Homosexuality has become an extremely controversial topic in many countries around the world, impacting societies and several Christian communities. The basic question is, “How should Christians relate to persons who practice homosexuality?” “How should those who have a homosexual orientation be made to feel by those who are ‘straight’?”

While there is an upsurge in the propaganda in favor of the gay lifestyle, there needs to be a corresponding eagerness on the part of Christians to see homosexuals as Christ saw all sinners. He was accused of mingling with prostitutes and sinners and was able to maintain his composure and confidence in treating such social outcasts with dignity and acceptance.

This new challenge, that interestingly is also affecting the Seventh-day Adventist Church, must be met in the same spirit that Christ demonstrated in His time and space. It is still expected that Christians should love the sinner while hating the sin, whether the sin is in the homosexual or in himself/herself.

Though homosexual members of our church pose a serious internal challenge, those in other communities also do the same. There is definitely the need for a new approach that can create an environment of grace which will lead to the transformation of a sinful life. This is the mandate that Christ has given to His Church, and He has modeled how to meet such a challenge.

“Christ’s approach demands that our church community be a haven of support to help precious people—including gays, lesbians, and bisexuals—in their often painful and traumatic journeys of recovery from all kinds of lifestyles. To restore the church as the trusted friend (rather than the enemy) of sinners requires a major shift in attitude on our part.”

Homosexuality, Marriage, and the Church, Edited by Roy Gane, Nicholas P. Miller, and H. Peter Swanson.
Notice is hereby given that the Fourth Quadrennial Session of the St. Lucia Mission of Seventh-day Adventists will take place at the L’Abayee Seventh-day Adventist Church from Wednesday, November 5th to Friday, November 7, 2014. Registration will begin on Wednesday, November 5, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. The first business session will convene at 4:00 p.m.

This Session is called to:

- Receive reports from the administrators of the Mission, the departmental directors and the auditors;
- Elect departmental directors and the elective members of the Executive committee;
- Approve plans and recommendations for the next quadrennium, including specific plans to get the Mission ready for conference status.
- Transact other business.

Delegates will be chosen in harmony with the operating policies of the St. Lucia Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.

Deaconesses Ordained To Full Gospel Ministry
Debra Henry
Revolution Fund
Bertie Henry
Youth & Chaplaincy Ministries / Trust Services
Anthony Hall
Director of Human Resource
Debra Felix

Produced by Caribbean Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists.

Edited by Theodore Jaria

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The issue of alternative sexual practices have been around from time immemorial and while some dared to go against societal norms and values the practice of homosexuality and lesbianism was always frowned upon. There were really no gray areas. God rained fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah because of their profligate behavior. They relished the thought of having angels for their enjoyment even in the face of Lot’s offer of his virgin daughters. Within recent times however, the lines seem to have become blurred and now we hear talk of gray areas. People have taken the very word of God and twisted it to support their alternative lifestyles. Today we hear of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community and their clamor for rights, we hear of the proliferation of gay marriages in many of the states in the US and already Caribbean Governments have entertained the thought of following suite. The adage when the US sneezes, we in the Caribbean catch the flu is certainly applicable here.

So where does the church stand on the issue of homosexuality? What is our position as an organization? The South Caribbean Conference must be commended for taking the lead in being the first field to initiate public dialog on the subject, when it convened a seminar on Marriage, Same Sex Relations and the Church entitled “Gray Lines” at the Crown Plaza hotel on October 2013. This activity sought among, other things, to re-emphasize the primacy of marital love between a man and a woman as God ordained it. Recently, on March 17th, the world church convened a meeting of the church leadership in Cape Town, South Africa to raise awareness of this issue, a process which I perceive, will be carried into the General Conference Session to be held in Texas 2015. The Union President was part of this exercise and we have included his report on page 18.

In this edition we seek to begin the dialogue on this sensitive subject which no doubt has and will continue to generate much debate.
The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes that every human being is valuable in the sight of God, and we seek to minister to all men and women in the spirit of Jesus. We also believe that by God’s grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God’s Word.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation. The Scriptures declare: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24, NIV). Throughout Scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (Leviticus 20:7-21; Romans 1:24-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Jesus Christ reaffirmed the divine creation intent: “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?’” (Matthew 19:4-6, NIV). For these reasons Adventists are opposed to homosexual practices and relationships.

Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to follow the instruction and example of Jesus. He affirmed the dignity of all human beings and reached out compassionately to persons and families suffering the consequences of sin. He offered caring ministry and words of solace to struggling people, while differentiating His love for sinners from His clear teaching about sinful practices.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council Session of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, October 3, 1999 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The Family Life Department of the South Caribbean Conference convened a conference on marriage, same sex relations and the Church, late last year. The Conference dealt with the issues of heterosexual marriage as “God’s Model”, homosexuality, same sex marriage and how these would impact the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These issues were investigated from theological, clinical, familial, legal and religious liberty perspectives.

A total of 237 persons were in attendance coming from throughout Trinidad, Tobago and some territories within the Caribbean Union Conference. Some comments made at the end of the conference included that “the program content was great!” “The line up of speakers and their qualifications were excellent.”

The facilitators included:
- Dr. Curtis Fox, PhD, Professor and Chair Department of Counselling and Family Science, Marriage and Family therapist, Loma Linda University.
- Dr. Nicholas Miller PhD, Professor and Chair of the International Religious Liberty Institute, Andrews University.
- Dr. Jiri Moskala, PhD, Dean of the SDA Theological Seminary and O.T scholar, Andrews University.
- Dr. Edward Clark, PhD, Dean School of Social Sciences and Psychologist, University of the Southern Caribbean.
- Dr. Faz Hosein, PhD, Dean School of Religion and Theology and N.T. scholar, University of the Southern Caribbean.
- Mr. Dale Scobie, Elder, Attorney at law (Private Practice).

This conference replicated to some degree another conference which was held at Andrews University in 2009. At the conference in Port of Spain, both New and Old Testament passages on homosexuality were investigated by the respective scholars. The Edenic model was elaborated on as “God’s Ideal.” Counselling, legal and religious liberty concerns were addressed and the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s positions on homosexuality and same sex marriage were shared with the attendees. Of course a strong emphasis was placed on the care and compassion of the homosexual as a person.

Plans are already on the way for a similar Conference in 2014.

Leslie Moses
Family Ministries Director, SCC
Caribbean Union was quite active in the recently convened ASI leadership Training Seminar held in Miami March 26 and 27 at the Inter American Division office. The Seminar, the first of its kind was held to provide orientation especially for new chapters and their presidents and dealt with topics such as: What is ASI and how does it relate to the official church; ASI-Mission and Evangelism; Sharing Christ in the Marketplace, How to start and maintain ASI Chapters and develop sustainable programs and Developing Leaders. Caribbean Union fielded the largest contingent and saw participants from Tobago, Trinidad, Guyana, Grenada, Barbados and the recently formed St. Vincent and Grenadines Chapter which had the largest delegation. Participants left with concrete plans and ideas for projects which can be undertaken when they return to their home chapters.

Theodore Jaria  
ASI Director

Five teachers in the Seventh-day Adventist school system were commissioned to the teaching ministry of the church at a very impressive ceremony held at the Arnos Vale playing field on Saturday, January 25th 2014, under the theme “Embracing the Dream of Christian Education”. The occasion brought together leaders, members, colleagues, families, friends and well wishers in a convocation of praise, affirmation and reflection. The teachers were presented by Pastor Dermoth Baptiste, President of the SVG Mission of SDA, while the keynote address was delivered by Dr Clinton Valley, President of the University of the Southern Caribbean. The consecration prayer was done by Dr Kern Tobias, President of the Caribbean Union of Conference while the charge was done by Dr Hilary Bowman, Education director of the Caribbean Union Conference.

The commissioned teachers were Mr Gabriel Bowman, Mr Ramesh Outar and Mrs Tricheal Febuary of the Mountain View Adventist Academy; Mrs Nicole Thomas of the Richland Park SDA Primary and Miss Marsha Williams of the Leeward SDA Primary.

The commissioning of the teachers was an endorsement by the church that they had satisfied the requirement for teaching, which includes academic, professional and denominational qualifications. The SVG Mission of Seventh-day Adventist congratulates these teachers and wish them great success as they continue to prepare students for service to humanity and for a place in the kingdom of the Lord.

Dermoth Baptiste  
President, SVG Mission of SDA
Shirley Matthews from the Amazing Grace SDA Church, Alice Cumberbatch, Cynthia Austin, Albertha Jack, Doris Williams and Margaret Samuel from the Fountain SDA Church and Rosemarie Richardson, Margaret Mitchell, Maureen Nero, Caroline Wilson, Annis Chapman, Perdita Thomas, Dulcina Pinder, Carmen John, Isabelle Simmons, Theresa Foster, Monica Rose, Clementina Wilson, Patricia Morris, and Adella Williams from the Kingstown SDA Church; these are the twenty deaconesses recently ordained in the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Mission. They are part of the over 400 deaconesses who serve in over 40 congregations across this Mission.

