

Conference Business
208th Session of the SDB General Conference
Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Michigan
July 23-August 4, 2023

Monday, July 24, 2023

First Business Session

The 208th Annual Session of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference of USA and Canada, Ltd. was called to order at 9:12 am at Calvin University, in Grand Rapids, Michigan by Conference President Charlotte Chroniger. Conference Pastor, Egbert Downes, led the delegation in prayer.

Johnmark Camenga, Lost Creek SDB Church (Lost Creek, WV), President-elect, introduced the procedural motion (below). It was seconded and carried and became the procedure for the business at Conference.

Procedural Motion

1. The rights and privileges of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference of the USA and Canada, Ltd. are extended to all guests, visitors, and fraternal delegates. The right to participate in debate and to vote on Conference Week business is reserved for official delegates of member churches as determined by the Credentials Coordinator, Cindy Nadeau, and subject to approval by General Conference.

In extending the rights and privileges of this Conference Week to delegates, guests, and visitors, it is understood that in Conference Week Interest Committee meetings, the chair shall grant participants of all ages the right to speak on the same basis as delegates.

2. All matters referred to a Conference Week Interest Committee from the floor shall be addressed by a recommendation to the Conference in the Interest Committee's report.
3. During business, persons addressing the President should wait to be recognized and shall identify themselves by name and church.
4. All major motions for the consideration of delegates shall be presented in written form and shall be given to the Recording Secretary and the Visuals Coordinator before being moved on the floor. They shall be provided to the delegates in written form (on paper or projected on screen) prior to any discussion. No motion shall be entertained for adoption by the delegates which requires additional clarification outside the language of the motion to make its intent understood.
5. When Conference Week Interest Committees deal with items of budget and program, representatives of the General Council, and Conference Directors concerned with the particular issue, must be involved in attempting to achieve a joint resolution before recommendations regarding the issue are presented on the floor for action. All motions coming to the floor for a final vote containing the allocation and/or expenditure of unbudgeted funds should clearly state their effect on recipients and any impact on other projects.
6. The honorable Judge Don Graffius shall be the Parliamentarian of the 208th session. In the case where the honorable Judge Graffius is unavailable, Gabriela Alonzo will fulfill this role.
7. The following rules shall apply to the discussion of motions on the floor by delegates:
 - (a) Debate shall be limited to five minutes per delegate.

- (b) Those speaking for and those speaking against a motion shall alternate as much as is practicable.
 - (c) No person shall speak twice to any question if there are other delegates who have not spoken and wish to speak.
 - (d) When referring to churches in writing or on the floor, the location of the church shall be included.
8. No main motion relating to new business shall be entered on the floor of the Conference that will not have time for referral to, and consideration by, one of the Conference Interest Committees. Specifically, this time is prior to the conclusion of the 2:00 p.m. business session, Monday, July 24, 2023.

9. Nominations

“All candidates for the respective offices shall be presented to General Conference by the Committee on Nominations, or may be nominated from the floor upon prior consent to serve, and shall be elected by vote of the delegates present and voting.” (Bylaw – Article V, Paragraph 3, sentence 1)

The Nominations Committee report shall be available in print and electronically in the SDB Yearbook 2022-2023.

10. Definitions of terms used in proposals that come before delegates shall be governed by those found in the glossary presented to the Conference Week Interest Committee chairs.
11. Four (4) printed copies of every Conference Week Interest Committee report will be presented to the President-Elect, Johnmark Camenga, or his assistant.
- One (1) electronic copy of every Conference Week Interest Committee report shall be presented to the Recording Secretary; Katherine Bofinger, and to the Visuals Coordinator; Joel Osborn, prior to the reading of their report.
12. The Recording Secretary and President shall be empowered to approve and publish the minutes of Conference Week 2023 business for official records with review by the General Council.
13. The Program Secretary and President shall be empowered to publish the program summary for official records with review by the General Council.

President-Elect Johnmark Camenga (Lost Creek SDB, WV) also made the following motion: Due to the dissolution of SpringsLife Church of Colorado Springs, CO, I recommend that we remove SpringsLife Church from membership in the SDB General Conference and that this recommendation be referred to the Reference & Counsel Conference Week Interest Committee.

The motion was seconded, and it carried.

General Council Chairman Andrew Camenga presented the report of General Council. The report was provided to conference attendees in writing within the 2023 Yearbook document and an addendum (both included below). A motion was made to accept the General Council Report and refer the recommendations to the Conference Week Interest Committees as indicated on the referral grid. The motion was seconded and carried.

Report of the General Council

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference is blessed by God with volunteers, staff, and directors who are dedicated to pursuing the ministry opportunities God presents to us. Over the last four ministry years, your General Council has been impressed and encouraged by the persistent effort, teamwork, pursuit of goals, and consideration of new opportunities demonstrated by people across the Conference.

Meetings of General Council

Your General Council met 7 times in the 2022–23 ministry year:

- August 7, 2022, by video
- September 30—October 2, 2022, in person, Seattle WA
- October 18, 2022, by video
- December 18, 2022, by video
- January 24, 2023, by video
- March 12, 2023, by video
- May 5–7, 2023, in person, Janesville, WI

We expect to meet by video on June 13, 2023 and again in person on July 23, 2023, in Grand Rapids, MI.

Introduction to the Report

When the 207th session of General Conference adjourned on August 3, 2019, there was no expectation that the next session would be in 2023.

This report is written with the expectation that General Conference will gather for the 208th session in Grand Rapids, MI, the week of July 23–30, 2023. While this report includes the events of the 2022–23 ministry year, we know that General Conference will be evaluating everything that has happened since the last session and have expanded the scope of this report by quoting or paraphrasing prior General Council reports (relying heavily on the report prepared for 2022) to help the General Conference:

- see what has been done for **continuity**;
- be informed of significant **decisions** that changed the status-quo;
- **ratify** those decisions that are generally reserved for the Conference-in-session; and
- **point forward** to the goals we want to pursue and how we want to pursue them.

An addendum to this report will be provided to General Conference delegates as Conference Week draws near. There are a number of matters for Conference consideration which were not yet complete as the deadline for submitting this report arrived.

Nominations, Elections, Vacancies, and Appointments

The General Conference has an established a rhythm of electing and appointing individuals to serve in positions responsible for a wide variety of Conference ministry.

At the heart of this rhythm is the Committee on Nominations. They prayerfully consider the terms that are concluding and seek the best people to fill those positions: sometimes by nominating the incumbent for an additional term and sometimes by nominating another person for the role.

Even though the rhythm of election and appointment was broken by our response to the COVID pandemic, the Committee on Nominations continued to carry out its responsibility, providing a report to the General Conference every ministry year. However, because General Conference did not meet in session, no nominations could be made, and no elections could be held.

Continuity for Elected Offices

The General Conference bylaws provide a path toward continuity in unusual circumstances.

First, in a paragraph addressing both “specific offices” and any “such assistants, boards, committees and/or agencies as may be deemed necessary, expedient, or convenient,” the bylaws state that those “elected or named and shall continue in office until their office is duly filled by a successor” (Article V, Paragraph 2–3 of introduction).

Second, the bylaws also provide that: “Vacancies in any office may be filled by General Council appointment until the next session of General Conference” (Article V, Paragraph 4). Later, the bylaws specify that General Council vacancies “shall be filled for the unexpired term either by the General Conference in regular session or by the General Council *ad interim*” (Article VI, Section 2).

Based on the guidance in these bylaws, your General Council worked with the Committee on Nominations to ensure that the people prayerfully chosen for positions of responsibility were recognized and empowered to serve with the full

confidence of the Conference. To be specific: at the end of each ministry year, General Council appointed the slate of nominees prepared by the Committee on Nominations.

General Council also appointed people to fill vacancies that arose when individuals resigned or were no longer able to serve.

Recommendation A

The General Council **recommends** that the General Conference ratify all appointments made by General Council between August 2019 and July 2023. Specifically, we **recommend** that General Conference ratify all appointments listed in the 2023 report of the Committee on Nominations with terms ending in 2025, 2026, and 2027 for positions with 5-year terms, and with terms ending in 2024, and 2025 for positions with 3-year terms.

Note: This recommendation does not disrupt the normal process of nomination and election arising from the report of the Committee on Nominations.

Standard Operating Procedure for Committee on Nominations

With successive votes in 2018 and 2019, General Conference established the Committee on Nominations as a nine-member, term-limited standing committee, entrusting General Council with the responsibility to maintain a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) reflecting specific recommendations adopted during the 2018 sessions. In addition to its primary task of nominating people, the Committee on Nominations has worked with General Council and the Conferences Coordinator to make changes to the SOP which clarify committee responsibility and improve the committee's operation.

Appointed Offices: Current Practice

Before the adoption of new bylaws in 2013, all General Conference offices were nominated and elected. With the new bylaws, General Conference established that in addition to election, some positions could be appointed "as determined by the Conference." At the time, General Conference adopted a policy statement indicating which offices were to be elected and which should be appointed. In the eight years since, ad hoc changes have been made to our practice of nomination, election, and appointment.

The current practice of the General Conference is to nominate and elect the people who serve our agencies and standing committees with multiple-year terms.

For Conference offices with one-year terms, the following summarizes current Conference practice:

- The General Conference nominates and elects the President, President-Elect, Business Recording Secretary, and Treasurer.
- General Council appoints the Program Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, and Assistant Treasurer.
- The Conferences Coordinator appoints the Credentials Coordinator (whose appointment is affirmed by the Conference as part of the procedural motion at the opening of Business), and the Courtesies Coordinator.

General Council is continuing a review of the responsibilities assigned to each of the appointed roles and expects to bring specific policy recommendations to the General Conference in 2024.

Reporting on Appointed Offices

Prior General Council reports have not included lists of General Council appointments. Beginning with our 2023 report to General Conference, this oversight will be corrected.

Executive Director

The Rev. Dr. Carl P. Greene began serving as the Executive Director of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference at the conclusion of our 2019 General Conference sessions. The Executive Director is a non-voting, ex-officio member of the General Council. His initial term of service was scheduled to conclude with the 2022 General Conference sessions. Over the last three years, Carl has provided excellent leadership. He has represented the General Conference in the appropriate ecumenical spaces and has built relationships in ways that strengthen our connections with groups that are pursuing similar goals. He has been in frequent communication with the Allied Societies of the Conference, ensuring

good working relationships with the Memorial Fund and with the Missionary Society. He has served as the convenor of the Coordinating Leadership Team and has facilitated regular communication within the group. He has supervised the Core Directors of the Conference, working to clarify areas of ministry ability and responsibility while establishing what appear to be healthy rhythms of goal setting and achievement checking. In all these spaces, when General Council has sought feedback from those who work with Carl, we have received statements that Carl is doing his job well.

Carl has helped the General Council work on vision, goal setting, and long-term planning. He is goal-oriented and has helped the General Council create an annual review process that incorporates his intentional process of setting and monitoring goals.

Carl understands and demonstrates that he is part of a team. This is clear when he communicates in public settings, and also by his interaction in General Council meetings. He makes us understand when work is done by the Core Directors, pointing to their accomplishments. He informs us of the ministry being accomplished by Agencies and Standing Committees. He encourages us with stories about good things happening in churches. He wants to make sure that when good work is done by others, it is seen and noticed.

We congratulate Carl on the completion of his PhD in Intercultural Studies at Trinity International University—and on the publication of his book, *Recognizing Rural Ministry*.

We believe that the General Conference has benefited from the leadership exercised by Carl Greene as Executive Director of the Conference and that he should continue to serve in that capacity for another three years. Accordingly, we have appointed him to another three-year term, pending confirmation by a vote of the General Conference.

Recommendation B

The General Council recommends that the General Conference confirm The Rev. Dr. Carl P. Greene to a second term as the Executive Director of the General Conference (2022–2025).

Financial Director

Ron Ochs capably serves the Conference as the Financial Officer. His roles include serving as the Conference Treasurer and as a non-voting ex-officio member of the General Council. We continue to appreciate his wise counsel in General Council sessions and the ways in which he supports and encourages the leadership of Carl Greene.

Over the last decade, Ron has worked with Conference Center staff, Conference directors, and the General Council to refine our budgeting and accounting process to provide better month-to-month support of ministry expenses. This effort has freed other Conference directors to focus more of their time and energy on matters which advance their ministry areas. We are grateful for what Ron has done to improve this “behind the scenes” ministry.

Supporting the Director Team

The directors of the General Conference do their jobs well. They bring a high level of skill to tasks and are committed to the mission of the Conference and to its people. We value their work as individuals and their work as a team.

General Conference has, on more than one occasion, expressed concern about the workload and stress level carried by our directors. General Council shares this concern and has been taking specific steps in the last four ministry years to support their continued health and success.

Annual Review Process & Goals

First, the Executive Director has worked with the directors to establish a healthy pattern of setting specific goals and evaluating achievement via those goals. This has provided the directors with ways to see the fruit of their labor each ministry year.

Compensation

Second, with the help of Financial Director Ron Ochs, General Council evaluated the directors’ financial compensation. We gathered information about similarly-sized non-profits and the pastor salary guidelines published by COSAR as points of comparison and made appropriate adjustments to their salaries. The changes took place across the 2020–21 and 2021–22 ministry years.

Third, building on the first two items, General Council approved a shift to a merit-based bonus structure in the 2021–22 ministry year. This new approach to awarding bonuses appears to be positive change.

Administrative and Support Staff

Fourth, General Council approved hiring people to assist the directors with important administrative responsibilities. Executive Director Carl Greene is working with the directors to identify responsibilities that can be delegated and to encourage such delegation.

Jeremy Howard and Jan Ehlers have been faithfully serving in the Conference Center Building for decades. Patty Petersen works remotely responding to new inquiries and maintaining a central database of churches and people. She is also serving as the Conference Week registrar. Brittany Kersten has been serving as the grant administrator, ensuring that grant applications are completed in consultation with the appropriate people and tracking implementation and reporting. She has also been serving in a variety of data gathering, entry, and tracking roles, along with supporting in-house publication preparation.

Church Planting Coordinator

Fifth, the Church Planting Coordinator was created as a part-time position for an initial 18-month trial from January 2021—July 2022. This role was created specifically to address the additional resources in terms of time and attention needed to carry out what we want to do in church planting. The trial demonstrated the value the position could bring to the conference and has been continued on a part-time basis.

Travel

Sixth, we have asked the directors to safeguard crucial relationships as they consider requests for travel. In particular, we have asked them to think about what they need to do to maintain healthy relationships with their families and with their local churches. We have encouraged them to offer video conferencing as an alternative to travel when it is appropriate to the circumstance.

