

Mid-America Union Outlook

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The Mid-America Union *Outlook* is an official organ of the Mid-America Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It is published monthly and circulated free of charge to constituent members.

The *Outlook* editorial office is located in the headquarters of the Mid-America Union Conference in Lincoln, Nebraska. Lincoln is the approximate center of the territory served by the Mid-America

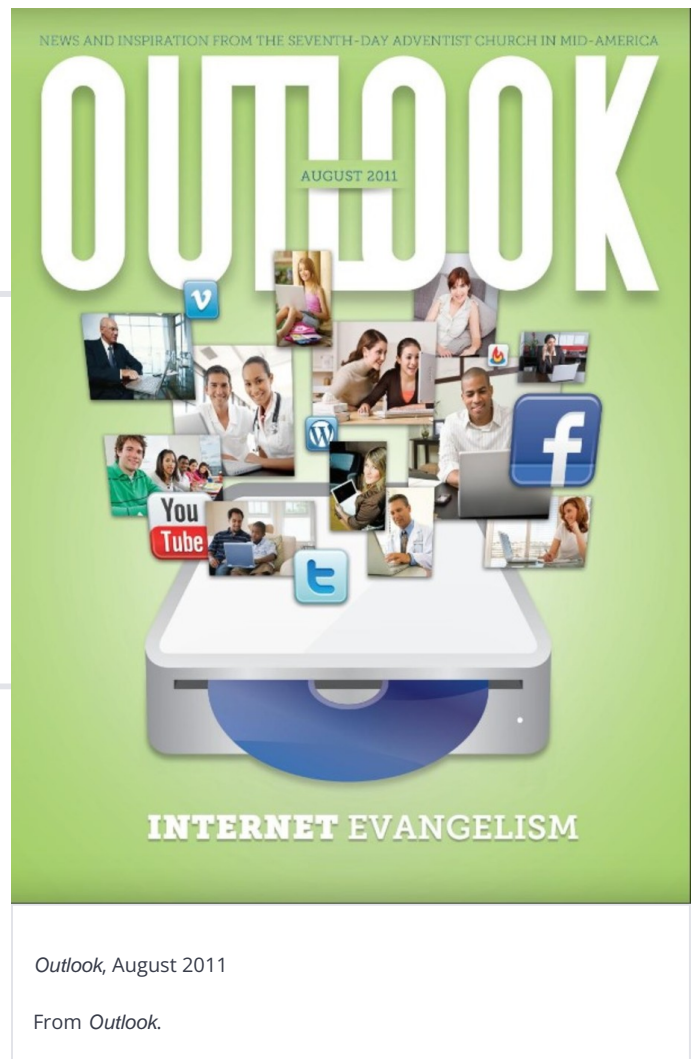
Union Conference, and thus the *Outlook*, a territory that comprises North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, and San Juan County, New Mexico.

The periodical has been in circulation since September 1980,¹ shortly after the Central and Northern Union Conferences merged to create what is now the Mid-America Union Conference. The *Outlook* was launched as the successor of both the former *Central Union Reaper* (1932-1980) and *Northern Union Outlook* (1937-1980).

The union paper has had multiple iterations since its inception in 1902. Church structure has played a deciding role in each of these adaptations, as the union has restructured multiple times throughout its history.

The Central Advance (1902-1904)

The first union paper within the Mid-America Union territory was founded in 1902 as *The Central Advance* (1902-1904), published biweekly from Lincoln, Nebraska, beginning with the December 16, 1902 issue. This paper, the “official organ of the Central Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists,” was a collaboration between the



Outlook, August 2011

From *Outlook*.

Central Union Conference – organized shortly before in Topeka, Kansas, on April 17, 1902² – and Union College, where it was printed at the college-owned College View Printing.