Pastor Henry Snagg, the Executive Secretary of the SVG Mission, who was the ordination speaker, commended the women for their unswerving commitment to the service of the Church and noted that he had interacted with many of those who were being ordained as a teen attending the Kingstown SDA Church. He admonished the deaconesses to continue to be assets in the administering of their duties.

Dermoth Baptiste
President, SVG Mission of SDA

Pastors Brent St Jean and Shane Franklyn of the local Seventh-day Adventist Church were ordained to full gospel ministry according to the usages of the SDA Church in a very impressive and solemn service held at the Arnos Vale Playing Field on Saturday January 25th 2014.

Pastor Franklyn has seven years in ministry and holds a BA degree in Theology and an MSc degree in Counseling, Psychology, with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Therapy. He currently serves the South Leeward district which comprises the congregations of Questelles, Good News at Campden Park, Maranatha at Block 2,000 and Ottley Hall.

Pastor St Jean holds a BA degree in Theology and an MA degree in Religion with an emphasis in Theological and New Testament Studies and currently serves the Southern district which comprises the congregations of Mt Moriah at Prospect, Glen, Choppins and Stubbbs. The SVG Mission of Seventh-day Adventist congratulates these ministers and wish them great success as they continue to give full proof of their ministry.

Dermoth Baptiste
President, SVG Mission of SDA
On December 24, 2013, the islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines suffered from extreme flooding where approximately 50,000 persons (half of the island's population) were affected and thirteen (13) lives were lost.

Many residents, including children, were traumatized by the disaster and as a result of this, a team visited the island and conducted training in psychological first aid. The team was comprised of two (2) professors, namely Dr Winetta Baker – team leader, Dr Adam Arechiga - facilitators affiliated with the Loma Linda University International Behavioural Health Trauma Team (LLUIBHTT); and Pastor Theodore Jaria-Communication Director/Caribbean Union, Mrs Aura Stewart-Henry, Hilda Halls-Julien and Mrs. Sylette Henry-Buckmire, all members of the Trinidad and Tobago Behavioural Health Trauma Team (TTBHTT).

The special training was conducted during February 27-March 06, 2014, in direct response to requests from the Honourable Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr Ralph Gonzalez, and Pastor Dermoth Baptiste, president of the St Vincent and the Grenadines Mission.

The intervention was in the form of a “Train-the-Trainer” program in the Community Resilience Model (CRM) to support trauma interventions for survivors of flooding, and post secondary trauma effects experienced by workers and volunteers.

During the period March 03-06, more than thirty-(32) persons including eighteen (18) counselors from the Ministries of Health and Education, pastors, representatives from NGOs, and other health professionals completed the Psycho-social Resiliency Training course. The Honourable Clayton Burgin, Minister of Health, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health, and the Chief Medical Officer graced the occasion with their presence on the opening day. Senior officials from the Ministry of Education and representatives from the St Vincent and the Grenadines Mission of Seventh-day Adventists also participated in the opening ceremony.

On the final day of the training, the trainees were afforded the opportunity to apply their new knowledge in the community setting. Teams led by the two facilitators from LLUIBHTT and the TTBHTT visited schools across the island and provided psychological counseling.

This initiative was funded by Loma Linda University, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)-Inter American Division, and the Caribbean Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The St Vincent and the Grenadines Mission of Seventh-day Adventists provided invaluable support throughout. Some of the objectives included rendering skilled professional services and fostering closer collaboration between the Seventh-day Adventist church, the Ministry of Health, and other government entities on the island.

As a result of this specialized training, plans are underway to set up a National Trauma Team for St Vincent and the Grenadines. The participants were unanimous that this was the next step and pledged their whole-hearted support for the establishment of such an entity. In his brief remarks made on the opening day of the training, the Minister of Health expressed the hope that this training will not be a one-time event but rather, should be viewed as the beginning of a partnership between the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Loma Linda University that will continue well into the future. The way has therefore been opened for closer collaboration between the SDA Church, the Ministry of Health, and other government entities on the island.

We express our gratitude to the Loma Linda University International Behavioural Health Trauma Team, Elder Wally Amundson, ADRA IAD Director—together with the ADRA IAD Board—who endorsed and supported this initiative; the Caribbean Union Conference administration for the support given at each step of the planning and execution of the intervention; Pastor Dermoth Baptiste, President of the SVGM, and other members of his administration for their unstinting support throughout the entire process.

Alexander Isaacs, ADRA Director
Caribbean Union Conference of SDA
Kinderkare Preschool Celebrates 25 Years

Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Hubert King wrote his first book entitled “Broken but Not Forsaken,” which is a autobiographical sketch of his life’s struggles. It offers laughter, tears, encouragement, and great hope.

