

**JANUARY 2024: LIVING MISSIONALLY IN THE REAL  
WORLD + US AND THEM + FACING YOUR FUTURE  
WITH ASSURANCE + REVIVING DRY BONES + PRAISE  
+ DEAR EDITOR**

# ADVENTIST REVIEW

**DIFFERENT  
FAITHS**

**COMMON  
HUMANITY**





“A second evil which plagues the modern world is that of poverty. Like a monstrous octopus, it projects its nagging, prehensile tentacles in lands and villages all over the world. Almost two-thirds of the peoples of the world go to bed hungry at night. They are **UNDERNOURISHED, ILL-HOUSED, and SHABBILY CLAD.** Many of them have **NO HOUSES** or beds **TO SLEEP IN.** Their only beds are the sidewalks of the cities and the dusty roads of the villages.”

—Dr. Martin Luther King  
Nobel Peace Prize address, 1964



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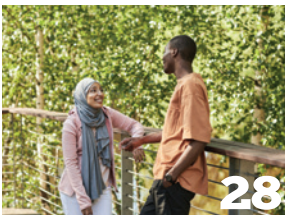
## FEATURES



18

18 **ON THE PATH TO FRUITFUL INTERFAITH INTERACTIONS** | BOUBAKAR SANOU

The Bible is an amazing resource for understanding how to connect with other faiths.



28

22 **LIVING MISSIONALLY IN THE REAL WORLD** | GREG AND AMY WHITSETT

Mission isn't only "over there," it's right here.



32

28 **NAVIGATING THE COMPLEX LANDSCAPE OF GLOBAL RELATIONS** | PETRAS BAHADUR

Connecting with the children of Ishmael

30 **US AND THEM** | OSCAR OSINDO

The goal is to be one with each other in Christ.

32 **SENSE OF THE WORLD** | ELLEN G. WHITE

Sounding the call to mission

To keep our eyes fresh for mission opportunity,  
we need to ask God to gift us with His eyes  
to see opportunities around us.

23

## ARTICLES

### 36 **FACING YOUR FUTURE WITH ASSURANCE**

**HENSLEY M. MOOROOVEN**  
Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, one thing is constant.

### 40 **FOUNDATIONS FOR OUR COMMON HUMANITY**

**GANOUNE DIOP**  
If we go back far enough, our family tree includes Noah (and Adam).

### 46 **HIS INVITATION**

**GREGORY AND CAROL ALLEN**  
Paul had an answer for divided believers.

### 50 **CONFESSIONS OF A YOUNG MAN**

**GARHETT MORGAN**  
Older members still might know a thing or two.

### 52 **REVIVING DRY BONES**

**SARAH GANE BURTON**  
Looking for revival? Look no further than the book of Ezekiel.

### 56 **FAITH-INSPIRED SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY**

**LEONARD BRAND**  
Biblical faith and science are intertwined (or are they?).

### 58 **IN THE BEGINNING**

**MERLE POIRIER**  
Let the 175-year-old birthday celebrations begin!

### 60 **DEAR EDITOR**

**JAMES WHITE**  
It may be 163 years old, but it's still truth.

### 62 **PRAISE**

**SHENALYN PAGE**  
Finding an answer to life's problems in an unusual place

### 72 **ADVENTISM'S FIRST FEMALE MISSIONARY**

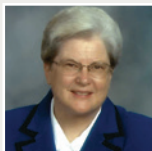
**BILL KNOTT**  
She's not well known, but she made an impact long before the others.

60



## NEWS | OPINION

- » Using Innovative Technology and Creative Storytelling for Mission
- » Peru's Largest Fruit Salad Highlights Importance of a Healthy Lifestyle
- » Two Adventist YouTubers Lead Evangelistic Meetings in Croatia
- » Youth Centers Are Changing Lives Near Brazil's Capital
- » Bulgaria Young People Commit Their Talents to God's Service
- » Trip to Venezuela Indigenous Communities Results
- » Kit Watts, Trailblazing Advocate for Adventist Women, Dies at 79



### EDITORIAL

- 5 **JUSTIN KIM**  
THE IDOLATRY OF PHUBBING JESUS

### DEPARTMENTS

- 6 **LETTERS**  
69 **HOUSE CALL**

### COLUMNS

- 27 **CLIFF'S EDGE**  
CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN
- 35 **THE PIONEERING PASTOR**  
SHANE ANDERSON
- 55 **WITNESSING FOR INTROVERTS**  
LORI FUTCHER
- 67 **TRANSITIONS**  
GERALD AND CHANTAL KLINGBEIL

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# TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED  
STORIES ON  
ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG  
LAST MONTH:

1



The Way of Life, by *Adventist Review* editors

2



Kit Watts, Trailblazing Advocate for Adventist Women, Dies at 79

3



Windows, by Annalise Truman

4



South American Division Launches Experience in the Metaverse, by South American News Agency

5



Adventism's Rusty Sword, Part 1, by Shane Anderson

# Miracles Still Happen!

WATCH. BE INSPIRED. SHARE WITH YOUR CHURCH.



## From "Witch" to Witness

[awr.org/ranja](http://awr.org/ranja)

Ranja was held captive by the evil spirits that possessed her . . . until the day she turned on her radio.



## Trading Guns for God

[awr.org/rebels](http://awr.org/rebels)

Rebel assassins have laid down their guns in exchange for a new life in Jesus . . . and they're already leading others to Him!



## Taking a Bold Stand

[awr.org/wisam](http://awr.org/wisam)

Wisam's own family tried to stone and stab him for his belief in God, but today he is an Adventist pastor in the Middle East!



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*Might we be cherishing the idea of God more than a real-life, real-time relationship with God Himself?*

## The Idolatry of Phubbing Jesus

Phubbing” is snubbing a real person in favor of interacting with a phone instead. Most likely you’ve experienced it: you are eating or hanging out together when someone—sometimes in midconversation—pulls out a phone. Another phenomenon takes this one step further: an individual interacts with the videos and photos on his/her phone while physically next to the same people they are looking at on their phone. In other words, they are with their friends, but interacting, not with them, but with digital manifestations of them. Here they are, at the same table, with the potential to make new memories, have new conversations with new cycles of banter and humor. But instead they are interacting one-sidedly with a digital facsimile of the same person. A twisted snub indeed.

There’s nothing wrong with photos and videos. But there is something wrong talking and interacting with them instead of human beings; not individuals, but the image; not people, but pixels; not persons, but pictures.

Screens are easier to control than people, who have thoughts, emotions, and conversations.

One can start and end videos at his or her convenience instead of experiencing organic exchanges with another. The character of friends is relegated to the digital rendition of those friends. The image becomes more than who they are in real life, in real time, in real context. The idea and the abstraction of the photo overshadows what we really love and cherish about the person in the photo.

Might we have similar delusions with God? Might we be cherishing the idea of God more than a real-life, real-time relationship with God Himself? We need, more than an ideal photo or video of God, a living, vibrant, organic, natural, and in vivo connection with Christ. We take selfies with Jesus and think that we are best friends with Him. We customize, edit, filter, amend, color-correct our mental videos of Jesus so that we have the version that we like.

Some people fall in love with the idea of Christ’s grace but refuse to experience that grace because they already own a snapshot of it. Others hold up of the idea of Christ as Lord but haven’t experienced His Lordship because they have a Pola-

roid of Him in their back pocket. Ranging from God’s aseity to His zeal, we sing songs about particular ideas and qualities about God, develop worship programs that revolve around these notions, and even name our churches and children after them. But as long as we keep them abstract, distant, and even “holy,” we are merely phubbing God while we sit in His pews.

It is modern Christian idolatry. We deplore the idols of other religions, rightly condemning their inability to speak, think, move, and do anything. We belittle their compositions of wood, stone, and metal. But our ideas about God are made of the same immateriality as idols. Ideas are idols too, made to be in our image as we pick and choose them selectively, to be set up for war against only the ideas that we don’t esteem.

Photos have their place to allow us to reminisce. But in the presence of the antitype they are mere figurines. “These are a shadow of things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ” (Col. 2:17, NIV). Instead of the idea of Jesus, let’s connect with Jesus Himself.

## WE HAVE NO IDEA

I am at a loss for words as to how to respond to this meaningful article by Annalise Truman (pseudonym). Thank you for sharing this very meaningful experience in the article titled “Windows” (December 2023). All too often in our congregational life our pastors and members have little knowledge of the challenges that all of us, including our pastors, face in our homes and in our lives. The mission that God has given us in the end-time has two aspects. One of those is ongoing ministry, healing, and spiritual enrichment to fellow members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Converting people to become followers of Christ is only half of the mission that God has given us.

**Gregory Matthews**

## THE PAIN IS SIMILAR

Parents of a child on drugs experience the kind of pain expressed in “Windows” (December 2023), by Annalise Truman (pseudonym). I hope her and her family will find hope and help as well.

**Ann Cunningham Burke**

## KEEP GOING

The story, “Our Christmas Miracle” by Ora May Baker (December 2023) had me on the edge of my seat. I always find



## NAVIGATING THE COMPLEX LANDSCAPE OF GLOBAL RELATIONS

*Building bridges with the children of Ishmael in today's world*

PETRAS BANADUR

28 ADVENTIST REVIEW | JANUARY 2024

In a world marked by diversity and an intricate tapestry of cultures and faiths, it is imperative that we seek to understand, relate to, and build connections with one another. The Global Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations (GCAMR), an initiative under the Adventist Mission Office of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, is dedicated to this very cause. GCAMR's primary vision is to raise awareness within the Adventist community, fostering an opportunity to share the love of God with Muslims by understanding their culture, religion, and worldview. We endeavor to dismantle the barriers of prejudice and separation by ultimately promoting peace through respectful engagement.

For centuries, differences between Christianity and Islam have fueled tensions, focusing on such matters as the divine revelation, the final prophet, and the "ultimate faith." These disagreements have erected walls of prejudice and separation between adherents of both religions, often leading to suspicion and distrust, especially in areas in which one faith predominates.

### COMMON GROUND

What many Muslims may not realize is the existence of a group among Christians known as Adventists, who encourage refraining from consuming what is considered unclean (such as pork), avoid intoxicants (such as alcohol), and are dedicated to preparing the world for the second coming of Jesus and the final day of judgment. These shared values offer common ground and facilitate understanding between the two communities. By acknowledging these commonalities, we can further break down walls of separation, promote peace, and strengthen cooperation for improved relationships.

Adventists have generally considered themselves to be the people of the Book (identified in the Scriptures), and Muslim sources acknowledge the existence of such Christians who are faithful to their Scriptures. When Adventists identify themselves as "people of the Book," it provides an opportunity for bridging the gap. Moreover, the alignment of

bids us to keep going, and never give up.

**Rex Turnberry**

## CHRIST IS ABLE

In John 9 Jesus healed and restored the sight of a man who had been born blind, teaching us clearly that no matter what dysfunction with which we may be born (genetic, epigenetic, psychological, etc.), Christ is able to heal and restore fully those who come to Him in faith! Michael Carducci's article, “Where the Battle Lies” (November 2023), reflects this thought.

**Craig Kavanaugh**

## HEALING THROUGH GOD'S WORD

I am thankful to Michael Carducci for sharing his thoughts in a connected, courageous way through his article “Where the Battle Lies” (November 2023). May true and deep healing come to some of those individuals so afflicted. I remember very much wanting to be a boy when I was a child, but through the love of Jesus and obedience to His Word, He brought me to value, very much, my female identity in Christ as a precious thing. Psalm 139 is truly very healing.

**Ann Goswick**

that nail-biting stories are only rendered more nerve-wrecking when they involve children. I was very relieved and praising God for the resolution at the end. This story made me think of Romans 8:25. Hope gives you the stamina to keep going. Even though you may hit roadblocks at every turn, the slightest glimmer of hope, even hope for a miracle, can help you take a 200 mile journey to save a life. When the outcome looks bleak and the chances are slim, hope



# Christ is able to heal and restore fully those who come to Him in faith!

CRAIG KAVANAUGH

## I REMEMBER THOSE DAYS

Can you imagine if *you* were one of those in the hotel room described in Dwight Nelson's article "What Hath God Wrought!" (November 2023)? Just a few guys shooting the breeze about ministry and evangelism and one or two of them saying, "Why not? If God be for us, who can be against us!" Indeed!

I remember those days. I had a cousin call me and say, "Who is this guy Nelson? Wow, is he ever laying it on the line! Do you have tapes?" I did! I gave them to Clif. Clif died a short time later, but he had the opportunity to see the message laid out before him once again. Clif was a former Adventist, but, I hope, an Adventist again in his heart of hearts! I'll leave that up to God, who "is not somebody to be afraid of, but somebody to be a friend of!"

Dan L. Kelly

## A VISION THAT LIFTED ME OUT OF DEPRESSION

I am thankful for what Clifford Goldstein shared in "The Vision" (November 2023). It reminded me of a vision of heaven I had while suffering from depression over a broken relationship. I saw Jesus and behind Him a great multitude that I could hardly make out, but a great roar of joy was

coming from them. That was it. Although I was still sad about the broken relationship, that vision lifted me up from my depression, because I knew the glories of being in God's presence will far outweigh any heartaches that we may experience in this life.

Charles Possenriede

## WE WILL KNOW THEN

Clifford Goldstein's vision that he shares in "The Vision" (November 2023) could have been inspired so that it comes out now and affects the one person God intended it to affect. None of us will ever know until after Jesus returns.

Martin Rogers

## AN ADVENTIST CONNECTION

Enno Müller's article "Whom We Miss Seeing" (September 2023), which included the reference to Arthur Fry's Post-it Notes, brought back memories of Fry's daughter, Sue. The author may not have been aware of the Post-it Notes' connection to the

Adventist Church. Sue Fry was my roommate in Rees Hall at Union College for the 1967-1968 school year. I was aware of her father's connection to Post-it Notes, but Sue did not brag about it nor her father's work at 3M.

Norita Nelson-Roth

Recognizing that the holiday season, as joyous as it may be, can be a stressful time, the December issue of *Adventist Review* addressed the topic of mental health. As a new year begins, the need to take care of our mental health has not abated. A new website has been made available by the General Conference Health Ministries Department to provide mental health



resources. We encourage you to visit it frequently as they

continue to update it. To access it, follow this QR code: <https://reminded.org/>

## YOUR TURN

We welcome your letters, noting, as always, that inclusion of a letter in this section does not imply that the ideas expressed are endorsed by either the editors of the *Adventist Review* or the General Conference. Short, specific, timely letters have the best chance at being published (please include your complete address and phone number—even with e-mail messages). Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: [letters@adventistreview.org](mailto:letters@adventistreview.org).

# Spiritual Deceptions Exposed!



*A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing* tackles modern-day spiritualism and practices that may seem harmless but can lead believers astray.



