop the "arrow of time," which only moves forward, cruel, unstoppable, and invincible. We wanted to prove that we existed, that we had been here. This magazine, I thought, would be our modern version of those plates: a physical object to tell future generations, "Hey! This happened!"

However, words and photos don't just compete with forgetfulness—they also compete with the way we think. Neil Postman, a critic of

modern culture who passed away in 2003, reminds us that in colonial America, an ordinary citizen might have crossed paths with the country's first president, Thomas Jefferson, at a fair or on the streets of a city without recognizing him because the public didn't know what the president looked like. However, if that same citizen read two paragraphs of one of Jefferson's texts, they would immediately realize, "Hey, the president wrote this." Writing shaped identities. Reading required patience, logical sequence, and connecting ideas—skills that, according to Postman, made us abandon the fragmented mindset of oral logic.

But all of this would change with the advent of television. The televised debate of 1960 between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, both candidates for the U.S. presidency, is a milestone in the history of mass communication. For those who watched it on TV, Kennedy emerged as the winner: his confident appearance, clean-shaven face, and relaxed posture projected youth and energy, contrasting with Nixon's tired and worn-out image, despite him being a far more experienced politician.

For those who listened on the radio, the perception was the opposite. Without the visual impact, listeners focused on the arguments and verbal articulation, considering Nixon superior. This episode illustrates a profound cultural shift: the transition from a typographic society, based on text and logical reasoning, to a visual culture dominated by images and spectacles. In the 19th century, political debates lasted for hours, requiring prolonged attention and complex reasoning. Engaged audiences followed elaborate arguments, judging leaders not by their appearance but by their ideas. With the advent of television, this dynamic changed drastically. Politics began to be evaluated not by substance but by visual and emotional performance.

Today, we live in an even more fragmented era, where short videos, memes, and selfies shape our perception of the world. If Postman were alive, he would fiercely criticize this "infantilization" of public culture, where immediacy and entertainment replace critical reflection. He would question whether we are still capable of engaging in long, deep debates or if we have become prisoners of a culture that values spectacle at the expense of truth. In this context, traditional forms of communication, such as printed magazines, still hold relevance. They offer space for detailed arguments, deep reflections, and an experience that demands sequential attention—something rare in the visual chaos of the digital age.

Therefore, in a world of 15-second videos, do we still know how to extract meaning from texts? This question troubled me for months as I thought about how to capture the glory and importance of this significant event—a session of the General Conference. There was only one way to find out: prepare the magazine and leave the result in God's hands.

The first steps

With the smartphone still warm after the call from Brother Gessner, I realized the first challenge would be to gather powerful voices from many parts of the world to tell a collective story. That's how the first steps began: reaching out to leaders, preparing detailed briefings, and anxiously waiting for the texts that would give life to the magazine.

On March 10, 2024, the journey began. I contacted the Colombian Union and spoke with one of its leaders, Pastor Nasareno Turushina, who was then part of the management team. Through him, I gained direct access to the Union president, Brother William Forero. Having a commemorative magazine without the context of how the work reached Colombia would be like assembling a puzzle without the central piece. I imagined the delegates flipping through those pages and finding not just numbers and speeches, but roots—stories of faith that overcame difficulties and conflicts to arrive at that place.

Next, I contacted the world president, the secretary, and the treasurer. For each one, I prepared personalized briefings. To the president, I requested greetings that went beyond a simple "welcome"—it should be a call for unity. The secretary could give a summary of the number of members worldwide, which is standard practice, but also a reflection on what it means to be a Reformer in times of superficiality. To the treasurer, I asked for something beyond the numbers, something that encompassed the essence of stewardship and not just the description of financial statements.

When the draft from Pastor Eli Tenório arrived weeks later, entitled *Closing a Chapter*, I realized that the essence of the text went far beyond a mere welcome—it was a challenge:

"As we embark on the work of this session, I want to urge all of you to approach this delegation with a renewed sense of commitment to the mission of our church. The road ahead is vast, and the responsibility we carry is immense."

I read the text on a quiet winter afternoon, and each paragraph seemed to warm the heart. God had worked through the author, who did more than greet the delegates. He invited them to renew their sense of commitment inspired by a celestial idea that transcends borders. Closing my eyes, I could almost hear the voices of readers in Colombia responding, "Amen!" The text was, indeed, a roadmap back to serving the Lord.

On the other hand, the secretary, Pastor Liviu Tudoroiu, impacted me differently. His text, *Arise and Shine!*, followed the exact theme of the General Conference, bringing a reflection that unsettles but is vital, born in the heart of God:

"We cannot boast of an experience that is not our own—it belongs to others. We must have our own personal '1914 type of experience.' We should aim to be the spiritual fathers of the next generation, not by merely recounting the experiences of the pioneers, but by sharing our own testimony, the living proof of our faith. . . . The past generation rests in peace, buried in forgotten cemeteries across this world, while





their children and grandchildren remember little of their forefathers' struggles. One pressing question remains for all of us today: How many more years must we wander as pilgrims on this earth before we are ready for heaven?"

The author wasn't speaking about doctrines but about identity. I sat still in front of the screen, as if the text had opened a door I didn't even know existed. Through these words, Jesus calls the reader to examine their own soul. Pastor Tudoroiu was an excellent instrument in God's hands.

Next, I received the text from Brother Rudolfo Gessner. His article, *Challenges and Victories in Financial Management*, transported my mind beyond Excel spreadsheets and financial reports. Instead of merely listing figures, he took the topic to a very practical level:

"Behind every figure and financial report lie stories of faith, dedication, and perseverance that uphold the mission of our church. Financial management goes far beyond accounts payable and receivable or spreadsheets. It transcends these factors, resulting in transformed lives, strengthened communities, and the ongoing work of God reaching souls across the globe."

The grace of God working through the author managed to transform what is typically a dull subject for most laypeople—financial management—into a mosaic of real-life experiences that connect stewardship to daily life. It was as if I could see the hand of God guiding His people to be faithful in their contributions, tithes, and family financial stewardship.

When I finally read the article by Pastor William Forero, entitled *The Work of The Reform Movement in Colombia*, I felt as if I were holding a historical map in my hands. God was tracing the origins of the Reform Movement in the country with impressive detail. From the first missionaries who arrived on Colombian soil under divine blessing to the challenges faced during decades of political instability, the text showed how the Reform message found fertile ground amidst adversity.

What touched me most was the description of the sacrifices made by the pioneers. He mentioned families who opened their homes for worship during periods of religious persecution and local leaders who traveled for days on horseback to reach remote communities. Reading these stories, I realized that the Reform Movement in Colombia was not just a religious institution but the means through which the Lord transformed lives for a greater purpose.

There was something both profoundly human and divine in the writing—a blend of satisfaction and humility in narrating how the movement grew despite the difficulties.

