

PRESIDENT'S report

GETTING TO KNOW OUR SCHOOLS

Did you know that the Seventh-day Adventist school system is the largest Protestant educational system in the world?

It all began when Martha Byington opened the first known Adventist school in Buck's Bridge, New York, in 1853. Today, you can find more than 7,500 Adventist schools in nearly 150 countries, with 85,000 teachers, and more than 1.5 million students.

Here's another statistic that should astound you: did you know that students who attend Adventist schools are uniquely successful? Did you know that more than 85% of our graduates pursue higher education and 80% of our students successfully complete college/university degrees?

Our schools are unique because they intentionally offer both a scholastic and spiritual education. We are in the business of "Educating for Eternity."

Seventh-day Adventists believe that we are created in the image of God, that we are thinkers, that we are lovers, that God has made us by and for love, and that He longs to be in a loving personal relationship with every one of His children.

Adventist Education is a wholistic vision for the development of the whole-person: spiritually, physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally. We don't just educate students for this life.

In 1872 in her book *Education*, Ellen White stated, "In the highest sense, the work of education and the work of redemption are one." (p.30).

It is crucial that the spiritual story of God in Christ redeeming the world be the very air we breathe, and the scaffolding around the schools we build.

Whether we are behind a desk, at bunsen burners, or on the baseball field, all of the work of our schools needs to be centered in this bigger story — and we need to constantly search for ways to tell that story.

This is why my wife and I attended Adventist schools. This is why we led our four children to

attend Adventist schools, through Walla Walla University and beyond. After all, what more valuable investment is there than our children?

If Adventist education is going to continue to capture the imagination of future generations, we need to not only let our children see our passion for and our financial support of our schools, we need to also share the many success stories that provide a witness to the unique education received there.

Stories such as Jeffrey Kuhlman — former physician to several U.S. Presidents. Jeffrey attributes his success to the preparation he received through Adventist education. He once said, "I cannot speak enough of the solid education that I received. It prepared me to be the physician to Presidents' Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama."



Jeffrey Kuhlman, physician to U.S. Presidents

Stories such as Cynthia Chea Péan — a trained and certified plant-based celebrity chef to some of the biggest names in Hollywood, such as Will and Jada Smith and Stevie Baggs Jr. a three-time All-American

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DAVID JAMIESON

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GETTING TO KNOW OUR SCHOOLS, CONTINUED...

NFL linebacker. She isn't intimidated when she walks into the homes of billionaires, because, as she says, "all of my Adventist education prepared me to stand before kings and by the grace of God, do just fine."



Cynthia Chea Péan, chef to the stars

Stories like Alvin Chea — a musician and recording artist with Take 6, the renowned *a cappella* group. Alvin says, "Everything that I have been blessed to do in my life, I can look back on Adventist Education and say that it all originated there."



Alvin Chea, member of Take 6

Almost ten years ago a family moved across the country, and one of their children had a particularly difficult time with the move and the transition to a new school. In fact, the parents had totally underestimated the angst the relocation had generated for their son, and they didn't quite understand that all his acting out, fighting at school, and the uncharacteristic anger issues were his way of trying to grapple with the disorientation caused by the move across country.

The notes and calls coming home from school became a steady stream of concern. When it came time to attend their first parent-teacher conference with Mrs. B. They braced for the experience, expecting to be both scolded and embarrassed.

They were ready to face the music about their

failure as parents. So, they sat down with Mrs. B. and she quickly announced, "I love your son."

They tried to point out to her that they were the Smiths and wondered, "Was she perhaps expecting a different family? Had they shown up at the wrong appointment?"

However, they quickly learned that Mrs. B. was very earnest: she loved their son.

She loved their son because she was a teacher caught up in the messy narrative of redemption, the story of God's gracious love in Christ, the drama of God's hope for this broken world.

She loved their son because she knew that our God plays a long game and isn't surprised by anything. And she saw in their son a disciple in the making, a follower of Jesus buried beneath all his fear and bewilderment. And she loved him.

He saw love modeled and he absorbed God's story through his teacher's example.

Job 36:22 asks, "Who is a teacher like God?"

