

# Quigley, Willis Biehl (1922–2016)

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## JAMES (JIM) ARTHUR GREENE, AND JOYCE ANN (KESLAKE) GREENE

James (Jim) Arthur Greene graduated from Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University) in 1967 with a degree in Accounting. He served the church in various administrative capacities, including treasurer of the East Indonesia Union, vice president of finance at Loma Linda University, Columbia Union College, and the Rocky Mountain Conference, and as executive secretary of the New Jersey Conference. Greene retired in 2014 after over 48 years of service. Jim and co-author Joyce Ann Keslake Greene were married in 1964, a union that was blessed with three children.

Joyce Ann (Keslake) Greene was born in Massachusetts but grew up in Orlando, Florida. After a period of twenty years in which she married co-author Jim, mothered their three children, and studied at four different colleges, she graduated with honors from Loma Linda University – La Sierra Campus in 1982 with a B.S. degree in Accounting. Her professional career included service as director of payroll at Loma Linda University and as associate treasurer of the New Jersey Conference.



Willis Biehl Quigley

Photo courtesy of Columbia Union Conference.

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Willis B. Quigley, pastor, church administrator, and associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial and Stewardship Association, was born August 17, 1922, in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, to John and Hettie Quigley.<sup>1</sup> He married Ellinor Gainer in 1943. They had one son, Robert Lynn (b. 1949).<sup>2</sup>

After graduating from Washington Missionary College (now Washington Adventist University) in 1945, Quigley began pastoral ministry in 1945 in the New Jersey Conference. During the following 12 years, he pastored churches in Mount Holly, Burlington, Paterson, and Trenton.<sup>3</sup> He was ordained to the Gospel ministry in 1951.<sup>4</sup>

From 1957 to 1961, Quigley pastored the Shadyside Seventh-day Adventist Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,<sup>5</sup> where he was the speaker for a radio program entitled, "Your Bible Speaks." The weekly broadcast on WPIT at 8:30 on Sunday mornings covered all of western Pennsylvania. The program featured music by the Kings Heralds, a Home Bible Study Plan, and a message by Elder Quigley.<sup>6</sup>

Quigley accepted a call in 1961 to pastor the Van Nuys Church in the Southern California Conference.<sup>7</sup> In what was described as "one of the most active soul-winning programs of the conference," he directed lay members in conducting "Fireside Bible Classes" for their friends and neighbors in the community at several locales in the Van Nuys area.<sup>8</sup>

The years 1964 to 1967 found the Quigley family in the Michigan Conference where Elder Quigley served as pastor of the historical Battle Creek Tabernacle church. His duties included chairing the Battle Creek Academy board.<sup>9</sup>

In 1967, the New Jersey Conference, where Quigley began his ministry more than two decades earlier, called him to return as president of the conference. Upon beginning his presidency, he exhorted believers to take up the challenge of reaching the secularized population of their state, including the “hundreds of thousands” seeking pleasure “along New Jersey’s coastline” and “the industrialized millions under the shadow of the skyscrapers of New York.” Though they “seem encysted and sealed off from the faint gospel cry,” he urged that “we must redeem our purpose for existing by finishing God’s work in these areas.”<sup>10</sup>

While success in winning people in these targeted populations is difficult to measure, the conference membership grew from 3,225 to 4,000, a rate of nearly 25percent, during Quigley’s presidency, which lasted from 1967 to 1972.<sup>11</sup> Another highlight was the advancement of the conference’s secondary school, Garden State Academy. The school was enjoying “the greatest year in its history!” Quigley declared in 1969, when it had an enrollment of 118, up by nearly 30 from the previous year. The upward trend continued with enrollment reaching 163 by 1972.<sup>12</sup>

In May 1972, Quigley accepted the call to become president of the Potomac Conference.<sup>13</sup> Later that year, at the Brotherhood Church in Washington, D.C., he co-presided with Cree Sandefur, Columbia Union Conference president, in the first ordination in Seventh-day Adventist history of a woman, Josephine Benton, as a local church elder.<sup>14</sup>

After just a year and a half in Potomac, Quigley was elected president of the Columbia Union Conference on October 11, 1973.<sup>15</sup> Under his five years of leadership, the Columbia Union grew in membership from 57,116, in 1973 to 65,409, at the end of 1977. Tithing income grew to almost \$22 million annually.<sup>16</sup>

In 1975, Quigley enthusiastically embraced a proposal to field test in the Columbia Union the PREACH project, a General Conference Ministerial Association initiative to reach clergy of other denominations. Bimonthly, *Ministry* magazine was provided free of charge to clergy of any faith, with content designed to aid their professional development and, in a nonconfrontational manner, “help them better understand Adventists and their teachings.” Professional seminars were then conducted for those who showed interest in response to the magazine.<sup>17</sup>

After four and a half years of service, Quigley resigned as president of the Columbia Union in April 1978, citing “personal reasons.”<sup>18</sup> Given his previous connection with the PREACH program, it is not surprising that, a few months later, he was called upon to direct the project’s field seminars in his new role as associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association.<sup>19</sup>

Quigley coordinated and authored materials for the world church's evangelistic program, "A Thousand Days of Reaping," launched in 1981, credited with addition of 1,171,390, new members to the church by 1985. Before retiring that same year, he authored materials for "Harvest 90," the worldwide evangelistic thrust for the following quinquennium.<sup>20</sup>

During retirement years in Florida, Quigley served as an interim pastor for several churches and built homes. He died as a result of viral pneumonia on October 15, 2016, in Orlando, Florida, at the age of 94. He was survived by his wife of 73 years, Ellinor Gainer Quigley, and his son, Robert Lynn Quigley, a pediatrician at Florida Hospital in Orlando.

Dr. Quigley summarized his father's legacy as an evangelism-oriented pastor and church leader: "His churches always grew and gained many new members and converts because Dad preached the truth in a vibrant and practical way. Dad always said that the purpose of the church is for winning souls for Christ."<sup>21</sup>

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## NOTES

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