Reading all these texts was like watching a puzzle come together. Each author had brought a unique piece: the president with his global vision, the secretary with a call for renewal, the treasurer with practical stewardship ethics for personal life, and finally, the president of the Colombian Union with his historical and emotional narrative.

And amidst it all, I came to better understand my role in this project: I was not supposed to create but to sew and unite. To weave voices, ideas, and stories into a fabric that, we hope, will stand the test of time. However, this "sewing" only makes sense because it is led by the divine hand. Without the guidance of God for every word, every image, and every decision, I would simply be someone organizing texts—and this would be just another magazine, without eternal purpose. But with Him, this work becomes something much greater: a tool in the hands of the Lord, designed to touch hearts and play a role in the salvation of souls and the strengthening of His people. But one question lingered: will readers notice, as I did, the invisible hand guiding every line?

The next challenges

If the first months were marked by organization and initial contacts, the final phase of production brought challenges that no one on our team could have foreseen. It was January 20, 2025, and the clock seemed to tick faster than ever. Every decision and detail had to be resolved in real time while the delegates' session was underway.

At the center of the team was Brother Rudolfo Gessner, the project manager. Since that phone call in November 2023, he trusted me to lead the team, but his constant presence was essential to align expectations and ensure that the purpose of the magazine—to





capture and preserve a historic event for the salvation of souls—was never lost sight of. Below God, he was the guiding hand whenever doubts or unforeseen issues arose.

Danilo Conceição, the team's designer, had been working alongside me since the final months of 2024. "Working alongside me" is a figure of speech—he was based in Rio Claro, São Paulo, while I worked from Mato Grosso do Sul, both in Brazil (I moved myself to this city in March 2024). His mission was to transform texts and photos into a visually impactful work. But what truly impressed me was his ability to adapt the layout in real time. When emergencies arose due to missing photos or last-minute corrections, he adjusted everything, creating blank spaces to be filled at the very last minute. "Dorval, don't worry. We'll fix it," he would say during moments when I felt overwhelmed. Danilo didn't just design pages; he brought a story to life that can now be appreciated with the eyes and felt with the heart.

Larissa Gessner, in charge of social media and real-time news updates, was also at my right hand. She was in Colombia, thousands of miles away. Not only did she set up and organize the cloud folder to archive delegate photos, but she also ensured each image was correctly labeled with names and delegations.

But amidst all this care, a shadow lingered. No one on the team foresaw this issue, and no single person was responsible for the setback, but I believe it stemmed from the fact that the venue for the Delegation Session was in a more remote area, resulting in poor internet connection. Brother Rudolfo tried to resolve the issue by getting a product from billionaire Elon Musk—a Starlink® satellite internet connection—from Space X—but even this cutting-edge technology could not fully save the day. The connection remained slow and unstable, despite our brother's commendable effort.

Even with all these data transfer problems, Larissa was always the one who stepped up to find solutions, often working late into the night to ensure nothing was left undone. "If you need me, I'm here," she would say. In the final moments, when I realized some delegates were missing names and photos in the magazine because their files hadn't been uploaded to the cloud folder, it was Larissa who led the search for the lost images, racing against time to ensure no one was forgotten. Her attention to detail was vital to preserving the completion of the task.

The images that brought the magazine to life are the result of Gabriela Ferreira's dedicated work. Arriving from Portugal, she worked in Colombia alongside Larissa to ensure every significant moment of the event was captured. Her photos are not just images—they are windows into emotions, faces, and stories that defined the event. Her right-hand man was Brother Hugo Cibalde, who worked from the media studio in Brazil, handling photo editing. When some photos went missing and threatened to compromise the record, Gabriela used her expertise to adjust and supplement the available material, ensuring the magazine reflected the diversity and unity of the Reform Movement. Without a doubt, it was excellent work.

A magazine is not made of images alone. The text is fundamental. Since this was a bilingual magazine, each text appeared in both English and Spanish. Therefore, a coordinated and helpful editorial team was essential.

The linguistic precision of the English texts was entrusted to Sister Barbara Montrose, from Roanoke, Virginia. With decades of experience as a text editor, author, and proofreader, she brought not only expertise but also a sensitive eye to preserve the spiritual essence of every word. During our email exchanges, she made observations that went beyond grammar—they were reflections that enriched the text, connecting it even more deeply to the heart of the divine message. Her discreet yet indispensable work was a reminder that God always shapes every detail, especially behind the scenes of a project. Praise be to Him!

On the other hand, Brother Paulo Devai, a resident of Santa Ana, Misiones, in Argentina, was responsible for bringing the Spanish texts to life. His work went beyond mere grammatical correction, delving into the nuances of culture and theology to capture elements that resonate with Spanish speakers worldwide. Moreover, his calm



demeanor in the face of challenges was a balm for me. Together, though thousands of miles apart, by God's grace, Sister Barbara and Brother Paulo ensured that the magazine's message crossed linguistic borders, becoming accessible to a diverse global audience.

Brother Nelson Ruiz recommended Panamericana Printing in Bogotá, which became the chosen company for printing the magazine. In the end, he also volunteered to transport the printed material from the printing company to the meeting place in Medellín, located 260 miles away. May God greatly reward him.

Concluding the mission

From the beginning, I knew that an interview with the elected president would be one of the most important moments in the magazine. Not only because he was the central human figure of the event—the man whose leadership God would confirm through the votes of delegates representing dozens of countries—but because his voice carried the weight of a personal and spiritual history that needed to be heard. However, securing this interview would be anything but simple.

The challenge began with time. Pastor Eli Tenorio was reelected on January 22, 2025, in Colombia. The General Conference was in full swing, and every minute of the event was contested between meetings, delegate sessions, and administrative decisions. For me, who was thousands of miles away in Campo Grande, Brazil, the clock seemed to tick even faster. I knew that if I wanted to capture his reflections while they were still fresh, I needed to act quickly.

But how to conduct such a significant interview without being there in person? That's when Larissa Gessner's help once again proved decisive. She was at the heart of the event, with direct access to Pastor Eli, who is also her father. I sent her the draft of the questions I had carefully prepared. She recorded the interview in audio. When the file reached my hands, I felt as if I were handling a time capsule: inside were the words of a leader who had just been reelected to guide a global community in the final days of this world's history.

I began the transcription carefully, listening to each response multiple times to ensure nothing was lost. Pastor Eli spoke about the unity of the church, explaining how doctrine and the love of Christ transcend cultural and geographical differences. He shared his concern for young people, emphasizing that they do not reject faith but rather superficial experiences. And at the end, he left a message of encouragement that deeply resonated with me: "God always has a greater purpose than what we can see."