Most of us could stand up right now and share how much we were blessed by the Godly teachers in our lives.

The truth is that this sort of education happens every day, and over a lifetime, in schools across our conference. And we can't afford to lose it.

Our teachers love our children.

Our teachers pray for and worship with our children.

Our teachers educate our children about God every day of the school year.

It is an education that makes an eternal difference!

Let's remember to keep hoping and dreaming with oversized hopes and dreams for our Adventist Schools,

Let's imagine how all God's children could be loved, shaped, and formed by such an education.

Let's renew the sacrificial love of generations past who made it possible for our Adventist schools to continue. And as a community of faith, caught up in the story of God in Christ...

Let's recommit ourselves with renewed passion for Adventist Education here at Upper Columbia Conference and beyond! Let's not just tell the next generations; let's show them.

As this year comes to an end, may you experience the joy and love of Jesus Christ this Christmas. Take this time of the year to pause and reflect. May our light shine out to the world until He returns!



ACTIONS TAKEN AT 12.4.25 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Administration update

- David Jamieson, UCC president, shared a devotion about Adventist education and its impact.
- A discussion was held regarding topics for the upcoming North Pacific Union Conference constituency session. Topics ranged from the future of Adventist education and church organizational structure.
- Eric Brown, UCC vice president for administration, provided a report from the secretariat office.
- Thirty-one churches and two schools took part in the Pentecost 2025 initiative. This resulted in 300 decisions for Christ, 170 decisions for baptism, with 128 baptisms and 47 professions of faith.
- With reporting current to the end of October, there have been 586 baptisms or professions of faith in 2025, higher than any other year in at least the last decade.

Financial update

- Allee Currier, UCC vice president for finance, shared a financial report.
- The audit report covering the year ending December 2024 was presented by General Conference Accounting Services. The report found that the overall financial statements were fairly presented and the report received a green light.
- October year-to-date tithe increased by 3.78%.
- The additional tithe, combined with UCC operating well under budget, helps address the 2025 year-end projected budget shortfall.
- A report was given regarding the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) funds that have been received. The funds are currently set aside for 1.5 years, until the risk of an audit passes. These funds are currently accruing interest.
- The 2026 preliminary budget was presented. That budget is based on a 97.5% tithe basis and indicates a potential loss of almost \$1.7 million.
- 2027/2028 projections indicate several areas of significant budgetary impact, including a scheduled increase due to the Washington Minimum Salary Threshold.
- Jamieson provided a review of what UCC has accomplished over the last few years to mitigate budget impact for the coming years. The Executive

Committee was presented with several possible ways to address the budget projections and took a survey regarding priorities.

- Sandi Bowman, manager of ABC Christian Bookstore, gave highlights on College Place ABC and the efforts there. Staffing has stabilized and a marketing class from Walla Walla University has adopted the store as a class project. The ABC continues to implement suggestions from the town hall meeting, but several challenges remain.

Education update

- Adam Littell, UCC vice president for education, presented an education report.
- The 7Up spiritual retreat for 7th and 8th graders was recently completed. More than 165 students indicated an interest in baptism or recommitting themselves to Christ.
- An assessment report was given by Jim Ingersoll, consultant, and his associates, regarding Upper Columbia Academy. The assessment will help guide the UCA school board and administration in planning for the future.
- It was voted to appoint Pastor David Sierra-Marin to fill the pastor member vacancy on the UCA Board for the term ending 2027.

Other actions

- It was voted to recommend Chewelah Adventist Group be accepted into the sisterhood of churches at the next constituency session.
- An update was given regarding the Cle Elum company. It was voted at the September 25, 2025, Executive Committee meeting to transition Cle Elum to company status with the intent that they be restored to church status as soon as new health and mission focus can be demonstrated.
- It was voted to appoint Sergio Manente as a pastoral representative on the NPUC Executive Committee.
- It was voted to approve hiring Logan Lennon as a pastoral intern, to begin seminary in August 2026.
- It was voted to approve the following church district realignments and pastoral support:
 - Davenport/Otis Orchards/Spokane Countryside, Pastor: Jon Jennette
 - West Plains, Pastor (1/4-time): Cade Bolin

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