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**“We are finding that digital evangelism can bring all the church departments together, creating great synergy.”**

**Neven Kláčmer, p. 12**

# NEWS



Group photo of delegates and presenters during CommSummit on November 7. PHOTO: DANIEL GALLARDO/IAD

## USING INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY AND CREATIVE STORYTELLING FOR MISSION

**INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION COMMSUMMIT ENCOURAGES, INSPIRES ADVENTIST COMMUNICATORS.**

MARCOS PASEGGI AND INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

Adventist media experts poured out their knowledge and experience during the Inter-American Division's Communication Summit, or CommSummit, held in Miami, Florida, November 7-8. The two-day event, which included presentations, short talks, and panel discussions, focused on the use of technology for mission and the use of cinematography to share stories, as well as celebrating creativity and storytelling.

### INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR MISSION

Daryl Gungadoo, director of Adventist Review Media Lab, discussed innovative options to use the newest technologies for mission, in-

cluding new ways of sending data from point A to B. "Currently we depend on our Internet service providers," he said. "New research is exploring how to use split photons instead. . . . What it means is that we might be able to communicate across the world without Internet service providers."

Other advances that Adventists need to consider and reflect on are the new frontiers in artificial intelligence (AI), which is now being applied for services such as design assistants, social media assistants, writing, and image generation, among many others. Gungadoo also mentioned companies that are exploring methods for adding electricity to our brains to

enhance human functioning and increase the brain's storage capacity; the implications of the trust economy, which includes services such as Uber but also Kickstarter and others; and the impact of hybrid media.

Gungadoo explained that in the past, media has been very linear, but it's now following a hybrid model. As an example, he used a recent production in Morocco, where the key was not how they shot the film but how they dealt with the content and technically repurposed it. "By using an 8K 360° camera system, we don't only capture the image but also what is around," he explained. "In that way we can reposition our cameras af-

ter we have shot the scene. And those images are not processed in a regular video-editing suite but in a gaming engine suite.”

The hybrid model also allows creators to insert 3-D images into scenes for special effects, such as adding computer-generated lions into the scene of Daniel in the lions’ den, Gungadoo explained. The filmed content can also be digitized and turned into a cartoon, games, augmented reality, and virtual reality options, he said. The technology has led to a new game, Babylon Quest, that is scheduled to be launched at the North American Division Camporee in August 2024.

Gungadoo also shared how Adventist Review Media Lab is recording new shows and programs on a green screen that is then applied to virtual studios, which reduces costs dramatically, he said. Other innovative approaches include incorporating augmented and virtual reality to the study of the Sabbath school lesson, or to create content to share the Adventist message.

### **USING YOUR GOD-GIVEN POTENTIAL TO CREATE**

Another presenter on November 8 was award-winning and Creativo 115 studio director Hellen Hernández Castro. “Stories have been always part of our lives and culture,” she said. “Things have changed, but the basis has been always the same. Even Jesus used stories to discuss the most significant top-

ics. Cinema is my preferred methods for telling stories.”

Hernández shared how her first trip to a cinema was to a venue where Mark Finley was preaching. “Some people went to the stage and prayed, ‘Thank You, Lord, for helping us use the evil space for a good cause,’” she said. “I found that kind of prayer very uncomfortable.”

Hernández shared how people were moved when she premiered her first short production when she was just 16 years old. “There I found out how powerful stories on a screen can be,” she said.

After graduating from Montemorelos University in Mexico, Hernández launched Creativo 115. She was also accepted to a top school in Mexico City, into an exclusive program that would take only 15 students a year. There, facing stiff competition and classmates with much more experience, Hernández had to learn and relearn what she thought she knew. That initial shock, however, led her to realize some of the advantages she had, including the skills acquired thanks to her church musical and Pathfinder Club background. Church members and the church organization have always supported the logistical aspects of their productions, she said.

Another advantage, Hernández explained, is that creative people usually seek to get in touch with their spiritual side, something that they try to achieve by various means, not all of them healthy. “Sometimes we are not aware of

the advantage we have in being able to talk to God so easily,” she said. “Asking Him what He wants me to say and what the message is He wants me to share. I think it is a great advantage.”

With these great advantages there also comes a big responsibility, she said. “God has given us dreams, talents, and if we are not using them in the right way, we are almost committing a sin,” she said. “It is the task of every one of us to inspire the new generations to create, to awaken that creativity, as we prevent them from wasting their potential.”

### **THE POWER OF A PLOT TWIST**

Another Adventist working in cinematography is Puerto Rican media producer Jonathan López, who discussed some of the challenges and opportunities the ministry offers church communicators.

“How many of you have ever felt [like] an underdog?” he asked. “It has happened to me. But let me just say first that in Jesus’ hands, we are not a finished product.” He added, “If you are working in church communication and feel that you have made it, you will probably have to change your vision completely about what it means to communicate Jesus.”

During the next few minutes López discussed the effect and power of a plot twist in his own life.

López shared how he studied biology with the goal of working in sports medicine. God, however,

led him to a different path that allowed him, just three years later, to launch his first cinematographic production. “God led me to understand that His plot twist in my life would not only impact my life but help impact the lives of others,” López said.

He shared some of his early experiences in which he was able to see how God was leading, and felt certain there was a calling from God in that area. “Evangelistic cinema does not begin at school; it’s a calling,” López said. “It starts with a fire inside of us. It is a fire that some will never be able to understand or explain.”

That calling does not reject training and education, but it understands that there’s a higher aim. “Prepare all that you want and are able to, but please understand that Jesus called you to something specific that He might not have called everyone to do,” López said. “I hope that the plot twist God may want to write with your script is unique and specific for the community in which He allows you to live.”

In López’s case, his calling prompted him to produce the movie *Spin* despite lack of funds and other challenges. “Along the way, our calling will be tested,” López said. “But the One who called you will lead you so that you can get what you need.”



Elementary school students participate in preparing the massive fruit salad. PHOTO: JOHN ANDREWS ADVENTIST SCHOOL

## PERU'S LARGEST FRUIT SALAD HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

ADVENTIST SCHOOL CELEBRATION INITIATIVE ENGAGED THE COMMUNITY.

THAIS SUAREZ, SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

As part of the festivities for the fourth anniversary of the John Andrews Adventist School (JAAS) in the city of Cajamarca, Cajamarca Region, in northern Peru, students successfully prepared “The Largest Fruit Salad in Peru” on November 10.

The event not only broke a record but also stood out for its commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle. It was a move that attracted church and community members, organizers of the activity said. Students from various levels actively participated in the preparation of the massive fruit salad, using fresh fruits grown locally, regionally, and nationally by Peruvian farmers committed to quality and sustainability. The initiative was carried out under stringent measures of health, hygiene, and care, organizers said.

JAAS principal Denix Deza showed his excitement for the initiative’s success, noting that the institution’s main goal was to raise awareness about the importance of incorporating fresh fruits into the daily diet. “The positive impact that this can have on society marks a benchmark milestone in the promotion of healthy eating in the Cajamarca Region,” he said.

In addition to the culinary challenge, JAAS carried out a comprehensive healthy lifestyle campaign. Professionals offered free fluoridation and nutritional assessment to community residents who attended the event. Based on those assessments, they offered advice on how to deal with various health issues or challenges.

### OUTSTANDING TEAMWORK

With more than 1,000 people involved, including the school’s students, parents, guest assistants, faculty, and staff, the event highlighted the school’s culinary know-how, event organizers said. Likewise, they added, the activity reinforced the school’s commitment to the wholistic development of its students.

JAAS is an educational institution that is based on biblical principles and enduring values, school leaders said. The school “is not only concerned with pedagogical quality and academic performance, but also actively engages in the promotion of a healthy lifestyle,” school leaders said. “As part of the Adventist Global Educational Network, JAAS continues to be a benchmark in the education of more than 2 million students in more than 165 countries.”

Two Adventist YouTubers led recent evangelistic meetings in Croatia. PHOTO: VANESA PIZZUTO/ADVENTIST

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## TWO ADVENTIST YOUTUBERS LEAD EVANGELISTIC MEETINGS IN CROATIA

THEY ENGAGED WITH FOLLOWERS AS THE COUNTRY PREPARES FOR EVANGELISM PUSH.

VANESA PIZZUTO, TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION

**D**ani odluke (Decision Days) was a unique evangelistic series organized by Hope Channel Croatia to connect online viewers to local Adventist communities. To achieve this, Hope Channel Croatia enlisted the participation of two emerging Adventist YouTubers, Croatian pastor Dario Kovačević (@BIBLIJA\_n\_dianu, 5.01k subscribers) and Serbian psychologist Nemanja Boričić (@NemanjaBoricic, 23.8K subscribers), to lead the activity. Together, they toured four cities—Osijek, Vukovar, Slavonski Brod, and Zagreb—meeting their YouTube followers in person for the first time and delivering powerful messages about the gospel.

At their final stop at Rakovčeva Adventist Church in Zagreb, Kovačević and Boričić preached in tandem, radiating a palpable energy and friendship. Reflecting on the history of Serbia and Croatia, as well as their unlikely friendship, Boričić remarked, “This unity itself is the gospel. We are different, but one in spirit.”

Throughout the campaign, November 10-16, the church was packed, with 150 people in attendance (roughly 20 percent of them were guests), along with 250-350 viewers watching the livestream, and up to 9,000 individuals watching the videos later in the week.

The team in Zagreb left nothing to chance. Every night a group of prayer warriors gathered to pray for the people listening to the message. Meanwhile the media team, an impressive group of seven volunteers led by Boris Brkić, managed five cameras, live mixing, and streaming on YouTube.

“It’s my first time doing this, but I’m one of the prayer team members,” Alan Požgaj said. “We meet a half hour before the meetings start with the speakers and pray. Then, while they preach, we stay in a little room in the church and pray the whole time. We pray for God’s Spirit, His angels, and everything happening . . . the experience is awe-inspiring. It gives me goosebumps!”

“I know a woman who watched one of our YouTube channels, and then she found a local church and eventually got baptized,” commented Brkić, emphasizing the importance of making the campaign available on YouTube. “We are trying to grow our online community, which now has roughly 10,000 subscribers. We started during COVID three years ago; we are still young . . . God is helping us, and we have lots of good feedback and blessings.”

### A STORY OF SYNERGY

According to Neven Klačmer, Croatian Conference executive secretary and communication di-

rector, the word that best describes this evangelistic campaign is “synergy.” “Dario was involved with Hope Channel Croatia from the beginning. So two years ago he moved away from Zagreb [where Hope Channel Croatia is based] and started his own YouTube channel; many people were following him.”

“He then contacted Nemanja in Serbia, and they both accepted the invitation to tour Croatia, promoting both their own YouTube channels and Hope Channel Croatia,” Klačmer said. As many of their followers came to meet them in person in every city, “it helped us bridge the gap between the digital and the analogue church.”

### WHAT’S NEXT?

Decision Days served as an introductory campaign, paving the way for the Christ for Europe initiative that was scheduled for December.

“We want digital evangelism to be our focus,” Klačmer said. “We are learning that sometimes we spread ourselves too thin with too many projects that only scratch the surface. We are finding that it is best to focus on one big project and that digital evangelism can bring all the church departments together, creating great synergy.”



Participants can opt to learn a new sport or get training to access the labor market.

PHOTO: APLAC FILE PHOTO

## YOUTH CENTERS ARE CHANGING LIVES NEAR BRAZIL'S CAPITAL

INITIATIVE OFFERS COURSES, TRAINING, SPORTS, AND A PLACE TO MAKE FRIENDS.

MAITA TÔRRES AND JOSÉ CARLOS, SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

In Brazil's capital region, two youth centers managed by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in the Federal District and Goiás aim to incorporate men and women—both Brazilians and foreign refugees—into the labor market, in addition to providing learning opportunities for young people. These centers promote work and offer quality education and vocational courses, leaders behind the initiative said.

At the centers young people between the ages of 15 and 29 have access to daily sports workshops, professional courses, lectures, psychosocial care, and other free services. The two youth centers are strategically located in the Samambaia and Recanto das Emas administrative regions in Brazil's Federal District. These areas are known for presenting a context of social inequality and for housing many young people in vulnerable situations.

### LIVES IMPACTED

Since 2022 the project has served more than 6,000 people. One of the young men who is seeing his life transformed through the Sa-

mambaia Youth Center is Marcos Eduardo Valeriano. At 21 he is studying and working, but somehow he still manages to set time aside to learn jiu-jitsu.

Through the project, Valeriano has been able to realize one of his dreams. He has participated in four competitions sponsored by ADRA and has won a gold medal in each of them. "I found out about the Youth Center through a friend who brought me here," Valeriano said. "The staff treated me so well that from that day on I never left."

For jiu-jitsu teacher Apolyano Dantas, the sport is making a difference in Valeriano's life. "Marcos was a very shy kid. Today he is very communicative, but when he arrived here, he was very introverted," Dantas said. "Eventually, I noticed that he had a talent for jiu-jitsu. He began to focus more. Through that, we took him to compete, and he began to stand out."

But it is not only in Samambaia that the project is impacting lives. In Recanto das Emas 17-year-old Pedro Theiss learned that the youth center was offering a free barber course. Through practical and theoretical classes, he learned the

trade and got a job at a barber-shop. "If it weren't for the Youth Center, I wouldn't be a professional today," Theiss said. "They didn't just teach me about having a profession. They taught me how to treat people, manage ideas, and learn from others," he said.

### A PLACE FOR CONNECTING

Besides helping people to become part of the job market, the social initiative also offers a space for young people to hang out and spend time together.

"The youth center is an extension of a young person's home," said Jeconias Neto, former regional ADRA director in the Federal District and Goiás. "We understand that the sense of belonging is what young people often find in the world of drugs and crime. Therefore ADRA must counter all that by offering a better option," he said.

Neto also said that the space is more than a place of learning. "Some young people don't come here to take a course. They just come to sit around, playing ping-pong, talk to other people. This is the extension of home," he said. ▀

Two young members look at Bibles on display during the recent national youth conference in Bulgaria. PHOTO: TSVETOMIR NAKOV AND

NIKOLAY STOYKOV

## BULGARIA YOUNG PEOPLE COMMIT THEIR TALENTS TO GOD'S SERVICE

YOUTH CONFERENCE ENCOURAGES PARTICIPANTS TO ACTIVE MISSION OUTREACH.

TSVETELINA TSVETANOVA, INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bulgaria held a national youth conference November 3-4 at the International Fair in Plovdiv under the slogan "God's Got Talent." The event was organized by the church's youth department.

More than 300 young people from all over the country took part in it, exploring their talents and their possibilities for serving God. The young people participated in workshops and were inspired by the sermons, organizers said.

More than 80 delegates from the Inter-European Division (EUD) who were attending the EUD year-end meetings also attended the youth conference's Sabbath service. A highlight of the program was the exhibition of the union ministries' departments of the church, which welcomed participation from the youth.

"This year our goal was for every young person from Bulgaria to find their mission," said Julia Krumov, organizer of the conference and part of the Bulgarian Seventh-day Adventist Youth Department. "And not only to find it, but to decide to start working from tomorrow, doing what God is calling them to do in their local church."