We recognize that in-person visits are an important way to build and maintain relationships within the Conference. However, we do not want the value of traveling for in-person visits to undermine the maintenance of the crucial healthy relationships at home.

Sabbatical

Seventh, we continue to encourage Conference directors to participate in the Sabbatical Policy adopted for their use in 2018. Nick Kersten took a Sabbatical in 2019. General Council worked with John Pethel to adapt to his scheduling needs and authorized splitting his Sabbatical into two-partial periods. We will use feedback from these Sabbaticals to further refine Sabbatical policy.

Conference Center Building

The Conference Center, the office building owned by the General Conference in Janesville, WI, is a useful tool for Conference ministry. Following a review in the late 2010s of the Conference Center's value, location, and fitness for service, General Council reported to General Conference that there was no compelling reason to change our physical plant.

Having concluded that we should remain in the building, General Council determined that the time had come to strategically address decades' worth of deferred maintenance and to begin making long-overdue improvements to the building. We asked Ron and Renee Ochs to guide us through this process and have been grateful for their leadership in making this happen.

In the last four years, through funds set aside for the purpose, new funds allocated to the purpose, and generous donations, several improvements have been made to the building. The most noticeable are new lights throughout the building, new heating/cooling units, a new roof and drainage system, a refreshed driveway and parking lot, landscaping including 2 new retaining walls, a new Conference Center sign, and an overall reduction in clutter. Interior cosmetic improvements are in the design stage. There are no plans for structural changes. The building is more fit for service now than it was four years ago and we expect additional improvements to be made over the next few years.

Vision Map

The mission of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference is to equip our churches to actively advance God’s kingdom. In the time since the Vision Map was first introduced to the General Conference in 2015, General Council has continued to refine and clarify the document. The purpose of the Vision Map is to help us keep track of all those things we are pursuing as a Conference: the primary mission, the kinds of ministry we have chosen to focus on, the culture we have been called to create, and the principles that guide our walk together. While the document can not include everything, it brings into focus those things Seventh Day Baptists have already identified as most important in Conference Ministry and increases the ability of General Council members to keep the big picture in mind when we make decisions.

The Vision Map is a living document. It works best for us when General Council reviews it periodically and makes changes to it to refine our focus, or to clarify our intent. This process of use, evaluation, and revision, has confirmed the ongoing value of the Vision Map. It is not a tool we expect to discard.

The members of your General Council are mindful that all “decisions shall be guided by their understanding of previous General Conference action and shall be subject to the will of the Conference and to the review of the Conference” (Article VI, Section 5, Paragraph 3). The content of the Vision Map has been guided by our understanding of General Conference action. The use of the Vision Map is in accord with our responsibility to “provide creative leadership and initiative for Seventh Day Baptists” (Article VI, Section 5, Paragraph 1).

Recommendation C

Because the Vision Map is a tool that General Council uses on a regular basis and because we are mindful of our responsibility to ensure that General Council decisions are guided by General Conference action, we **recommend** that General Conference adopt the “Vision Map Resolution” presented at the end of our report.

Church Planting Funnel

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference is a voluntary association of churches—when churches ask to join the General Conference, those already in the association decide whether to grant membership or not. To ensure order in the membership process, the General Conference established procedures to help churches requesting membership know what factors we consider in the decision-making process.

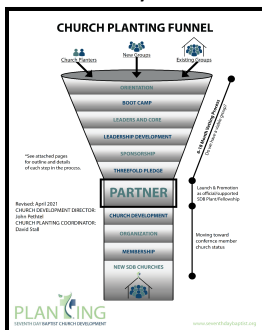
While General Conference personnel have routinely helped churches navigate the membership procedures, we have generally left churches without help through the early stages of organization—helping only when asked to help.

When the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference identified church planting as a ministry emphasis, it established the Church Planting Task Force. As it worked, the Task Force identified providing organized, systematic help to groups in the early stages of organization or seeking Conference membership as one important step in developing the Conference’s ability to foster church planting.

The Church Planting Coordinator and the Director of Church Development, in consultation with the Church Planting Task Force, developed a process to walk church planters, new groups, and established groups through the steps involved in organizing as a church and moving toward membership in the General Conference. The process identifies important milestones and provides multiple kinds of assistance to help churches achieve those milestones.

This process is the “Church Planting Funnel.” A diagram of the funnel is on this page.

At each significant step in the development of the Church Planting Funnel, General Council has been informed, provided feedback, and given approval. We are grateful for the leadership of the Task Force, the Director of Church Development, and the Church Planting Coordinator in this space—and anticipate the Church Planting Funnel will be a valuable addition to the overall ministry of the Conference.



Special Committees (Task Forces)

In addition to General Conference agencies, allied societies, standing committees, and special committees, the General Conference establishes ad hoc committees as “necessary or appropriate to conduct Conference Business” (Article XI, Introduction). As far as we know, only three ad hoc committees had continuing work at the close of the General Conference sessions in 2019.

Church Planting Task Force and Church Development Task Force

The General Conference, General Council, Coordinating Leadership Team, and Missionary Society acted in concert to create two ad-hoc committees across the 2012–13 and 2013–14 ministry years. These committees were called the “Church Planting Task Force” and the “Church Development Task Force.”

Both groups continue to function as ad-hoc committees of the Conference, working in close cooperation with ministries overseen by the Council on Ministry. They have been important contributors, helping to set the stage for the ministry of the Church Planting Coordinator and for our ongoing attention to local church health.

The focus of these task forces is integral to the overall mission of the Conference. Because we will have an ongoing need for people dedicated to improving our shared work in these areas, we have begun to explore how to incorporate these groups within the structure of the General Conference.

Conference Week Task Force (2019 sunset)

The General Council appointed a Conference Week Task Force during the ministry year 2017–2018. The task force gathered information by researching past practice, taking surveys, and engaging in conversation with Conference members. Their work focused on ways we could improve how people experience the Conference Week and ways in which we could reduce the burden on those involved in hosting the week. The task force reported directly to the General Council and their final report was issued near the end of 2019.

The work of the Conference Week Task Force provided the impetus to clarify the role of the Conference President, to create the role of the Conferences Coordinator, to simplify the General Conference registration process, and to experiment with a new flow for the General Conference week. These are described in the next section of this report.

Conference Week Changes

Upon the receipt of the final Conference Week Task Force report, General Council approved changes to five significant areas of our General Conference week experience. These were to be implemented in time for the 2020 General Conference session and would be used for at least two sessions before a full review would take place following the 2021 General Conference session. With the cancellation of the 2022 General Conference week, we now expect the changes to be in place for the 2023 and 2024 sessions, with a review to take place in the fall of 2024.

Drawing heavily from the language used in our 2020 report, here is a brief description of the five significant areas of change:

Conferences Coordinator

The Conferences Coordinator role is still being developed but is envisioned as a person who can help oversee all the moving pieces related to the Conference Week. The establishment of this position will change how we approach recruiting people to serve in “host committee” roles. John Pethel has begun to serve in this capacity to develop an understanding of all the role entails and to prepare the way for someone else to do the job well.

President Standard Operating Procedure

The General Council approved changes to the standard operating procedure of the Conference President. These changes allow the Conference President to focus more on program-related responsibilities by moving responsibility for several administrative tasks to the Conferences Coordinator. The SOP envisions the role of the Conference President as an active participant in the ongoing ministry of the Conference, working with the CLT and General Council to develop a theme and program which advance the mission and ministry of the Conference. Both President Kevin Butler (in planning for 2020 and 2021) and President Charlotte Chroniger (in planning for 2022 and 2023) used the new SOP as they served.

Registration Changes

Signing up for Conference Week has required navigating a convoluted mix of options. The process and forms are confusing for those who register and at times overwhelming to the volunteers who oversee on-site activity. Some of the complexity is driven by managing both registration and room and board on the same forms. General Council determined that we must simplify the registration process. Too much time and energy has been spent on managing Conference registration. Full-week room and board options will continue to be part of the registration process, but many a la carte options will cease to be offered.

Experimental Scheduling

The Conference serves two primary functions: 1) conducting the business of General Conference, and 2) providing the space and time necessary for the people attending Conference to create and enhance relational connections through worship, talking, learning, eating, and playing together.

For decades, our primary approach to achieving the two functions has been to interweave the business and connectional functions throughout the week. It has been hard to do this well. The Conference Week Task Force proposed separating the business and connectional portions of the Conference Week by focusing on business at the start of the week and connection at the end. We have encouraged the Conferences Coordinator and Conference Presidents to experiment with that proposal over the next few sessions to look for better ways to complete business and enhance connecting during the week.

Families of Conference Executives

In 2019, General Conference recommended that General Council “consider developing and implementing a plan before the 2020 session to allow the core family members of the executives and directors to attend conference at no cost to them. This would be in addition to current compensation packages.”

Based on a 2019 General Conference recommendation, General Council has budgeted \$13,000 to pay for travel and registration expenses for the Directors’ core families (spouse and children 18 and under living in Director’s household) to attend General Conference sessions.

Conference Week Cost and Registration Fees

Your General Council values the Conference Week. We were deeply saddened by the cancellation of three consecutive Conference Week sessions—and are delighted to resume in 2023 this valuable time of gathering.

One hurdle to attending the General Conference sessions is the cost of attending. Without any overhead, the combined on-campus room, board, and facilities fees for adults this year were projected to be just over \$455/person. That cost is higher than what had been paid in 2010s but is not out of line with what other campuses were quoting for the summer of 2023.

The General Conference has little control over the cost of room, board, and facility fees. However, we do set the registration fee. The rest of this section is dedicated to explaining where things stand concerning the registration fee. The General Conference office has records indicating the income generated and expenses incurred in hosting the Conference Week sessions. However, these records do not provide a complete picture of the cost of the sessions because some costs are paid directly by the agencies of the Conference without going through the host committee.

So, your General Council and the Coordinating Leadership Team asked the question, “How much does hosting the General Conference session really cost?” We wanted to be in a position to help the General Conference in session make intentional choices about which expenses for hosting the week should be borne by the registrants and which expenses, if any, should be borne by the Conference itself.

We asked the Conferences Coordinator to compile as complete a picture as possible of the financial cost of hosting the Conference Week sessions.

We intentionally excluded two items from the financial picture. The first, we did not compute the pro-rated salaries of Conference employees who are required to attend the sessions nor the time they use in preparing for the sessions.

General Conference has long considered these expenses to be ministry-related expenses that should not be charged against the Conference Week. The second, the cost of implementing General Conference’s 2019 recommendation that “core family members of the executives and directors to attend conference at no cost to them.” That action seemed to

indicate that General Conference considered the cost of sending core family members to Conference a ministry support expense and not a Conference Week expense.

Excluding room, board, and facilities fees (mentioned above), the following categories were considered when setting the registration price for 2023: transportation, office, stipends, conference program, background checks, receptions, registration software, insurance, processing fees, and the travel and registration cost for Conference officers. The total cost of these Conference Week expenses were projected to be \$60,400 which would represent a \$241 per person registration fee (based on 250 registrants).

Combining the room, board, and facility costs with the cost of overhead would have led to a break-even price of \$700 per person (based on 250 registrants) for the Conference week. Knowing that in prior years not all of these expenses had been borne by registrants, General Council authorized setting the room, board, and registration rate at \$550 per adult, accepting that the Conference will subsidize more than half of the projected registration costs of the week, \$37,500 ($\$150 * 250$).

General Conference in session will eventually need to make choices about how to deal with the cost of hosting Conference Week. General Council will do what it can to provide General Conference with the information and tools needed to address questions about how the costs for the Conference Week should be borne, what we want the Conference Week to accomplish, and how the Conference Week fits into our overall ministry and identity. A “Conference Week Forum” is scheduled during the 2023 General Conference week to provide a place and time to begin this conversation.

If you have any questions or if you would like to share your insights about the current value of the Conference Week or ways in which it could better serve our overall ministry and identity, please send an email to Conferences Coordinator John Pethtel (jpethtel@seventhdaybaptist.org). He will ensure that your communication is heard.

Bylaw Changes Required for Electronic Business Sessions

When the Conference Week was cancelled in 2020 and the General Conference business session with it, General Council explored whether we could host the business session virtually—using technology to bring the delegates together without the need for a physical assembly. The next two paragraphs summarize our findings.

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA & Canada, Ltd. chose to organize as a nonstock nonprofit corporation in Wisconsin¹. When the General Conference made that decision, our Conference agreed to operate in a manner that is consistent with the laws of Wisconsin. As part of the incorporation process, we presented Articles of Incorporation to the state and agreed to adopt bylaws—and these documents establish a legal framework that governs how we operate as a Conference².

Our bylaws specify that Robert’s Rules of Order (the most recent edition) will function as our parliamentary authority. Robert’s Rules of Order specify that unless an organization’s bylaws provide explicit authorization for electronic meetings the only valid meetings are when the delegates are physically gathered. Our bylaws make no provision for electronic meetings for General Conference sessions. *Therefore, General Conference cannot **now** conduct a legally recognized electronic business session*³.

However, with the appropriate bylaw amendments, General Conference should be able to legally conduct an electronic business session. Therefore, we make the following recommendation:

¹ Chapter 181 of Wisconsin’s Statutes

² Chapter 181 is silent about virtual sessions for the annual meeting of delegates for nonstock nonprofit corporations. The statutes do not prohibit virtual sessions, and they do not authorize them. The statutes do explicitly require any such meeting of delegates to be held according to the bylaws.

³ General Council consulted most of the General Conference parliamentarians who have served in the last two decades to confirm this understanding of *Roberts Rules of Order*.

Recommendation D

In order to enable the General Conference to meet by electronic means, the General Council **recommends** that *Article III. Meetings* of the General Conference bylaws be amended by inserting (between the first and second sentences) the sentence “General Conference may occur in person or by electronic means, such as video conferencing, that permit speaking and the display of text by delegates.”

Adopting this recommendation begins the amendment process (*first reading*), preparing the General Conference to complete the amendment process next year. The resulting text will read:

Article III. Meetings

A meeting, session, or conference, herein called “General Conference” shall be held annually or at such times and places as the General Conference may from time to time determine. ***General Conference may occur in person or by electronic means, such as video conferencing, that permit speaking and the display of text by delegates.*** Delegates, when assembled under the corporate name and in the manner prescribed by its Certificate of Incorporation and Bylaws, shall have and may exercise all the powers, rights and privileges of a meeting of the corporation. Roberts Rules of Order (the most recent edition) shall guide parliamentary procedure at meetings.