After finishing the transcription, I carefully reviewed the text, adjusting the formatting and ensuring the tone remained faithful to the personality of the interviewee—to capture not only the words of a leader but also the heart of the message God conveys through him.

When the final text was inserted into the magazine file, I realized that this interview represented much more than an exchange of questions and answers. It was a bridge between continents, a silent collaboration among people who, though separated by thousands of miles, shared the same goal: to capture and preserve the historic moment of the reorganization of God's people. Now I see that everything was part of a process guided by something far greater than ourselves. Without God opening doors and directing every step, the interview, the articles, and the photos would never have been there in that form. But, under divine guidance, the project reached its conclusion in a wonderful way. After all, we were much more than storytellers; we were gathering images and texts that would transform lives.

Creating a magazine for a global event in 2025 goes beyond text and images. First, it involves a connection with God, for He is the author of all things. Second, one must be mindful of time zones, cloud computing, translations, and the coordination of a team whose members work from various parts of the world. In this way, I had the unique opportunity to participate in a team that included talents from Argentina, the USA, Brazil, Portugal, and Canada.

It is also worth mentioning the production of versions in English and Spanish, which highlighted the essential role of multilingualism: it is a tool that serves as a cultural bridge for a diverse audience, ensuring the message is clear and accessible to all. It is a demonstration of how God can use technology and global collaboration as powerful tools, but still, only as tools. The divine human touch remains indispensable.

In the end, we learned that a magazine is not made solely of pixels and words. Its core is formed by people who dedicate themselves to every comma, image, and detail. All of this is guided by the hand of God, who transforms human efforts into something much greater: a living testimony of faith, unity, and purpose. Praise be to God for allowing us to be part of this work, using our skills and limitations to cherish a historic moment for God's people in these last days. Amen.

Available online at **https://sdarm.org/gc-2025** ℟



Arise and Shine: Media Ministry

By Larissa Tenorio Gessner

In the summer of 2015, I had just started managing the official Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement Facebook page while studying full-time. We had about 1,000 "likes," and it was my job to keep the page and website updated weekly with content. That September, the 22nd General Conference took place in Roanoke, Virginia, USA. It was the first conference in which I had the opportunity to contribute, though from another country. I asked Sister Raquel Terceros, a graphic designer from Bolivia, to help me, and we prepared posts to announce the incoming General Conference leadership and give basic updates of the Delegation Session.

Almost ten years later, the 24th General Conference was at hand. This time, I had the opportunity to attend in-person, counting with a team of 29 media professionals from around the world, committed to covering this event for God's honor and glory. It was our mission to extend the General Conference experience to those who could not make it in person and share with them the blessings poured out during this long-awaited event.

Media ministry goes beyond microphones, cameras, and social media posts. While these constitute part of the visible labor, media requires intense planning, forethought, and preparation. For years, the GC Media Team (formed in 2023/24 and consisting of myself as Team Director along with Sister Gabriela Ferreira – Videographer/Editor, Brother Gabriel Terceros – Video Editor, Brother Hugo Cibalde – Brand Strategist, and Brother Stephen Jacobs – Web Developer) we together prepared and planned for this event.

The event's visual identity was created by Aisamaque Morales, who partnered with the team over the span of a year to provide the graphics and elements necessary for the event signage, print materials, motion graphics, etc. Gabriela recorded the General Conference Department Directors, introducing their departments and raising awareness about each department's role. These videos were in production for months, edited and captioned for the bilingual audience present during the conferences.

About a year out from the event, we discovered that the livestreaming of the conference was in jeopardy. Not accepting that so many would miss out on the blessings of such an event, we began fundraising with faith that God would provide. We joined forces with the *DVIDA* media team from the Colombian Union (hosts) and the *Conectados com Deus* media team from Brazil (previous GC hosts) and set out to find a budget.

The first blessings came when the *Conectados com Deus* team, consisting of 15 individuals, volunteered their service as an offering. And, praise the Lord, funds were secured to cover the cost of equipment and rentals. After weeks of fundraising with Units around the world, prioritizing equipment to fit the budget, site visits, and many meetings to iron out details with all parties and vendors, everything seemed ready for the special weekend. The event would be livestreamed simultaneously in four languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French—the largest livestream undertaking at a General Conference in our Reform






Movement history. Translation booths and translators were organized for Portuguese and French, as the event would take place in English and Spanish.

During the Delegation Session, the Media Team worked earnestly on a number of simultaneous projects: incoming officer announcements, photographing all the delegates (more than 200), editing those photos immediately for publication in the magazine prepared for the GC weekend, recording and preparing social media content, recording music clips with international musicians, uploading the daily bulletins, and so on.

For a while, we shared a growing concern across all teams. Big events don't just happen. Without minute organization, everything quickly dissolves, nobody knows what's next, the audience is left waiting for precious minutes while the next presentation gets organized, and an online audience will quickly tune out.

For the livestream to go smoothly, we needed a very detailed program for communication across teams. For example, when it was time for the children's presentation, the camera crew knew where to point, the lighting crew to know when to dim the lights and what part of the stage to illuminate, the sound crew knew how many microphones were needed and which ones to turn on/off, as well as whether they needed to play a playback. The lighting and sound crew were from Plaza Mayor, which meant communication needed to be extra-detailed and in Spanish. We were also concerned that if there was no stage management crew to prepare the next presenters ahead of time, there would be a lot of empty airspace between presentations, while the choir or the children took their places, or until a translator was found, for example.

There were several days and long nights to fill out all the details in the program across the teams and with the final approval of the GC Executive Committee. With the help of the brethren from the Music Department (Brethren Marcos Pedrazas, Aarón Quispe, and Isaac Terceros), as well as Brethren Nasareno Turushina, Abel Morales, Cesar Galeano, and Sister Andrea Rodriguez, we formed a stage management team that kept the program on time—and both in-person and online programs were able to go smoothly, praise the Lord!

It was only after the incoming officers were elected that we could know who would be preaching and when, which meant Brother Hugo had only a few days to put together all the PowerPoints that would be used during the public meetings in English and Spanish. He spent many hours preparing this material to send to the projection crew, who would then display the prepared texts, images, hymn lyrics, videos, and other media both to the in-person screens and livestream.

We also had a team of three photographers (Gabriela Ferreira, and Dayse & Rafael Oliares) that spent the entire weekend dedicated to covering the event with all the simultaneous activities (children/youth programs, kitchen) and taking photos that we will be able to use in our Reform Movement stock image database for years to come.

There were also many adventures like the overnight bus trip from Barbosa to Medellín, through winding roads and beautiful scenery. With all the many early mornings and late nights working, at first I felt like we had missed the opportunity to fellowship, watch and just appreciate this special program. But it was such an incredible experience to participate in this spiritual gathering. There is something unique about the General Conference, and we take much joy and satisfaction in knowing that we didn't keep these blessings to ourselves but rather served as instruments to share these blessings with thousands of souls. Throughout the weekend we received comments from churches that were gathered in groups of 40 here, 30 there, to tune in to the livestream. Participating backstage, I felt that God had reserved spiritual blessings for us, too.