EUD youth ministries director

Jonatan Tejel was a keynote speaker at the event. "The role of young people should be at the front lines and leading the church," Tejel said. His observations from Bulgaria are that there is a strong core of motivated young people in the Adventist Church who are moving forward together, and every year this group is increasing.

General Conference (GC) secretary Erton C. Köhler shared God's Word through his personal testimony during the Sabbath service. GC vice president Thomas Lemon also inspired the youth during the afternoon workshop by telling his mission life story. Young people were motivated to discover their personal gift for mission. Valdimir Krumov, youth pastor at the Bulgarian Seventh-day Adventist Christian Centre VIVO, gave young people an opportunity to take a test to discover their own gifts for mission.

"I'm positive that what motivates young people is to have the opportunity," Tejel said. "We should let them do what they are good at. To be free to express and use their talents in the way they feel comfortable."

EUD president Mário Brito congratulated the youth in Bulgaria and shared his vision for the role of young people in the church. "I

see young people as locomotives on a big train. They are full of powerful imagination, full of initiative. We must work closely with young people, listen to them, and this will help the church a lot," Brito said.

Conference participants shared that they drew inspiration, motivation, and a sense of unity from the conference, along with useful contacts and new opportunities for future development.

"I liked that we had the opportunity for so many young people to be together, see each other and communicate," Ina Staneva, a youth participant in the conference and a Pathfinder leader, said. Also, "to be inspired for mission and participate in sharing the good news."

Local church youth leader Bridget Mancuso agreed. "I have personally discovered a lot about myself, about my character and my talents, precisely through initiatives in the church, in which I was invited to get involved," she said.

Tejel appealed to young people not to give up when they encounter difficulties or disappointments. "Remember that working for God is not a matter of what people around us say, but a matter of our personal communication with God," he said. ▀





Leaders pray for several young people before baptizing them in southeastern Venezuela.

PHOTO: EAST VENEZUELA UNION



## TRIP TO VENEZUELA INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES RESULTS IN BAPTISMS

VOLUNTEERS TRAVEL BY BOAT AND ON FOOT FOR A FIRST VISIT IN TWO YEARS.

STEVEN'S ROSADO AND ANAÍ JIMÉNEZ, INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Traveling several hours by car, boat, and on foot, and even spending the night in the middle of the jungle, were among the challenges Seventh-day Adventist pastors, health practitioners, and lay volunteers experienced in their efforts to attend to the physical and spiritual needs of dozens of people in several Venezuelan indigenous communities in the state of Bolívar.

The visit, which took place October 3-8 and included a delegation of 16 people, specifically benefited the Indigenous communities of Alto Paragua known as Periquera, El Plomo, and Arekuna. The communities, which total approximately 1,800 residents, had not been visited in two years, church leaders said.

Five months before the trip, regional church leaders had sent a lay church member to preach the gospel in that area. Now volunteers offered a Vacation Bible Experience program for the first time in all three communities. At each location volunteers also offered a week of Bible conferences for adults. Free medical care was provided in El Plomo. As a result of these efforts, 24 people, including older children, young people, and adults, gave their lives to Christ through baptism. Each received a Bible as a gift.

Southeast Venezuela Conference president Mauricio Brito, who led the delegation that arrived in Arekuna, said his group had to spend the night in the middle of the jungle for reasons beyond their control. "It was a challenging experience, but we felt the protection of God's angels at all times," he said.

A total of 205 children—from both Adventist and non-Adventist families—enjoyed the Vacation Bible Experience program. Another 250 people benefited from the health day held in El Plomo, which included dentistry, pediatrics, general medicine, hydrotherapy, and pain and neurolymphatic therapies. The team distributed donated medicines and provided education on various aspects of health care, organizers said.

Dentist Fergis Marcano, who performed extractions, dental cleanings, and removable prostheses during the health day, said it was a joy to participate in the initiative. "It is very gratifying to carry out this work, to see how patients thank you because you made a change in their lives," Marcano said. "We didn't talk just about oral health but also about increasing their self-esteem, which is especially true for patients who received their prostheses."

Marcano said her team also gave talks in schools about the importance of brushing correctly and suggested putting an oral health handbook together where people can go regularly to find dental information in their own dialect.

Raul Zambrano, captain of the El Plomo community, said he deeply appreciated the visit from Adventist pastors and volunteers, because it is very expensive to leave the community to go to the city for treatment. "We want them to come back next year, because we were pleasantly surprised with their service," Zambrano said.

At the end of the intense week of missionary work, Brito, accompanied by Julio Bastardo, executive secretary for the conference and organizer of the service work carried out in Periquera, said they felt joy after participating in the initiative. "We are happy to have taken care of our brothers in their homes. No matter how far away and how many resources are required, we won't leave them alone. This group of pastors, doctors, and lay volunteers were there to serve them, helping to provide relief to their challenges," Brito said. ▀

## KIT WATTS, TRAILBLAZING ADVOCATE FOR ADVENTIST WOMEN, DIES AT 79

**SHE SERVED AS ADVENTIST REVIEW ASSISTANT EDITOR AND IN MINISTERIAL ROLES.**

PAT BENTON AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

**C**atherine Bea (“Kit”) Watts, a longtime Seventh-day Adventist leader who served at *Adventist Review* and opened ways for women to use their God-given talents in ministry, died November 15 after a long battle with cancer. She was 79.

Since 1973 and for decades Watts participated in several study groups on the role of women in the Adventist Church, where she advocated for equality of women in ministry through her voice and the research papers she authored.

She became well known throughout the Adventist Church when she served for nearly a decade as assistant editor of the *Adventist Review*. She wrote on a variety of topics, but her focus was always widening the circle of acceptance for all people.

Watts was born December 5, 1943, to Carl B. and Lois May (Shepherdson) Watts in Topeka, Kansas, United States. The family lived in the Midwest until the summer of 1955, when Watts, her younger brother, Howard, and their parents sailed for Yokohama, Japan, where her parents served as Seventh-day Adventist missionaries—first in Yokohama and then in Okinawa—for the next 18 years.

Watts completed her secondary education at Far Eastern Academy

in Singapore in 1961 and enrolled at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, that fall. In 1966 she graduated with a bachelor’s in religion and physical education and minors in education and English.

That fall Watts stepped aboard a Greyhound bus and headed for Walla Walla, Washington. For the next two and a half years she took journalism classes at Walla Walla College. The summer of 1969 Watts assisted Roberta J. Moore, her major professor, with research for her doctoral dissertation on religious journalism in the U.S., colonial times to the Civil War. Watts fell in love with both American and church history as they researched libraries and church archives.

At the end of that summer Watts began her first full-time job as an editorial assistant at the Bureau of Public Relations at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC), then located in Takoma Park, Maryland. Her next job was assistant book editor at the Review and Herald Publishing Association, just across the sidewalk from the GC.

In 1973 Watts became the first woman on the pastoral staff of Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park. Even as



the youngest member of the Sligo team, she managed to magnify her views about gender inclusiveness. That year she was invited to participate in the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s seminal Role of Women in the Church Study Committee that met at Camp Mohaven in Danville, Ohio. Watts presented a 57-page paper for that assembly. (During her professional lifetime she was the only invitee to participate in all of the church’s major committees and councils on the role of women.) While working at Sligo, she also studied library and information science at the University of Maryland and earned a master’s degree in 1978.

In 1997 Watts accepted a dual role as founding director of the Women’s Resource Center (WRC) at La Sierra University in Riverside, California, and in the Southeastern California Conference as assistant to the president for communication. When Watts retired in 2007, she moved back to the Walla Walla Valley.

Watts is survived by her brother, Howard Watts; one nephew, Travis Watts; one niece, Kandice Watts; and a multitude of friends scattered across the continent. 🍀



### LOCAL CHURCH IN THE U.S. FINDS WAYS TO CONNECTING FAITH AND THE ARTS.

The Campion church in Loveland, Colorado, dedicated the month of October and a few days in November to celebrate the connection between faith and the arts and invite the public to join in a Faith and the Arts Festival. The festival included evening presentations by experts in the congregation on such topics as beginning drawing classes, a songwriting lab, a beginner's pottery lab, Bible art journaling, and more.



### HUNDREDS ARE BAPTIZED THROUGHOUT COLOMBIA IN ONGOING EVANGELISTIC EFFORTS.

Hundreds of people were baptized across Colombia thanks to a nationwide evangelistic series. In the North Colombian Union 370 people were baptized in Cúcuta thanks to the Escrito está (It Is Written) evangelistic series in that city. In the South Colombian Union, the evangelistic caravan launched on November 4 in the city of Ibagué, with 128 baptisms. More than 3,000 people in search of spiritual renewal and hope attended.



### ADVENTIST CLINIC PERFORMS FREE SURGERIES IN THE PERUVIAN RAINFOREST.

For six consecutive days, from November 5 to 10, health-care professionals from AdventHealth in Colorado, and the Ana Stahl Adventist Clinic in Peru offered surgery services to people in underserved communities on the banks of the Amazon River in the Peruvian rainforest. Thanks to the campaign, 29 low-income people who needed laparoscopic hernia and gallbladder care were able to undergo surgery. In addition, 655 people received primary health care, both in cities and in riverside communities.



### IN CROATIA, HEALTH MAGAZINE LAUNCHES CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION.

At the forty-fifth International Book Fair in Zagreb, Croatia, on November 12, the magazine *Life and Health* (*Život i zdravlje*) began a yearlong celebration of its centennial. *Life and Health* was founded in 1924. Initially published with a print run of 10,000 copies, the magazine aimed to convey that adhering to God's principles of health could lead to an improved life. Unfortunately, the onset of World War II halted its circulation for roughly two decades.



### "OUR MISSION IS TO CARE FOR OTHERS." On November 13, in Forlì, Emilia-Romagna, Italy, managers, employees, and guests celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the Casa Mia retirement home.

Casa Mia is a social outreach initiative of the Adventist Church in Italy. It was established as a project seeking to accommodate self-sufficient elderly people. Over the years, various transformations have led to the inclusion of elderly residents who are not self-sufficient, in response to the area's new and growing needs.



### SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION LAUNCHES EXPERIENCE IN THE METAVERSE.

A trailblazing step in digital evangelization took place on November 17, as the South American Division launched a church option in the metaverse. Pastors and members of the Adventist community from several Brazilian states and countries attended the ceremony. In its first hours the space received more than 800 visits. With the use of custom avatars, anyone can participate in worship services, Bible studies, and community activities in a three-dimensional virtual environment.



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# ON THE PATH TO FRUITFUL INTERFAITH INTERACTIONS

BOUBAKAR SANOU

In a world where diverse faith traditions coexist, the importance of constructive interactions with believers of other faiths cannot be overstated. The Bible records remarkable stories of interactions between the children of Israel and adherents of other faiths, offering insights for effective interfaith communication. Here are some examples: Abraham and Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20), Abraham and Abimelech (Gen. 20:1-17), Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-24), Elisha and Naaman (2 Kings 5), Jesus and the woman at Jacob's well (John 4:1-42), and Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10). Below are 10 tips for fruitful interfaith interactions drawn from these passages.



**1 Pray for Understanding and Guidance:** Start by praying for God to remove any stereotypes and prejudices you might have toward people from other faiths. Seek God’s wisdom and align with His mission.

**2 Educate Yourself:** Take the initiative to learn about the basic tenets and practices of other faiths. This will reduce your ignorance and foster cross-cultural understanding and communication skills in personal interactions and professional settings.

**3 Avoid Assumptions:** Do not assume that followers of other faiths have no knowledge of the true God. Abraham made this mistake in his encounter with Abimelech by assuming that the fear of God was absent from Abimelech and his people (Gen. 20:11). God’s witnesses can be found in unlikely places on earth. This is highlighted in Jesus’ commendation of the Roman centurion’s faith: “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!” (Matt. 8:10). In your interactions with people of other faiths, prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you where and how He is already at work in their lives and ask Him for the courage, wisdom, and humility to join Him *on His terms*. Such an approach recognizes that the power of Christian witness emanates only from the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. It took Peter courage, wisdom, and humility to confess before Cornelius’ household that “in truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:34, 35). It also took humility to acknowledge that the Holy Spirit that descended on him and other disciples at Pentecost was the same Holy Spirit that descended on Cornelius and his household, although they were not yet baptized (verses 44-48). We need to recognize and accept the fact that our conventional approaches may not align with God’s missionary ways and also that “we know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete” (1 Cor. 13:9, Message).<sup>1</sup>

**4 Show Respect:** Approach people of different faiths with respect, love, and a positive attitude, recognizing their worth as individuals created in the image of God, cherished by Him, and endowed with a certain understanding of who

## Approach people of different faiths with respect, love, and a positive attitude.

God is. Attentively listen to them, thoughtfully consider their viewpoints, and acknowledge any genuine insights they offer. Active listening involves suspending judgment and preconceived opinions so that one can really hear another’s perspective. Although deep theological differences between faiths can make dialogue challenging, particularly on topics where beliefs strongly diverge, remain calm and respectful even if the conversation becomes challenging or emotionally charged. Avoid responding defensively or confrontationally. Winning an argument should not come at the cost of losing the heart of the person you are conversing with. The overall goal of a respectful, loving, and positive attitude toward those who have different beliefs is to eliminate prevalent misconceptions and establish bridges of mutual understanding. People’s appreciation for your scriptural knowledge will emerge only once they have a clear sense of your genuine care. Never forget that “the strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.”<sup>2</sup>

**5 Acknowledge Shared Beliefs and Values:** Finding common spiritual values and principles with someone from a different faith tradition can be a good foundation for fruitful dialogue. This can create a bridge of understanding and help dispel misconceptions and stereotypes.

**6 Ask Engaging Questions:** Encourage deeper conversation by asking questions that invite the person you are conversing with to share more about their beliefs and experiences. On one hand, asking engaging questions helps reveal the underlying assumptions of the person you are conversing with. It also relieves you from constantly being in a defensive position. For example, if a Muslim asks you, “Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?” avoid immediately answering “Yes.” Instead, simply ask him or her, “What do you mean by that?” In doing so, you will avoid confirming some misguided notions that person might have about Jesus. On the other hand, asking questions will also

## The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.

help you avoid making assumptions about what the other person believes or practices based on stereotypes or preconceived notions. Just as you appreciate others giving you an opportunity to define your own beliefs and practices, do the same for them (see Matt. 7:12). It is important that when asking engaging questions, you avoid turning the conversation into a debate or divisive argument.

**7 Speak Truth With Love:** Speak about your faith and its uniqueness without belittling the faith tradition of the person you are conversing with. Arrogance damages your role as a witness for Christ.

**8 Acknowledge Enrichment:** Recognize that God can plan your interactions with individuals from other faiths to contribute to your spiritual growth, as seen in Abraham's interaction with Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20) and Peter's encounter with Cornelius (Acts 10). The encounter between Abraham and Melchizedek benefited both of them spiritually and materially, and (very likely) deepened their understanding of God's universal sovereignty. In his encounter with Cornelius, Peter's preconceived beliefs about who could be part of the Christian community were challenged. As a result, Peter's and other early Christians' understanding of God's inclusive redemptive plan was broadened. This encounter was also a foundational moment in the history of the early church relative to the inclusion of Gentiles in the Christian fellowship.