Bylaw Change: Physical Gatherings of General Council

General Conference bylaws require a physical gathering for four of the six General Council meetings held each year. This requirement was not met in the 2019–20, 2020–21, or 2021–22 ministry years due to restrictions on gathering and travel related to COVID.

However, even before the COVID epidemic, General Council proposed, and General Conference adopted as a first reading a bylaw change to reduce the number of required physical gatherings from 4 to three. We continue to believe that in many years three physical gatherings will be sufficient to faithfully execute our responsibility to the General Conference.

Recommendation E

General Council recommends that General Conference complete the amendment process begun in 2019 (*second reading*) by voting to amend Article VI. Section 4. of our bylaws, changing the word “four” to “three” as indicated in the following:

Article VI. General Council of the General Conference

Section 4. Meetings

The General Council shall hold at least six bi-monthly meetings each year. At least **three** ~~four~~ of the meetings shall take place with a quorum physically present. Three elected members shall constitute a quorum. Additional meetings may be called upon proper notice, and necessary action between meetings may be taken by mail ballot or electronic means. Any action taken by mail or other means is to be confirmed and entered into the minutes of the next regular meeting. All reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by members shall be paid by the corporation.

Crisis Management Team and Plan

In our report to General Conference in 2020, we stated:

An important part of leadership is responding well to unplanned and unforeseen circumstances that threaten an organization’s ability to focus on or carry out its mission. In consultation with the Coordinating Leadership Team, the General Council has adopted a Crisis Management Plan which creates a three-member Crisis Management Team empowered to assess crises as they arise and to coordinate the overall Conference response, drawing in additional personnel and resources as necessary. One specific responsibility for this team will be to assess and coordinate responses to reports of abuse on a case-by-case basis.

General Council appoints the three members of the Crisis Management Team and may change the composition of the team at any time.

The Crisis Management Plan and Team had just been established when COVID began to cause widespread disruptions across our Conference. General Council has asked the team to respond to a few other matters.

Our current assessment of the plan is that it is working well for the Conference. The approach has provided a clear method for responding to unplanned and unforeseen circumstances, defining who should respond initially and how to

bring additional people into the decision-making process. We think that this approach has allowed us to stay better focused on our primary mission while simultaneously improving our response to the unexpected. General Council appointed John Pethtel as the Crisis Management Officer when the plan was adopted. He is serving well in this role.

Sabbath Recorder, Newsletter

We are grateful for Pat Cruzan's service as editor of the *Sabbath Recorder*. People across the conference continue to receive and read this valuable monthly publication.

Your General Council, in consultation with Director of Communications, Jeremiah Owen, continues to consider how to best pursue the continuing usefulness of the *Sabbath Recorder* while being attentive to the ever-increasing cost of publication and distribution. An initial approach to addressing some of the issues was developed for implementation during 2020 but was delayed due to shifting priorities in the COVID season.

A printed newsletter, edited by Rick Crouch, focused more explicitly on Conference-wide ministry, has been developed and is being distributed by mail. It is scheduled for distribution a few times each year.

Obituaries

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference values the contributions made by individuals over a lifetime of service to the Conference and its churches. We have remembered that service by reading the obituaries of Conference leaders during business sessions of General Conference.

In the distant past, General Conference appointed a committee to collect information and compile obituaries focused on Conference service. Because much of this information was already being published in the *Sabbath Recorder*, the committee eventually chose to compile and pass these obituaries along to the Conference.

In 2008, the General Conference recognized this change in practice by removing the Committee on Obituaries from our list of standing committees and electing in its place an Obituaries Coordinator. The role of the Obituaries Coordinator was to compile the obituaries of certain Seventh Day Baptist leaders published in the *Sabbath Recorder*. At the time the Conference defined "leaders" as "ministers, ministers' wives, missionaries, General Conference presidents, officers and executives of SDB Boards or Agencies, members of the General Council, and Deacons of SDB Churches in the U.S.A. and Canada." (2008 General Conference Minutes, A-18). At the time, that decision was sound and served the General Conference well for many years.

However, a shift in cultural norms around the content and placement of obituaries—one that had already begun in the early 2000s—has become more evident in recent years. Obituaries of Seventh Day Baptist leaders have not consistently been submitted to the *Sabbath Recorder* for publication. Some of the obituaries that have been submitted have not mentioned significant areas of service within the Conference.

This cultural shift around obituaries has meant that the process we have used for remembering individuals and recognizing their service no longer reliably provides a complete record for our use. It is broken.

General Council has approved a collaborative effort between the Council on History, the Tract and Communication Council, the editor of the *Sabbath Recorder*, and the core directors of the Conference to develop a consistent pattern of publishing death notices in the *Sabbath Recorder* and to find ways to generate accurate obituaries of Seventh Day Baptist leaders which include details of service within the General Conference. This collaborative effort, led by the Council on History's Biography committee, will include designing an appropriate way to remember at the General Conference session those who have died during the last ministry year.

Memorial Fund | Grant Process

The Seventh Day Baptist Memorial Fund trustees have consistently declared their desire to support the ministry of the Conference and its churches. They have been working closely with Executive Director Carl Greene and our core directors to establish a routine for handling grant requests. A typical grant process includes a conversation with one of the directors of the Conference (clarifying goals, methods, and specific needs), an evaluation by the General Council about how well the grant aligns with the Vision Map, and a final determination by the Memorial Fund Trustees. The Memorial Fund Trustees have also worked with our team of directors to create a more streamlined grant process for challenges

that arose in the midst of COVID, and smaller grants tied to specific planting or revitalization processes overseen by the Conference.

Memorandum of Understanding

The Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society stands as its own organization. It relates to General Conference as an allied society. The level of cooperation and the completeness of communication between the two organizations waxes and wanes with changes in personnel and shifting ministry emphases. For more than a decade, they and we have been working to improve cooperation and communication. We believe that the current working relationship is healthy. Because we believe the current relationship is healthy, General Council has authorized Executive Director Carl Greene to work with the Missionary Society to create a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding between the two groups. The memorandum will define key terms, describe key roles, detail some areas of shared responsibility, and clarify the best ways for us to work cooperatively.

Significant progress has been made toward creating the memorandum, but it is not yet finished.

2020 Statement Concerning Racism | Living into Diversity

On June 4, 2020, General Council approved the release of a statement concerning racism. The statement acknowledged an “opportunity to show our communities the true hope of their suffering, the true liberation of their oppression, and the true vindication of their injustices through the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

The statement was released at a time when many people in the United States were actively asking questions about how Christian institutions perceived and responded to racism in the culture at large and within Christian circles. Your General Council believed that it was important to provide a timely response to those questions and worked with our leadership team to craft a statement that we believe accurately reflects the sentiment of the Conference as a whole.

At this session, the first one following the time when that statement was released, we ask the General Conference to ratify our action by adopting the statement at this session:

Recommendation F

The General Council **recommends** that the General Conference adopt the “Statement from SDB Leadership Concerning Racism” as a statement of this Conference session.

Note: The “Statement from SDB Leadership Concerning Racism” is included at the end of this report.

The leadership of the Conference committed itself in that statement to “move forward with ways in which it can support its churches to defeat racism by seeking diversity in its leadership, promoting racial and cultural sensitivity in their ministries, and providing resources that reinforce the value of all humankind. We are committed to pursuing the end to any systems, structures, and strongholds that affect racism in our organization and its culture.”

Executive Director Carl Greene is working collaboratively with Andy Samuels, Chief Executive Director of the Missionary Society, to guide our approach to this commitment. They have been working with many people to get a clearer understanding of current Seventh Day Baptist practice and opportunities in this realm.

Budget

The General Conference ministry year flows from one Conference Week to the next, roughly from August to July. Delegates in session evaluate ministry that has been completed, assess the plans and priorities for the upcoming year presented by Conference leadership, and provide suggestions and recommendations to affirm, strengthen, or redirect those plans and priorities. The General Council, Coordinating Leadership Team, Agencies, Allied Societies, Standing Committees, and ad-hoc committees then work from Conference Week to Conference Week to implement those plans. The General Conference fiscal year, the budget year, follows the calendar year, from January to December. Because the ministry year and fiscal year are on different cycles, General Conference has historically adopted a budget a full six-months before it is implemented. In the past, the Budget and Finance committee of General Conference has noted how difficult it is to set a realistic budget that far in advance of implementation.

Experience Flowing from COVID

With the unfortunate cancellation of the Conference Week in 2020, 2021, and 2022, an opportunity arose to delay the formal budgeting process until late October and early November before implementation in January. However, the ministry year cycle continued to flow from August to July. Ministry was evaluated as the ministry year came to end; plans and priorities were set in August and early September; decisions about major grant applications were made in October. All of these decisions provided valuable information for creating a realistic budget for the next fiscal year. Your General Council (which includes Financial Director Ron Ochs as an ex-officio member) discovered that we were able to better fit budget to priorities when goal setting and major grant decisions had already been made.

Proposing a New Budget Flow

With the experience gathered over the last few years and with the expected opportunity to create a virtual meeting of delegates at the order of the Conference (after bylaw changes are adopted at the 2024 Conference Week sessions), your General Council proposes that we approach our budgeting cycle in a new way.

The new cycle would look like this (dates are approximate):

- (late July, early August) Delegates at Conference week evaluate completed ministry, assess proposed plans and priorities, and provide suggestions and recommendations to affirm, strengthen, or redirect those plans. General Conference delegates will also receive year-to-date financial information.
- (August–September) General Council, the Coordinating Leadership Team, Agencies, Allied Societies, Standing Committees, and ad-hoc committees determine how to implement Conference Week action—identifying necessary financial resources.
 - General Council and Conference Directors will develop specific goals for the organization based on Conference action and communication from all those groups
- (October–November) Working with General Council, the Financial Director gathers the necessary information to formulate a meaningful, responsible, and responsive budget.
- (Early December) General Council publishes a proposed budget.
- (Early January) A virtual session of the delegates acts on the budget.

Note: The bylaw change permitting a virtual session will not be in effect in January 2024. We will likely have an unofficial session to figure out how the mechanics of a budget discussion can work. For this transitional year, General Council can implement the decisions made by the unofficial gathering.

Recommendation G

The General Council **recommends** that General Conference adopt a new budgeting flow, allowing the General Council and all Conference agencies and committees to respond to Conference Week action in the budgeting process, with the understanding that a proposed budget will be presented to the churches of the Conference near the end of a calendar year, and that opportunity for feedback from Conference members will be provided. This recommendation is also made with the understanding that once a virtual session of delegates is possible, the virtual session will be the mechanism for action.

2023 Budget Recommendation

Recommendation H

The General Council **recommends** that General Conference ratify the adoption of the attached document, “Seventh Day Baptist Summary of 2023 Operating Income & Expense Budget Draft #1” as the General Conference Budget for 2023.

Indemnification Process

In the 2020 General Council Report, we said:

In response to General Conference action in 2017, the General Council asked member Churches to sign an indemnification agreement as a condition of continued membership in the Conference. The indemnification agreement states what has always been true: local churches are autonomous organizations that take responsibility for their decisions and actions. A majority of churches have signed the document and returned the

supporting documentation to the Conference office. However, a significant number of churches have not yet completed the process. A conference executive has been tasked with helping churches complete the indemnification process before the General Conference has its next annual sessions. We expect that all churches will complete the necessary documents by early 2021 and that General Council will not need to recommend further action related to this matter.

The indemnification process was interrupted by everything involved in responding to COVID. As we enter the 2023–24 ministry year, this process will again become a priority. General Council and our Core Directors will do what we can to help the churches who have not yet completed the indemnification agreement.

No recommendation for 2023

Even as we hope no further action related to this matter will be needed in General Conference sessions—General Council will recommend that the General Conference act as necessary to conclude the indemnification process at the next session.

Other Significant Updates to Ministry, Service, or Organization

External Grants

General Council appreciates the initiative Carl Greene has taken in pursuing external grants to create ministry opportunities for the Conference. We have been grateful for his growing expertise in the field and have encouraged him to continue pursuing grants as appropriate opportunities arise. In his time of service, we have received funds from National Association of Evangelicals to foster wellness among pastors, from the Mustard Seed Foundation to explore the Theology of Work, and from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to encourage conversations about Worship.

Insurance and Liability Review

Financial Director Ron Ochs undertook a broad-based review of General Conference insurance policies, including price, renewal cycles, and general exposure to risk. Based on his recommendations, General Council authorized changes to provide better coverage and renewal management.

Winter Virtual Delegate Forum

When, to our bitter disappointment, the General Conference session scheduled for 2022 was cancelled, General Council and the Conference Directors deeply desired to create some event that could provide at least a little time for real-time communication. The General Council, with immense help from John Pethel, hosted a “Winter Virtual Delegate Forum” on January 8, 2023. The forum included presentations from many General Conference groups and then divided into several breakout sessions, providing an opportunity for sharing ideas, asking questions, and just talking about Conference ministry.

Ministry Match

MinistryMatch is an organization that provides assessment tools and processes which are designed to help the churches and pastors of the Conference identify those places where ministry opportunities and pastoral skills match well. The most obvious use for these tools is when churches or pastors are in times of ministry transition. The Council on Ministry has successfully gathered information for this platform from most of the pastors of the Conference. They have begun helping churches who are searching for pastors to use information gathered from the assessments. MinistryMatch tools can do more than just matching churches to pastors. As we become more familiar with the tool, we expect that it will help us be more effective in overall ministry.

Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention (ECAP)

The General Conference has long advocated for churches to create ministry environments that are safe for all involved. In the 1990s, the conference encouraged participation in programs like *Reducing the Risk*. In the 2000s, we adopted a Child Protection Policy for General Conference Programs and urged churches to do the same.

We continue to search for resources that will allow us to do this well. The Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention (ECAP) “was created in 2019 to provide awareness, accreditation, and resources in order to help Christian organizations that serve kids protect the vulnerable in ministry” (<https://ecap.net/about> -- accessed June 2, 2023). Their ministry and resources appear to be a good match with ours. General Council has asked the Conference’s director team to pursue accreditation for the General Conference USA & Canada (this accreditation would be for the Conference organization, it would not be for the churches of the Conference) in time for the 2024 Conference Week sessions.