There is much room for growth in the media ministry, and I am humbled and excited to have been given the opportunity to continue working with this team and developing the media ministry. I kept remembering my first media-related General Conference in 2015 and praising the Lord for the advancements that have taken place in the last ten years. In the end, counting with the stage management and the light/sound crew from Plaza Mayor, we were a team of 38 people. I am thankful to God who sustains us, for our team with their dedication and heart for service, to the administration that has supported and allowed us to work, and for the Units that funded the livestream. Without your support, this work would not be possible. Onward and upward until His kingdom come.

Livestream stats

Channels streamed	YouTube and Facebook
Simultaneous points of access	over 20,000
Total estimated views	over 400,000



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Testimony from Fabrício Souza, *Conectados com Deus*

"Participating in the production and broadcasting of this event was a privilege for me. Among the many challenges faced was the logistics of equipment. The transportation, assembly and rental required meticulous planning. It was also essential to ensure that local suppliers had the capacity to meet the event's demands, avoiding technical setbacks that could compromise the entire production.

"Despite the challenges, the General Conference provided a unique opportunity for an exchange of knowledge, networking, and strengthening of ties among professionals from different countries, united with the same purpose. It was a touching and inspiring experience."



Testimony – Diego Moreno, *DVIDA*

"At the end of the event, as I listened to our beloved church singing 'God Be with You,' I felt a mixture of emotions. Reflecting on everything we had gone through to get to this point, all the uncertainties faced and various challenges overcome, I could say with complete certainty, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us' (1 Samuel 7:12, last part)."

"It was all worth it. Thousands of people were reached with the broadcasts and that reminds me of when Sister Ellen G. White wrote, 'The inventions of human minds are supposed to spring from humanity, but God is behind all. He has caused that the means of rapid travelling shall have been invented, for the great day of His preparation.' *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 409." This might be applied to advances in communications, too! *R*



Logistics

By Yeison Bogota

Thinking about organizing the logistics of the General Conference assembly is a mixture of emotions, between the joy of being able to help in such a great event, the worry about the workload, and the pressure to get everything right.

God's word had a promise for me as He did for Hezekiah of old, "And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart and prospered" (2 Chronicles 31:21).

I then understood the need to seek God, trusting that everything done for Him would work out well. So it was, together with prayer, that we created the methodology of working hand-in-hand with Pastor Nasareno Turushina. We were to have a team of helpers that would be God-fearing, voluntary, and bilingual. It was a challenge to find them, but thankfully, young people do not get tired! We were blessed with Martin Borja, Samuel Gil, Valentina Gil, Richard Junior Fajardo, Meliss Turushina, Camilo Rodriguez, David Ruiz, Daniela Ruiz, Haydee Martinez, Sebastian Verdugo, Oswaldo Verdugo and Olga Ruiz. Thank God I found pure gold in these young, willing, tireless, and capable people.

It took months of planning—of creating the whole ecosystem of responsibility from the moment a delegate was picked up at the airport until he/she left Colombia.

As the final moment arrived, there was expectation. The reorganization assembly of the Lord's church here on earth was starting, and the responsibility fell on our shoulders that no delegate would be missing. How were we going to recognize them? The ***Sabbath Bible Lessons*** booklet is a symbol of worldwide identity, and some small banners with the logos of the church were the answer. Little by little they were arriving. With joy we received them, knowing that some of them had been traveling for 2 or even 3 days. The weariness was left behind when we met them and received them with a hug. In contrast to these joys, when we told the team of volunteers that 6 delegates from Africa and Asia had been deported, it was a sad moment.

We were not alone, nor were they traveling alone. As we were waiting at the airport for three delegates to arrive, we did not know them, and they did not know us. From the international arrival gate I saw four people, all of them with a coat and tie, and in their hands they each had a briefcase and almost at the same time they kneeled down to take out the ***Sabbath Bible Lessons***. I recognized them and raised the banner so they could see me. As I passed the door, I greeted them with a handshake and a hug, when I told them to please accompany me. At that moment there were only three, so I immediately asked for the fourth companion so that he would not be left behind. But only three delegates had traveled—so I must have greeted a heavenly caretaker!






Angels from heaven traveled with the delegates. They were the first in line in logistics, guarding the brethren from the evils and dangers along the way.

Organizing in such a way to avoid anyone having for to wait more than two hours at the airport was a challenge. With the many different means of transportation, some volunteers worked closely together with us, doing more than 24 continuous hours without a break. May God bless the lives of each one of the volunteers. It brought joy to my heart to work with them.

The departure to Medellín from the Union headquarters was an even greater challenge. I could no longer count on the same team, and now there were no longer four or five busloads—there were twelve! Yet, God again provided a team of young people of the highest caliber–Laura Gutierrez, Brisa Aguirre, Karen Fajardo all came to join with all willingness.

Today we can joyfully say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12, last part). Everything went well; the delegates and the musicians were able to reach their destination. The Lord is good.

By God's grace, we'll see you in the Philippines in 2030!

Translation

Being invited to translate at the General Conference came as a complete surprise and honor. I was so excited the first time I heard about it, that I had a hard time sleeping. I felt immensely blessed for the opportunity.

Seeing firsthand how a Delegation Session happens is something quite impressive. There are delegates from all around the world, and meeting these brethren and their cultures is a rich experience. They're all human, but there is something about praying multiple times a day and spending all day talking about God and His things, that makes you act differently, with more patience and self-control.

Translating has its challenges—and by evening the first couple of days, I couldn't think properly. The word would come to my mind, but it took me a while to say it. Yet after a couple of days, my mind eventually caught up and things flowed better.

When the Delegation Session finished, we went to Medellín where the General Conference Spiritual Meetings were held. That was an unforgettable trip. The road was full of curves, and many got sick on the trip. Medellín is known for its agreeable temperature and the street food is delicious, but I had one concern in my mind. I was surprised by an invitation to translate the President's sermon for Divine Service on Sabbath. I was happy to discover I could do better than I had imagined with my Spanish, but I also knew there was still a road to perfection. Nonetheless, opportunities like this one come around once in a lifetime, and I could not let it pass me by. I was going to do my best, so help me God.

Sabbath came, and I remember the anxiety felt while waiting to go up to the platform. I looked at those who would also be there—Brother Sas! I remembered my mom saying that when she was a little girl, he would gather the children around and tell stories whenever he visited. I had read his biography, and it was a privilege to meet him in person. We went up the stairs and the strong lights hit my face. Thankfully, once I started translating for Brother Eli, I calmed down. When words failed, the Lord helped me find others to convey the right message. I made sure to pay attention to Brother Eli's tone of voice so that I could convey the same emotion in Spanish. Once we said the last "Amen," it took me a while to really understand what had just happened. It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life!

