

NAD NEWS BRIEFS

DEBRA C. BRILL, FORMER NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION VICE PRESIDENT FOR MINISTRIES, PASSES TO HER REST

Debra Clements Brill, former vice president for ministries for the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, passed to her rest on August 27, 2023, at her home in Jamaica, Virginia, after an extended illness. She was 71.

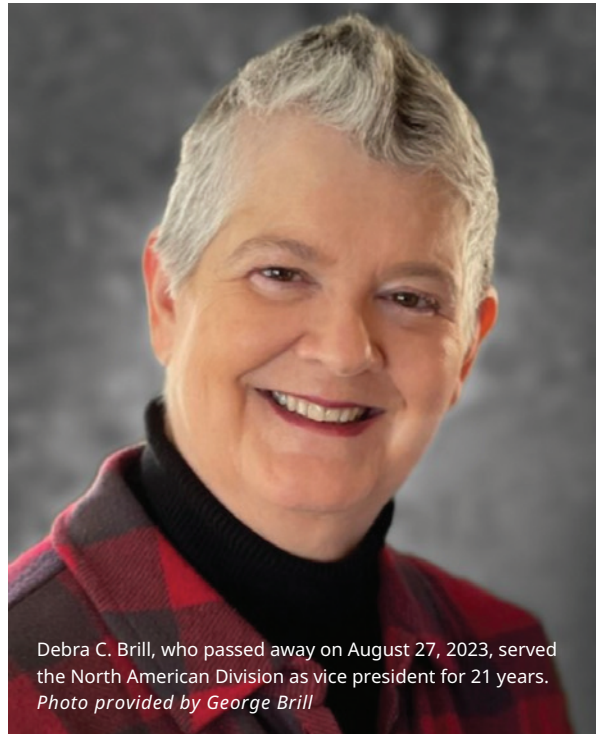
Brill retired on October 1, 2019, after serving the division as a vice president for 21 years. “It’s been my great joy to work with gifted leaders who love God and His church!” said Brill upon her retirement.

“Debra was an unusual and unique blend of dignified strength, humility, compassion, vision, and calm perseverance,” said G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president. “She could always find an encouraging word to say during the most difficult circumstances. She knew how to navigate the complexities of church structure to get things done. I consider it a high honor to have worked beside her for more than 10 years.”

“I would go to Debra’s office when I was faced with a challenging situation and learn from her. I always felt empowered by our conversations,” said Bonita Joyner Shields, NAD associate secretary. “When asked to follow her as vice president, I never felt as if I had to ‘fill her shoes,’ because I knew she was right there rooting me on. Her impact on my life—personally and professionally—was immeasurable.”

In the vice president role, Brill served as administrative liaison and chair of NAD committees and boards for the following ministries: Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Adventist Community Services, Adult, Children’s, Deaf, Disabilities, Family, and Health ministries, Hope for Humanity, Meeting Planning, Philanthropic Services for Institutions, Prayer and Reconnecting ministries, Resource Development, Special Projects, Stewardship, Women’s, and Youth and Young Adult ministries.

Brill, with 33 years of denominational employment, currently holds the record for longest-serving vice president of the NAD; and she was the second woman to occupy a vice president position at the division. Shields replaced Brill in 2019, and was replaced in 2021 by Wendy Eberhardt. The first woman to hold the position was Rose Otis.



Debra C. Brill, who passed away on August 27, 2023, served the North American Division as vice president for 21 years. Photo provided by George Brill

“I followed in the footsteps of Rose Otis, who was an amazing evangelist, and also a mentor to me,” said Brill during an interview around the time of her retirement. “At the time there was not a track for women. There were so few women pastors, and there were so few women even in conference leadership, much less union leadership. . . . But people believed in me, and Elder Alfred C. McClure, NAD president, said, ‘We want you to come and work with the leaders here at the division.’ And, in fact, he did poll them, and they were supportive.”

The division changed the portfolio to include church ministries and resource development; and the division added a distinct Women’s Ministries Department, with a director.

Before her work as an NAD vice president, Brill served as executive director for research and development, Church Resources Consortium, Pacific Union Conference, and in Potomac Conference as associate director for Adult and Children’s ministries, and special projects.

Brill is survived by her husband, George, former associate director for NAD Information Technology Services; their two children and their spouses; and three grandchildren. A memorial service was held on September 10 at the Collegedale Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tennessee.

—Kimberly Luste Maran, NAD Office of Communication