Wheeler Leadership Development Fund

The Rev. Alton and Ethel Wheeler Leadership Development Fund has been established to equip and missionally send young SDB leaders as we face a fantastic future. A gracious gift by Rev. Glen Warner has catalyzed the investment in our emerging leaders—reflective of the way that Rev. Wheeler invested in him. You can join this initiative by sending a gift.

Change in Oversight: School of Ministry

The General Conference adopted bylaw changes in 2019 transferring oversight for the School of Ministry from the Council on Ministry to the Christian Education Council. The transfer of responsibility appears to be complete.

Website

By 2019, the need for a website overhaul had long been obvious. However, several factors mitigated against making rapid changes to the website. Three of them were its structure, the amount and kind of content, and the number of Conference Agencies impacted by potential changes to the website. Preparatory work was done in the 2019–20 ministry year to better understand what needed to happen to upgrade the site.

As COVID’s impact was intensifying in the summer of 2020, the overhaul of the website took on greater importance. The directors suggested and General Council agreed that updating the website should be a priority goal for the 2020–21 ministry year.

The church locator was revised in the website overhaul to include only member churches of the Conference. General Council recently approved a policy proposal to include additional groups on the site, groups that meet several criteria including their cooperation with the Conference through participation in the Church Planting Funnel.

Compilation of Selected Conference Resolutions

The Committee on Christian Social Action and Disaster Relief was asked by General Conference to create a booklet presenting Christian Social Action resolutions and statements that had been adopted by General Conference. The committee reviewed prior Conference action, selected appropriate statements, and produced a booklet. It has been printed and is ready for distribution.

403b Transition

Through the auspices of COSAR, the General Conference oversees a plan to help churches establish 403b retirement accounts for their pastors. In 2018, COSAR was forced to change the plan due to a change in the financial institutions with which they were working. At the time of General Conference in 2019, most of the initial transitional work was complete.

However, that transition process revealed many questions about how 403b programs work and should be run. The Conference’s Financial Director, Ron Ochs, has devoted considerable time to understanding how these plans are and should be structured. He is working with COSAR to determine how to best continue offering this service to the churches and pastors of the Conference.

Manual of Procedure

A revision of the Manual of Procedure is long overdue. It has been identified by General Conference, General Council, Conference Directors, and the Committee on Faith and Order as a priority. Plans were in place to begin the revision in earnest during the 2020–21 ministry year. General Council affirmed that those plans should be set aside as everyone adjusted ministry priorities in the light of COVID that year. We do not know when the next window of opportunity will arise to work on revisions.

Internal Development: Training, Handbook, Policy Collection

The General Council knows that part of our responsibility is to learn how to become as effective as we can be at the tasks entrusted to us by General Conference. Two years ago we started the process of examining our role by studying together a book called *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Non-Profit Boards*. This last year we used *Clifton Strengths* to think about how we work and who may be better suited to certain tasks.

Internally, we are seeking to improve how we work and how we track certain kinds of information. Specifically, we are in the midst of revising the General Council Handbook initially crafted after the 2012 Conference reorganization. Also, we have identified a history of creating, forgetting, and re-creating policy documents at both the General Council and General Conference level. We intend to find a way to break that cycle.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elected Members:

Andrew Camenga, Ericessen Cooper, Erin Inabnit, Maura Mazza, Steve Osborn

Ex-Officio Non-Voting Members:

Carl Greene, Ron Ochs

Statement from SDB Leadership Concerning Racism | June 4, 2020

The mission of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference is to equip our churches to actively advance God's Kingdom. That mission faces obstacles in this world. One of the particular ways in which that mission is hindered or opposed is by the sin of favoritism in various forms including racism.

Racism appears in beliefs or practices that distinguish or elevate one race over others. Its existence has unfairly benefitted some and burdened others simply because of skin color or ethnicity. No race or ethnicity is greater or more valuable than another in God's Kingdom. The gospel of Jesus Christ has no place for favoritism of any sort and contains the power to destroy the barriers that human hearts have erected with regard to race and ethnicity.

Recent tragic events have brought a greater realization of the continued existence of racism for some. However, racism should not only be addressed after tragedies. Sustained efforts must take place so that it might never be known as what our churches (and our Conference) support, defend, allow, or refuse to speak about. There is no room in our gospel proclamation and demonstration for this sin. We have an opportunity to show our communities the true hope of their suffering, the true liberation of their oppression, and the true vindication of their injustices through the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to do better. We will do better.

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference will move forward with ways in which it can support its churches to defeat racism by seeking diversity in its leadership, promoting racial and cultural sensitivity in their ministries, and providing resources that reinforce the value of all humankind. We are committed to pursuing the end to any systems, structures, and strongholds that affect racism in our organization and its culture.

The leadership of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference laments the continued destruction that racism and the injustice accompanying it has caused to our nations. We are urging all Seventh Day Baptists:

- to seek the peace and welfare of their communities;
- to do justice with humble hearts to the glory of God;
- to mourn with others who mourn and weep with those who weep;
- to love and show grace and mercy even when they do not understand;
- to listen quickly and to speak (or type) slowly in response to tragedy;
- to submit our responses and emotions to the leading of the Holy Spirit;
- to reflect personally on our attitudes and actions and repent of any areas where we have allowed prejudice to take root;
- to contact local, state, and national governments/authorities to share their concerns and to help catalyze change: and
- to treat ALL life as precious to God.

For Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh Day Baptist churches who are hurting right now, we stand with you. Let us know of any ways in which we can actively support Kingdom advancement or help overcome barriers to every tribe, tongue, race, ethnicity, and color worshipping God in your community.

With brotherly and sisterly love,

Vision Map Resolution

*Note: The current Vision Map can be found at:
<https://www.seventhdaybaptist.org/vision-map/>*

Whereas the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference adopted new bylaws in 2012, reorganizing the General Council and continuing to entrust it with the responsibility to “provide creative leadership and initiative for Seventh Day Baptists” while acting with “the authority of General Conference in all denominational matters between sessions”, and Whereas the General Council desired a tool that would help them express the mission, central ministry focus, guiding principles, and preferred culture of the Conference, in a form that would at first facilitate discussion between the General Council and the Coordinating Leadership Team (CLT), and later facilitate communication with the agencies, standing committees, and task forces of the General Conference, and

Whereas the General Council developed a Vision Map based upon structures found in the book *Leading from the Sandbox* by T. J. Addington, and

Whereas the General Council sought feedback from many individuals and groups across the Conference as they developed and refined the Vision Map, and

Whereas by 2015 the Vision Map had proved itself to be a useful tool and over the last eight years and has been used for internal General Council discussions and in conversation with the CLT and other groups within the General Conference, and

Whereas the General Council revisits and revises the language and structure of the Vision Map periodically to make it more effective tool, and

Whereas the General Council is “guided by their understanding of previous Conference action,” and

Whereas action by the General Conference in session establishes policy for the Conference,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

... that the General Conference adopts “Our mission is to equip our churches to actively advance God’s Kingdom.” as the mission statement of the conference, and

... that the General Conference affirms the content of the Vision Map presented by General Council at the 208th session in 2023, and

... that the General Conference supports the use of the Vision Map to guide the decision-making of General Council and to clarify communication with the CLT and other groups within the General Conference, and

... that the General Conference encourages the General Council to review the Vision Map as part of its annual routine and to adopt changes as they are necessary to further the mission of the Conference or to foster better communication within the Conference.

Implementation Report:

General Conference's 2019 Recommendations, Urges, and Suggestions

Many action items represent specific tasks. These items will be marked “completed” when accomplished. An item will be marked “in process” if work has begun on the task and it will be completed as resources allow. If an action item cannot or will not be completed, this document will provide a reference to the report that explains the decision.

Some action items refer to on-going focus or effort. Each item will be marked “completed” when action has been taken to implement it. “In process” will be used to indicate that an item has been considered and further action is required before it is implemented. Again, if an action item cannot or will not be completed, this document will provide a reference to the report that explains the decision.

Executive Director

From the Report of the Courtesies Coordinator:

- **Recommendation 2:** The Executive Director shall send a letter of appreciation from the General Conference to Renee Crowe with the office of marketing and events at Lancaster Bible College. **(Completed)**

- **Recommendation 3:** The Executive Director shall send letters of appreciation from the General Conference to the seminar guest leaders and evening worship guest speakers. **(Completed)**
- **Recommendation 4:** The Corresponding Secretary shall send letters of greetings to the retired pastors and wives and widows, as well as retired and serving missionaries who were unable to attend this Conference. **(Completed)**

Council on History/Director

From the Interest Committee on History:

- We **urge** the Council to develop ways of preserving digital media such as websites for historical purposes. **(Completed)**
- We **encourage** the Council to coordinate events and *Sabbath Recorder* articles with key dates related to our history. We further **encourage** the Council to develop a tour itinerary related to the 350th anniversary of SDBs in America. **(Completed)**
- We **encourage** the Council to develop ways to best educate and communicate our history moving forward. **(Completed)**

Christian Education Council/Director

From the Interest Committee on Christian Education:

- We **recommend** that beginning at the 2020 Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, there will be designed a structured Middle School Conference with activities in the morning and afternoon. The committee **recommends** this be for those who have completed the 6th grade to students who have completed the 8th grade. This conference will have the goal to provide education, spiritual growth, and structure to the students attending. **(Completed – ready to roll out with the 2023 Conference sessions)**
- We **commend** the Christian Education Council and the Director of Education and History, the Rev. Nick Kersten, for opening a Slack channel specifically for Christian Education interests. Resources utilized by individuals and the results of their programs can be shared between churches. We **urge** the Council to continue to publish clarifying information as to how to access this resource through normal venues including uploading to the website, uploading to the Facebook page, as well as contacting the churches directly. We encourage churches to utilize this channel, and if anyone wishes to be a part of this channel, they must contact the Rev. Kersten to be granted access to the channel (nkersten@seventhdaybaptist.org). **(Completed – However, Slack changed how free accounts are handled, so CEC stopped using Slack for this purpose.)**
- We **commend** the work of the Christian Education Council on continuing to develop and administrate the coordination of the Conference’s Child Protection Policy to ensure the safety of the children for which we are responsible. The committee **urges** the Council to continue to provide clarifying information to churches as the indemnification process concludes. **(Completed. In implementation: John Pethel now handles the administrative side of the child protection policy. CEC remains responsible for advocacy within the Conference.)**

From the Committee on Young Adult Interests:

- **Recommendation 1:** We recommend that Zach Floyd and Wayne Bloom be appointed as Joint-Activity Coordinators, whose duties would be to schedule and/or oversee young adult activities for the 2020 session of General Conference. **(Completed)**
- **Recommendation 4:** We recommend that Wayne Bloom and Conor Hannah be appointed as coordinators of the Annual Young Adult Retreat for 2020. **(Completed)**

Council on Ministry/Director of Pastoral Services

From the Interest Committee on Christian Social Action:

- **Recommendation 1:** We recommend that the SDB School of Ministry develop further education for church leaders on social brokenness issues (domestic abuse, child abuse, conflict resolution, Sexual identity, etc.) and develop an adequate referral list of resources and counselors for church leaders to look to for guidance and leadership when these issues are involved. **(Completed)**

From the Interest Committee on Church Development:

- We **encourage** the continued development of the CPTF guidelines so that we can best identify and include new fellowships into the SDB family of churches. **(Completed)**
- We **recommend** the Director of Church Development and Pastoral Services develop goals for five years and ten years as a roadmap towards his goal of 500 churches by the year 2100. **(Completed)**

Conferences Coordinator

From the Women's Interest Committee:

- We appreciate the return of the SCSC program to the Conference schedule as it helps children and youth to be aware of this opportunity. Therefore, we **urge** that the Conference President plan for an SCSC program each year and work with the Christian Education Committee to schedule the program so that children and youth can attend. **(Completed)**

General Council

From the Interest Committee on Budget and Finance:

- **Recommendation 3:** That the General Council consider developing and implementing a plan before the 2020 session to allow the core family members of the executives and directors to attend conference at no cost to them. This would be in addition to current compensation packages. **(Completed)**

From the Committee on Ministerial Interests:

- We are concerned about the amount of work and responsibilities that our Directors have. We **urge** General Council to continue evaluating these responsibilities and make adjustments as needed. **(Completed. This is an ongoing concern and will remain on the General Council agenda.)**

Tract and Communication Council

From the Interest Committee on Youth:

- We **recommend** that Isaac Floyd and Taylor-Marie Thomas be Beacon Editors for the 2019-2020 year. **(Completed)**

From the Committee on Young Adult Interests:

- **Recommendation 2:** We recommend that Sarina Gumness and Holly Probasco be appointed co-editors, for the young adult column of the Sabbath Recorder until the 2020 session of General Conference. **(Completed)**

From the Interest Committee on Communications:

- **Recommendation 2:** We recommend that the T&CC remove the Publications committee chair and Sabbath Promotion committee chair roles, as they have remained unfilled for several years and these functions are covered by other committees or people. **(Completed)**

Seventh Day Baptist Summary of 2023

Operating Income & Expense Budget Draft#1

Income	Administration		Church Development		Communication		Leadership		Gospel Saturation				TOTAL	
	Conference Services	Building Operations	COSAR	Revitalization	Planting	Communications	CEC	Historical	Women's Society	Christian Social Action	Ecumenical Affairs Fund	Budget		Missionary Society
Giving	155,400.00	18,600.00	5,000.00	122,200.00	18,000.00	46,000.00	23,400.00	0.00	14,400.00	0.00	10,000.00	413,000.00	7,200.00	420,200.00
Investment	8,000.00	8,000.00	50,000.00	0.00	4,000.00	46,000.00	44,000.00	51,000.00	3,000.00	1,600.00	0.00	215,600.00	108,000.00	323,600.00
Sales / Services Income	15,000.00	0.00	0.00	1,900.00	0.00	400.00	44,704.00	2,350.00	800.00	0.00	0.00	65,154.00	0.00	65,154.00
Grants	48,750.00	7,100.00	0.00	78,000.00	59,250.00	12,500.00	48,250.00	0.00	2,500.00	0.00	0.00	258,350.00	2,500.00	258,850.00
Other					8,400.00							8,400.00	125,000.00	133,400.00
Total Income	\$227,150.00	\$33,700.00	\$55,000.00	\$202,100.00	\$89,650.00	\$104,900.00	\$160,354.00	\$53,350.00	\$20,700.00	\$1,600.00	\$10,000.00	\$958,504.00	\$242,700.00	\$1,201,204.00

Expense	Conference Services	Building Operations	COSAR	Revitalization	Planting	Communications	CEC	Historical	Women's Society	Christian Social Action	Ecumenical Affairs Fund	Budget	Missionary Society	TOTAL
	Programs	0.00	0.00	37,110.00	57,900.00	45,000.00	34,750.00	114,787.00	12,250.00	18,800.00	1,000.00	10,000.00	331,597.00	11,600.00
Compensation	176,435.99	0.00	0.00	137,332.89	25,000.00	67,977.00	60,974.35	25,525.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	493,245.28	170,730.00	663,975.28
Travel	21,000.00	0.00	0.00	12,000.00	5,000.00	3,000.00	6,500.00	1,500.00	2,500.00	0.00	0.00	51,500.00	24,000.00	75,500.00
Facilities	3,860.00	25,172.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	29,032.00	19,500.00	48,532.00
Overhead	32,590.00	0.00	460.00	3,560.00	500.00	17,200.00	2,600.00	1,150.00	2,460.00	460.00	0.00	60,980.00	1,500.00	62,480.00
Other													120,000.00	120,000.00
Total Expense	\$233,885.99	\$25,172.00	\$37,570.00	\$210,792.89	\$75,500.00	\$122,927.00	\$184,861.35	\$40,425.05	\$23,760.00	\$1,460.00	\$10,000.00	\$966,354.28	\$347,330.00	\$1,313,684.28

Income/(Loss) (\$6,735.99) \$8,528.00 \$17,430.00 (\$8,692.89) \$14,150.00 (\$18,027.00) (\$24,507.35) \$12,924.95 (\$3,060.00) \$140.00 \$0.00 (\$7,850.28) (\$104,630.00) (\$112,480.28)

Addendum To the Report of the General Council

This document is an addendum to the report of the General Council to the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, USA & Canada, Ltd. for the ministry year August 2022-July 2023.

