

December 1999

---

## 57th General Conference Session 2000

**PLACE:** SkyDome and Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Toronto, Canada

**DATES:** **June 25 - June 29 (Sunday - Thursday)**  
World Ministers Council  
**June 29 - July 08 (Thursday - Sabbath)**  
General Conference Session

**THEME:** *Almost Home*

---

### Religious Life in Toronto

Religion is alive and well in Toronto, that is when you include everything from Roman Catholicism, Eastern Religions, Protestantism and “other-isms.”

Adventism is definitely part of Toronto’s religious life. Every Sabbath some 13,000 worshipers flock to 47 sites in metro Toronto, which covers an area of approximately 1,000 square kilometers.

Toronto’s religious roots go back to several mainline religions with Roman Catholic priests being the first to land on the shores of Lake Ontario with the early explorers/pioneers of the 1700’s. Keep this in mind when you understand that Ontario still has a fully government-funded, province-wide Catholic school system that parallels the public school system.

Other early religious pioneers were Anglicans (also known as Episcopalians). They too established missions and schools. They were followed by a variety of Protestant groups including Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians and more.

Today’s religious scene has changed significantly in the past 25 years. Now there is a mosaic of spiritual groups with Roman Catholicism being the largest with 1,420,395 adherents and 222 parishes. Collectively there are more Protestants (1.6 million) than other groups of religions. Among Protestant groups, the largest are Anglicans with 90,000 members in 284 congregations and the United

Church of Canada with 71,757 members in 324 congregations. However, attendance at mainline Protestant churches is significantly less than their membership. The same is true for Catholicism.

Other faith groups are Jews (180,000), Eastern Orthodox (180,000), Muslims (145,000), and Hindus (90,000). Numerous religious organizations abound with groups like Alpha and Omega Mission of Jesus Christ, Baha’i, Christian Science, Mormons, Eckankar, Good Shepherd Refuge, Inter-Church Coalition of Africa, Krishna, Legion of Mary, Path of Life, Buddhist Centre, Sanctuary of Prophets, and Unity Centre of Light and Love.

Toronto has also experienced numerous religious phenomenon: Be it the infamous interview of Bishop Pike and Psychic Edgar Cayce; the Toronto Blessing of 1995; Billy Graham preaching to a packed SkyDome; the “weeping Mary” at a Roman Catholic Church in 1998; or an evangelical-based Christian TV station.

Toronto has mega churches as well as traditional ones. There are the expressive, the ultra-liberal, the house churches, and the ethnic churches representing most of the languages or cultural groups of the world. Yet, while there is much in the way of formal religion, a very powerful religion exists in materialism, humanism, entertainment and religious apathy. This is where the masses of people are. This is the real and biggest challenge of Christianity and particularly Adventism. Yes, Toronto is religious, but not necessarily spiritually committed to a faith experience with the Creator and Redeemer. So welcome to Toronto. Come, worship and pray as Adventism reaches out to the various people groups in this metropolitan mission field.

[Dirk Zinner]

### Preview of Session Agenda

The Church’s business session in Toronto will hear numerous reports about the state of the Church and its activities during the years 1995-2000. The Nominating committee will consider names to the Church’s top governing body, the General Conference, and the agenda

will present recommendations adjusting the current Church constitution and bylaws, according to Athal Tolhurst, Undersecretary of the General Conference responsible for preparing the agenda for the Session. Changes will include selection process for delegates attending the General Conference Session, but will “not significantly change the balance relative to the lay and employee participation,” Tolhurst said.

“Experience has indicated the need for realistic adjustments to eliminate difficulties of choosing delegations from different Divisions and their institutions, and at the same time meet the acceptable criteria for such selection,” he explained.

The Session delegates will consider several *Church Manual* items. These will include a recommendation for a significant change to the format of the Church’s guidebook for local congregations and its members.

“The proposal calls for reformatting that would designate mandatory and advisory parts of the *Manual*,” Tolhurst said. The Church Manual Committee identified numerous procedural passages in the *Church Manual* that would be included at the end of each chapter in a section called Notes. These information passages (mostly in chapters 6-8) are largely based on cultural differences and modern advancement. These notes could be updated as needed without bringing the proposed changes to a General Conference Session.