**9 Consider Timing:** Be mindful of when and where you share information. Choose the right moment for meaningful conversations. According to Ellen White: "Many efforts, though made at great expense, have been in a large measure unsuccessful because they did not meet the wants of the time or the place."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, she advises that "while the teacher of truth should be faithful in presenting the gospel, let him never pour out a mass of matter which the people cannot comprehend because it is new to them and hard to understand."<sup>4</sup>

In John 16:12 Jesus Himself refrained from instructing His disciples beyond what they could bear at that time. If such was Jesus' approach with

those He was with day and night for three and a half years, it would be unwise for us to do otherwise with people we encounter in our Christian witness.

Another good example of considering good timing for what we say is the case of Naaman, the top military officer in Syria, who was afflicted with a severe case of leprosy. Heeding the counsel of a young Israelite servant girl, he embarked on a journey to Israel in search of a remedy. Following Elisha's directive, he immersed himself seven times in the Jordan River and experienced a miraculous cure. Upon his recovery, Naaman confessed, "There is no God in all the earth, except in Israel" (2 Kings 5:15), and proclaimed his firm commitment to worship only Yahweh from then on (verse 17). He approached Elisha with an unusual request for special consideration, however. He wanted two muleloads of earth from Elisha's property and pleaded for forgiveness when he was required to escort the king of Syria to the temple of Rimmon (verses 17, 18). Surprisingly, Elisha told him only, "Go in peace" (verse 19). Jon Paulien explains that "for the primal religions of Naaman's day, all gods were associated with one land or another. That meant that Naaman could not worship Yahweh, the God of Israel, in Syria unless he brought with him Israelite dirt to spread in his garden. When he wanted to worship Yahweh, he would kneel on the Israelite soil. When he entered the temple of Rimmon with the king, he would bow his head but not his heart"<sup>5</sup>

When Elisha sent Naaman off in peace, he was neither condoning nor encouraging his actions. As in John 16:12, Elisha might have felt that this was not the right moment to give counsel to Naaman on these matters. Instead, he chose just to acknowledge his faith and commit him to God's care, trusting that in His providence God would continue to reveal Himself to him. Several centuries later Jesus commended Naaman's faith in contrast to that of His contemporaries (Luke 4:27). Ellen White adds, "God passed over the many lepers in Israel because their unbelief closed the door of good to them. A heathen nobleman who had been true to his convictions of right, and who felt his need of help, was in the sight of God more worthy of His blessing than were the afflicted in Israel, who had slighted and despised their God-given privileges. God works for those who appreciate His favors and respond to the light given them from heaven."<sup>6</sup>

**10 Practice Hospitality:** Offering, accepting, or asking for hospitality has the potential of counteracting negative stereotypes, breaking down barriers, building trust, and fostering relationships, as seen in the exchanges between Abraham and Melchizedek and between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. The act of hospitality displayed by Melchizedek (offering his bread, wine, and blessing to Abraham) and Abraham's humble response to it paved the way for meaningful conversations between them. In John 4:7 Jesus took the initiative to ask for hospitality from the woman at the well: "Give me a drink." This simple request set the stage for a life-changing conversation and led to a remarkable turn of events. Jesus and His disciples were invited to stay in the Samaritan town for two days—a surprising and uncommon occurrence in their time. Many Samaritans came to confess their faith in Jesus as the Savior of the world (verse 42).

## CONCLUSION

Fostering positive relationships with people of all nations, cultures, and beliefs is an integral part of the Great Commission. A rephrased version of Matthew

28:19, 20, could say, "As you go about your daily lives, be intentional about making disciples of the people you interact with." Given that the gospel represents the most extraordinary news that we could ever have the opportunity to proclaim, Christ invites each of us to let our faith in Him influence all aspects of our lives—family, school, professional, and social interactions. If people reject the gospel, it should not be because we misrepresented its essence in our interactions with them. 📌

<sup>1</sup>Texts credited to Message are from *The Message*, copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress, represented by Tyndale House Publishers, a division of Tyndale House Ministries. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 470.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1892), p. 297.

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 202.

<sup>5</sup>Jon Paulien, "The Unpredictable God: Creative Mission and the Biblical Testimony," in *A Man of Passionate Reflection*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2011), pp. 87, 88.

<sup>6</sup>Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), p. 253.

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# LIVING MISSIONALLY

IN THE REAL WORLD





**GREG AND AMY WHITSETT**

**B**zzz, Bzzz, Bzzzzz. My (Greg's) phone was vibrating again. Although I was busy, I stole a glance and saw another message in our Fresh Beginnings Sabbath School WhatsApp group. It was perhaps the eleventh message I had received in the past hour. As annoying as it is to get interrupted throughout my workday, I didn't silence the message alerts. Each buzz was a reminder that I was experiencing a miracle.

Our Fresh Beginnings Sabbath School group is a diverse group made up mostly of new believers and serious seekers. Although many do not gather weekly, it is a vibrant group of people experiencing Jesus' handiwork in their lives. We have an Uber driver, two public school teachers, an artist, a federal worker, a corporate manager, a drywaller, a retiree, a mechanic, and a spouse of a foreign diplomat. Some are waging battles against addictions while others are simply exploring a new faith in Jesus. Yet here we were, messaging away as if we were all a bunch of high school BFFs.

How did this happen? You could call it an intentional accident—something out of our control but something we've been praying and working for.

We are missionaries who raised our kids in Asia for more than 16 years. In 2018 we returned to the United States and joined a local church in Maryland, eager to continue participating in outreach at home. As we review the past five years, we celebrate the synergy we have experienced with our local pastoral team. In this article we will trace the lessons we learned overseas and how they also bore fruit at "home" in America. Perhaps our experience will resonate with you.

**1. PRAY FOR "GOD-EYES."**

When we first arrived in Asia, a veteran missionary advised us, "Take lots of pictures. After you've lived here a few years, everything will seem normal, and you will lose your eye for what is noteworthy." He was right. Those early years we filled roll after roll of film with photos of Buddhist temples, paddy farmers, schoolchildren, monks, and silk weavers. As the years passed, we stopped taking so many pictures because it had all become so normal.

Our spiritual walk with Jesus can be like that. When one first experiences salvation or when one first accepts God's call to make disciples, there is an eagerness to find anyone new with whom to share Jesus. But over time one's fire can dim.

To keep our eyes fresh for mission opportunity, we need to ask God to gift us with His eyes to see opportunities around us. Jesus saw mission where His disciples saw nuisances—social outcasts, sinners, children, and the lone Samaritan at the well. Arriving in Maryland, we asked God to give us His eyes to see people He wanted us to bless and invite into discipleship.

**2. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING.**

We enjoyed hosting student missionaries while working in Asia, and they did excellent work winning souls for Christ. Early on we noted that the devil wasn't happy with them. On several occasions a student missionary would awaken in the night terrified and having a suffocating pressure on their chest. They would cry out to Jesus, and the pressure would immediately disappear. As we discussed the problem with them, we took Paul's advice to heart: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17) and pray "always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:18), for we were fighting "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the

heavenly places” (verse 12). Furthermore, we decided that the ubiquitous spirit houses in every courtyard and business were a call to prayer, seeking heaven’s reinforcements to aid us in the invisible contest over the souls of our neighbors and friends. It is amazing how this impacted our self-awareness about the urgency of our mission.

While our new neighborhood in Maryland doesn’t have spirit houses, we know that demons are no less active. In place of spirit houses, televisions and computers stream content that glorifies evil and slanders God. We began to pray as we walked the streets of our neighborhood, even making a map of our street, to write down the names of our neighbors—knowing that the first step of our cooperation with Jesus in mission is simply making friends and building trust.\* When the pandemic shut people in their homes, we felt impressed by God to hold an outdoor block party in the driveway we share with our neighbor. Praying for our neighbors led us to take action we would never have thought of doing otherwise. But more than that, prayer is not just preparation for mission; it is in itself the work of mission.

### 3. MAKE MISSION A LIFESTYLE.

While living in Asia, we found that in every aspect of living, even shopping in the market, we were a spectacle. People were naturally curious about who we were and what brought us to their country. The curiosity we stirred up was a reminder that there was no down time from being missionaries. Every aspect of our lives was a mission witness.

Returning to America, we sought to maintain this missional lifestyle. Since I (Amy) love fresh flowers, I can’t resist spending a few minutes enjoying my local grocery store’s wonderful selection of fresh florals. But it’s not just the beautiful flowers that makes me linger among them—it’s the florist. As I began thinking and praying about my sphere of influence, I realized that my florist is someone who I see regularly who is not attending church. So I decided to be more intentional about building a relationship with her. For the first couple of weeks as I prayed for her, I simply asked God how I should bless “the florist at the grocery store.” God helped me realize that the first step was simply to learn her name. So I did. As I continued to pray for her, my interest in her grew. Although the spiritual interest hasn’t yet developed, I smile as I write this,

knowing that my florist is loved by God, and I am His agent to bless her. And just like that, my grocery shopping becomes so much more than just a weekly chore—it’s a mission adventure.

Using this model, can you see how mission doesn’t always mean adding new activities into our already hectic lives? Simply take the time to prayerfully make a list of people you already interact with who either need to be introduced to Jesus or need a deeper relationship with Him. Then commit to praying for each person, asking God what the next step is in each relationship. You might be surprised at how many opportunities you find you have. Oh, and I should tell you, the alstroemeria is always a great flower choice. Treated right, it can last up to three weeks. And Lisa, my florist friend, would be happy to tell you how!

### 4. MAKE ROOM FOR NEW FRIENDS.

One of the hardest things about heading overseas was the sacrifice of leaving loved ones behind. But that was part of the cost of reaching out to strangers and inviting them to become disciples of Jesus with us.

When the pandemic shut down regular worship services, our church got creative and began holding services in the parking lot. A radio signal broadcast the sermon so we could enjoy the climate control of our cars as we participated in worship by tuning in with our car stereos. One woman came regularly—a coffee in one hand and a cigarette in the other. Taking note of her apparent interest, the pastor asked if I (Amy) would befriend her. Over the next few weeks I began to watch for her. Our friendship started with a simple “Hi! What’s your name?” conversation and over time developed into a deep, sister-type friendship. We met her boyfriend, and the four of us began studying the Bible together. But more than that, we began to share our lives together, which crowded out the time we had for family and older friends.

We soon began to feel a tug-of-war going on between spending time with our new friends and the time we allotted for our family who lived in the area. It felt wrong that we were spending so much time away from our family, but then we realized—whether abroad or at home, we needed to focus on the lost, just as the good shepherd left the 99 sheep safely in the fold to reach the one that was lost. Mission may require you to sacrifice old friend groups to form new ones. Some may misunder-

## Here we were, messaging away as if we were all a bunch of high school BFFs.

stand your refocus on other people, so pray for wisdom for how to handle it. But do not turn back from focusing on new people. After all, mission is about creating a community in which we extend warmth and hospitality to new people, so they feel safe and that they belong.

### 5. MAKE JESUS REAL.

The gospel is so much more than good Bible teaching. The gospel is the transforming relationship we enjoy with our Savior. The gospel is how Jesus turns our lives around, gives us new joy and a hope in the day that all things will be made right.

When people in Asia experienced Jesus giving them victory over demons, they were sold on Jesus. When Jesus healed them, they were compelled to follow Him. When Jesus gave them a new heart, they knew that Christianity wasn't just a religion but a completely new way of life—a life they wanted.

We are seeing the same here at home. Each person that has joined Fresh Beginnings is experiencing new life in Jesus. Addictions have been broken. Dyslexia has been healed. Hearts are being filled with joy because our *modus operandi* is to lift Jesus up in all things and at all times. And the more Jesus is lifted up, the more people are being drawn to Him.

But here's the catch: Jesus is lifted up best when a community is able to be real about their trials and temptations. In our Fresh Beginnings group we as the leaders have committed to being open and vulnerable about the challenges we are facing. Our desire is not to portray our best selves—our

ANDREA PIACQUADIO/PEXELS



desire is to demonstrate where and how we turn for help. This is the central theme of our interaction—we are all sinners and hurt people being drawn by a loving God who patiently receives us and fixes our problems.

*Bzzzz. Bzzzz.* My (Amy's) phone is buzzing. Someone from Fresh Beginnings is writing: "Hi, everybody! Did you read the challenge in the Sabbath School lesson today? It says to begin praying for someone who is different from you or even someone you may not personally like. Can we do that today? Can we talk about it a little more on Sabbath?"

Someone answers after a few minutes, "Yes! Wonderful idea. I just began praying for four people."

An hour later, *Bzzzz. Bzzzz.* "I couldn't think of anyone. As I was trying to think of someone, an image came onto my screen of a very expensive vase just like the one my friend stole from me. This wasn't the only thing she stole from me. She ruined my son's life! I will pray for her now. Lord, help me do this."

My (Greg) heart is bursting with joy as I catch up on these messages. I reply, "Hey all, I am swept away by your generosity to pray for those who give you pain. May Jesus do as you pray and so much more than you can even think to ask. In Jesus' name, amen."

You know what we like most about mission? It's the transformation we experience as He tunes our heart to His—a hearted burdened to rescue His kids. Being a Christian is so much more than believing in God and loving Jesus. He invites us, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). We've found that participating in God's mission is the place we can expect to experience His best miracles.

*Bzzzz Bzzzz Bzzzzzzzzzzzz.* Gotta go, mission is calling. 📞

\* Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 143.

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# AFTER DEATH

## The Deception

In October 2023 *After Death* hit 2,605 silver screens in the United States and Canada. Produced by Angel Studios, which created *The Chosen* TV series and *The Sound of Freedom* movie, *After Death* is a documentary about people who have died, or kind of died, but then come back to life bearing fantastic stories about what they had experienced after, well, death.

Though I saw only the trailer, it was all the usual near-death experiences (NDE) stuff: sensations of leaving their bodies, floating in a mist, approaching a wonderful light, even meeting dead relatives. All this, and more—if not hard proof that we soar off at death to heaven or, in some cases (according to the movie), to hell—is deemed “proof” enough.

How fascinating that amid the online hoopla and praise for the movie, some commented about how little of Jesus, or the gospel, or the plan of salvation, was revealed to these nearly dead people. You don’t say? Years before I became an Adventist, what I loved about reading my first book on NDEs, Raymond Moody’s *Life After Life*, was just how un-Christian the whole thing was: “un-Christian” in that many who had these experiences weren’t churchgoing folks to begin with, and whatever they had learned from whomever they met while supposedly floating around disembodied in heaven—it wasn’t anything like *You need to believe in Jesus to be saved* or *Repent and be converted*, which back then gave me great comfort. You’d think that, having been given a foretaste of the Christian heaven, they might have also gotten a bit of Christian truth as well. Most didn’t.