Appointments

General Council has appointed the following officers of the General Conference for the 2023 Conference Week or the 2023-24 General Conference ministry year:

- Program Recording Secretary: Tabatha Pethtel
- Corresponding Secretary: Carl Greene
- Assistant Treasurer: Jeremy Howard
- Disciplinary Council: Stephen Osborn, Maura Mazza, J. R. Shick

The Conferences Coordinator has appointed the following officers for the 2023 Conference Week with General Council approval:

- Credentials Coordinator (as named in the procedural motion): Cindy Nadeau
- Courtesies Coordinator: Tabatha Pethtel

Church Membership

The Open Arms Seventh Day Baptist Church, North York, Ontario, applied for membership in the Conference. The church has worked with the Director of Church Development, John Pethtel, and the Standing Committee on Faith and Order over the past several years. They have provided the documentation required by the membership guidelines adopted by the General Conference and have demonstrated themselves to be in relationship with other churches of the Conference. General Council has reviewed the supplied documentation and believes that the church has shown itself “to be in harmony with the distinctive faith and practice of the Seventh Day Baptist denomination” (Bylaws, Article II, Paragraph 2).

Recommendation I

The General Council **recommends** that the Open Arms Seventh Day Baptist Church, North York, Ontario, be accepted as a member church of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.

Accreditation

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference provides accreditation to Seventh Day Baptist pastors who comply with guidelines adopted by the Conference. Accreditation is for 5 years and must be renewed.

Because the General Conference did not meet in 2020, 2021, or 2022, your General Council voted to extend all accreditations due for renewal until the next session of General Conference. We did not act on any applications for new accreditations. Our intention was to honor accreditations already granted by the Conference while waiting for General Conference in session to act upon any new requests.

The following recommendations are made in coordination with the Council on Ministry to restore our accreditation process and maintain the existing 5-year accreditation cycle.

Recommendation J

The General Council **recommends** that the General Conference *ratify* the accreditation extension and *retroactively renew* accreditation for the following Seventh Day Baptist pastors:

2020: Robert Babcock, Matthew Berg, Kenneth Burdick, Oscar Burdick, Donald Chroniger,

Nathan Crandall, Nicholas Kersten, Paul Manuel, John Pethtel, Matthew Olson, Helmer Umana

2021: Gabriel Bejjani, Kenneth Chroniger, Steven Crouch, J. Paul Green, Stephen Osborn,

Herbert Saunders, Lawrence Watt

2022: Kevin Butler, Perry Cain, Carl Greene, Robert Harris, Dale Rood, Andrew Samuels

D. Scott Smith, Kenneth Smith, Melvin Stephan, David Thorngate, Verne Wright

Recommendation K

The General Council **recommends** that the General Conference *renew* accreditation for the following Seventh Day Baptist pastors:

Paul Andries, Ericessen Cooper, Steven James, Russell Johnson, Gordon Lawton, Stephan Saunders
Dale Thorngate, Robert Van Horn, Jerry Vaught

Recommendation L

The General Council **recommends** that General Conference grant accreditation to the following Seventh Day Baptist pastors retroactively effective to the indicated year:

2021: Judith Houts
2022: Timothy Smothers

Recommendation M

The General Council recommends that the General Conference grant accreditation to the following Seventh Day Baptist pastors:

Christopher Galarneau, Deryck Thomas

Date for Winter Virtual Delegate Forum

Your General Council plans to host a second Winter Virtual Delegate Forum on January 7, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. (Central). We expect the format of the forum to be similar to the forum hosted in 2023, but may make changes in order to explore methods designed to support a deliberative voting session—anticipating the possibility of hosting an electronic business session to vote on the Conference budget in January 2025.

General Conference Site for 2024

Communication to secure a site for the 2024 General Conference Week is underway. We expect but cannot yet confirm that the dates will be July 28-August 4, 2024. An announcement will be made via our typical communication channels as soon as the dates and location can be confirmed.

World Federation Delegates

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, USA & Canada, Ltd., is a member of the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation. Along with 18 other conferences—Australia, Brazil, Burundi, England, Guyana, India (Andhra Pradesh), Jamaica, Kenya, Malawi (Central Africa Conference), Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia—we cooperate to exercise our “unity in Christ” and share in a “vigorous witness throughout the world.” [list of conferences and purpose, <https://sdbwf.org/about-us/member-conferences>, accessed July 17, 2023].

The Seventh Day Baptist World Federation is meeting in Blantyre, Malawi from September 16-23, 2023. Officers of the World Federation expect that every conference will have a delegate at the sessions. The following General Conference members will serve as our delegates to the meeting:

Nicholas Kersten, Andrew Samuels, Garfield Miller, Michael Spearl, Joanna Lovelace

Quorum Size

A quorum is the minimum number of members a decision-making body needs to conduct official business on behalf of the organization. The purpose of the quorum is to ensure that gathered delegates adequately represent the whole body when making decisions. In other words, the quorum is designed to be a safeguard against an unrepresentative action in the name of the group.

Our General Conference bylaws set our quorum at 75 delegates representing 10 churches. With registration for the 2023 Conference Week substantially lower than past sessions and future attendance patterns unknown, it seems wise to evaluate whether the current quorum is set at a reasonable point.

With the General Conference considering bylaw language to enable electronic business sessions, it is wise to consider whether the possibility of an electronic session changes how the presence of a quorum should be determined. For these reasons, your General Council will consider our General Conference quorum requirements during the 2023-24 ministry year. We plan to report our findings to the 2024 General Conference session along with any needed implementation recommendations.

2023 Interest Committee

Referral Grid

	Budget & Finance	Christian Education	Christian Social Action	Church Development	Communications	Historical	Ministerial Interests	Mission	Reference and Counsel	Women's Interests	Young Adult Work	Youth Work
Societies, Agencies, Committees												
Christian Education Council	X	X									X	X
Christian Social Action & Disaster Relief	X		X									
COSAR	X						X					
Council on History	X					X						
Council on Ministry	X			X			X					
Faith and Order									X			
General Council Report and Addendum	X								X			
Memorial Fund	X											
Missionary Society	X							X				
Tract & Communication Council	X				X							
Women's Society	X									X		
GENERAL COUNCIL Recommendations												
A: Ratify Appointments									X			
B: Confirm Executive Director									X			
C: Vision Map Resolution									X			
D: Bylaw: (first reading) Electronic Business Session									X			
E: Bylaw: (second reading) Physical Gatherings of General Council									X			
F: Statement Concerning Racism			X									
G: Budget Process	X											
H: 2023 Budget	X											
I: Open Arms SDB Church Membership									X			
J K L M: Accreditation							X					

The president called for new business, and upon hearing none dismissed the delegation to interest committees at 9:26 am.

Monday, July 25, 2023

Second Business Session

President Charlotte Chroniger called the second business session to order at 2:18 pm and Pastor JR Shick opened the session with prayer.

Diane Hibbard, Christian SDB Church, Silver Spring, MD read the report of the Nomination Committee. A motion was made to place the slate of officers into nomination. The motion was seconded, and the president called for any nominations from the floor. Seeing none, a motion was made to close nominations and elect the individuals as presented, the motion was seconded, and carried.

Nomination Report 2023-2024

The Nominations Committee has met several times throughout the year over Zoom to discuss this year's nominations. It is with much prayer and discussion that we submit the following nominations to serve the Conference for this upcoming year.

President (2024)

Pastor Johnmark Camenga

President-Elect (2025)

Tom Davis

Conference Treasurer (1-year term)

Ron Ochs

Recording Secretary (1-year term)

Katy Bofinger

General Council (5-year term)

Current Members: Steve Osborn (2024), Andrew Camenga (2025), Erin Inabnit (2026), Maura Mazza (2027)

Ericessen Cooper (2028)

Tract & Communication Council (5-year term)

Current Members: Rick Crouch (2024), Elianna McHenry (2025), Dave Alldredge (2026), Julia Coleman (2027)

Shanny (Snyder) Ayers (2028)

Christian Education Council (5-year term)

Current Members: Peggy Chroniger (2024), Carol Scull (2025), Bill Shobe (2026), Gabby Alonzo (2027)

Chuck Meathrell (2028)

Christian Social Action & Disaster Relief (3-year term)

Current Members: Norman Burdick (2024), Danita Lee (2025)

Ron Davis (2026)

Committee On Support and Retirement (COSAR) (3-year term)

Current Members: Mark Lewis (2024), Bethany Lawton (2025)

Earl Hibbard (2026)

Council on Ministry (5-year term)

Current Members: Norman Fearon (2024), Nathan Crandall (2025), Frank Mazza (2026), Bethany Lawton (2027)

Sharon Gay Dailey (2028)

Council on History (5-year term)

Current Members: Judy Parrish (2024), Elizabeth Lawton (2025), Tim Lawton (2026), Madge Chroniger (2027)

Kim Merchant (2028)

Faith and Order (3-year term)

Current Members: Shay Rankhorn & Dorothy Napier (2024), Virginia Evans & Brent Hannah (2025)

Kurt Berg and George Lawson (2026)**Memorial Fund (3-year term)**

Current Members: Jim Goodrich & Myron McPherson (2024), Don Graffius, Ruth Brin, Stephen Rogers (2025)

Mark Lewis, Doug Mackintosh, Bill Probasco (2026)**Nominations Committee (3-year term)**

Current Members: Scott Paulin, Madge Chroniger, Nina Creel (2024), Debbie Bond, Melissa Brown & JR Shick (2025)

Theo Wilson, Logan Curran, Jasmine Lynch (2026)

President Chroniger asked if there was any new business. Hearing none, delegates were dismissed to interest committees at 2:24 pm.

Tuesday, July 26, 2023**Third Business Session**

President Chroniger called the third business session to order at 9:11 am and Frank Mazza from Shiloh SDB led the delegation in prayer.

Gabriella Alzonzo, SDB Christian Church (Silver Spring, MD), read the report of the Committee on Ministerial Interests (below). A motion was made to accept the report with its suggestions and recommendations, the motion was seconded. The report was amended to clarify adoption of the General Council’s recommendations, J, K, L, and M. The motion carried.

Report of the Committee on Ministerial Interests

We commend the COSAR committee for their ongoing oversight of the commitments this Conference made to the people who are supported by the old plan for retirement. We urge Seventh Day Baptists to donate to the old plan and support these retirees. We thank COSAR for their provision of disability insurance, salary guidelines, relief funds, and the administration of 403(b) retirement accounts.

We commend Doctor Carl Greene and the Reverends John Pethtel (“Rev. Pethtel”) and Nicholas Kersten for their continued dedication to training and encouraging leaders in Seventh Day Baptist churches. SDBU, MinistryMatch, and many other programs and tools would not be possible or accessible without their dedication and teamwork. Specifically, we commend them and their fellow colleagues for developing the SDBU program and encouraging lay persons to take part in the program. We further express gratitude for Rev. Pethtel in his capacity as the Director of Church Development & Pastoral Services and all other responsibilities he has assumed while still pursuing continued education. This includes Rev. Pethtel’s work in hosting the April 2023 Summit Conference.

We reviewed the General Council’s recommendations referred to us by General Conference action. We adopt Recommendations J, K, L, and M from the 2023 General Council Report to ratify the accreditation extension, retroactively renew accreditation, renew, or grant accreditation to the individuals mentioned in those recommendations.

We reviewed the report of the Council on Ministry. We are grateful for the many ways the Council continued to support the recruitment, training, and encouraging of individuals in ministries across the churches of the Conference throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. We also note that there are internships and residencies for pastors being fostered and we encourage the continued development of these. We thank the Council for hosting annual Pastors Conferences, and for planning Pastors Conferences that are relevant to the needs of our pastors and churches.

In reviewing the Council on Ministry's report, we had a fruitful conversation about our pastors' holistic health and longevity. Therefore, we make the following suggestions:

Suggestion 1: We suggest that as the Committee on Faith & Order revises the SDB Manual of Procedures, that it also considers clarifying requirements of pastors coming from other SDB Conferences outside the US and Canada.

Suggestion 2: We suggest that the General Council explore making a statement on the Conference's website clarifying that we as a conference are open to females in ministry; making sure there is opportunity if they feel so called.

Suggestion 3: We suggest that the Council on Ministry explore guidelines for associate pastors and non-pastoral leaders such as deacons and lay-elders for sabbaticals.

Suggestion 4: We suggest that the leaders of SDBU explore offering Spanish-language courses and other practical ministry tools that pastors, and ministry leaders may need, with the goal of adding these tools to SDBU's curriculum.

We also make the following recommendation:

Recommendation 1: We recommend that the Council on Ministry make accreditation credentials meaningful and evaluate the holistic health of a pastor (academic, emotional, physical, and spiritual etc.). In addition, we encourage the Council on Ministry to explore some format of a wellness assessment with pastors along with the renewal process.