A retiree of the South Caribbean Conference, Hubert King served that institution for twenty-five years as a literature evangelist, and maintenance technician. Brother King has made full use of his retirement time by taking up writing as one of his hobbies.

Born in the village of Monte Grande, Tunapuna on the island of Trinidad, his early childhood was filled with lessons by his God-fearing Mother. His father was a builder contractor, from whom he learned his first trade, proving his mastery by building his current home.

He has been blessed with many skills which he uses to the honor of God. He has functioned as a barber, shoemaker, preacher, handyman, and even midwife. He is also an outstanding auto-mechanic, helpful, caring, generous and personable. He has had his own hurdles to surmount and his success has been as a result of his unswerving trust and faith in God.

A second book may soon be on its way as he hopes that all who should read his writings would be drawn closer to Christ in preparation for His imminent return.

Gleanings Editor

Hubert King

Kinderkare Preschool opened its doors to the Maraval Community in Trinidad on January 11th 1989. On this special morning the school was dedicated to the Lord, and to witness this occasion were five students their parents and one teacher. The school has grown tremendously since then to where six hundred & fifteen students have graduated to date. Over the years many challenges and obstacles were faced leading those who run the pre-school to believe that to survive for 25 years truly takes the hand of God, for which they are thankful.

The school operates on the compound of the Maraval Seventh-day Adventist Church and adheres to Christian principles. It continues to strive and flourish and not only caters to the needs of the children but also conducts parental programs. One such program is our Parent Support Group called C.A.R.E-Cultivating Attitudes in Relationships for Eternity which convenes a monthly meeting to deal with different issues affecting parents. Professionals are invited to speak at some of these meetings which are open to the Community. “We are pleased and blessed because so many have benefited from these meeting.”

Throughout the years the school has kept in touch with many of their former students who now give great service to the Community. Some of these are nurses, lab-technicians, one is a general manager in the oil/gas industry. Some are also mechanics, couriers, bank officers, social workers to name a few.

At Kinderkare Preschool it is believed that once parents and teachers work together in the interest of the children of the community, coupled with the assistance of God, to mould individuals who will become strong and positive adults fitted to take their position in this life and for eternity.

CHRISTINE MOORE CLOUDEN (Teacher)
The Publishing work has been designed by God to be a vessel for the proclamation of the good news of salvation. The book Colporteur Ministry p.6 states that God has ‘ordained the canvassing work as a means of presenting before the people the light contained in our books...’ Over the years the publishing work has been, and will continue to be, an effective witness in preparing the church and evangelizing the world – getting ready for Jesus’ return.

Recently, the Inter-American Division Board voted to change the management structure of all Adventist Book Centres within their territory, and the Caribbean Union (CARU) will be following the policy guidelines in this restructuring exercise which has seen our territory divided into the following four (4) regions:

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A Field Manager will be selected from any Conference/Mission within the region to manage the new entity. The Inter-American Division Publishing Association (IADPA) and the Local Field Administrators will negotiate to employ the necessary number of persons for its operation. An IADPA representative was voted as the Regional Manager for the Book Stores of the Caribbean Union.

This transition between IADPA and the Local Fields is consistent with the strategy to advance the church’s mission. IADPA Bookstores will give eighty percent (80%) of the profits to each local field for the growth of the colporteur ministry and the support of the publishing work.

Trade and subscription inventory previously purchased from IADPA and currently held in stock, will be taken at the original purchase price.

IADPA’s basic function is the distribution of books to the church and literature evangelists (LEs). The administrative structure of the new entities will depend on the legal and fiscal framework within each island.

Each local field will assume full responsibility for the colporteur ministry and its basic functions will be part of their evangelistic strategy. Under this new policy structure LEs will receive benefits commensurate with their work and efficiency. The different categories of LEs are as follows: beginner, licensed, golden licensed, credentialed and golden credentialed.

While change is sometimes riddled with uncertainty, it is also filled with opportunity for growth and progress. This is the thinking of the Inter-American Division (IAD) that provided the motivation to give the Publishing Ministry a boost.

The desire of the Caribbean Union Conference is to work in partnership with all the stakeholders in proclaiming the good news which will usher in the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

May God continue to bless this great ministry which has meant so much to our membership, as it continues to be vital for the vibrancy of our Church and its mission.

Kern Tobias
PRESIDENT
Caribbean Union Conference

Judith Smith
PUBLISHING MINISTRIES DIRECTOR
Caribbean Union Conference
Enrique’s Winning Streak

The melodious voice of 11-year old Enrique Jarrott thrilled the audience at the Tobago Mission’s Biennial Schools Music Festival which took place at the Good News Seventh-day Adventist Church in Scarborough late last year.