Among the recommendations for Toronto is a proposal for new wording of chapter 15 of the *Church Manual* on “Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage.”

“This recommendation, however, does not call for any major changes to the Church’s position on this subject,” Tolhurst said. Many of the proposed changes came out of a report produced by the Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission set up in response to a request made from the floor of the 1995 General Conference Session in Utrecht, Netherlands.

The thrust of the revisions which were discussed and now recommended to the Session by the 1999 General Conference Annual Council underscore the biblical basis for the Church’s teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. A new section is being introduced on the Church’s role in ministering to families and providing programs for engaged couples, instruction for married couples, and “support for broken families and divorced individuals.” Some of the recommended changes alter the tone of the Church’s position. Gone are such words as

“guilt” and “disfellowship” being replaced by “removal from membership.” The proposal also affirms that separation or divorce as a result of physical violence is also allowable. Such cases, however, would not give either partner scriptural grounds to remarry.

The Toronto Session will deal with several Church reorganization recommendations in different parts of the world including establishing new unions. Also, the delegates will hear a recommendation for a name change of the Health and Temperance Department. It is recommended that the department be named Health Ministries. Among other recommendations, the process for electing auditors and the Auditing Service Board of the General Conference will be featured in the agenda.

The overall agenda of the Session will no doubt be impacted by statistical reports of membership increases as well as organizational and economic challenges brought on by rapid growth of the Church in different parts of the world.

“How to be effective in our mission to the world will be on top of the agenda. It is important that such focus is kept before the delegates to the Session. That’s why the Church exists and it is important for all believers to keep the ‘finishing of the work of God’ in mind in all aspects of our Christian life as Seventh-day Adventists,” said Tolhurst.

[Ray Dabrowski]

## **Come Visit ADRA’s World**

Toronto, with its 2.4 million inhabitants, seems far removed from ADRA’s world. Yet here in the heart of the clean, modern city with its landmark CN Tower overlooking the waters of Lake Ontario, visitors to the 2000 General Conference Session will be able to catch a glimpse of ADRA’s world.

“ADRA’s World” is the theme of the main ADRA exhibit located next to the central exhibit, just inside the main entrance to the Exhibit Hall. Those of you who follow ADRA’s work will recognize “ADRA’s World” as the name of the weekly television program that airs on 3ABN.

Visitors to this exhibit can sample a refugee biscuit, talk with ADRA staff, watch a video, and wander through the exhibit, which will feature miniature habitats representing homes from three regions of the developing world. Be sure to stop by and pick up a brochure about ADRA’s work. Free daily drawings will be held each evening. Prizes for the drawings will include works of art from Africa, South

---

America and Asia.

In the Commercial Hall, visitors can support ADRA projects by purchasing shirts, caps, key rings and other items. All profits from the sale of these items will be used to help people in need through ADRA's many projects. If you buy an ADRA item as a souvenir or get a gift for someone back home, you will be helping to make a difference in someone's life. You can also help raise awareness about ADRA and its work whenever you use the item.

ADRA's national spokesperson Steve Darmody, award-winning baritone and founder of MorningSong Music, will have a booth representing ADRA and MorningSong. Each year, Steve gives more than 100 concerts where he shares his music and tells of ADRA's work.

ADRA will be represented on the Exhibit Hall stage, which will feature programs each day except Sabbath. ADRA's programs will include a concert by Steve Darmody and other special features including musicians from the countries or regions that make up ADRA's world.

ADRA has a presence in more than 120 countries of the world. Don't miss this opportunity to find out what ADRA is doing there. [Rick Kajjura]

## **Almost Home: A Report of Walk Around the World 2000**

As the finish line comes into view, it indicates the "Walk Around the World" program, which began at the 56<sup>th</sup> General Conference Session in Utrecht, and concludes at the 57<sup>th</sup> Session in Toronto, Canada on Thursday, June 29, 2000.