Respectfully Submitted,

Keith Shick, JR. "JR" (Chair)

Gabriela L. Alonzo (Secretary)

David Fox

Althea Rood

Tim Smothers

Joanne Kandel

Darwin Steele

Kevin Butler

Linda Camenga

Jeremy Evans

Joel Houts

Deryck Thomas

Jessica Veale, Shiloh SDB (Shiloh, NJ), read the report of the Interest Committee on Christian Social Action and Disaster Relief (below). A motion was made to accept the report and consider each recommendation separately, the motion was seconded and carried.

Recommendation 1: A motion was made to amend the report and adopt the statement on Racism as it was presented by the General Council, it was seconded, and carried. A motion was made to accept the recommendation as amended, the motion was seconded, and it carried. A motion was made to amend the 4th paragraph on the Statement from SDB Leadership on Racism to use the word "support" rather than "affect". The motion was seconded, and it carried. A motion was made to add the word "racial" prior to the phrases "diversity in its leadership." The motion was seconded, and after a standing vote, the motion was defeated. A motion was made to close debate on recommendation 1, the motion was seconded, and it carried. A motion was made to accept recommendation 1 as amended, it was seconded, and carried.

Recommendation 2: Following discussion of this recommendation and several amendments, a motion was made to refer recommendation 2 and all ensuing discussion to the standing committee on Christian Social Action and Disaster Relief in consultation with General Council, the motion was seconded, and after a standing vote, the motion carried.

Report of the Interest Committee on Christian Social Action and Disaster Relief

The Interest Committee on Christian Social Action and Disaster Relief (CSADR) reviewed the 2023 Report of the CSADR interest committee and the related financial statement in the 2023 Yearbook.

We THANK the Standing Committee on Christian Social Action and Disaster Relief and General Council for supporting Malawi SDB Conference, Puerto Rico SDB Church, Daytona Beach SDB Church, SDB Church in Andhra Pradesh, India, and

the SDB Conference of Churches in Sudan this last year on behalf of all Seventh Day Baptists for our Lord Jesus Christ and our Seventh Day Baptist brothers and sisters.

We COMMEND all those who contributed to the SDB United Relief Fund, and we urge everyone to give generously to the Fund so that assistance may continue in the future.

We COMMEND President Charlotte Chroniger on coordinating the General Conference 2023 sessions.

We thank John Pethel for visiting our meeting and answering our questions.

We URGE pastoral training to continue to develop further education for church leaders on social brokenness issues (domestic abuse, child abuse, conflict resolution, Sexual identity, etc.) and develop an adequate referral list of resources and counselors for church leaders to look to for guidance and leadership when these issues are involved.

We URGE all SDBs who have knowledge of useful resources involved in dealing with social brokenness issues to forward them to the Council on Ministry.

We URGE pastors to educate themselves on local resources involved in dealing with social brokenness issues.

We URGE our churches to have a point person in looking for current disaster relief efforts within the denomination and report this person's contact information on the directory.

We URGE General Council to review the topics discussed in the CSADR Interest Committee meetings, and decide if further action is needed on these topics, which include:

- Drugs
- Homelessness
- Media Indoctrination
- Training to assist churches in dealing with mental health, addiction, etc., Child Abuse
- Statement on Marriage (defining man and woman?)

Recommendation 1: We RECOMMEND the adoption of the Statement from SDB Leadership Concerning Racism, with changes. (See Attachment 1) We further recommend that upon adoption of this resolution that the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference of USA and Canada, Ltd. mail every member church, sponsored church, and applicant for membership a copy of this resolution.

Recommendation 2: We RECOMMEND the adoption of the Protecting Children from Exploitation statement. (See Attachment 2) We further recommend that upon adoption of this resolution that the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference of USA and Canada, Ltd. mail every member church, sponsored church, and applicant for membership a copy of this resolution.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Veale, Chairman

Committee attendees;
Carla Burlingame
Pastor Wayne North
Brian Millermon
Dr. Ron Davis
Luann Cruzan
Pastor LeRoy Burdick

Attachment 1:

Statement from SDB Leadership Concerning Racism | June 4, 2020

The mission of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference is to equip our churches to actively advance God's Kingdom. That mission faces obstacles in this world. One of the particular ways in which that mission is hindered or opposed is by the sin of favoritism in various forms including racism.

Racism appears in beliefs or practices that distinguish or elevate one race over others. Its existence has unfairly benefitted some and burdened others simply because of skin color or ethnicity. No race or ethnicity is greater or more valuable than another in God's Kingdom. The gospel of Jesus Christ has no place for favoritism of any sort and contains the power to destroy the barriers that human hearts have erected with regard to race and ethnicity.

Recent tragic events have brought a greater realization of the continued existence of racism for some. However, racism should not only be addressed after tragedies. Sustained efforts must take place so that it might never be known as what our churches (and our Conference) support, defend, allow, or refuse to speak about. There is no room in our gospel proclamation and demonstration for this sin. We have an opportunity to show our communities the true hope of their suffering, the true liberation of their oppression, and the true vindication of their injustices through the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to do better. We will do better.

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference will move forward with ways in which it can support its churches to defeat racism by seeking diversity in its leadership, promoting racial and cultural sensitivity in their ministries, and providing resources that reinforce the value of all humankind. We are committed to pursuing the end to any systems, structures, and strongholds that **support** racism in our organization and its culture.

The leadership of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference laments the continued destruction that racism and the injustice accompanying it has caused to our nations. We are urging all Seventh Day Baptists:

- to seek the peace and welfare of their communities;
- to do justice with humble hearts to the glory of God;
- to mourn with others who mourn and weep with those who weep;
- to love and show grace and mercy even when they do not understand;
- to listen quickly and to speak (or type) slowly in response to tragedy;
- to submit our responses and emotions to the leading of the Holy Spirit;
- to reflect personally on our attitudes and actions and repent of any areas where we have allowed prejudice to take root;
- to contact local, state, and national governments/authorities to share their concerns and to help catalyze change: and
- to treat ALL life as precious to God.

For Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh Day Baptist churches who are hurting right now, we stand with you. Let us know of any ways in which we can actively support Kingdom advancement or help overcome barriers to every tribe, tongue, race, ethnicity, and color worshipping God in your community.

With brotherly and sisterly love,

The General Council and the Coordinating Leadership Team for the SDB General Conference

Attachment 2:

Protecting Children from Exploitation

Recognizing that children are among the most vulnerable in society and that satanic attacks on children and families have escalated, we therefore RECOMMEND Seventh Day Baptists be united in intentionally protecting and praying for these most vulnerable in our society. Examples of this escalation of attacks on children include the sharp rise in child trafficking and slavery, child gender mutilation (both surgical and chemical) and manipulation, youthful fentanyl and other drug deaths, critical race theory indoctrination in schools, and assaults on parental rights and consent.

Cindy Nadeau of Pawcatuck, RI presented the report of the Credentials Coordinator (below). A motion was made to adopt the report with the provision that corrections and updates may be made through the end of Conference Week 2023, the motion was seconded, and carried.

Report of Credentials Coordinator

Part I Delegates from Member Churches

The Credentials Coordinator submits the following report to the Conference. Official delegates who have been certified by action of the local church or by the authority vested in the chairman of the representative delegations are as follows:

ARKANSAS

Texarkana: Melissa Brown

CALIFORNIA

Bay Area: Rebecca Crouch, Steven Crouch, Norma Johnson

Foothill: Brynn Owen, Jeremiah Owen

Riverside: Jennifer Lewis Berg, Kurt Berg, Norman K. Burdick, Victoria L. Burdick

CANADA

Toronto: Linnette Reynolds, Paula Reynolds Diane Rhoden

COLORADO

Frontier Church - Carbon Valley: Matthew Berg, Miriam Berg, Chris Galarneau, Patty Petersen, Pat Williams, Gretchen Zwiebel

Next Step: Douglas Mackintosh, Jane Mackintosh

FLORIDA

Daytona Beach: Ben Figueroa, Marcela Figueroa, Ewald Fick

Fort Lauderdale: Harold Smith

Miami: Andrew Samuels, David Stall

Putnam County: Matthew Jacob

West Palm Beach: Donna Lynch, Jasmine Lynch, Asabe Miller

GEORGIA

Metro Atlanta: Debbie Hargett, Jeff Hargett

MARYLAND

Silver Spring: Gabriela L Alonzo, Earl Hibbard, Dianne Hibbard

MICHIGAN

Battle Creek: Lorrie Bird, Ella Lowe, Scott Paulin, Marilyn Smith, Tim Smothers, Marilyn Tuck

White Cloud: Duane Cruzan, Ed Cruzan, Luann Cruzan, Keith (JR) Shick

All Nations: Haywood Floyd, Zachary Floyd, Lance Elliott Griffin

MINNESOTA

Anchor of Hope (Dodge Center): Andres Jara, Cathy Jara, Althea G. Rood, Dale E. Rood

NEBRASKA

North Loup: Helen Goodrich, James Goodrich, Amy Palermo, Nick Palermo

NEW JERSEY

Marlboro: Joanne Davis, Thomas Davis, Lora Sweeney

Plainfield: Egbert Downes

Shiloh: Donna Bond, Carla Burlingame, Donald Chroniger, Dennis Coleman, Julia Coleman, George Cruzan, Phillip Lawton, Frank Mazza, Maura Mazza, Liam Probasco, William Probasco, Jessica Veal

NEW YORK

Agape: Deryck Thomas, Yanette Thomas

Berlin: Ellen Olson, Matthew Olson, Melvin F. Stephan

First Genesee: Joanne Kandel, Christina Thorngate, David Thorngate

New York City: Ericessen Cooper, Lisa Moore, Joan Small

Verona: Jennifer A Johnson, Russell G Johnson

OHIO

Pataskala: Dean Fox, Susie Fox

OREGON

Portland: Jerry G. Vaught

PENNSYLVANIA

Bell: Darwin W. Steele

German: Amanda Barbee, Perry Barbee, Andrew J. Camenga, Donald Graffius

Hebron: Allen D. Hauber, Lori J. Hinton, Steven W. Hinton

PUERTO RICO

Agape: Joel Houts, Judith Houts

RHODE ISLAND

First Hopkinton: Jeremy Evans, Virginia Evans, David Fox, Rachel Fox, Jeffrey G Lawton, Nadine Lawton, Jeannie Pratt

Pawcatuck: Cindy L. Nadeau

TEXAS

Remembrance: Ron Davis, Nina L. Creel, Jim McCalip, Nancy McCalip, Holly Pontier

WASHINGTON

Seattle Area: Erin Inabnit, Karen Uhlich

WEST VIRGINIA

Lost Creek: Cate Camenga, Cathy Camenga, Eve Camenga, Johnmark Camenga, Jonah Camenga, Linda Camenga

Middle Island: Ed Green

Salem: Josephine Rogers, Stephen Rogers, Lydia Solomon, Dale D. Thorngate, Janet Thorngate

WISCONSIN

Albion: Jerry Vaught

Freedom Community: Kristine North, Wayne North

Milton: Kevin Butler, Nate Crandall, Carl Greene, Cindy Greene, Marcy Kersten, Nick Kersten, Tim Lawton, Joel Osborn, Renee Sanford, Benny Uhlich, Sarah Uhlich, Marian van Dalen-Anderson

PART II Official Delegates

Official delegates from other Seventh Day Baptist Conferences and Churches:

We have no official delegates from other Seventh Day Baptist Conferences.

PART III Visitors

Visitors from other Seventh Day Baptist Conferences, Churches, and other Organizations:

Rev. Fabian Loachamin, Quito, Ecuador
Andrea Pozo, Quito, Ecuador

PART IV Statistics

Total Registration	280
Registered Delegates (less 1 duplicate)	140
Churches Officially Represented	43
Ministers and Pastors present	46
Visitors	2
Kids Con	14
Nursery	5
Youth Con	30

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy L Nadeau
Credentials Coordinator

Rev. John Pethtel, Milton SDB, on behalf of his wife Tabatha Pethtel (working in the nursery), presented the report of the Courtesies Coordinator (below). A motion was made to adopt the report, with the understanding that additions can be made to the report until the end of Conference Week 2023. The motion was seconded and carried.

Report of Courtesies Coordinator – Conference Week 2023

Recommendation 1: That the General Conference USA & Canada expresses appreciation to the following for their service during Conference Week 2023:

- Conference President Charlotte Chroniger for encouraging us to continue experiencing how great our God is
- The Chroniger family and others for their assistance and support to the president.
- Hannah Patterson from Calvin University for her continued willingness to be a gracious host and contact for Conference Week 2023.
- John Pethtel (Conferences Coordinator), Patty Petersen (Conferences Assistant) and the entire team who helped to make Conference Week 2023 occur
 - Gordon Lawton, Linda Lawton, Steve Osborn, Renee Ochs,, and Liam Probasco for helping with registration
 - Haywood Floyd for logistics and support to the Conferences Coordinator
 - Lance Griffin, The Klubecks (Bill, Tammy, and Matt), Angel Floyd, Marian van Dalen-Anderson, and David Irizarry for airport transportation
 - Isaac and Samantha Floyd, Melissa Brown, Zack Floyd, Vicki Burdick, Marian van Dalen-Anderson, and Xavier Pethtel for on-campus transportation
- Allen Hauber as Audio/Stage Liaison and assistants Timothy Lawton, Zack Floyd, and Dennis Coleman
- Bri Jansen, Daniel Cordeiro, Emmanuel Odekunle, Brooks Townsend, and Alan Warner from Calvin University for their assistance with audio and streaming
- Joel Osborn as Visuals Coordinator
- Jeremiah Owen as Streaming Liaison
- Don Graffius as Parliamentarian and Gabriela Alonzo as Assistant Parliamentarian