Also, in a last-ditch effort to keep me from the cross, Satan lured me into the

occult, where my own out-of-body experiences were amazingly similar to what some of these people in the movie said had happened to them—and I was nowhere near death. Simply read now about Astral Travel, or Astral Projections, or Out-of-Body Travel (plenty of Facebook forums), in order to see how similar these New Age occult phenomena are to what those in *After Death* had experienced.

The amazing popularity of *The Chosen* and *The Sound of Freedom* will, by default, give credence to this new film, which will only confirm for endless Christians the belief that at death they ascend immediately to heaven, even though the Bible teaches that death is an unconscious (Eccl. 9:5, 6; Ps. 6:5; 115:17; 146:4) sleep (Ps. 13:3; 1 Kings 2:10; Dan. 12:2; 2 Kings 16:20; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor. 15:20) until the first resurrection, at Christ’s return (John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 20:6).

Decades ago I heard William Loveless, then president of Columbia Union College, give one of the most concise depictions on how to be protected from last-day deceptions.

“You have to remember two things,” he said. “First, there is a great controversy. Second, the dead sleep.”

Exactly. Too bad so many other Christians, not understanding these truths, especially the last one, are wide open to the error promoted by this film, no matter how well-meaning its producers. ▀

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**Clifford Goldstein** is the editor of the *Adult Bible Study Guide*. His latest book is *Risen: Finding Hope in the Empty Tomb*.

CLIFF'S  
EDGE  
CLIFFORD  
GOLDSTEIN



THE BIBLE TEACHES  
THAT DEATH IS AN  
UNCONSCIOUS  
SLEEP UNTIL  
THE FIRST  
RESURRECTION AT  
CHRIST'S RETURN.



EDMOND DANTÉS/PEXELS

# NAVIGATING THE COMPLEX LANDSCAPE OF GLOBAL RELATIONS

*Building bridges with the children of Ishmael in today's world*

**PETRAS BAHADUR**

In a world marked by diversity and an intricate tapestry of cultures and faiths, it is imperative that we seek to understand, relate to, and build connections with one another. The Global Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations (GCAMR), an initiative under the Adventist Mission Office of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, is dedicated to this very cause. GCAMR's primary vision is to raise awareness within the Adventist community, fostering an opportunity to share the love of God with Muslims by understanding their culture, religion, and worldview. We endeavor to dismantle the barriers of prejudice and separation by ultimately promoting peace through respectful engagement.

For centuries differences between Christianity and Islam have fueled tensions, focusing on such matters as the divine revelation, the final prophet, and the "ultimate faith." These disagreements have erected walls of prejudice and separation between adherents of both religions, often leading to suspicion and distrust, especially in areas in which one faith predominates.

## COMMON GROUND

What many Muslims may not realize is the existence of a group among Christians known as Adventists, who encourage refraining from consuming what is considered unclean (such as pork), avoid intoxicants (such as alcohol), and are dedicated to preparing the world for the second coming of Jesus and the final day of judgment. These shared values offer common ground and facilitate understanding between the two communities. By acknowledging these commonalities, we can further break down walls of separation, promote peace, and strengthen cooperation for improved relationships.

Adventists have generally considered themselves to be the people of the Book (faithful in adhering to the Scriptures), and Muslim sources acknowledge the existence of such Christians who are faithful to their Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> When Adventists identify themselves as "people of the Book," it provides an opportunity for bridging the gap. Moreover, the alignment of

present world events with biblical prophecy, as seen in the three angels' messages of Revelation 14, compels us to prepare "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6) for the imminent return of Jesus the Messiah and the day of judgment. While Muslims may differ regarding the purpose of Jesus' second coming, sharing the message of His return remains a bridge between the two faiths.

## UNDERSTANDING OTHERS AND AVOIDING MISCONCEPTIONS

In our diverse world it is essential to approach others by understanding their culture, beliefs, and practices and avoid imposing our views without regard for their worldview. Within Islam there are various nuanced expressions, including folk Islam, orthodox Islam, and mystical Islam. Just as in any faith, there exist both fundamentalist and moderate perspectives. Therefore, it is crucial to approach different worldviews with sensitivity and respect.

We can foster better relations with Muslims by realizing that the following issues may be the cause of hindrance to our interaction:

1. *Lack of Knowledge:* A lack of understanding of Islamic beliefs and culture can deter relationships, while knowledge about them can promote connections.

2. *Fear:* The fear of extremism may discourage Adventists from engaging with Muslims, but the majority of Muslims strive to live peaceful lives.

3. *Cultural Barriers:* Perceptions that it is difficult to understand those operating from a Near Eastern cultural paradigm can hinder relationships, but hospitality cuts across cultural barriers.

4. *Difficult Conversations:* Many find it challenging to discuss religious matters with Muslims and hope to avoid difficult conversations, but Islamic sources have many positive associations to the Bible and Jesus.

5. *Confrontational Approach:* An aggressive approach that labels people to be wrong and denounces their religion or belief system can hinder the development of friendships and mutual understanding. If there is no bridge of friendship, then there is no opportunity of crossing it.

Despite these challenges, it's important to recognize that Adventist-Muslim Relations (AMR) is not limited to experts or specific individuals. It's an opportunity for all Adventists, irrespective of age, gender, profession, or knowledge level. Basic cultural and religious understanding can pave the

## We should embrace the opportunity to meet the needs of others and share hope.

way for meaningful relationships. Please contact your Adventist Mission, Personal Ministries, or AMR leader for further support.

AMR is not confined to regions with a Muslim majority. Adventists worldwide can participate through prayer, financial support, and moral encouragement. You don't have to be an expert. Hospitality and friendship transcend cultural and societal boundaries.

Contrary to misconceptions, AMR does not undermine the importance of the Bible. Instead, it seeks to find redemptive connections and links to biblical truths within other cultures and faith systems, much as the apostle Paul did. We recognize that God's footprints are already present in other cultures and faith systems.

## CHRIST'S METHOD ALONE

Getting involved in Adventist-Muslim Relations should follow the principles of "Christ's method alone." It's essential to follow the example of Jesus, who mingled, sympathized, met the needs, and built trust before extending the invitation "Follow Me."<sup>2</sup> Jesus' teachings emphasize loving others as we love ourselves, which stands as a universal message regardless of one's faith.

In a world often polarized by current events, let us strive to be grounded in the teachings of Jesus by sharing His love through genuine, empathetic engagement. We should embrace the opportunity to meet the needs of others and share hope. This hope is the good news about Jesus to all, since only He can bring peace in this world. He is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) and offers us His peace by saying, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27, NIV). Let us embark on a journey that can usher us into a world of peace and understanding by following the example of loving others as Jesus did.<sup>3</sup> 🌿

<sup>1</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al-Imran 3:110, 113-115.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> For further information, please contact [gcaminfo@gmail.com](mailto:gcaminfo@gmail.com).

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# US AND THEM



*Becoming one with  
the other in Christ*

## OSCAR OSINDO

God chose the Seventh-day Adventist Church to preach the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12. The church interacts with diverse cultures and sends missionaries worldwide. This engagement can sometimes lead to discrimination because of ethnocentrism—a common human trait that leads to negative bias toward other cultures.

The Great Commission calls us to interact with others in a way that embodies Christ's love despite dividing humanity into two groups: us and them. God implores us to share the good news with others and prepare them for His return. Growing up in multicultural Kenya taught me to appreciate human diversity and celebrate differences. In addition, my interreligious interactions have enriched my worldview.

## LESSONS IN LANGUAGE

God's calling to serve Muslims and share God's love taught me many lessons. I used to view Muslims, their mannerisms and behavior, as peculiar and prone to violence. I soon learned that most Muslims strive daily to earn a living like everybody else. They cherish peace. I discovered that the more I sought to bridge the cultural gap, the more we understood one another.

In 1997 I, along with a team of youthful men, pitched an evangelistic tent in the Muslim holy city

of Lamu on the north coast of Kenya to declare the mighty works of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was one of the most challenging tasks in my evangelistic life. Out of nowhere a Muslim sect claimed that one of my team members had dishonored the Prophet Jesus, the Messiah. They therefore vowed to kill him. This caused such an uproar that activities on the Lamu archipelago ceased for two days.

I tried to understand how and why my evangelist had insulted Jesus Christ. It didn't make sense to me that we who put our lives on the firing line would at the same time demean our Lord Jesus Christ. I was informed that the preacher had referred to Jesus as *kuhani mkuu*. I didn't see anything wrong with this, because it is a title of honor, which means "high priest" in the Kiswahili translation of the Bible. They, however, had a different interpretation of it. To clarify, the Muslim leaders and I looked up the word in a Kiswahili dictionary called *kamusi*. To our sur-



prise, we discovered that *kuhani* means both “priest” and “soothsayer, defrauder, swindler, and deceiver” in Kiswahili, depending on the dialect. We were both right and wrong at the same time. We laughed together and reconciled.

I realized that even if I am convinced that I am right about something, it is always wise to listen to another point of view. I learned a significant cross-cultural lesson about communicating the gospel to people of different religions, even if we speak the same language. Differences in dialects can cause misunderstandings on the recipients’ end. This was my experience, as I speak the Kimvita dialect of Swahili spoken in Mombasa, Kenya, which has slight differences with the Kiamu of the Lamu archipelago.

#### **DOG WALKING, PEOPLE TALKING**

During my time serving cross-culturally in Europe from 2001 to 2005, I encountered an incident that taught me a valuable lesson. Moving from a collectivist to an individualist culture was a big change for me, and I struggled to adjust. As part of my exercise routine, I started walking and jogging in a nearby park. Even though I encountered many people, nobody seemed interested in greeting me, which made me think they disliked my ethnicity. I realized, however, that even among themselves they did not greet those they met. This was very different from the society I came from, where people greet each other liberally.

But then I noticed something interesting. People stopped and chatted briefly with others who were walking their dogs. I decided to be innovative and volunteered to walk my neighbor’s dog, Shelly. When I took Shelly to the park, I crossed paths with someone also walking his dog. To my surprise, we stopped, greeted each other, and admired each other’s dogs. It dawned on me how wrong I was to assume that people disliked me because of my ethnicity. I had misjudged them based on my Coastal Kenyan frame of reference.

From this experience I learned that as a missionary in a new place and culture, I should suspend judgment and take the time to study the context. I discovered that it was easy to fellowship with these people once I knew their social location, which in this case was among the fellowship of dogs.

**The gospel truly received results in the merger of “us” and “them” into one body in Christ Jesus.**

#### **BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING**

Another occasion was in Nicosia, Cyprus, a city divided by a wall into European and Turkish sides. I lived in the European part of town. One day I decided to walk to the Turkish side. The border control officer on the European side refused to allow me to cross over. He didn’t want to see my passport or hear my reasons. He mislabeled me as a drug peddler, an illegal immigrant, and so many negatives. I was in shock, but I was not about to give up.

I returned home, changed into formal attire, and returned to the same border point, driving my car. Reaching the crossing, I rolled my car window down, and the same officer who shoved me away an hour before said, “Sir, can I see your passport?” After glancing through its pages, he said, “Ooh, Kenya is a good friend of Cyprus!” gladly reminding me that the founders of the two nations were great friends. I was delighted that his prejudice had vanished. As a result, he let me through the border control. That day I learned another lesson: one can wiggle out of someone’s stereotyped mind. God has provided each society and culture with cultural bridges of understanding; in this case, it was about the friendship between Kenya and Cyprus.

In these three instances I realized that the mandate to preach the three angels’ messages lays a responsibility on us to acquire cross-cultural skills. We are the ones called to go to other cultures; we are the ones who must adjust to them and not them to us. God has sent us to the nations to incarnate Christ, who mingled with all and ushered them into His saving grace. The gospel truly received results in the merger of “us” and “them” into one body in Christ Jesus. That is one characteristic, among many, that the church of Christ will exhibit before He returns to take us home. 🍀

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**Oscar Osindo**, Ph.D., is director of the Institute of World Mission at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

# SENSE OF THE WORLD

*An invitation for all to share  
in the mission experience*

**ELLEN G. WHITE**

**T**he leaders in God's cause, as wise generals, are to lay plans for advance moves all along the line. In their planning they are to give special study to the work that can be done by the laity for their friends and neighbors. The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.

## **CREATING MISSIONARIES**

The salvation of sinners requires earnest, personal labor. We are to bear to them the word of life, not to wait for them to come to us. Oh, that I could speak words to men and women that would arouse them to diligent action! The moments now granted to us are few. We are standing upon the very borders of the eternal world. We have no time to lose. Every moment is golden and altogether too precious to be devoted merely to self-serving. Who will seek God earnestly and from Him draw strength and grace to be His faithful workers in the missionary field? . . .

There should be a well-organized plan for the employment of workers to go into all our churches, large and small, to instruct the members how to labor for the upbuilding of the church and also for unbelievers. It is training, education, that is needed. Those who labor in visiting the churches should give the brethren and sisters instruction in practical methods of doing missionary work. All the preaching in the world will not make men feel deeply the need of perishing souls around them.



## IGNITING A PASSION FOR MISSION

Nothing will so arouse in men and women a self-sacrificing zeal as to send them forth into new fields to work for those in darkness. . . . It is the positive duty of God's people to go into the regions beyond. Let forces be set at work to clear new ground, to establish new centers of influence wherever an opening can be found. Rally workers who possess true missionary zeal, and let them go forth to diffuse light and knowledge far and near. Let them take the living principles of health reform into the communities that to a large degree are ignorant of these principles.

Men in humble walks of life are to be encouraged to take up the work of God. As they labor they will gain a precious experience. There is a dearth of laborers, and we have not one to spare. Instead of discouraging those who are trying to serve the Master, we should encourage many more laborers to enter the field.

All who commune with God will find abundance of work to do for Him. Those who go forth in the spirit of the Master, seeking to reach souls with the truth, will not find the work of drawing souls to Christ a dull, uninteresting drudgery. They are charged with a work as God's husbandmen, and they will become more and more vitalized as they give themselves to the service of God. It is a joyous work to open the Scriptures to others.

Young men and women should be educated to become workers in their own neighborhoods and in other places. Let all set their hearts and minds to become intelligent in regard to the work for this time, qualifying themselves to do that for which they are best adapted.

## EDUCATION IN AND FOR MISSION

Many young men who have had the right kind of education at home are to be trained for service and encouraged to lift the standard of truth in new places by well-planned and faithful work. By associating with our ministers and experienced workers in city work, they will gain the best kind of training. Acting under divine guidance and sustained by the prayers of their more experienced fellow workers, they may do a good and blessed work. As they unite their labors with those of the older workers, using their youthful energies to the very best account, they will have

Nothing will so arouse in men and women a self-sacrificing zeal as to send them forth into new fields to work for those in darkness.

the companionship of heavenly angels; and as workers together with God, it is their privilege to sing and pray and believe, and work with courage and freedom. . . .

There should be no delay in this well-planned effort to educate the church members. Persons should be chosen to labor in the large cities who are fully consecrated and who understand the sacredness and importance of the work. Do not send those who are not qualified in these respects. Men are needed who will push the triumphs of the cross, who will persevere under discouragements and privations, who will have the zeal and resolution and faith that are indispensable to the missionary field. And to those who do not engage personally in the work I would say: Do not hinder those who are willing to work, but give them encouragement and support.