The *Central Advance* was created as a merger between *The Practical Educator*, which was a Union College periodical, and the Nebraska Conference paper, *Nebraska Reporter*. Rather than focusing on Union College or Nebraska Conference, *The Central Advance* was a union-wide paper, the first of its kind in the Central Union Conference.³

Instrumental in the creation of *The Central Advance* was its first and only editor, W. A. Colcord. Colcord was born in Coleta, Illinois, on December 8, 1860, and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Grand Junction, Iowa, at the age of 24.⁴ Colcord went on to be General Conference secretary (1891-1893),⁵ and an editor in Australia for nine years prior to taking on the position at *The Central Advance*.

Central Union Conference President E. T. Russell and Union College Professor L. A. Hoopes served with Colcord on the editorial committee. Three individuals worked with the editor in taking responsibility for three regular departments or sections in the periodical: Professor Hoopes (Educational Department), Dr. Lyra H. George (Health Department), and Katie Coleman (Missionary Department).⁶

The mission of *The Central Advance*, as stated in its inaugural issue, was to “clearly sound forth warning notes, showing that we are near the close of earth’s long night of sin” and to “arouse the people to greater activity in the work of the Master.” It intended to accomplish this mission by telling the stories of those within its territory. The first issue went on to state, “In the publication of this paper we desire to better come in touch with our people throughout the Central Union Conference, in order that we may have concerted action in important undertakings for the spread of the truth for these last days, and do with dispatch the work given us to do.”

The paper was circulated by mail within the Central Union Conference, which at the time included Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado, at a cost of \$.50 per year. It was printed on newsprint with about 10-20 pages per issue. These pages rarely included photos (black and white), and only occasionally included illustrations. The first printed photo appeared in the January 28, 1903, issue and was of a church recently purchased in Washington, D.C., to expand the work there.⁸ Nearly all of the pages were filled with text relating news that had taken place within the union or opinions about current events.

Central Union Outlook (1911-1932)

After *The Central Advance* ceased publication April 20, 1904,⁹ the Central Union Conference had no paper for seven years until the *Central Union Outlook* (1911-1932) was created to fill the void. The *Central Union Outlook* was launched as a result of a recommendation passed on January 22, 1911, at a joint meeting of the Central Union Conference Committee and representatives from the various states attending the bookmen's convention in College View, Nebraska (now a neighborhood of Lincoln, Nebraska).¹⁰

In the inaugural issue of the *Central Union Outlook*, union president E. T. Russell stated, “there are so many departments and institutions in our territory that it was imperative that these institutions and departments should have a unifying medium through which to reach people.”¹¹ He pointed out that the Central Union, despite being a strong union, had been the only union in the Adventist church without a union paper.

The new publication declared its purpose as follows:

The mission of the OUTLOOK will be to keep its readers in the closest possible touch with the progress, in every corner of the Central Union Conference, of the movement in which the Seventh-day Adventist stands committed. Its aim will be to merit a warm-hearted place in the homes and hearts of all our people, by furnishing such live and up-to-date information concerning our work and workers that no family of loyal Seventh-day Adventists will feel that they can afford to be without its weekly visits.¹²

A. T. Robinson, a Canadian-born missionary, pastor, and conference official, was chosen as editor of the paper, along associate editors Frederick Griggs, C. G. Bellah, and Meade MacGuire.¹³

Northern Union Reaper (1906-1932)

In the meantime, the Northern Union Conference, which consisted of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, had begun publishing its own paper called the *Northern Union Reaper* (1906-1932). When it was organized in 1902, the Northern Union Conference also included Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, Canada. When the Western Canadian Union Conference was organized in 1907, the Canadian provinces were taken from the Northern Union Conference and Iowa Conference was added to it.¹⁴

The Northern Union *Reaper* was first printed April 3, 1906. The mission of this paper was “to inspire hope, faith, and courage in the home and in the field outside of the home. It will give reports of progress, experiences in the field under trial, and victories in gathering the ripened grain.” The paper was issued every Tuesday from the Northern Union Conference headquarters in Minneapolis, Minnesota. C. L. Emerson accepted responsibility as editor – his first editing position.¹⁵