To think that I received this opportunity because of my dad's decision to answer the call to open the work in a new country where I had the opportunity to learn new languages! All because of one courageous decision.—*Evelyn Gessner*





First-time Delegates

Serving as a first-time delegate at the 2025 General Conference Session, I witnessed our church's worldwide mission come alive. Each morning began with united prayer, lifting up countless needs from around the globe—a special moment that set the tone for our work together. I really enjoyed my conversations with experienced pastors and church leaders. Their personal stories broadened my understanding of worldwide ministry. On a different note, this Delegation Session marked significant leadership transitions, with faithful leaders stepping into new chapters while others took up the role of service.

Amidst these changes, my role on the Plans Committee was an exciting one. It gave me a unique opportunity to actively contribute to shaping new initiatives. This was particularly meaningful, as it allowed me to help guide efforts that will touch lives across the globe. This experience broadened my perspective on our shared mission and deepened my faith in ways I'll carry forward into my local ministry.—*Marco Alonso*

I was blessed to be able to attend the 24th General Conference Session in Barbosa, Colombia as a delegate for the first time at the General Conference level. Although I have previously been a delegate to a number of Field/Conference and Union Sessions before, there were some new aspects at this Session which I enjoyed learning and participating in. One of these was the unique experience of working together at the Session with so many delegates representing many different countries and speaking many different languages. It was wonderful to see that with the help of the translators, we were able to have input on each proposal and decision from a variety of delegates representing the needs and interests of the church in various parts of the world. It was also a blessing to be a part of the Temporary Doctrinal Committee, where each of the doctrinal proposals from the outgoing Permanent Doctrinal Committee was considered, discussed, and studied before being brought to the Session floor to be voted upon.

Another aspect which I was impressed with was the dedication and hard work of all the support staff who helped take care of the many logistical needs of hosting a Delegation Session with more than 200 delegates over a period of two weeks. It was encouraging to see so many brothers and sisters, including many young people, working hard each day in the various teams including transportation, kitchen, bakery, laundry, housekeeping, maintenance, technical support and more. Our brethren and sisters in Colombia were wonderful hosts for this Session, and I pray that our time there and the experiences we were able to share with them were a blessing and encouragement to them as well!—*Jordan Chapman*

Orchestra

At the January 2024 congress in Colombia, Brother Isaac Terceros told us in a rehearsal that in January 2025, auditions would be held for the orchestra that would play at the General Conference meetings. At that time, I was practicing the piano, but was told that it was not an instrument eligible for participation in the world orchestra. Faced with this situation, I told myself, "It won't be easy to get there, but with God's help, it's not impossible." That was when I visualized which instrument to learn to play and felt drawn to start taking viola lessons.

I prayed, fasted, and placed my learning in the Lord's hands. I started viola lessons in February 2024 with a teacher who gave me virtual classes. I knew nothing about the viola, let alone how to read sheet music for this instrument, but my dream and trust in God were greater than my fear. Determined to practice with discipline, I attended every rehearsal I could to improve my ear for the orchestra.

I never lost sight of my goal: to pass the audition and join the General Conference orchestra. I was very nervous because it would be my first time participating in an orchestra, and I had never played a string instrument before. I kept praying and trusting in my Jesus, who inspired me daily to practice so I could offer my music as a gift to Him at the worldwide spiritual meetings.

I progressed so quickly that my teacher eventually told me, "Sofia, you need to continue your studies with a more advanced teacher." That's when she connected me with another instructor who guided me further. With her, I began practicing the pieces for my audition.

From February 2024 onward, I didn't stop until the long-awaited audition day arrived. I was nervous, but as I had always said until that moment, "Let God's will be done, and if I pass, may it be for His honor and glory." My parents and my brother constantly inspired me. We prayed together and remained in God's hands.

I took the audition, and then all that was left to do was pray and wait for the results. Those days of waiting felt endless to me. When the email arrived, I was so nervous to open it. But when I did, I couldn't believe I had made it! At that moment, I thanked God and the support of my parents and teachers.

As soon as I learned I had passed, I started practicing the orchestra pieces.

But now I faced another challenge and concern. The rehearsal week had arrived. Even though I had practiced the orchestra pieces, I was very nervous about making mistakes, playing out of






tune, losing my place, etc. However, I trusted that if it was for God, everything would turn out well.

That rehearsal week was a great experience. I met many people and improved some of my instrumental techniques.

Then came the day we had to travel to Medellín, where the GC meetings would take place. On the first presentation night, Thursday, February 6, during the Congress inauguration, I was very nervous. Playing in front of a few brethren during rehearsals was not the same as performing in front of a large audience, especially with the orchestra and choir. But thanks to God, everything went well.

At the event, I was filled with joy to be there by the grace of the Lord. Feeling His presence in every performance, message, and prayer was truly special.

Then came the Sabbath, when we attentively played the congregational hymns. That night was the concert, and I was so excited because it was one of the most important parts of the event. I prayed to the Lord and asked Him to give me wisdom so I could play with all my heart for Him, and He granted my request. That concert night is one I will always cherish in my heart.

I learned so much and truly enjoyed participating in the orchestra. Now, I ask the Lord to continue guiding me, granting me wisdom, and help me prepare to be part of the orchestra at General Conference spiritual meetings in the Philippines.

I thank the Lord for everything, including to Sister Larissa Gessner for asking me and also to the Editors of this wonderful magazine for giving me the opportunity to share my experience.

May the Lord be praised at all times! Amen.—*Tania Sofia Hurtado Mayorga*

If I had to describe my trip to Colombia in one word, it would be: Blessing! Being a part of the GC orchestra made my trip a unique experience. It was inspiring to be involved in such a fun music ensemble with a diverse group of people from all over the world. From our first rehearsal to the weekend of performances, there were several moments that the beauty of the experience gave me chills! I thank God for the opportunity to go and meet wonderful people, taste fruits that were new to me, play beautiful music, and explore a beautiful country.—*Karina Espinal*

The Messages

I was one of many who could attend the General Conference public meetings last time, and it was a blessing. It was great to relive past experiences of such large gatherings, where we could be together with friends and relatives. But the most important thing—the spiritual food we greatly need—was delivered to us. Such a timely topic for the moment in which we live today, could not have been better. I wish more people could have been there to have the same personal experience. I wish more people could see the urgency of our times.