The grand finale of Walk 2000 will have representatives from all over the world, from every Division. There will also be Pathfinders coming from each city where General Conference Sessions have been conducted during this century. This historic portrayal, together with a concert on the steps of City Hall, will be a media event which will positively reflect on the Church and show that Seventh-day Adventists are strongly committed to a drug-free lifestyle.

The concert will commence at 3:00 p.m. with Wintley Phipps as the master of ceremonies. There will be choirs and musical groups from many countries. At the conclusion of the program, the Walk 2000 will begin as 2000 balloons with a message telling of the dangers of drugs are released and lift high above the city.

This symbolic walk, which brings the Walk Around the World 2000 to a conclusion, represents many thousands of participants from all over the globe. Leading the walkers to the SkyDome, it is hoped that the Mayor of Toronto, the Honorable Mel Lastman, will be the Grand Marshall. There will be Pathfinders in uniform and colorful national costumes worn by those from other lands.

As the leaders enter the hall, previous walks will be portrayed on the mammoth screen. When the last of the walkers file through and the screen presentation is completed, Pastor Jan Paulsen, General Conference president, will give a position statement regarding the Church and drugs.

You will want to be a part of this great event and the time to begin is now. The General Conference has designated May 2000 as "Adventist Drug Awareness Month." All churches, schools and youth groups are encouraged to conduct a Walk 2000 in their neighborhoods to draw attention to the strong position Adventists hold regarding the use of alcohol, tobacco and other harmful substances. Wherever you are, be sure that your church is involved in this project next May.

For more information, write I.C.P.A. Walk 2000, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904, USA, or call 301-680-6719. [Reg Burgess]

### **How Are You Receiving Session 2000 News?**

Session 2000 News is a monthly publication available to you in the following formats: 1) fax copy; 2) e-mail text copy; 3) e-mail PDF copy; 4) mail; 5) viewing through the official website: [www.adventist.org/gc2000/](http://www.adventist.org/gc2000/)

Let us know how you would prefer to receive the newsletter. Contact:

General Conference Communication Department  
12501 Old Columbia Pike

Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 USA

Phone: 301-680-6308; Fax: 301-680-6312

E-mail: [session2000news@gc.adventist.org](mailto:session2000news@gc.adventist.org)

**Have you visited the official website for GC  
Session 2000? The website contains information  
you can't afford to miss. Visit us today at:  
[www.adventist.org/gc2000/](http://www.adventist.org/gc2000/)**

---

## Airline Discount Information

These discounts are not combinable with any discounts or promotions. Fares do not include surcharges, international taxes or Passenger Facility charges. Reservations may be made through your local travel agency or call the numbers below.

### AIR CANADA

North America, Caribbean, Europe, Asia & Middle East

Travel Dates: 6/4/00-7/29/00  
Discount: 5% off published excursion fares  
10% off if booked & ticketed 60 days in advance  
Phone: In USA, 1-800-268-0024 or Air Canada Reservation Number  
Code: Event Number CV008287

### AMERICAN AIRLINES

Domestic (from USA)

Travel Dates: 6/15/00-7/18/00  
Discount: 5% off fare  
10% off if booked & ticketed 60 days in advance  
Phone: 1-800-433-1790  
Code: 0960UE

### DELTA AIRLINES

Domestic (from USA)

Travel Dates: 6/20/00-7/13/00  
Discount: 5% off published fare  
10% off if booked & ticketed 60 days in advance  
Phone: 1-800-241-6760  
Code: DMN155874A

International

Travel Dates: 6/20/00-7/13/00  
Discount: 10% off B, M or Y fares  
Phone: Delta Airlines  
Code: DMN155875A

### UNITED AIRLINES

Domestic (from USA)

Travel Dates: 6/15/00-7/18/00  
Discount: 5% off any fare  
10% off if booked & ticketed 60 days in advance  
Phone: 1-800-521-4041  
Code: Tour Code 567SO

### US AIRWAYS

Domestic (from USA)

Travel Dates: 6/22/00-7/11/00  
Discount: 5% off fare  
10% off if booked & ticketed 60 days in advance  
Phone: 1-800-451-7208  
Code: Gold File Number 68160587 [Session Management]

---