Restructurings and Renamings

The *Central Union Outlook* and *Northern Union Reaper* continued to be published until the Central and Northern Union Conferences voted to merge on February 3, 1932, as a result of a recommendation by the General Conference. At a joint meeting of the Northern and Central Union Conferences in Omaha, Nebraska, it was voted to merge the two unions under the name Central Union Conference, thus merging the two unions’ papers and beginning the publication of the *Central Union Reaper* (1932-1980).¹⁶ When the Northern Union was again organized separately on April 1, 1937, the Central Union retained the name *Reaper* for its publication and the Northern Union began publishing the *Northern Union Outlook* (1937-1980).¹⁷

In July 1980, after extensive deliberation, the Northern and Central Union Conferences were restructured into the Mid-America Union Conference. With this restructuring, the *Northern Union Outlook* and the *Central Union Reaper* ceased publication, and a new publication was created called *Mid-America Union Outlook* (1980-present).¹⁸

Chosen as editor for the new Mid-America Union *Outlook* was Halle G. Crowson, who served from 1980 to 1985. Crowson was a native of Mississippi who began his ministry as an evangelist in Greenville, Mississippi. He pastored churches in Alabama and Mississippi and worked as a conference evangelist before accepting a call in 1969 to be union ministerial secretary for the Northern Union Conference. During his time at the Northern Union Conference, he also managed the communication and religious liberty departments, serving as editor of the *Northern Union Outlook* from 1976 until 1980.¹⁹

Style Changes

As the publication has changed in name and audience, it has also changed in price, availability, and style. *The Central Advance*, which was produced biweekly, cost \$.50 per year, or approximately ½ a cent per issue. By the time the Central Union paper was revived with the creation of the weekly publication *Central Union Outlook*, the price had increased to 1 cent per issue, although the yearly cost remained the same at \$.50.

These early publications were modeled after newspapers of the time, *The Central Advance* being printed on approximately 7½ by 10-inch newsprint paper. As the publication evolved over the years, though, it transitioned from simply a newsprint style publication to more closely resembling a bound magazine. This transition occurred gradually over many years. The *Outlook* is now printed as a magazine on glossy, 8 by 10½ inch paper.

Mid-America Union Outlook (1980-)

By the time the Mid-America Union *Outlook* was created in 1980, the publication was being distributed monthly in the form of a color magazine. The *Outlook* continues to be a bound magazine-style publication distributed free to approximately 65,000 constituent members.²⁰ In order to focus on creating stronger design and content for every issue, it transitioned to 11 issues per year in 2010, and to 10 issues per year in 2013.

Beginning with the first Mid-America Union Conference Constituency Session in 1981, *Outlook* magazine has published a special constituency issue every five years with reports on the progress of sharing the gospel in the heartland territory. The August 2005 issue featured updates from the General Conference Session, held that year in St. Louis, Missouri. *Outlook* also regularly highlights stories and information on entities of Adventist Health System, and from Union College, the only institution of higher education in its territory. College staff members and *Outlook* editors have collaborated since 1995 to provide students with the opportunity to publish their articles, photos, and designs in one issue per year. In 2011, *Outlook* was completely redesigned and garnered an Honorable Mention award in the category of magazine design at the Society of Adventist

Communicators annual convention.

Outlook's mission today, as stated on its website (www.outlookmag.org), is to share Adventist news and inspiration with excellence, efficiency, and grace via various media to help people grow closer to Jesus Christ and in community with one another. ²¹ *In the past ten years, Outlook has explored current best practices for creative evangelism, discipleship, health ministries, stewardship, Adventist education, Adventist church identity and member retention, and diversity in the church. It has also addressed other topics relevant to Christianity including religious liberty and global persecution of Christians, environmentalism, the global immigration crisis, and the role of peacemaking.*

The digital age has presented more opportunities for reaching constituent members. While the *Outlook* print publication continues to be an effective tool for reaching a strong base of readers in the territory, the addition of an online edition and an organizational website and social media presence are opening the path to an even larger audience, including young adult populations. The Mid-America Union website (www.midamericaadventist.org) was launched at the beginning of the twenty-first century and was redesigned in 2009, with regular updates since. The *Outlook* magazine site went live in 2011 and has grown to reach a world-wide audience, due in large part to the volunteer blogging team that continually posts fresh content. In addition to *Outlook's* Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages, the product suite currently includes *The Advance* podcast and myOUTLOOK e-newsletter, launched in 2015 and sent weekly to nearly 1,300 subscribers.