Seeing all the work done in this past General Conference reminded me of Romans chapter 12, where Paul, through Christ, teaches us that we all have a part to play in His church. As members of one body, each of us has a distinct role and duty to fulfill, and it was inspiring to see how invested everyone was in accomplishing their responsibilities. Lastly, I want to highlight the important message given by David Zic, which serves as a constant reminder that we risk becoming complacent in our spiritual state of mind and losing sight of our goal. Therefore, let us renew our commitment to help the cause of Christ, regardless of where we are or our position in the church. We must not forget our duty and life goal: to preach the gospel of Christ to every soul.—*Yuri Gessner*

At the Conference, we were in a nice place. There was a lot of music, and the topics were very touching—with many appeals being made by our Brn. Eli Tenorio and Daniel Balbach.

The kitchen staff was very practical in serving simple—but good—dishes.—*Magdalena Florian de Pereda*



In the Kitchen

Greetings to my dear brothers and sisters around the world. May God bless you abundantly. Most know me as Brother Peter. I am from Bogotá, Colombia, and a candidate for baptism in the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement.

For the Colombian Union, it was a great privilege to host the 2025 General Conference Delegation, and as a result, I was invited to join the kitchen team as a chef. With over ten years of culinary experience and formal training in Bogotá, I had often wondered how I could use my talents for God's work. When I received the invitation, the first thing I did was pray and place everything in God's hands.

However, as we know, the enemy is always lurking, seeking to disrupt God's plans. In November, I was involved in a traffic accident. I am immensely grateful to God that my injuries were not more severe. I began therapy, and by January, I arrived at Camp Eben-Ezer, where the assembly would take place. On January 16, 2025, I began my work in the kitchen, trusting fully in God. Still, fear and uncertainty were ever-present.

From the start, we had to improvise with meal preparations and adjust menus. Yet, with God's help and the expertise of the kitchen team, everything turned out well. As the days passed, the long working hours and challenging environment began to take a toll, and the enemy pressed on once again. At one point, I suffered another accident—hot oil spilled on my right arm. Despite the pain, I continued my work, though the thought of quitting grew stronger. Once more, I turned to prayer, asking for strength to persevere despite the difficulties.

With the conviction that I was using my talents for God's work and the assurance that He had answered my prayers, my team and I pressed on. We remained committed to providing the best possible meals until the end of the Session and into the General Conference in Medellín, Colombia. I concluded this experience with deep satisfaction, knowing I had contributed to God's work. I am profoundly grateful to my fellow brothers and sisters who supported this mission.

I reflect on Psalm 37:5: "Commit thy way into the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." This is my invitation to you—no matter the circumstances in life, place everything in God's hands and trust that He will provide a way. I ask my brothers and sisters to keep me in their prayers as I continue my journey, dedicating my talents and my life to God. May this testimony be a blessing to each reader. May God bless you abundantly.— *Pedro Ángel González Alarcón*







Journeying . . .

It is always a joy to be able to share a special adventure in the hands of God. To go to the General Conference is always a nice experience. But this time it was not economically feasible, so I had decided not to go. There was now only a week remaining before the Conference and some in the orchestra as well as some pastors had already left to attend the event.

Suddenly the phone rang, and brother Edgar Montiel told me that he needed a car driver to go to Colombia. Immediately I did not hesitate to answer, "Yes!" So, I made the longest trip of my life—driving from Puno, Peru (at the border of Bolivia) all the way to Medellín, near the border of Panama (2,615 miles/4,210 kilometers).

Dear brethren, I want to thank God for having taken care of me and blessed me throughout my life with many things which—although they were humanly impossible—God nonetheless bestowed upon me. I want to invite you to trust in God, tell Him with all your heart your plans and sorrows—things that perhaps do not allow you to sleep. He bids us trust our pathway in His gracious hands. Psalm 37:5.

Now, along this blessed road, it was not the first time I had ever seen the hand of God. We had traveled almost 200 kilometers when the car suddenly slowed down. I looked in the rearview mirror and realized that the rear tire was coming off! At that moment, I parked—and indeed, the wheel had only one firm nut holding it in place and the rest of the nuts were bent and many were even broken. I remembered that the route along the way had been full of curves and cliffs.

We all prayed together. What would become of us without God's intervention? In what place, in what part of the world, in what condition, would we find ourselves without the hand of God? Let us seek the Lord while He may be found, let us call upon His name while He is near. Isaiah 55:6.

Thank the Lord, we arrived in Medellín, where the General Conference meetings were held. We participated in all the precious messages, activities, and fellowship that greatly strengthened our spiritual life. God is good!—*Eliseo Cohaguila.*



Due to many circumstances, it seemed impossible for me to attend the GC spiritual meetings. But one brother encouraged me and insisted that I could attend and live that great experience of an encounter with Jesus and our brothers in Christ worldwide. I can say that it was totally worth it to have left behind all the daily life and hustle and bustle of this world!

These were days of much blessing and many joys. One of the things I enjoyed the most was the GC choir and orchestra. I was sitting in the first row, and when they played and sang, I simply thought about how it would be to worship Christ in heaven. In my mind, it felt like I was transported to heaven and got a little taste of what Ellen White had expressed in *Early Writings*, p. 39 when she was taken away in vision. She describes: "I begged of my attending angel to let me remain in that place. I could not bear the thought of coming back to this dark world again. Then the angel said, 'You must go back, and if you are faithful, you, with the 144,000, shall have the privilege of visiting all the worlds and viewing the handiwork of God.' "

On my part, I just wanted to remain at this wonderful Conference. That's how much it seemed to draw my thoughts upward to celestial glory.

It was wonderful to meet with our brothers united in purpose, preparing for the second coming of Christ. From Mozambique, Haiti, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, Mexico, Perú, Bolivia, Chile, Hungary, South Korea—all with whom I was able to share short or long but valuable moments—I was also able to create beautiful memories with photographs and videos.

This brought a great awakening in my spiritual life. I came home with a lot of encouragement and new goals. And one of them is to accompany Claudia, a friend I met from Chile. She travels around the world doing missions with volunteers; now she is going to Mozambique to help drill wells where they do not have access to water. It is my great desire to join her! I have always asked, "What is my purpose, Lord? How will I serve you where I can give 100% of myself?" Now I know that it is to bring the love of Christ to others through social welfare assistance, bringing smiles where there is sadness.

May the Lord allow me to fulfill these aims for His glory and may it be His will!

I say goodbye with this phrase: Let us reflect Christ wherever we go!

And lastly, remember that I lived every one of these precious experiences because a brother took the time to write to me to give me encouragement and help me organize everything for the trip!—*Eva Rosalia Laura Jihuaña* ℛ

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The North American Region



Arise and Shine!





The Lord has blessed this Region to see a 12.4% increase in membership over the past five years. Although it comprises only 2.5% of the membership of the SDA Reform Movement worldwide, the North American Region contributes 26% of the entire amount received by the General Conference—thus helping to finance many projects around the globe. New groups are being formed here in new areas as the message is spread through church services, conferences, media productions, health classes, missionary training, vacation Bible schools, youth activities, music activities, community service, and more. Much of this is livestreamed online. A special language institute staffed by volunteers is also being used as a form of missionary outreach.