Enrique, a student of John Roberts Memorial School of S.D.A. copped the first place in the Male Vocal Solo (Junior). He was also in winners’ row when he joined with Anthony Nicholson in the Male Vocal Duet and, he participated in the Mixed Choirs (Junior) Category, which saw his school emerging as champion.

Overall, the Festival was very successful and the Tobago Mission extended its appreciation to Mr. Philbert Hislop, Festival Coordinator, the Adjudicators and all the support staff.

Wilfred Desvignes
EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Naya is 2nd Best SEA Student

Naya Nancis, a standard five student of Scarborough S.D.A. Primary School, placed second in Tobago in the 2013 Secondary Entrance Assessment Examination. Naya received several awards for her overall performance both in areas of Academics and Co-curricular activities at the School’s last graduation exercises.

Her Principal, Mr. David Smith, Class teacher Mrs. Natalie Bernard Lovelace, other members of Staff, and her parents were very proud of her, and the Tobago Mission wishes her continued success.

Mr. Wilfred Desvignes
EDUCATION DIRECTOR
JOYOUS ACCOMPLISHMENT

Sixteen students from the Tobago Extension Campus of the University of the Southern Caribbean were part of the 2013 graduation exercises. The graduates from the Tobago Extension Campus were Patricia Marshall Bernard, Lystra Clarke Lincoln, Hermine Cunningham-Lovell, Teresa Mills, Michelle Chance, Jerriylyn Dillon, Darren Henry, Vernicia James, Shenelle Kelly-Perreira, J-Leise Mander, Joel Peters, Nigel Sterling, Jemma Walters, Julie-Ann Charles, Shonnelle Adams and Kieshel Morrison.

An overjoyed Pastor Toney Mapp, President of the Tobago Mission of S.D.A. joined with parents, well wishers and supporters in congratulating the students. He encouraged and reminded them of their role in the development of the country in general, and the development of the Tobago Mission in particular.

Wilfred Desvignes
EDUCATION DIRECTOR

'Be Ye Faithful'

“Stay with the Church.” These were the words of our Mission President, as he motivated the members of the eleven pastoral districts who were assembled at the Cyd Gray Stadium in Tobago at their last Annual Mission Lay Rally. He also expressed his appreciation to all members for the hard work and dedication to the cause of God.

He also spoke of two churches that had achieved significant milestones, namely the Glamorgan Church which celebrated its 100th Anniversary, while the church at Moriah celebrated its 90th Anniversary on December 16th 2013.

One outstanding lay workers, Bro. Henry Archer, who is 95 years old and still diligently about the Lord’s business, took the opportunity to remind the brethren and visitor’s about the opportunity of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He encouraged all to remain faithful to God.

Wilfred Desvignes
COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR
HEALTH FOR ALL

“Health for all” was an initiative of the Tobago Life and Health Foundation, the Adventist Health Professionals Association headed by Pastor Ein Kirk, Health Director of the Tobago Mission and the United Hands Inc. The objective of this program was to empower as many as possible within their community to be the best and do their best. This program was implemented through four exhibitions, followed by a Home Gardening Project and Health Seminars for the year 2013.

A workforce of 50 volunteers from the United States of America along with local persons dedicated time and resources to make this program a reality. A total of over 1000 persons in four venues were attended to, namely Moriah Community Centre, Golden Lane SDA Church, Castara SDA Church and Mary’s Hill Community Centre.

Each “Health for All” program provided vision tests, blood pressure tests, glucose tests and weight management tests. Among the other things being offered persons were also provided with dental services: cleaning of teeth, filling and extraction; medical evaluation by the doctors; services of a chiropractor; free glasses and health counselling on the healthy lifestyle plan.

The participation of all who attended these programs was very much appreciated as we shared with our communities our wish for the preservation of a healthy state of well-being.

Pastor Ein Kirk
HEALTH DIRECTOR

The Communication Department of the Caribbean Union on March 17-19 convened its communication Certification Workshop as part of its contribution to the Year of Informal Education instituted by the Inter American Division for 2014. The intent is to provide training for church officers so that they could be equipped to adequately perform their functions. Directors from all fields in the Union except the Suriname Mission were in attendance and the understanding is that they are to return to their conferences and Missions equipped to provide training for their Church Communication Secretaries. Also in attendance were representatives of the University of the Southern Caribbean, the health and safety officer of the South Caribbean Conference and on the final day Principals from some of the secondary and Primary Schools in the conference. The main facilitators were Leon Wellington and Abel Marquez from the Inter American Division and Celeste Ryan Blyden of the Columbia Union Conference who addressed the critical area of Crisis Communication. Many remarked on the relevance of the information shared and left with a clearer understanding of the function of the Communication Department of the church. All participants were given a free copy of the book Crisis Boot Camp written by Mrs. Blyden which gives step by step directions on how to prepare for and function during crisis. The Communication Director of the Union commended the Hospitality Department of the University for efficiently arranging housing, meals and providing transportation for his overseas guests.