All this work of training should be accompanied with earnest seeking of the Lord for His Holy Spirit. Let this be urged home upon those who are willing to give themselves to the Master's service. Our conduct is watched by the world. Every act is scrutinized and commented upon. There must be diligent cultivation of the Christian graces, that those who profess the truth may be able to teach it to others as it is in Jesus, that they themselves may be examples, and that our enemies may be able to say no evil of them truthfully. God calls for greater piety, for holiness of life and purity of conduct, in accordance with the elevating, sanctifying principles that we profess. The lives of the workers for Christ should be such that unbelievers, seeing their godly walk and circum-spect conversation, may be charmed by the faith that produces such results. ♣

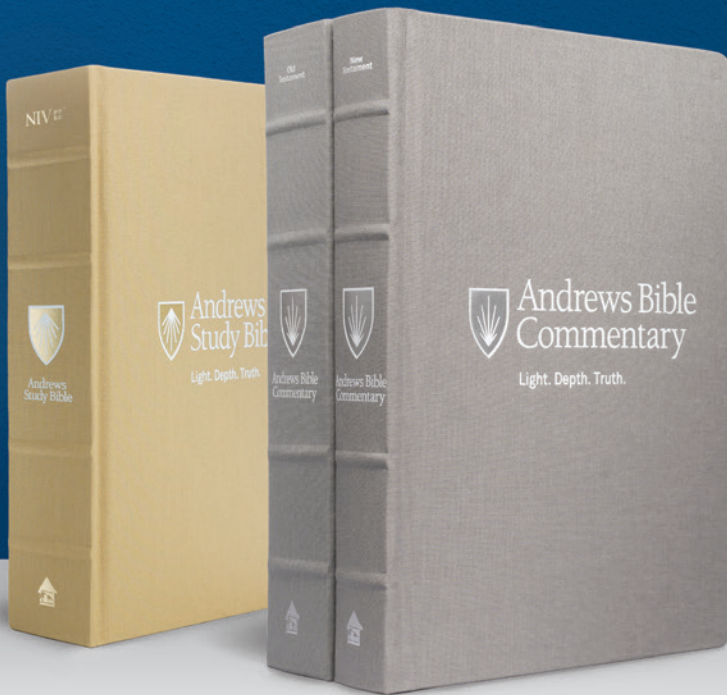
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Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt was taken from *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, pp. 116-120.



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# YARD SALE COMMENTARY

**M**any years ago my wife, Darlene, went to a yard sale held to benefit one of our Adventist high schools. The inventory at this annual event was vast, with literally thousand of items to choose from. If one wanted a new garbage can, there were 10 to choose from. Looking for a table saw with no blade, circa 1968? One could be had for just \$15. And of course there were the standard (at least for American yard sales) array of archaic electronic items: monitors, CPUs, keyboards, and miscellaneous cabling.

But amid the standard yard sale detritus was (in my opinion, at least) the equivalent of buried treasure: a complete set of *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* series. By the looks of them, the various volumes had been treated well during decades of use. In fact, they were in good enough condition to command a correspondingly high price. My wife went to the cashier to ask how much the entire set would be.

“Four dollars,” came the reply.

When Darlene arrived home with her acquisitions, I couldn’t believe how cheap the commentaries had been. “Why only \$4?” I asked. She explained that the cashier reasoned that the commentaries, though in good condition, were a niche item. “These books are really only appealing to Adventists,” the cashier said, “and if we charged even our regular book price, not even they would bother with them.”

I don’t want to (forgive the pun) read too much into this yard sale experience. But I can’t help wondering if the lack of desire for what for many decades was the pinnacle of Adventist scholarship isn’t also a partial commentary on the state of Adventism today.

There are voices in the church now that are urging us to be less Adventist rather than more. Some would prefer that Adventist distinctives be downplayed in an attempt to show goodwill and tolerance to those in society who see life differently than we do. Our uniqueness, they contend, is too often our weakness.

I too want more receptivity from an increasingly secular world. The church cannot afford to ignore the diverse milieus and cultural trends in ascendance today in the name of woodenly upholding orthodoxy. But when I remember that each point of distinctive doctrine that Adventism teaches is centered in Jesus Christ, the undeserving honor I feel in living and sharing our unique message is renewed. Rightly understood, Christ, in and through Adventist teaching, is still the best answer to the world’s problems.

Those yard sale commentaries (which still serve in my personal library) contain more than epic scholarship. They also contain a reminder that Adventists really do have something unique—and salvific—to say to the world today, even to the point of writing 10 strapping volumes to better explain it. A lack of appreciation for distinctly Adventist teaching may thus say more about us than it does about it. True, we must always seek to present our message in engaging, relevant ways! But not at the expense of doctrinal integrity.

The tidy sum of \$4 is all it took to buy those commentaries. Yet the message of Jesus that Adventism is called to embrace and to share is priceless. Let us witness accordingly, with both relevance and loyalty. 🍂

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**Shane Anderson** is the lead pastor of Pioneer Memorial church on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

**THE PIONEERING  
PASTOR  
SHANE  
ANDERSON**



**THE TIDY SUM OF \$4  
IS ALL IT TOOK TO  
BUY THOSE  
COMMENTARIES.**

A photograph of a man in a yellow shirt carrying a young child with arms outstretched in front of a house. The man is smiling broadly, and the child is also smiling with arms outstretched. The background shows a white house and green foliage.

# FACING YOUR FUTURE WITH ASSURANCE

HENSLEY M. MOOROOVEN

**M**ost psychologists agree that focusing too much on the past can lead to depression, focusing too much on the present often triggers stress, and concentrating too much on the future may provoke anxiety.

We are entering a new year, standing at the threshold of uncharted territory. Throughout the past year we have traversed many roads, faced countless trials, and experienced moments of triumph and despair. As we embark on a new year, we must acknowledge that this journey carries with it an air of uncertainty, an invitation to embrace the unknown. Amid this situation of uncertainty, we know the Lord will be with us, so we face our future with assurance rather than anxiety.

## CROSSING THE JORDAN

When the Israelites prepared to cross the river Jordan to take possession of the Promised Land, they faced uncertainty and challenges. We too face the unknown as we begin 2024. Like them, we “have never been this way before” (Joshua 3:4, NIV). The year 2024 holds mysteries yet to be unraveled and challenges yet to be overcome. How do we face a situation that we have never encountered before? The timeless wisdom found in God’s Word provides us with valuable insights on how to face our future with assurance, as the Israelites did.

Here are three lessons to remember about our all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-wise God as we face 2024 with assurance.

## THE GOD WHO WAS WITH US YESTERDAY

Whenever you face a situation that you have never encountered before, remember that the Lord your God was with you *yesterday*. “You shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness” (Deut. 8:2).

You likely already know that the Lord cared for His people for 40 years in the wilderness! Maybe therein lies the challenge! We have come across this information so often that it has lost its full meaning. I have taken some time to process this information anew. Let me share with you what I found.

How do you supply such a crowd with food and water in the wilderness? Some Bible commentators believe that approximately 2.6 million people left Egypt for the Promised Land. To survive one day in the desert, one would require about 3 gallons (11 liters) of water for hydration, food preparation, and hygiene.

Therefore, 2.6 million people would require 7.8 million gallons of water for one day in the desert. How do you convey to a single spot 7.8 million gallons of water? They could not just open a tap. In the United States the largest tanker (with a trailer) carries up to 11,600 gallons of liquid. To transport 7.8 million gallons of water would require 673 of these tankers per day. The average tanker is 42 feet long; 673 tankers would cover 5.4 miles!

Yet God gave His people water for 40 years in the wilderness without requiring a single truck, for the Bible declares that water gushed out of the rock. Whenever you encounter a situation that you have never walked through, remember that the Lord your God was with you *yesterday*.

Let’s ponder a minute on food. To feed a crowd of 2.6 million people, you would require approximately 1,600 tons of food per meal. How do you convey to a single spot 1,600 tons of food? They didn’t have any grocery stores or Instacart in the wilderness. Doing so would require two trains a mile long each, *per meal*. God, however, gave His people food for 40 years in the wilderness without requiring a single wagon, for the Bible declares that food came down from heaven!

Another important component of their sojourn was the pillars of cloud and fire. Imagine the scene: a vast desert, a multitude of people, uncertain terrain, and an uncharted path ahead. Amid this uncertainty, God provided a visible manifestation of His presence—a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

The pillar of cloud served as a GPS for the Israelites. As it revealed the path to follow, it also provided shade from the scorching sun. It was a clear indication that God was with them every step of the way. Similarly, the pillar of fire illuminated their way by night. Apart from that, in the desert, where temperatures plummet during the night because of the poor heat-retaining properties of the sand, the children of Israel found a source of warmth and comfort in the pillar of fire.

When you face a situation that you have never encountered, remember that the Lord your God was with you *yesterday*.

## Why do you worry? The Lord who was with you *yesterday* is also with you *today*!

### THE GOD WHO IS WITH YOU TODAY

We do not serve a God of only yesterday. The past is but a place of learning, not a place of living. We face real challenges now.

In Joshua 3:7 “the Lord said to Joshua, ‘This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.’” Remember that the Lord your God is with you *today*!

Why do you worry? The Lord who was with you *yesterday* is also with you *today*!

Some of us are chronic worriers. If worry were an Olympic discipline, we would be gold medalists. Yet Ellen G. White reminds us: “Worry is blind and cannot discern the future. But Jesus sees the end from the beginning.”\*

I have two definitions of worry that I cherish:

Worry is looking into the future without God in the picture.

Worry is the dark room where negatives are developed.

Our problem is not our problem; it is the way we look at it. Our challenge is not our challenge; it is the way we apprehend it. Let’s train our eyes to see our challenges through the lens of God’s sovereignty and stop worrying!

Whatever the uncertainties that 2024 brings along, remember that God is with us *today*. Whenever you encounter a situation you have never experienced, remember that God was with you *yesterday* and He is with you *today*!

But we don’t need only a God of yesterday and today—we need a God who also cares about our tomorrows.

### THE GOD WHO WILL BE WITH YOU TOMORROW

I love the Word of God! I firmly believe that the Bible doesn’t need to be rewritten, but only needs to be reread. Let’s reread Joshua 3:5. Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you” (NIV).

Whenever you encounter a situation you have never experienced, remember that God will be

with you *tomorrow*! Not only will God be with you tomorrow; He will also perform wonders in your life tomorrow.

Yet, according to Joshua 3:5, this promise comes with a requirement: “Consecrate yourselves.” This call to consecration rings true for us as we enter a new year. To face the future with assurance, we must set ourselves apart for God’s purpose and dedicate our hearts and minds to Him. As we enter 2024, let us remember that our first step toward assurance is drawing near to God and growing as disciples through a daily relationship with Him that results in spiritual growth based on personal prayer, Bible study, and applying the divinely inspired instructions of the Spirit of Prophecy.

Whatever the uncertainties that 2024 brings, remember that God was with you *yesterday*! He is with you *today*! And He will perform miracles for you *tomorrow*.

Whatever you are going through, there is no need to be depressed about the past, because God was with you *yesterday*; no need to be stressed about the present, because He is with you *today*; and no need to be anxious about the future, for He will perform wonders in your life *tomorrow*.

As we enter this new year, we might encounter personal upheaval, relational challenges, financial stresses, family transitions, and career disappointments. Remember these words of encouragement from God’s Word:

He was with you *yesterday* (Deut. 8:2).

He is with you *today* (Joshua 3:7).

He will perform miracles for you *tomorrow* (Joshua 3:5).

In conclusion, let’s remember that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8). God never changes, and His promises are true. So we can face our future with assurance. With God our past is redeemed, our present makes sense, and our future is secure.

Whatever challenges you are navigating, I pray this devotional will help you remain grounded in the unchanging truth of God’s Word. Root yourself in Scripture and remember the hope you have in God—no matter your circumstances. 🌿

\* Ellen G. White, *Christian Leadership* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1985), p. 77.

**Hensley M. Mooroven** is undersecretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



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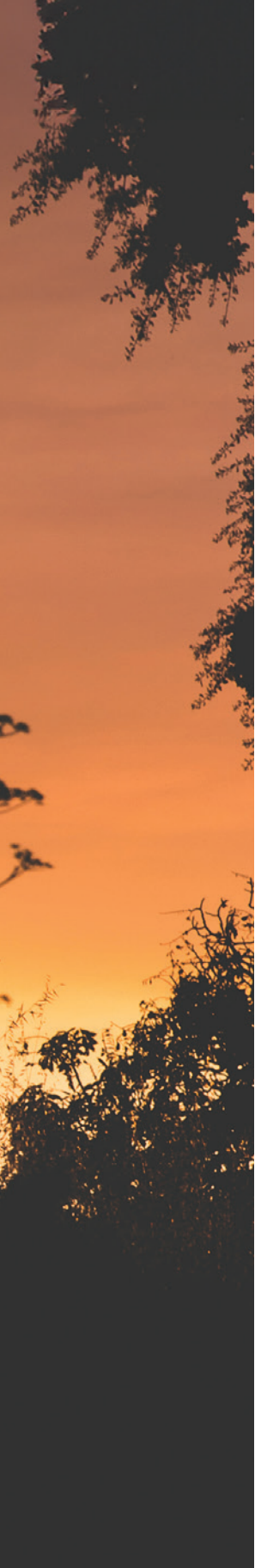
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The background of the entire page is a photograph of two people standing in a field of tall grasses and plants, silhouetted against a bright, orange-hued sunset sky. The person on the left is shorter and appears to be a woman, while the person on the right is taller and appears to be a man. They are facing each other, possibly in conversation. The lighting is warm and golden, creating a peaceful and contemplative atmosphere.

**FOUNDATIONS  
FOR OUR COMMON  
HUMANITY**



## *The truth of our incontrovertible connection and planned destiny*

**GANOUNE DIOP**

**T**he Bible opens with the creation of one humanity. Ethnic differentiations and divisions are constructs meant to erode the truth of a deeper identity and unity of one human family.

### **FOR ALL HUMANITY**

If the story of Adam and Eve is truly the foundation of all humanity's common ancestry, then it follows that valuing systems in the form of stratifications and hierarchicalisms prevalent in human societies and relations are a manifestation of evil. They have no legitimate justification in the way God meant the human family to relate to one another.

Some have read the Bible to justify the alleged inferiority of segments of the human family, especially black people or supposed people of color in general. They refer to the curse of Ham and the division of his children as eponymous ancestors of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. This reading conspicuously bypasses the fact that even these three have the same father, Noah; in other words, they and their descendants belong to the same family.

Obviously one must factor in the fact that Noah himself is a descendant of Adam. The story of the curse of black people is a myth that has no foundation in Genesis 9.<sup>1</sup>

The table of nations of Genesis 10 is not the starting point of the story of humans; Genesis 1 is.