The Central American Region



This is a rapidly growing Region with a large media presence. Over the past five years, 26 virtual conferences were held—16 of which were on doctrine, prophecy, and administration. There were 16 in-person events of this nature as well, plus 17 public conferences on prophecy as well as home and family matters. The Region has six missionary schools; two are in Colombia, one in Haiti, one in Honduras, one in Mexico, and one in Venezuela. These have become "breeding grounds" for workers and pastors. Mexico has been blessed with two online radio stations and has also acquired a printing press. Venezuela has established a "health house." By God's grace, Cuba is experiencing a revival, and the work has opened in the Cayman Islands. When the GC Welfare Department came to hold a project in the Central American Region, feedback came from an elderly recipient to a young person, "Please tell your pastors and leaders to keep bringing Jesus out of your churches and onto your streets. We need Him."

The South American Region



This Region has the largest membership in the SDARM, represented in every nation on the continent, thus providing resources for many, many spiritual activities to be carried out on a regular basis. Focusing on just one highlight worthy of mention, the Illuminando Vidas ("Lighting up Lives") project immediately comes to mind. Among the 62 municipalities in the state of Amazonas in northern Brazil, only 7 are accessible by land; the other 55 can be reached only by boat.

Imagine the great difficulty involved in preaching the gospel with such limitations! The residents here are blessed to live in harmony with nature, but they also lack basic services and spiritual assistance. For decades, faithful SDARM brethren had longed to see the day when our church could reach out and carry the message of hope in these remote places among the Amazonian tributaries where rivers are the only roads.

With God's help, what had started off as a canoe reaching two cities with the everlasting gospel, two brethren took on the challenge to restore an old ship. Today the Illuminando Vidas missionary ship is equipped with a dining room, full kitchen, 8 rooms to accommodate 50 people, plus space for 80 hammocks. There are men's and women's restrooms on board, as well as barbershop, dental, and legal services, medical care clinics, and an air-conditioned chapel that seats 150 people. We have been blessed with nurses, nutritionists, massage therapists, psychologists, social workers, children's teachers, financial educators, a prosthetic health care practitioner, a naturist, and a hairdresser. There is an intercession room where pastors can provide counseling sessions and answer the questions of souls hungering and thirsting for the truth. Missionary contacts are invited to join in listening to the evangelistic worship at the end of every mission where they can get to know Jesus. We praise God for the way He is using this project in the Amazon as a platform of love, healing, and transformation.



The Eurasian Region



Eurasia faces various challenges. There is not complete religious freedom in Russia and Central Asia, so much of the Lord's work is carried out through literature and media. Youth meetings and services are held regularly, as well as missionary schools for teens and children. Due to the military action causing a very difficult situation, many have fled the Ukrainian Union for western Europe, the United States, and Canada. Those who remain are doing pastoral, missionary, and charitable work in service to those who are suffering the ravaging effects of the war. They have often gone to places where military actions were being carried out even where volunteers were trying to give charitable aid. Our church established a ministry called "Angels' Hand," an outreach whereby people bring food, clothing, hygiene products, media, and literature to places where souls are inclined to listen to the Word of God. This is an important time because many people are in such a state of uncertainty, in fear and hopelessness—and perhaps this is a means for people to hear the good news of the mercy and love of God. The media department has been quite active in the production of missionary videos.

Many of those who came from Ukraine joined the ranks of the brethren in Poland and Czech Republic. We are blessed with a beautiful new church in Liberec, and the believers are also renting a church in Prague.

In Moldova, the brethren are organizing Bible schools, and schools for the children and youth. The music department is preparing programs to make the truth more accessible to the people.

In Turkey and Israel, our numbers are few but they, too, are doing their best to spread the truth.



The Asian Region

In Asia, we have over 3,000 members in two Unions with many Missions, with many of them being in South India alone. A new mission has been established there known as the "Bethel Mission" with 250 members.

Thanks to the First Sabbath Offering provided to Manali, Himachal, the construction of a house of prayer is progressing, but has been delayed due to extreme weather.

Another First Sabbath Offering enabled the Nepal Mission to purchase a parcel of land for the construction of a church.

Recently the Reform message was presented to a group of more than 50 souls who accepted it and were organized into the Ladakh Mission. This remote area is bordered by Tibet to the east, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh to the south, and Pakistan to the south and southwest, and the Himalayan Mountains to the north.

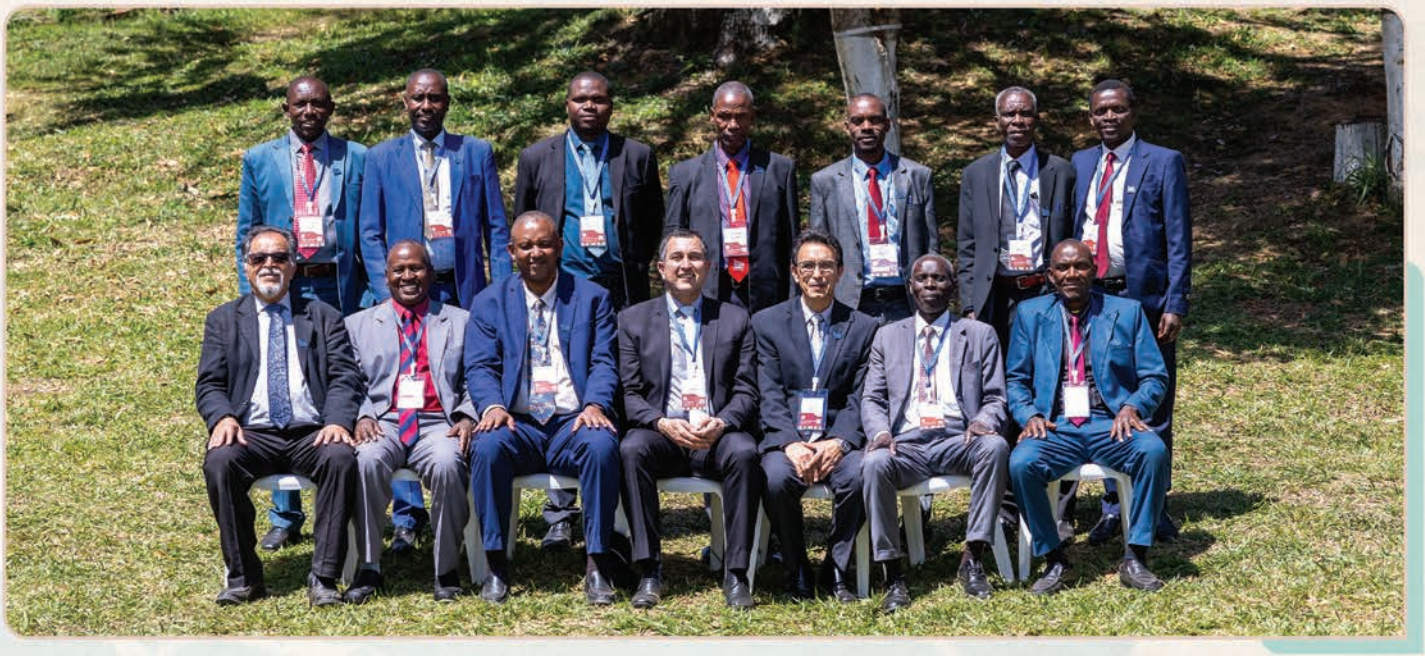
Baptisms are also being performed even in some very difficult, restricted areas as well as in places where the people suffer amid civil unrest. Our Sabbath Bible Lessons published in multiple languages are also being used in other churches besides our own and we pray that these silent messengers may bear fruit to the glory of God.