Theodore Jaria
Communication Director
March 29th to April 12th would always be remembered by the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the people of Mexico, because of the Evangelism Impact that was hosted by the Inter-American Division and the Mexican Union, hosted as a gift to that great nation.

Pastors and laymen from all the Unions of the IAD converged on that beautiful country to preach the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. Despite the difference in the language and the need for translators, the program was well managed and executed by the local leaders. There was also a School of Evangelism where the participants were exposed to many of the principles and practices of effective evangelization. Presenters like Drs. Tom Evans, Gerson Santos, Donnieval Walker, and Richard Elofer facilitated a great growth experience.

There were nine participants from the Caribbean Union Conference in this wonderful initiative. They were Dr. Clinton Lewis, Pastors Marvin Smith, Preston Patterson, Terry John, Ruel Blackman, Claudius Morgan, Brothers Eugene Benjamin, Frankie Thomas, and myself. On a personal note, I had the challenge of speaking in Spanish because my interpreter arrived late for the service. God provided the gift of tongues and I was able to complete the sermon.

On Sabbath April 12, there was a grand celebration at the Arena of Mexico, where about 18,000 persons were in attendance. Elder Ted Wilson, his wife, Elder Israel Leito, and various Union Presidents and other leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist church were in attendance. We were treated to great music, wonderful fellowship, and a powerful message from Elder Wilson.

He encouraged the attendees to focus on the mission of the church, using the various ministries and approaches to preach the gospel to the world. There were live baptisms at the site, which added more meaning to the occasion. At the conclusion of the exercise over 3000 persons were baptized to the glory of God.

Next year the event will be hosted in the Caribbean Union Conference. What an awesome challenge. We solicit your prayers and support!

Dr. Kern Tobias, President (CARU)

PS: The Inter-American Division has advised that a total of 12,000 persons gave their lives to God as a result of this effort!
Pastor Kerwin Authwell Mitchell
In 1997, Kerwin Mitchell felt the call to full-time ministry, and in January 2002, he left for the Caribbean Union College to read for a Bachelor's Degree in Theology.

After his graduation in 2006, he returned home and served his ministerial internship in Georgetown under the supervision of Pastors Malcolm La Fleur and the late Ashton Alleyne. Pastor Mitchell's first pastoral assignment was in the Corentyne East District, Berbice. He is currently serving as the district pastor of the Upper East Bank Demerara pastoral district. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, his ministry has been blessed with over 500 souls.

Pastor Mitchell is currently pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Pastoral Theology at the University of the Southern Caribbean.

Pastor Sancho married Mignon Erika Maynard and this union has been blessed with two sons - Joel and Jonathan. He is currently pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Pastoral Theology at the University of the Southern Caribbean.

Pastor Marvyn Oathneal Smith
Marvyn received his academic training for ministry at the University of the Southern Caribbean where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Theology Cum Laude.

Upon completion of his studies in 2008, he did his ministerial internship in two Georgetown Districts under the guidance of the late Pastor Ashton Alleyne and Dr. Hilton Garnett. His first pastoral district assignment was in the Demerara/Berbice No. 2 District. He currently serves as the Director of Youth Ministries, Chaplaincy, and Public Affairs and Religious Liberty as well as pastor of the Peter's Hall Seventh-day Adventist Church. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, his ministry has been blessed with over eight hundred (800) souls.

Marvyn is married to Elodie Smith nee Cage, a prayerful and supportive companion in ministry, who hails from the French island of Martinique. Together they have brought the adorable Eden Melody Smith into the world.

Please join the Guyana Conference in prayer for these young men and their families so that they will remain conscious of the sacredness of their calling and stay committed to the ministry.
Workers at the headquarters of the Guyana Conference attended a staff retreat in the last weekend of January 2014. Planned by the conference administration, the unique retreat was intended to promote together-ness among the ‘conference family’ as well as personal spiritual upliftment.

On Friday evening as the Sabbath drew on, staff members residing in close proximity of the headquarters of the Guyana Conference began the year enthusiastically with the mobilisation of relevant groups of leaders during the month of January as a part of the process of programme planning and implementation. These were the Women’s Ministries, Youth, and Personal Ministries and Sabbath School Departments.