Adam and Eve were created in the image of God with infinite dignity. There is no degree in dignity. All human beings by virtue of being created in the image of God are endowed with human dignity. In fact, this is the foundation for the imperative to respect every person. It is also the foundation of human rights and human security, in terms of the protection of every person's physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual integrity. The dignity bestowed upon all at creation means that no human being should be violated in any of the dimensions of their being.

Understanding the sanctity of human life and the sacredness of human conscience are foundational to how we should think of every human being. The value of human life is further illustrated by the solidarity God expresses in Scripture: "He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker" (Prov. 14:31; cf. Prov. 17:5). Jesus' own words show the depth of God's identification with the human family: "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25:40). God identifies with humanity. He wants to save all people and bring them to the knowledge of the truth (see 1 Tim. 2:1-4).

### **THE DIVINE MISSION**

The overarching purpose of the history of salvation is redemption of the whole human family; the re-creation of a new humanity in Christ Jesus. This is

the reason Jesus is the new Adam and all those who are in Christ have joined a new human family bonded in God. They are truly brothers and sisters in Christ.

The apostle Paul is explicit regarding the unity in Christ. In Galatians 3:28, 29 he states, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Christ came to restore the oneness of the human family in Him. He came to create a new humanity.

In John 11 the overarching goal that Jesus came to achieve was revealed with the unwitting stamp of prophecy from the high priest Caiaphas: "He prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would *gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad* (John 11:51, 52).

Christ came to redeem our story of fallenness, brokenness, and divisiveness, and transform it into a story of reunion, restoration, healing, and wholeness.

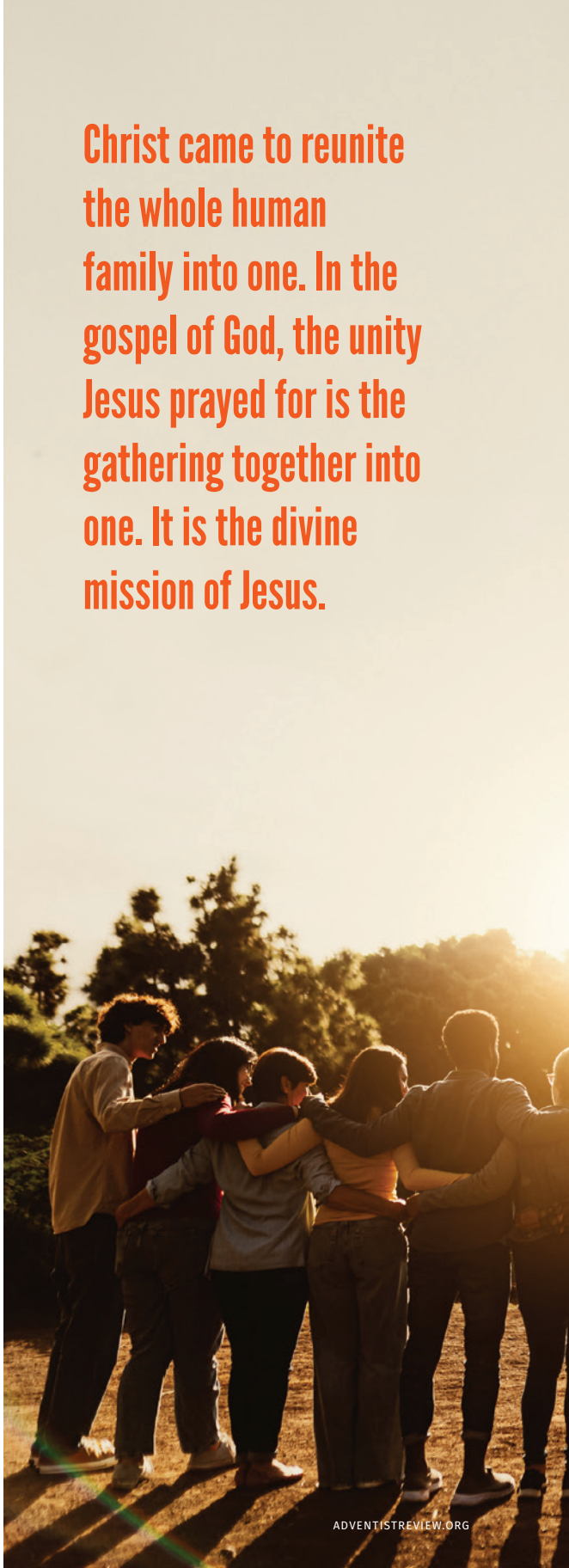
Christ came to reunite the whole human family into one. In the gospel of God, the unity Jesus prayed for is the gathering together into one. It is the divine mission of Jesus.

In Ephesians the unity of the whole universe is in focus. Ephesians 1:9, 10 states, "Having made known to us the *mystery of His will*, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times *He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.*" This mystery is God's overarching purpose. It is to put everything, the whole creation, under the leadership of Jesus Christ.

The mystery is about the reign or the kingly rule of Christ, based on God's kingship, expressed in the kingdom of God. That is the content of the gospel, or good news.

Only Christ is Lord. He is the only leader. The *archēgos* (archleader), who brings or leads to salvation, and the *prodromos* (the one who opens the way; literally, the one

**Christ came to reunite the whole human family into one. In the gospel of God, the unity Jesus prayed for is the gathering together into one. It is the divine mission of Jesus.**



who runs before the others to show the way), says Hebrews 2:10 and 6:20.

This is the true sense of genuine Christian unity. This unity is not manufactured by human ingenuity. True Christian unity is unity in Christ. Under one leader, one Lord, Jesus Christ. Not under a human being, a spirit or an angel or any human dignitary. Just Christ alone (*solus Christus*).

This spiritual unity should set the determination for the unity among human beings and among nations who recognize the sovereignty of God.

### **BREACHED WALLS**

The division of the human family into races has no biological justification. It is a construct meant to sow seeds of discord and dominions. Racism, tribalism, and ethnocentrism are instruments of evil. Expressions of crimes against the one humanity.

The root cause of all human predicaments is the fact that because of sin there are breaches in the walls of the reality of human existence. Evil has infiltrated the whole ecosystem of human experience. All the human family is affected because of the consequences of the intrusion and pervasive presence of evil.

So Jesus taught us to pray for deliverance from evil (Matt. 6:13). In His own priestly prayer Jesus prayed for us: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

God's one solution is the gospel. This is the good news of the restoration in humans of the image of God and freedom to have access to the fellowship and worship of the Creator. The gospel is always about the Savior, who can accomplish such a salvation.

It is of interest to note that the current aspirations of the nations that form the United Nations are encapsulated in the three pillars of this international organization. The pillars are:

- Peace and security.
- Justice and development.
- Human rights in terms of freedom from want and fear, and freedom to live in dignity.

The overarching Christian contribution to the aspirations of the whole human family is simply the gospel. The foundations of the new humanity are contained in the gospel: the gospel of God (Mark 1:14; Rom. 1:1; 15:16); the gos-



pel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mark 1:1; Rom. 1:9); the good news of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15); the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4). The gospel, as Paul describes it in Galatians 1:6-8, is the “grace of Christ”: “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed” (ESV).

The gospel is the good news of your salvation (Eph. 1:13); it is the “gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15); the gospel of the righteousness of Jesus Christ freely given to all who covenant with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16). The gospel “is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. . . . In the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith’” (Rom. 1:16, ESV). The gospel is the good news that the Lamb of God, whom John identified as Jesus (John 1:29), has conquered. It is the gospel of the blessed hope of the second coming of Jesus Christ. The gospel of the restoration of universal and cosmic harmony when Jesus returns as He promised in John 14 and in the book of Revelation. The latter is the last promise of the last book of the Bible.

### THE DISTINCTIVE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL

John the Baptist, as a precursor for the announcement of the new humanity the Messiah had come to form, had a threefold message:

1. A call to repentance.
2. An announcement of judgment and its accompanying warning.
3. The advent of a Savior, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

The precondition for the reception of the gospel or the consequences for rejecting the gospel are not the gospel. The gospel is about the Savior and His offer of freedom. In Luke 4:18, 19 Jesus defined His ministry in terms of freedom:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He has anointed Me  
To preach the gospel to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,

To proclaim liberty to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

The whole human family is invited to accept the good news of the advent of the Savior.

Those who receive the good news and are born again join a new human family (cf. John 1:12, 13). That is the good news of a new humanity, delivered from the old creation dominated by sin and infected by evil. “If anyone is in Christ,” Paul writes, “he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:17-20).

The eternal gospel of Revelation 14 that we are called to share is the best antidote against the fragmentation of the human family. Of the gospel, in the context of Revelation 14, Ellen White writes:

“The message proclaimed by the angel flying in the midst of heaven is the everlasting gospel, *the same gospel that was declared in Eden* when God said to the serpent, ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel’ (Genesis 3:15). Here was *the first promise of a Savior* who would stand on the field of battle to contest the power of Satan and prevail against him.”<sup>2</sup>

Revelation 14’s gospel is apparently the *proto-evangelium*, the first gospel of the promise of a Savior who will deliver the seed of the woman by defeating the serpent as per Genesis 3:15. Christ’s second coming will then put an end to the activity of Satan and the deception of wickedness.

So the gospel is the prophecy and the promise of Christ, who defeats the serpent. This was the first good news. The first advent of Christ, in the birth of the Messiah, the Savior as announced in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 2:10, 11), was the good news of the first advent.

What the Bible calls the everlasting gospel as proclaimed in the three angels’ messages is



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## Understanding the sanctity of human life and the sacredness of human conscience are foundational to how we should think of every human being.

inseparable from freedom. This final gospel is the good news of total freedom. It is the final exodus and deliverance from all oppressors, evils, and evil itself.

### ALL THINGS NEW

A deeper and more comprehensive study of the book of Revelation would reveal a compelling connection between the book of Revelation and the themes of the book of Exodus. Suffice it here to mention that in the first chapter of the book of Revelation the following elements show that the experience of God's end-time people is patterned after the liberation/Exodus Israel experienced when delivered from oppression in Egypt.

1. The revelation of God's name to Moses.
2. The blood of the lamb on the doorposts as a token of faith for the redeemed Israelites.
3. The constitution of God's people into a kingdom of priests.

God's reason for the Exodus was so that the children of Israel could worship Him, thereby forming a worshipping community.

These features are the beginning of the book of Revelation and set the stage for the pilgrimage of God's people from oppression, domination, persecution, and martyrdom to total freedom from evil.

In the first covenant God created a people who experienced liberation from oppression. They were graced with the Exodus, which for the children of Israel marked the existence of a new people of God, a people of priests. They sang the song of Moses.

In the last proclamation of the everlasting good news, the redeemed are described as standing upon the sea of glass mixed with fire. "They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. 15:3). We are invited to experience the final exodus. The everlasting good news of total freedom to have access to God's presence, in gratitude, worship, and eternal fellowship with God. That is the destiny of the new humanity in Christ.

"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful'" (Rev. 21:3-5).

A new humanity, a new environment, and a new atmosphere where freedom, holiness, righteousness, peace, and joy will dwell forever. 🍀

<sup>1</sup> Gene Rice ("The Curse That Never Was [Genesis 9:18-27]," in Suzanne Scholz, *Biblical Studies Alternately: An Introductory Reader* [Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2003], p. 217) wrote that "of all the passages of the Bible none is more infamous than Genesis 9:18-27. Many a person has used this text to justify to himself and others his prejudice against people of African descent. Indeed, it has been widely used to claim divine sanction for slavery and segregation. Often the location of the passage is unknown, and one is not familiar with the details, [but] with the certainty of unexamined truth it is asserted that the Bible speaks of a curse on black people. And this notion has exercised so powerful an influence precisely because its adherents by and large have been 'good church people.' While the heyday of this understanding of Genesis 9:18-27 was during the last and early part of this century, it persists to this day." See also Ganoune Diop, "Curse of Ham' or Blessing of God? Autopsy of a Tenacious Myth" (unpublished paper available upon request).

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 2, p. 106. (Italics supplied.)

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# His Invitation

*Reconciliation, unity,  
and latter-rain power*

**GREGORY AND CAROL ALLEN**



**A**t the close of His farewell discourse, Jesus' prayer to His Father has implications that stretch from the cross to the *eschaton*. Jesus prays for Himself and the apostles; then He intercedes for all who would believe in Him until the end of time (see John 17:22-24, NASB).

The specific focus of Jesus' prayer is that His disciples might be one; that their perfect unity will mirror the oneness of God. Only *this unity* in the church will convince the unbelieving world of God's saving purpose in Jesus.

Certainly God called our church into existence. Yet according to Jesus' prayer, proclaiming the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and the third angel's message is not sufficient to attract unbelievers to Christ (cf. John 12:32).

### **GOD'S SOLUTION IN JESUS CHRIST**

Many Christians are unaware that Paul's letter to believers in Rome is a Spirit-inspired tour de force on reconciliation and unity written to Gentile and Jewish house churches divided by their ethnicity.<sup>1</sup>

Since the Protestant Reformation, especially based on Martin Luther's ideas, most Christians believe that Paul, oblivious to the division between Gentiles and Jews, wrote a theological treatise to believers. Its overarching theme is justification by faith in Christ alone.<sup>2</sup> Against the medieval Catholic emphasis on righteousness by works, the Reformers emphasized justification, God's declaration of individual acquittal through faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

Instead, Paul writes a letter to divided believers in which every theme, including justification by faith, is designed to foster reconciliation and unity through the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> But before we provide biblical evidence from the letter, contextual background will be helpful.

After Pentecost, Jewish believers took the gospel to every corner of the Roman Empire, including Rome (Acts 2:14-41). In the early years, before "Christian" assemblies were organized, Jewish believers shared the gospel in synagogues. According to the Roman historian Suetonius, writing after the fact (A.D. 121), rioting occurred in the synagogues in Rome "at the instigation of Chrestos."<sup>4</sup>

Although Suetonius mistakenly thought that Jesus Christ was responsible for the disturbances, what he shares next is critical for a proper understanding of Romans. Because Roman authorities

**Paul writes a letter to divided believers in which every theme, including justification by faith, is designed to foster reconciliation and unity through the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

suppressed the disruption of peace anywhere in the Empire, and especially in Rome, the emperor Claudius issued an edict in A.D. 49, expelling the Jews from Rome. Luke corroborates this expulsion (see Acts 18:1, 2).

What then became of Christianity in Rome? With synagogues closed, Gentile believers preserved Christianity by creating house churches (Rom. 16:3-16). During the expulsion Roman Christianity became exclusively Gentile in leadership, theological beliefs, and practices (Rom. 11; 14). When Claudius died (A.D. 54), the edict either lapsed or was repealed, and Jews returned to Rome. The Jewish community found Christian Gentile leadership firmly established in the house assemblies. The Gentile majority was in control.<sup>5</sup>

Aware of this situation (Rom. 16:1-16), Paul writes the letter to the Romans (c. A.D. 57) to address the ethnic division with the gospel. Because he did not establish the Roman house churches, Paul opens his letter diplomatically. He affirms both communities (Rom. 1:1-15). He reminds his Jewish audience of the gospel's roots in Scripture's promise of a Messiah through the lineage of King David (verses 1-3). Then Paul, a Jew, affirms the Gentile community by announcing his desire to "reap some harvest" among them and describing his obligation to the non-Jewish world (verses 13, 14). He thanks God for both groups and asserts that their "faith is proclaimed in all the world" (verse 8, ESV), but hints that *all* believers need to be strengthened through his gift of *the gospel*; this is Paul's first allusion to the need for *corporate sanctification*.