- Katherine Bofinger as Recording Secretary-Business
- Tabatha Pethtel as Recording Secretary-Program
- Carl Greene as Corresponding Secretary
- Perry Barbee, Jim Goodrich, J.R. Shick, Bill Probasco, Johnmark Camenga, Butch Hibbard, Amy Palermo, Jessica Veale, Chris Galarneau, Valerie Probasco, Ed Cruzan, and Phil Lawton as Conference Week Interest Committee chairpersons
- Amanda Barbee, Gabriela Alonzo, Liam Probasco, Cathy Camenga, Dianne Hibbard, Susan Camenga, Carla Burlingame, Miriam Berg, Debbie Bond, Duane Cruzan, and Bethany Lawton as Conference Week Interest Committee secretaries
- Cindy Nadeau as Credentials Coordinator
- Tabatha Pethtel as Courtesies Coordinator
- Egbert Downes as Conference Pastor
- Don Chroniger as Choir Director
- Charlotte Chroniger as Choir Accompanist
- Ruthann Davis, Sandy Layton, Lora Sweeney, Cindy Greene, Tom Davis, and Donna Bond as Pianists
- Bill and Valerie Probasco for leading a game time
- Nick Kersten, Dennis Coleman, Bill Probasco, George Cruzan, and Donna Bond for presenting devotions
- Sandy Latyon, Dennis Coleman, Maura Mazza, Judy Parrish, Frank Mazza, J.R. Shick, Althea Rood, Hawood Floyd, Steve Osborn, Lisa Moore, Johnmark Camenga, Julia Coleman, Kevin Butler, Miriam Berg, Steve Hinton, Nate Crandall, Cheri Appel, and Helmer Umana as Bible Study Leaders
- Wayne North, Tyler Chroniger, Steve Osborn, Phil Lawton, Frank Mazza, and Tom Davis as worship speakers
- Steve Hinton, Dennis Coleman, J.R. Shick, Nate Crandall, Egbert Downes and Tyler Chroniger as worship leaders
- Jonah Bond, Zach Floyd, Julia Coleman, Jessica Veale, Josh Coleman, Reyna Mazza, Marianna Mazza, Riesa Cassano, Miguel McFarlane, and Dante Mazzeo as band members
- Charlotte Chroniger, Kris North, Kevin Butler, Amanda Barbee, and Maura Mazza for children's messages
- All Thursday night vesper participants
- Dr. Julie Stevens and Dr. Elizabeth Camenga for being panelists
- Julia Coleman, John Pethtel, Miriam Berg, Frank and Maura Mazza, Marianna and Reyna Mazza, and Eric Bofinger as seminar leaders
- Tabatha Pethtel as Nursery Coordinator
- Doneta Osborn, Sandy Layton, Jenn Chroniger, Joanne Davis, and Lora Sweeney as KidCon staff
- Maura Mazza and Erin Inabnit as KidCon @ Nite leaders
- Debbie Bond, Tyler Chroniger, Valerie Probasco, Haywood Floyd, Bill Probasco, Matt Berg, and Erin Inabnit as YouthCon staff and drivers
- Eric Bofinger and Miriam Berg as the Gospel Feet Fun Run Coordinators

Recommendation 2: The Executive Director and Conferences Coordinator shall send a letter of appreciation from the General Conference to Hannah Patterson with the office of Event Services at Calvin University.

Recommendation 3: The Executive Director and Conferences Coordinator shall send letters of appreciation from the General Conference to any guest speakers or participants during Conference Week 2023.

Recommendation 4: The Corresponding Secretary shall send letters of greetings to the retired pastors and wives and widows, as well as retired and serving missionaries who were unable to attend this Conference.

Respectfully submitted,
Tabatha Pethtel, Courtesies Coordinator

Perry Barbee, German SDB (Enterprise, PA), presented the report of the Interest Committee on Missions (below). A motion was made to accept the report with its recommendations; the motion was seconded and carried.

Report of the Interest Committee on Missions

The committee had the opportunity to hear from Pastor Mading Bol (originally from South Sudan and now in Phoenix, AZ), Andy Samuels, Chief Executive Director, and Garfield Miller, Director of Mobilization and Projects, and the planting, expanding, and equipping of the mission in North-East Africa (South Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia) and Alaska, Nebraska and Arizona in the United States. Further thanks to Garfield Miller and Andy Samuels for answering questions regarding the Missionary Society.

We pray and support the upcoming meetings of the World Federation in Blantyre, Malawi from September 16-23, 2023, and those traveling from all over the world.

The committee reviewed the 2023 Missionary Society video report as well as the 181st Report of the Missionary Society.

We commend the Missionary Society for their continued works in promoting the Kingdom of God near and afar by:

1. Equipping and educating
2. Mobilizing for the gospel
3. Partnering individuals and/or churches together

We commend Nadine Lawton's 17 years of service to the Missionary Society. We welcome Miriam Berg, Director of Advancement and Operations, and appreciate her knowledge and skill updating the missionary society website.

We urge the Seventh Day Missionary Society to continue to develop and work on their communications and follow up to both individuals and churches as they develop partnerships in missions.

We urge Seventh Day Baptist churches and individuals to connect and partner with other Seventh Day Baptists around the world in support of one another and to bring glory to the Kingdom of God. Look for future projects including a 3-month project to India and completing the first graduation of the African Bible College.

We **recommend** the Missionary Society establish at least one time for prayer during General Conference Sessions.

We **recommend** the Missionary Society clarify #1 under equipping.

Matthew 9:37 – Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore to send out workers into his harvest field."

Respectfully Submitted,

Perry Barbee, Chairperson,
Amanda Barbee, secretary
Garfield Miller
Ella Lowe
Harold Smith
Renee Sanford

Matt Klubeck
Danny Lee
Danita Lee
Marian van Dalen-Anderson
Marilyn Smith
Mading Bol

Miriam Berg, Frontier Church-Carbon Valley (Dacono, CO), presented the report of the Committee on Young Adult Interests (below). A motion was made to accept the report with its recommendations; the motion was seconded and carried.

Report of the Committee on Young Adult Interests

The Young Adult Interest Committee would like to commend the following individuals, boards, and councils: The associations, churches, and individuals who provided financial assistance to young adults wishing to attend Conference; The Women's Board for sponsoring and facilitating the SCSC program; The Memorial Board for providing grants to grateful SCSC participants.

The Young Adult Interest Committee met four times during the week of Conference. There were no significant developments beyond the appointing of new members into organizational roles over various young adult activities for the year of 2024.

Recommendation 1: We recommend that President-Elect John Mark Camenga appoint a young adult as a Young Adult Activity Coordinator, whose duties will be to schedule and/or oversee young adult activities for the 2024 session of General Conference.

Recommendation 2: We recommend all young adults contact Nick Kersten for help with any mentoring, internships, and cohorting questions/needs.

Respectfully Submitted,

Reverend Christopher Galarneau, Chairman

Asabe Miller

Melissa Brown

Holly Probasco

Miriam Berg, Secretary

Sam Floyd

Matt Klubeck

Melinda Irizarry

Timothy Lawton

Diane Hibbard, SDB Christian Church (Silver Spring, MD), presented the report of the Interest Committee on Communications (below). A motion was made to accept the report with its recommendations; the motion was seconded and carried.

Report of the Interest Committee on Communications

The members of the Communications Interest Committee reviewed the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the American Sabbath Tract and Communication Council (T&CC). We appreciate the diligence of the Council's work in preparing the report.

For the years 2020-2021 we acknowledge that there were no Communications Interest Committee meetings due to the pandemic and therefore this Interest Committee Report is reflective of 2018-2019 Interest Committee Report.

We invited Jeremiah Owen to meet with our committee and he enthusiastically answered our questions and shared his vision and plans for the new technological resources being developed and implemented by the T&CC. We continue to appreciate the SDB Conference App. Also, we appreciate the work of live streaming the General Conference sessions, placing photos on Facebook on a daily basis, and making the sessions available on Facebook and YouTube. During our meeting with Jeremiah Owen, we discussed the need for Spanish translation of church publications.

We are thankful for Patricia Cruzan's work as the Sabbath Recorder editor. We appreciate the enhanced content and graphics.

We thank the many contributing authors and proofreaders who prepare and submit articles for the Sabbath Recorder.

We encourage everyone to submit articles to be considered for publication. We also encourage interested parties to proofread articles for potential grammatical and/or theological errors with a quick turnaround time.

We thank Dave Alldredge for his service as chair of T&CC.

We thank the T&CC again for making the Conference registration available online. We encourage their continued efforts to simplify the online registration process.

We are excited about the continued development of new and updated tracts in both English and Spanish and encourage the continuation of this important work in both languages.

Our committee brings before the conference the following:

Whereas churches have requested there be more news in the Sabbath Recorder, we **urge** all churches to send information about upcoming and past events, church milestones, and member highlights for articles and/or photos to the Sabbath Recorder as they occur.

We present the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: We recommend that T&CC consider the importance of our Spanish speaking members and make available church publications in Spanish and English.

Recommendation 2: We recommend acceptance of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the American Sabbath Tract and Communication Council.

Recommendation 3: We recommend the 2024 conference president plan to include a seminar to assist churches in web design and new technology.

Respectfully submitted,

Earl Hibbard, Chairman
Dianne Hibbard, Secretary

Committee Members:

Julia Coleman
Dennis Coleman
Verne Fuller
Christine Davis
Jeff Hargett

Jim Goodrich, North Loup SDB (North Loup, NB), presented the report of the Interest Committee on Church Development (below). A motion was made to accept the report and deal with the recommendation separately, it was seconded and carried. A motion was made to accept recommendation 1, the motion was seconded, and carried.

Report of the Interest Committee on Church Development

We discussed the recent use of the Multiply Conferences and noted the possibility of having regional conferences.

We commend the Rev. David Stall for his work as Church Planting Coordinator over the past three years. His work in church planting and guiding new churches is invaluable in helping to grow the Seventh Day Baptist Conference USA and Canada. We would also like to thank him for attending our committee and sharing his work.

We are excited for the PULSE process as we heard multiple instances of its being used in our churches. We concur with the Council on Ministry that churches be encouraged to take advantage of this instrument.

We commend Director of Church Development and Pastoral Services the Rev. John Pethtel for his work in assisting churches in their development as the body of Christ.

We commend Contact and Data Management Coordinator Patty Pedersen for her work in responding to new contacts by individuals and groups.

We **encourage** churches to be more than a meeting within the walls of a building, but to reach out and be Christ-loving and visible in the communities where they are located as a means of showing God's love to our world.

We **encourage** all churches to have their members find a way to be involved at the denominational level in some way as a means to accomplish a working relationship between the local churches and the national conference.

Having not found an official report, written or video, of the church planting coordinator and recognizing the importance of this program we **encourage** the general council to find a means of including such a report in the program of General Conference. We understand that this is a departure from usual protocol but see the need to keep all members informed in this area.

We were excited to hear that there are no less than 20 developing Seventh Day Baptist groups, at least six of which are anticipating applying for conference membership before the next sessions on general conference.

In this era when many churches and other social groups are seeking new social dimensions to appeal to a broader populace, we encourage our churches to continue to adhere to Biblical principles. We feel that there are many who will seek out Bible believing church groups and in so doing may find their way to the Sabbath as well.

We are concerned that with changing times what we recognize as a church may need to be adjusted. The face of what is a church now sometimes looks like a home gathering or small rented space accommodating a smaller but no less dedicated group of Seventh Day Baptists. Those smaller groups tend to branch off to other smaller groups, none of which have the numbers to qualify as a church under our present guidelines. We believe that viability and reproducibility in cluster churches should be an avenue to a group belonging to the conference.

The goal of our recommendation is to accurately determine the viability of new churches and good spiritual health of existing churches.

Recommendation 1: We **recommend** that the general council with the conference executive director investigate changing the standards for church membership in the conference to eliminate the requirement of a specific number of members but rather concentrate on the areas of leadership, beliefs consistent with those of the Seventh Day Baptist general conference and group stability and survivability with a goal of making a recommendation to the next general conference session. As a show of example for that model, we further recommend that a plan be proposed that would bring about a system of reviewing and renewing the membership of Seventh Day Baptist churches as members of the conference based on the same qualifications as incoming churches with that review being done in five-year increments based on the year of membership of the church.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Goodrich, chairman
Nate Crandall
Donald Chroniger
David Stall
Frank Mazza
Jasmine Lynch

Lisa Moore
Lori Hinton
Steve Hinton
Judith Houts
Ewald Fick
Lydia Solomon

Sophia Kersten, Milton SDB (Milton, WI), presented the report of the Interest Committee on Youth (below). A motion was made to accept the report with its recommendations as a whole; the motion was seconded, and it carried.

Report of the Interest Committee on Youth

The youth would like to thank the following:

- Deborah Bond, Tyler Chroniger, and Valerie Probasco and their staff for putting together the youth conference program.
- Calvin University for letting us use their facilities.
- President Charlotte Chroniger for the Conference theme, How Great is Our God.
- The Host Committee for making sure that the youth had everything they needed for this week.
- Pastor Phil Lawton for being our Youth Banquet speaker.
- Families and sponsors for bringing us to Conference.
- Youth Interest Chairperson Deborah Bond for facilitating the Youth Interest Committee meeting.
- Elizabeth Greene and Thomas Palermo for being the Beacon Editors for the 2023-2024 year.

We **recommend** that Elizabeth Greene and Thomas Palermo be Beacon Editors for the 2023-2024 year.

We **encourage** the inclusion of Youth-led devotions and worship time for all attendees (youth and adult) during the Conference week.

We **encourage** the General Conference to pursue ways to make Conference week more accessible for families by offering grants to our churches.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deborah Bond (Chairperson)
Valerie Probasco (Secretary)

Aaron Barbee	Luke Coleman	Reyna Mazza
Andrew Barbee	Elizabeth "Ellie" Greene	Dante Mazzeo
Angela Barbee	Naomi Inabnit	Amelia Miller
Elijah Berg	Matias Jara	Zerek North
Sophia Berg	Corbin Kersten	Brynn Owen
Josiah Bond	Isaac Kersten	Thomas Palermo
Annika Camenga	Natalie Kersten	Addison Pethtel
Cate Camenga	Sophia Kersten	Annelise Sweeney
Elisa Camenga	Madison Kristovich	Sean Sweeney
Eve Camenga	Sarah Loachmin	
Jonah Camenga	Marianna Mazza	

Liam Probasco, Shiloh SDB (Shiloh, NJ), presented the report on the Interest Committee on History (below). A motion was made to accept the report with its commendations and recommendations; the motion was seconded, and it carried.

Report of the Interest Committee on History

The Conference Interest Committee on History met two times on Monday, July 24, 2023. We reviewed the Council on History's Annual Report for 2022-2023 as well as the most recent Report of the Interest Committee on History (2018-2019).

We **commend** Rev. Nicholas Kersten and his staff members, Rinald Kersten and Gay McRoberts, for their passion, devotion, and tireless efforts in promoting and preserving SDB history.

We **commend** the directors of the Council on History, Chairperson Kim Merchant, Secretary Judy Parrish, Elizabeth Camenga Lawton, Timothy Lawton, and Madge Chroniger, for the dedication of this high-functioning committee to communicate the history of Seventh Day Baptists.