Women’s Ministries Leadership Retreat

As the church continues to focus on Revival and Reformation, the Women’s Ministries department adopted a major aim: to challenge Women’s Ministries leaders and their assistants to become more involved in the larger mission of the church. Intent on putting leaders on the path to achieving the common evangelism goal of the conference for this year, the department conducted a retreat over the January 10 - 12 weekend in the quietude of the Madewini Camp Site.

The training retreat focused on sensitizing the female leaders regarding small-group evangelism and the ability of women to minister in unique areas and in ways that are not as readily available to men. Women’s Ministries Director, Pamela Mentore, indicted that the women left Madewini with an enhanced knowledge of their expected roles in the mission of the church and a better sense of purpose in achieving the larger goals of the organisation.

The retreat also served as a launching pad for a major city evangelism initiative earmarked for March 9 to April 12. This is a collaborative ‘venture of the Personal Ministries and Women’s Ministries departments. Field work for the campaign to which many of the women have already committed, will be executed using the small-group approach. By large, the leaders are enthusiastic to begin this new phase of evangelism and to pool their resources to achieve the soul-winning goal of the conference.

The department enlisted the expertise of past and current women leaders for the facilitating of various discussion sessions. These were Women’s Ministries Director of the Caribbean Union, Pastor Claudette Andrews; past Women’s Ministries leader of the Guyana Conference (and current conference treasurer), Pastor Margaret Ramsarran; retired Women’s Ministries leader of the IAD, Pastor Waveney Martinborough; and Dr Janice Emanuel-Bunn, past director of the Guyana Conference who brings with her much knowledge and experience in leadership. Also contributing to the retreat were President of the Guyana Conference, Richard James and his wife, and the Upper East Bank District pastor, Pastor Kerwin Mitchell.

The final day of the retreat also saw an additional twenty-one persons consisting of pastors and lay leaders being trained to train Sabbath school teachers. Dr Janice Emanuel-Bunn facilitated training in the use of the “Behold the Master Teacher” curriculum which she herself designed some years ago. This cadre of trained leaders is intended to be used to conduct Sabbath school teacher workshops around the Guyana Conference during the year ahead.

A Partnership Leadership Summit

It made an unusual potpourri of leaders when Pathfinder Directors, AY Leaders and other youth leaders met with Community Services Leaders, Personal Ministries Leaders, and Sabbath School Superintendents for a leadership summit over the weekend that signalled the end of January and the beginning of February.

The collaboration facilitated a unified effort to sensitize the local church departmental heads of the intended direction of the departments for the year 2014. The occasion was also used to equip these leaders with necessary tools for the implementation of various conference-planned initiatives.

It is hoped that the marching orders given through these inaugural events for 2014 will lead to a smoother and more effective implementation of the goal of these departments and the conference at large.
The Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) between the Caribbean Union Conference/USC and the North Colombian Union/UNAC, has been launched with the first contingent to make use of the opportunity to improve their understanding of and ability to speak Spanish. It has been a great success!

Dr. Kern Tobias, President of CARU, Pastors Toney Mapp, President of the Tobago Mission and Giovanni Manhoef, a pastor from Suriname, and Sister Janette Cupid-St. Hiliare, VP Finance of USC spent one month in Medellin, Colombia attending Spanish classes.

Classes began on February 10 and ended on March 6. The teacher was Ms. Sandra Vega, who did a great job and performed miracles on her charges. The personnel from Colombia are carded to visit USC in July/August to improve their speaking of English.

Kern Tobias, President

A Memorable Visit

Dr. Lois Ritchie-Ritter, the daughter of Pastor Cyril J. Ritchie paid a surprise visit to the offices of the Caribbean Union Conference Headquarters on Tuesday April 1st 2014. Pastor Richie was a pioneer president of the South Caribbean Conference and further served as President of the Caribbean Union Conference. It was during his presidency at the Union that the property on which the office is situated was purchased.

Dr. Lois worked as a medical doctor at the Community Hospital in Cocorite, Trinidad from 1966-1970. She is now retired and lives in Loma Linda, California. She is a picture of health, happiness, and satisfaction. It was a memorable moment to meet one of God’s true servants.

Kern Tobias
President
Three children were chosen to do recordings for 3ABN Kids by the host of the programme Brenda Walsh. Mrs. Walsh met the children during a recent visit to Trinidad and Tobago where she met with children and adults at various conferences around the country.