Titles

Central Advance (1902-1904); *Northern Union Reaper* (1906-1932); *Central Union Outlook* (1911-1932); *Central Union Reaper* (1932-1980); *Northern Union Outlook* (1937-1980); *Mid-America Adventist Outlook* (1980-1986); *Outlook* (1986-).

Editors

Central Advance: W.A. Colcord (1902-1904).

Northern Union Reaper: C. L. Emmerson (1906-1907); T. D. Gibson (1907-1912); W. H. Edwards (1912-1917); M. L. Andreasen (1917-1918); N. P. Neilsen (1918-1919); M. S. Reppe (1919-1921; 1925-1927; 1928-1930); Stanley Ledington (1921-1925; 1927-1928); Lessie Culpepper (1930-1932).

Central Union Outlook: A. T. Robinson (1911-1914); Mettie E. Cornell (1914-1924); R.T. Emery (1925-1926); D. D. Rees (1926-1932).

Central Union Reaper: D. D. Rees (1932-1937); Mrs. Harry C. Turner (1937-1938); Ava M. Covington Wall (1938-1943); Margaret C. Blue (1943-1945); Martha Helen Huffines (1945-1950); Audra Wood (1950-1951); Olene Marie Nelson (1951-1952); Sylvia Powers (1952-1953); Clara Anderson (1953-1976); C. R. Beeler (1976-1980).

Northern Union Outlook: A. R. Smouse (1937-1952); L. H. Netteburg (1952-1976); H. D. Crowson (1976-1980)

Mid-America Union *Outlook*: Halle G. Crowson (1980-1985); James L. Fly (1986-1990); Roger W. Morton (1991-1998); Ryan Teller (1999-2005*); Martin Weber (2005-2013); Brenda Dickerson (2014-)
*assistant editor with no editor listed (1999-2000)

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Colcord, W. A. "The Advance Not Yet Discontinued." *The Central Advance*. April 6, 1904.

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Russell, E. T. "General Interest: Why." *Central Union Outlook*. June 6, 1911.

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Underwood, R. A. "Announcement: The Reaper." *Northern Union Reaper*. April 3, 1906.

NOTES

1. E. S. Reile, "The President's Page," *Mid-America Adventist Outlook*, September 4, 1980, 2.
2. E. T. Russell, "The Central Union Conference," *The Central Advance*, December 16, 1902, 2.
3. E. T. Russell, "A Few Words by Way of Introduction," *The Central Advance*, 2.
4. W. W. Prescott, "W. A. Colcord obituary," *ARH*, January 2, 1936, 21.
5. Seventh-day Adventist Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, "General Conference Officers," accessed June 18, 2018, www.adventistarchives.org/gcofficers.
6. Russell, "A Few Words by Way of Introduction," 1.
7. Ibid.
8. "New Church, Washington, DC," *The Central Advance*. January 28, 1903. 11.
9. W. A. Colcord, "The Central Advance Discontinued," *The Central Advance*. April 20, 1904, 12.
10. E. T. Russell, "Why," *Central Union Outlook*, June 6, 1911, 1.
11. Ibid.
12. "Greeting," *Central Union Outlook*, June 6, 1911 1.
13. Russell, "Why," 1.
14. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. edition (1996), s.v. "Northern Union Conference."
15. R. A. Underwood, "The Reaper," *Northern Union Reaper*, April 3, 1906, 1-2.
16. Minutes of the Joint Session of the Central Union and Northern Union Conference, February 3, 1932, Mid-America Union Conference Archives.
17. J. F. Piper, "A New Union Conference," *Central Union Reaper*, March 30, 1937, 1.
18. The publication was initially entitled *Mid-America Adventist Outlook* until it was shortened to Outlook in 1986.
19. Reile, "The President's Page," 2.

20. Outlookmag.org, "About," accessed June 2018, www.outlookmag.org/about.

21. Ibid.

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