The Pacific Region



This is a vast Region with millions of people, and a vast number of cultures, religions, and languages. For example, Papua New Guinea is a country where 800 languages are spoken. Yet the message continues to go forward amidst the obstacles. There are serious challenges due to the many different religions as well as restrictions in various countries. Because much of this Region is within the Pacific "Ring of Fire" prone to volcanoes, earthquakes, cyclones, and tsunamis, much of the work that is done needs to be humanitarian ministry ready for when natural disasters occur. Besides our regular Conferences, there are Bible seminars, health seminars, and online ministry programs are being carried out. Your prayers are greatly needed so that the work may go forward and the seeds of truth planted in this Region may find their way into hearts.

The Northern African Region



For centuries, the continent of Africa has been in vast darkness, but this is changing. The Lord's work is expanding into new territory. One example is the Central African Republic, which recently has been opened despite the obstacles of war. A similar case is Ivory Coast, also at war, but where 39 souls were baptized in one day. Precious souls in Benin are eagerly accepting the truth, yet one challenge that nearly all of them face in seeking to attend church is a dire lack of even basic clothing.

Some projects in this Region over the last five years include:

Tanzania Medical Mission ¬– 150 volunteers from 19 countries provided greatly needed medical services, as well as building a new church in Dodoma and providing facilities to make water accessible to the community.

Rwanda – A missionary training school was established here with teachers volunteering from abroad, and 96 were recently baptized in one day. After the school term was completed, the building remained active as a regular school.

Togo – Here is found another new missionary school. Togo is a nation suffering from war, but has been greatly helped by the self-sacrificing efforts of our brethren from Ukraine, another nation plagued by war.

Liberia – The Lord touched the hearts of a Romanian team to come here to build a church and a school.

Burundi – New churches have been built in this growing country as well.

The membership in northern Africa has seen a growth of 15.6% in five years.



The Southern African Region



The Lord's work in southern Africa has advanced significantly in recent years. This Region is composed of 20 countries, of which 17 have been entered and the message is being implemented. As of July 2025, workers are being provided for the remaining three. Marvelous events have taken place, including Region-wide conventions for youth as well as one for women. Upon this latter occasion, the government sent radio and television to cover the event so that everyone could follow this wonderful program. Believers in the third angel's message who attended were deeply moved, as they had never experienced such an event before. Finally, we also held the International Youth Convention. Many African countries marked their presence, especially South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Zambia. They also brought their experiences to enrich the event—and after it had ended, the conversation among the youth seemed to be solely about the convention. We've had several baptisms—231 souls recently were baptized in Congo, and later 83 more. Lesotho has a newly organized Mission with 14 souls. One sister there lamented, "You delayed in bringing the truth here. My mother always desired to know the truth, but the reality is that in our country, it never existed. Now that the truth has arrived, my mother has already passed away." We assured her that the case of her mother is in God's hands, yet this is a reminder that faithful souls are in places beyond, waiting for the truth. We have a responsibility to seek and to save precious souls lost in darkness.

The European Region



This Region has 22 countries, 17 languages, and is organized into 14 Units. There are three missionary schools—one each in Romania, Austria, and Portugal.

According to prophecy, the nations of Europe would never truly unite, but as the people of God, we wholeheartedly seek to operate unitedly in harmony with the teachings of Christ. Friends and young people attending our meetings have especially observed this blessing when we host conferences, youth meetings, gospel workers' seminars, medical professional congresses, nutrition seminars, and book fairs. In Romania, 700,000 euros worth of books have been shared by postal mail. The Media Department here has 27,000 subscribers among 11 Units. An online follower traveled 1,700 km (1,056 miles) to attend a church service in person after being impressed by the online content.



In Ukraine, people have been suffering the ravages of war, so charitable aid is the best way to bring them hope, opening their hearts for the gospel.



Asia – Ladakh: The Reform message was presented to a group of more than 50 souls who accepted it and were organized into the Ladakh Mission.



Pacific: Much of the work that is done needs to be humanitarian ministry ready for when natural disasters occur.

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BUILDING TOGETHER

When Jesus lived as the Son of man on earth, He was a carpenter who built things. It's amazing to think how the same One who designed and built the whole universe also came to our planet to build! He who had been the exalted Commander in heaven laid aside His kingly crown to live and labor among us. He started His career on earth by working together with Joseph in the carpenter's shop. There He gave a simple example to us of how to work cheerfully with others to achieve something good.

In order for any project to succeed, those working on it must be willing to help each other and work together. Remember what happened at the tower of Babel: When the languages were confused, those laying the brick at the top could no longer work with those on the ground. Men were posted at different points, each to receive and report to the next below him the orders for needed supplies. But the messages got mixed up, so the wrong supplies were sent. Confusion and frustration followed. Everything had to stop; there was no more harmony. The builders became angry and everybody blamed each other. The whole plan fell apart. The project ended up as a disaster! That's where the name "Babylon" comes from—it means "confusion."



The opposite is found among the children of God. We are called to leave the confusion of this world, and instead obey God—not rebelling to do whatever we may feel like doing. When the church comes together for worship or business, we work together. Sweet harmony and order are seen. Everyone has a task or duty to do. If we do not keep this goal in mind, the result will be lopsided—and there will be confusion.

That is why the church holds big worldwide meetings every five years. There we can remind ourselves of the wonderful faith we share and the truths we believe. We can come up with good plans to promote the spread of the everlasting gospel in this earth. We can figure out in a fair way who should do what, and where they should do it. Then the project Christ has assigned to us—to go into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone—will bring glory and honor to His name. And we will have the delightful joy of getting to help!

The apostle Paul explains: "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. . . . I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—*BHM*