The three very excited girls who were chosen were Jaydelle Baird, Anjali Ramella and Shelby Mitchell. Jaydelle Baird, who hails from the island of Tobago, was the first person to travel to the United States to be part of the Kids Time programme. She has been singing from a tender age and last year came first in her category during the National Music Festival. Her mother was also very excited about this opportunity.

Anjali Ramella is 8 years old and attends the Maracas SDA Primary School in Trinidad. She has already recorded her 16 songs, which it has been estimated took two and one half hours but was well received in the end. She has even been invited to return at another time. Her parents, both professors at the University of the Southern Caribbean are happy with the exposure that she got.

Shelby Mitchell has been singing publicly since she was 9 years old. At the 2010-2011 National Music Festivals, she was the overall winner in the Open Gospel Category, she was the youngest participant at that time. She also completed about 15 recordings and was also invited to return at a later date. She reported that she was not nervous at all and she could not wait to see the airings.

Brenda Walsh, who had visited Trinidad and Tobago for the first time, was very impressed with the performances put on by the children and was very happy for them to share their talent with the rest of the world. She described all the children attending the Kids Time Show as “amazing”, “first when they would walk in wide-eyed to see the studio. All of the kids have been watching the shows and they usually find that the studio (which is located in West Frankfurt, Illinois in the United States of America) is bigger than it would appear on television. They all go crazy for the most popular member of the show, the dog! He is the crowds’ favourite”.
The moment had arrived! It was the occasion that I had been hoping for a long time. The event was a special trip to Cape Town, South Africa to attend the informative Summit sponsored by the Family Ministries of the General Conference. The delegates came from all the Divisions of World Church, and I was privileged to be one of them. The Caribbean Union Conference permitted my wife Linda to accompany me, which made the long trip bearable and the experience memorable.

After two days of air travel and six hours in advance of Eastern Time Zone, it was time to settle down to the important matter of the Summit. Entitled “In God’s Image – Scripture. Sexuality. Society,” it began on Monday March 17th and concluded on Thursday March 20th. The keynote address was given by Elder Ted NC Wilson, President of the General Conference. In it he encouraged attendees to uphold the standards of the Bible while demonstrating the love and forgiveness that characterized the life and ministry of Jesus, to our homosexual brethren and friends who live in a broken world.

I am delighted to affirm that the stated objectives were realized in a significant way. The presenters were profound, the presentations were provocative, and being present was profitable.

Dr. Kwabena Donkor had an in-depth hermeneutical presentation about the micro(beginning), meso(middle), and macro(deeper) interpretations of hermeneutics. There seems to be a tension between the traditional and contemporary, as he indicated that what a text meant originally must harmonize with what we say it means today. The ‘Gadamer’ or interpretation of the text must be reliable and compatible with God’s revealed will concerning any sensitive or controversial issue.

Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller had a detailed discourse on the Old and New Testaments’ views on homosexuality. He emphasized that there is a difference between homosexual practice and orientation. The practice is classified as sinful but the orientation is a propensity which if managed by the grace of God, could be overcome. Passages such as Leviticus 18:22; 20:13, and Romans 1:24-27 were referenced as the theological foundation for the church to uphold God’s ideal for human heterosexuality.

The Life Experiences of Wayne Blakely, Virna Santos, and Ron Woolsey were of interest to the attendees. These brethren were redeemed by the grace of Christ and demonstrated an awareness of the mercy of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to change and keep them faithful to their faith.

Dr. Curtis Fox dealt with the Social Sciences, which showed the relationship between one’s social environment and one’s victory or defeat. He highlighted that we need to demonstrate empathy with persons who are struggling with homosexuality allowing them to express themselves, which could allow them to see God’s will in a non-threatening way. Medical Perspectives, Ethics and Ministry, and Legal and Employment issues were some of the other major areas that were explored.

THE WAY FORWARD:

There is no question that homosexual behavior is one of the most challenging lifestyle practices to overcome. In a religious community that accepts the Bible as its authoritative guide to faith and practice, the attempt to harmonize Scripture with the acceptance of some homosexual practices is futile, and because homosexual orientation does not necessarily mean that one will engage in homosexual practices, there must be great care in treating everyone with compassion and respect.

True compassion for homosexuals means that we should help them move from the dead-end of false security to acceptance of the authentic gospel miracle, for nothing is impossible with God (see Luke 1:37), and “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

While the church has no Biblical license to sanction the practice of homosexuality in any form, Christ’s approach demands that the church should be like a hospital where the spiritually sick can be nursed back to health and wholeness. Now is the time to educate our membership on the ramifications of this sensitive issue. The contents of this wonderful summit will be made available to all and sundry in due course. To have been at the summit and in Africa were stimulating and sensational.

Kern Tobias
President, Caribbean Union Conference