It is with great thanks that we **acknowledge** Dr. Janet Thorngate for her many years of service, writing, and teaching as a member of the Council on History on behalf of the denomination. Although she stepped down from her official capacity in 2022, she continues to work with the Council on History as a consultant, and we look forward to her continuing contributions in the future.

We **commend** the Council on History for updating the SDB history website and removing the paywall, making it universally accessible to all (www.sdbhistory.org). We also **thank** the many donors and volunteers who made this possible.

As mentioned regarding the Biography Committee in the 2023 Annual Report on page E5, "We **encourage** families to submit obituaries for their loved ones to biography@seventhdaybaptist.org." Please provide a detailed obituary for future reference. We **thank** the Biography Committee for their efforts in recording biographical information on our brothers and sisters who have gone on to Glory.

We **thank** the Council on History for including the report from the Obituaries Coordinator within the body of its annual report. The Obituaries Coordinator report can be found on pages E7-E11 of the Council on History's Annual Report for 2023. Please take a moment to read about and remember these Seventh Day Baptist leaders.

We **encourage** everyone to access the SDB Historical Library and Archives Facebook page (www.facebook.com/sdbhla), which provides historical information and updates pertaining to SDB history.

The Council has begun working on a fourth volume of SDB history, adding to the previous three. The previous three are called *Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America*, and the fourth volume will cover Seventh Day Baptist history around the world from 1950-2000. We **encourage** anyone who is interested to use these volumes, both the three older ones and

the fourth once it is made available. The first three volumes, as well as other materials, are available on the Council on History website. Limited printed copies may be available from the Council on History headquarters.

We look forward to the merging of the online periodical index with the main literature catalogue, which will allow for searching of all periodicals and literature within the scope of the SDB Historical Library and Archives in one location. We **commend** all those involved in this project, especially Kim and Tom Merchant.

We **commend** Rev. Nicholas Kersten for his participation in SDB Boot Camps for church planters as well as interdenominational podcasts and interviews pertaining to the subject of Seventh Day Baptist history.

We **encourage** churches to contact the Council for recommendations for the best methods of preserving their church history.

We **urge** the Council to continue developing ways of preserving digital media such as websites for historical purposes. We applaud the Council for developing ways to educate and communicate our history moving forward. We **encourage** churches to work with the Council on History and use its resources.

Respectfully submitted,
 Bill Probasco, Chairman
 Liam Probasco, Secretary
 Anthony J. Bentley
 Nadine Lawton
 Jo Rogers
 Marylene Tuck

Johnmark Camenga, Lost Creek SDB (Lost Creek, WV), presented the report of the Interest Committee on Christian Education (below). A motion was made to accept the report; the motion was seconded, and it carried.

Report of the Interest Committee on Christian Education

The committee reviewed the report of the Christian Education Council (hereafter referred to as “the Council”) of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.

We **commend** the Council for continuing to live up to their stated mission of equipping ambassadors to represent Christ’s Kingdom. We further commend the Council for recognizing the changing cultural conditions (technological, economic, demographic, political, etc.) and making adjustments in their response, support, and resourcing to meet these changes and challenges.

We **commend** the Council for persevering in its commitment to **next generation ministry** by working alongside local churches in their children and youth ministries, supporting summer camping ministries, and for providing consultation for the newly burgeoning year-end retreat movement.

The Council has identified **strategic development of kingdom leaders** as an area of special attention. We commend the Council for recognizing this need and for their ongoing development and implementation of various initiatives and programs to aid in identifying and equipping leaders for the future. These initiatives and programs include (as outlined in the Council’s report):

- Internships and Cohorts
- Lay Leadership Training and Ministry through SDBU
- Pastoral Leadership Training through SDBU

We **commend** the Council for its work in developing the groundwork for a **mental health network**. The committee sees this as a critical step in making our Conference and our churches more capable of meeting the spiritual and emotional needs of both current members and those the Lord will be sending our way.

We **commend** Pastor Steve Osborn (General Editor), contributing writers, and the Council for their continued work on *The Helping Hand in Bible Study*. We commend Andrea Pozo Velastegui for her work translating *The Helping Hand in Bible Study* into Spanish.

We **commend** our Conference President Charlotte Chroniger for challenging the conference this year with a scripture memory program matching her theme “How Great Is Our God!” We encourage the continuation of the annual scripture

memory program as well as local Church participation in the memory program.

We **commend** the Council in its continued desire to honor faithful and effective Sabbath School teachers with the presentation of the Crystal Apple Award. We urge churches to send nominations for this award so that these teachers can be acknowledged for their service.

We **commend** the Council for its continued commitment to provide diaconate training.

We join the Council and the Conference in expressing gratitude to the Rev. Paul Andries for his 17 years of service to the Council.

The committee is excited to not only read about what the Council is doing but also to bear witness to the work: it is clear that the Council is not just talking about things that would be nice to do, but is actually doing the things.

Respectfully Submitted,

Johnmark Camenga, chairman

Matthew Olson

Ellen Olson

David Thorngate

Christina Thorngate

Lorrie Bird

Erik Wangsness

Cathy Camenga

Joan Small

Donna Lynch

Norma Johnson

Annette Murray Lawrence

Steve Crouch

Glenn Denman

Asabe Miller

President Chroniger dismissed the delegation at 11:24 am.

Tuesday, July 26, 2023

Fourth Business Session

President Charlotte Chroniger called the fourth business session to order at 2:04 pm.

Amy Polermo, North Loup SDB (North Loup, NE), presented the report of the committee on Women's Interest (below). A motion was made to accept the report, with one change of 2019 to 2023, the motion was seconded and carried.

Report of the Committee on Women's Interest

The Committee reviewed and accepted the 2022-2023 report of the Women's Society.

We **URGE** the Women's Board to explore options for making the SCSC program more visible such as using social media, the Sabbath Recorder, and creating a promotional video to encourage young people to consider serving. Current SCSCers could be asked to write testimonials about their service for inclusion in the Sabbath Recorder. These methods would seek to inform young people and churches of their options for serving.

We **SUGGEST** the Women's Board explore the possibility of designating a person to collect stories from local churches about ministries for inclusion in the Sabbath Recorder monthly.

We **commend** President Katrina Goodrich and the 2023 Women's Board, Officers, and Committees for serving this past year as volunteers. We look forward to another great year for the SDB Women's Society under their prayerful direction.

- We thank Helen Goodrich, Chair of the SCSC Committee, Amanda Barbee, Training Director, and the Training Staff along with the SCSC Committee and the wonderful cooks. We also thank the Project Directors, Host Churches, Students, and the Shiloh, NJ church for hosting training at Jersey Oaks Camp.
- We thank Paula Reynolds for organizing a successful Women's Banquet.
- We thank Lydia Solomon and her committee for their faithful service on organizing the presentation of the Robe of Achievement and Jenni Wangsness WISE Award.

We thank Marcela Figueroa, Cathy Jara, Linnette Reynolds, and Diane Rhoden-Barrows for serving as our Love Gift sub-committee. The following is the decided allocation of Love Gift funds:

- Bill and Sam Fick \$750

- Pastor Bill Shobe \$250
- Emily (Joanne Kandell's daughter) \$250
- Phil and Bethany Lawton church start up 50% of the balance
- An SDB International Missions program (TC) 25%
- Daytona Beach Church Outreach Ministries 25%

Additional donations to the 2023 Love Gift may be sent to the SDB Center in Janesville, WI until September 30th. You may also give a donation for the Love Gift at the Women's Board Table.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Palermo, Chair
Susan Camenga, secretary
Donna Bond
Ruth Ann Davis
Karen Denman
Marcela Figueroa

Jenny Johnson
Jeannie Pratt
Paula Reynolds
Lynne Severance
Marva Shears
Patricia Sutton

Monette Thomas
Pat Williams

Edward Cruzan, White Cloud SDB (White Cloud, MI), presented the report of the Interest Committee on Budget and Finance (below). A motion was made to accept the report and act on the recommendations separately. The motion was seconded and carried.

Recommendation 1: A motion was made to adopt recommendation 1. The motion was seconded, and it carried.

Recommendation 2: A motion was made to adopt recommendation 2. The motion was seconded, and it carried.

Recommendation 3: A motion was made to adopt recommendation 3. The motion was seconded, and it carried.

Report of the Interest Committee on Budget and Finance

We thank the members of the General Council and Ron Ochs (Financial Director) for their work in preparing the 2023 budget for us to consider. We also appreciate the oral presentations given to the Budget and Finance Committee by Erin Inabnit (member of General Council) and Ron Ochs.

Ron provided the Committee with financial summaries for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 and gave us a brief explanation of income and expenditures covering those years.

The Committee reviewed Yearbook Document C-Financial Supplement for the year 2022-2023. As noted in that document an outside review or audit of the Conference financials has not been completed. It is expected that this information will be provided to the General Council in the near future and the General Council will review those documents once received.

The Committee reviewed the figures contained in the charts on pages C-2 and C-3 of the Yearbook, Conference Financial Summary Consolidated Income and Expense and Conference Financial Report-Balance Sheet; Balance per Ministry as of 12/31/2022, respectively. A clerical error was noted in the Conference Financial Summary Consolidated Income and Expense. The Committee amended these errors as reflected in Attachment #1.

Recommendation 1

The Committee **recommends** adoption of the Conference Financial Summary Consolidated Income and Expense as amended and Conference Financial Report-Balance Sheet; Balance per Ministry as of 12/31/2022.

The Committee considered General Council Recommendation H (page K-18). It was noted that a clerical error was made in the Seventh Day Baptist Summary of 2023, Operating Income & Expense Budget Draft #1 (page K-27) which added a column for "Missionary Society" (which uses its own accounting and budgeting processes) and a column for "Total" which included the Missionary Society information. The Committee moved to amend this Budget grid by removing those

two columns and renaming the “Budget” column to “TOTAL.” Attachment #2

Recommendation 2

Concerning General Council Recommendation H, the Committee **recommends** that the Seventh Day Baptist Summary of 2023, Operating Income & Expense Budget Draft #1 as amended, be ratified as the General Conference Budget for 2023.

The Committee considered General Council Recommendation G concerning a new budgeting flow.

Recommendation 3

The Committee **recommends** the adoption of General Council Report Recommendation G.

In addition, the Committee **suggests** that the General Council periodically communicate their progress on the budgeting process to the SDB membership during the year.

Respectfully Submitted,
Edward Cruzan, Chairperson
Duane Cruzan, Secretary
Nick Palermo

Marva Shears
Judith Parrish
Erin Inabnit

Ewald Fick
Marcela Figueroa
Also in Attendance: Ron Ochs

Conference Financial Summary Consolidated Income and Expense

	2020	2021	2022
Income			
Giving	405	333	323
Investment income	148	231	209
Grants	278	293	292
Sales	50	53	55
Other Income	14	23	227
Total	895	933	1,106
Expenses			
Programming	232	280	378
Compensation	378	449	495
Travel	21	23	40
Facilities	25	33	24
Overhead	92	80	103
Total	748	865	1,040
Net	147	68	66

Phillip Lawton, Shiloh SDB (Shiloh, NJ), presented the report of the Interest Committee on Reference and Counsel (below). A motion was made to accept the report and consider the recommendations separately; the motion was seconded and carried.

A motion was made to adopt recommendation 1. The motion was seconded, and it carried.

A motion was made to adopt recommendation 2. The motion was seconded, and it carried.

A motion was made to adopt recommendation 3. The motion was seconded, and it carried.

A motion was made to adopt recommendation 4. The motion was seconded, and it carried.

A motion was made to adopt recommendation 5. The motion was seconded, and it carried.

A motion was made to adopt recommendation 6. The motion was seconded, and it carried.

A motion was made to adopt recommendation 7 as a first reading. The motion was seconded, and it carried.

A motion was made to adopt recommendation 8 as a second reading. The motion was seconded, and it was carried by a greater than two-thirds vote.

A motion was made to adopt recommendation 9. The motion was seconded, and it carried.

Report of the Interest Committee on Reference and Counsel

We commend the General Council and all our conference executives for the work they continue to do on behalf of the General Conference and of Seventh Day Baptists of the USA and Canada.

Recommendation 1: The committee sadly recommends the conference approve the motion from the floor to remove SpringsLife Church from membership in the SDB General Conference due to its dissolution.

Recommendation 2: The committee recommends the conference accept the Report of the Committee on Faith and Order.

Recommendation 3: The committee happily recommends the conference adopt Recommendation I of the Report of the General Council and welcomes Opens Arms Seventh Day Baptist Church (North York, ON, Canada) into the conference.

Recommendation 4: The committee recommends the conference adopt Recommendation A from the Report of the General Council ratifying the appointments made by General Council.

Recommendation 5: The committee commends Carl Greene for his outstanding work in the role of Executive Director and as such the committee recommends the conference adopt Recommendation B from the Report of the General Council extending his term through 2025.

Recommendation 6: The committee recommends the conference adopt Recommendation C from the Report of the General Council approving the Vision Map Resolution.

Recommendation 7: The committee recommends the conference adopt Recommendation D from the Report of the General Council with the following amendment:

*General Conference may occur in person or by electronic means, such as video conferencing, that permit speaking, **the display of text, and voting** by delegates.*

Recommendation 8: The committee recommends the conference adopt Recommendation E from the Report of the General Council reducing the number of in person meetings of General Council from four to three.

The committee **urges** General Council to complete the indemnification process by General Conference next year.

Recommendation 9: The committee recommends the conference accept the Report of the General Council.

Respectfully submitted,

Philip Lawton - Chairman

Bethany Lawton – Secretary

Katy Bofinger

C. Justin Camenga

Thomas M. Davis

Cathy Jara

Marcy Kersten

Gordon Lawton

Jeff Lawton

Linda Lawton

Holly Probasco

Linnette Reynolds

Diane Rhoden-Barrows

Steve Rogers

Melvin F. Stephan

Ginny Evans
Ben Figueroa
Peter Harris
Matt Jacob

Timothy Lawton
Doug Mackintosh
Scott Paulin
Holly Pontier

Dale D. Thorngate
Benny Uhlich
Sarah Uhlich
Jerry Vaught

By unanimous consent the conference accepted the report of the Memorial Fund (Yearbook Document F) as an addendum to the interest committee on budget and finance.

President Chroniger adjourned the meeting at 2:47 pm until Conference Week 2024.

Respectfully Submitted,
Katy Bofinger
Shiloh SDB (Shiloh, NJ)
Business Recording Secretary