Throughout the letter Paul presents the Godhead as the model for communal oneness. Paul portrays the Father as the author of the gospel, then asserts that Jesus Christ is the content of the gospel as Son of David and risen Lord. The good news of wholistic salvation is achieved through the sacrifice of God's Son. Paul uses the cryptic expression "the Spirit of

## Christ's Spirit *first* produced oneness among His followers, and *then* the same Spirit fell in latter-rain power.

holiness" (verse 4) to identify the Holy Spirit as the one who resurrected Jesus Christ from the dead. Later Paul shows that the Spirit mediates the life and transformative power of Christ to the believing community (verses 1-4; Rom. 8:1-17). The Godhead acts as one.

Paul's thesis statement asserts the essential claims he will make (Rom. 1:16, 17). Aware of the Roman cultural value of honor, Paul asserts that he is not ashamed of the culturally shameful gospel of a crucified Savior. He stresses that Christ's death provides God's saving power for all "trusting" Jews and Gentiles. Moreover, God's gospel of Christ is first to the Jews, who are first chronologically, and then to the Gentiles. Paul asserts that Christ's person and work reveal both the nature of God and His ability to save sinners. Finally, Paul signals the rhetorical core of the message that he will develop in the letter. He quotes Habakkuk: "The just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4). Paul has established that believers in Rome have been justified by faith in the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:8). However, he will argue that their ethnic division reveals their desperate need of *communal sanctification*. Those in Christ must "live" by faith through the power of the Spirit.

In the body of the letter, Paul levels the playing field for Gentiles and Jews. He demonstrates that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, all are under a death sentence: "For there is no partiality with God" (Rom. 2:11; see Rom. 1:18-3:20). Paul reiterates God's solution: the sacrificial death of Christ. He explains to the Jews that their salvation was not achieved by law keeping, but by faith in Christ; indeed, Abraham is the father of all those who are justified, both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 3:21-4:25).

In Romans 5:1-11 Paul exposes the heart of his argument. He moves from the legal semantics of justification to the relational language of reconciliation. Justified believers, Gentiles and Jews, now enjoy peace with God through the reconciliation accomplished through Christ. Through this he

shows the basis for communal, or horizontal, reconciliation in Rome: *the implied necessity*. In Ephesians Paul explains: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is *our peace*, who has made *the two groups one* and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself *one new humanity out of the two*, thus making peace, and *in one body to reconcile both of them to God* through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit" (Eph. 2:13-18, NIV).

Communal reconciliation and unity are not optional. One new humanity through Christ's death is God's reality and must become reality for *all* true believers. Rejection of *the new humanity* is a rejection of the efficacy of the cross. Throughout Romans Paul builds on this premise, i.e., genuine reconciliation with God through Christ will issue in reconciliation and unity between Jews and Gentiles.

### PAUL'S CALL TO UNITY IN JESUS CHRIST

Paul closes his letter with an apostolic appeal that has relevance for Adventism today. He exhorts believing Gentiles and Jews to perfect relational unity with these words: "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you" (Rom. 15:7, NRSV). In Paul's day pagan Romans used the term translated "welcome" to mean "accept into one's society, receive into one's home, afford table fellowship, grant access into one's heart."<sup>6</sup> In Greco-Roman society this type of welcome was typically not offered to the ethnic other. To the ethnically divided house churches in Rome, Paul commands both Gentiles and Jews to engage in a unity undergirded by tangible fellowship. They are to experience a relational oneness that is reciprocal and continuous. Yet Paul's command is not rooted in his personal authority. It is fixed in the fact that Gentile and Jewish believers have been received by Christ. A more precise rendering of the command and its basis would be: Welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed *y'all*. The personal pronoun is plural. All believers have experienced unmer-



ited acceptance through the blood of Christ. Through the power of the Spirit, and for God's glory, they are to extend this acceptance to the other (cf. Matt. 5:43-48).

### LATTER-RAIN POWER

Paul's letter raises a question. Will the Spirit be poured out in latter-rain power on a divided church? The answer lies in the reception of the former rain in the first century. Luke describes this critical moment in salvation history:

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with *one accord* in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:1-4).

The Greek expression translated "one accord" literally means to be of one mind.<sup>7</sup>

But here is the backstory to Pentecost: Jesus "breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22). Christ gave His Spirit to His disciples *before Pentecost*. Then "these all continued with *one accord* in prayer and supplication" (Acts 1:14). Christ's Spirit *first* produced oneness among His followers, and *then* the same Spirit fell in latter-rain power on a united people.

We end as we began, with the prayer of Jesus: "The glory which You have given Me I also have given to them, so that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me" (John 17:22, 23, NASB).

Jesus prayed for a united church as an evangelistic necessity. Will Adventism yield to the power of the Holy Spirit to participate in God's end-time work? Will we accept Christ's invitation? 

<sup>1</sup> W. Wiefel, "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome and the Origins of Roman Christianity," in K. P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate*, revised and expanded (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991); see also K. Stendhal, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> See Donfried.

<sup>3</sup> See G. J. Allen and C. E. Allen, *Christ Has Welcomed You: A Case for Relational Unity in the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Huntsville, Ala.: Unity Publishers, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *Divus Claudius*, in *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, rev. ed., trans. R. Graves (New York: Penguin Books, 1979).

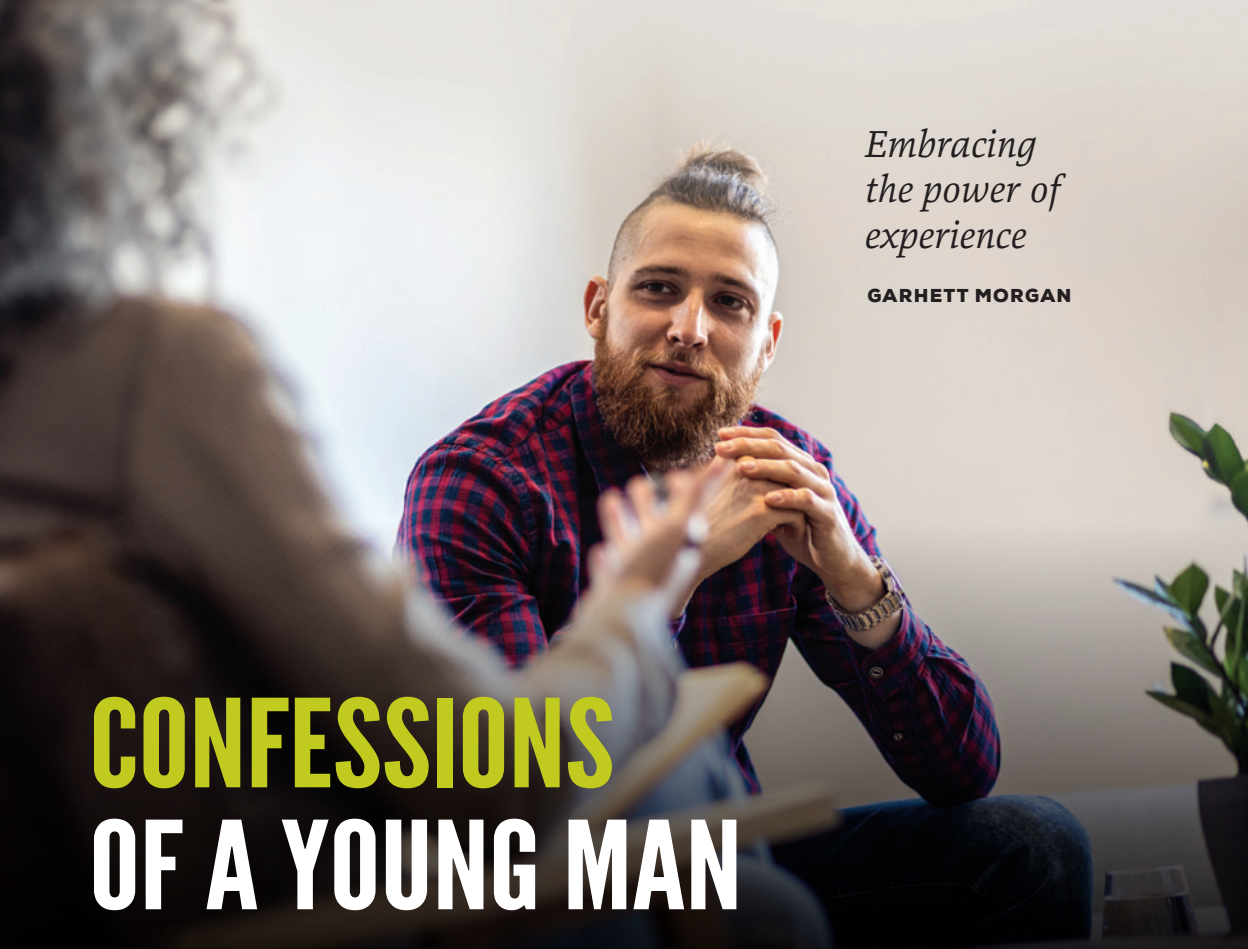
<sup>5</sup> Donfried.

<sup>6</sup> F. W. Danker and W. Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Writers*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

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*Embracing  
the power of  
experience*

**GARHETT MORGAN**

# CONFESSIONS OF A YOUNG MAN

**G**rowing up in the Adventist Church, I frequently heard such comments as: “You are so special! Adults love to see a young person on fire for the Lord and working for Him.” “When you preach a prophecy series and give Bible studies, it is so powerful because of your youth. The Lord is raising an army of young people to carry out His work!”

I was blessed to be a part of many youth organizations that had an incredible influence on my Christian walk and spiritual life. These programs, including Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) Youth for Jesus, naturally had a special emphasis on inspiring and entrusting the work of spreading the gospel message to the young people of our church.

The directors and leaders worked hard to emphasize the 1 Timothy 4:12 concept of not allowing anyone to “despise your youth.” This was the attitude I carried into ministry as I formally began to work for the church, moving from volunteer to Bible worker to pastor. I was, and remain today, passionate about our young people, and I

still believe that there is a special work that will be done by an army of youth in the closing days of earth’s history.

## **FLAWED THINKING**

A flaw had grown in my thinking, however, which continues to affect many and could have robbed me of critical opportunities for growth. I acquired a mindset of acknowledging that the church had some incredible leaders who were older individuals, while also considering their opinions, methods, and leadership style to be old-fashioned. I felt that they tended to hold back the “real” work that needed to be done in a fast-paced, complicated, and technologically advanced society.

I maintained a respectful attitude to the older generation and was glad that they were a part of the church, but I wanted the leadership and decision-making of the local church to be handed over to people my age who would act efficiently and with energy, cutting through the red tape that so often frustrated me. Then a dear older saint pulled me aside. This was not just for one conversation,

but for intentional mentorship, which I failed to recognize in the early stages of our friendship. This relational mentoring proved vital to my young ministry, and she continues to impact and gently guide in my life and ministry to this day.

I began to recognize that her advice did not originate in trivial dogmas from times past, but consisted of relevant values and skills. After all, these principles of how to treat people, share personal faith, and deal with conflict were not something she had read in a self-help book. These were biblical principles that she had not just read, but had experienced, practiced, and witnessed through a lifetime of church work, soul winning, and sharing the love of Jesus with anyone who would give her an ear to listen. She never despised my passion or minimized my frustration, but patiently listened and shared scriptures and practical application.

#### THE VALUE OF MENTORSHIP

In 1 John 2:14 John addresses the church and compliments not only the young men but the more experienced saints as well. “I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one” (NIV). The fathers obviously have experience and the youth lack it, but energy is on their side.

I fear that we have often missed out on such an opportunity in our local churches. Often the respective age groups view each other as more of a threat than an asset and do not value the potential that each group brings to the table. This is a blunder that has been committed by youth and aged alike. I wince when I hear conversations in adult Sabbath schools wax long in criticizing the new generation and all their faults and vices. Yet I also know many youth who view the older members as obsolete and graceless, and wish that they would just “get out of the way.” The devil exults in hearing both conversations, as they continue to cause division and rob the strength unity would bring.

I praise God for Nancy, my mentor, and the patience she had in teaching me to listen and find the power in experience. This skill has not only saved me from painful mistakes but has allowed for developing real relationships with my older members, whom I not only value but sincerely

## The burdens young people struggle with on a day-to-day basis are the same trials older members battle.

love. I shudder to think of how lopsided my ministry could have been, and the friendships I would have failed to kindle, if one dear woman had not taken the time to be patient with a hardheaded young worker. I’ve found the burdens our young people struggle with on a day-to-day basis are the same trials our older members battle. The questions about a connection with God are the same in both categories. There is so much in common, but so often kept separate by an age gap.

For those reading this today who find themselves in the category of more experience, I appeal to you: seek out the young people in your local congregation, and find value in their lives. Do not just stop at the comings and goings of life and a superficial Sabbath morning “How are you?” Offer a real interest in the spiritual life and its growth. You may not immediately be welcomed, and may even be met with some suspicion, but be persistent. Be open and vulnerable. You *are* needed.

On the other hand, you may find yourself reading this article and relate to my youthful frustrations. Be teachable. Remember to listen, just as you want to be heard. Your energy is needed, and so is your willingness to be guided by a generation who has already made the mistakes you are in danger of making. Those gray hairs speak to years of struggling with God and asking Him the same questions you may be asking now. If you are seeking this desperately needed mentorship, there is no lack of quality people right where you are. Ask questions, listen to those words of wisdom, those words of life. I thank God we have a church of such diversity, for mentors in my local church, and for Nancy, who expounded and embodied practical principles for life as a Christ follower. I look forward to growing old together in heaven, where age will know no separation. 🍀

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**Garhett Morgan** is a pastor in the Lake Union Conference.



# REVIVING DRY BONES

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*The breath of  
God makes all  
the difference  
in the world.*

**SARAH GANE BURTON**

**T**here was a crunching sound when Ezekiel stepped. He looked down at his feet and saw protruding white shapes: a femur, a jawbone, a skull. His face twisted in horror as he came to a stop at the bottom of a valley filled with bones. He was in a place of death.

For Ezekiel, a priest and a prophet, being among bones was hardly a good place to be. Leviticus 21 clearly states that only under certain conditions was a priest allowed to come in contact with a dead body and even then with the consequence of being unclean for a time (Num. 19). Additionally, there was something strange about the valley that would make anyone uncomfortable: the valley was filled with bones that were lying *on top of the surface*. This was not a proper burial ground. Whoever these people were, they had been dishonored by not being given a proper burial. They had been forgotten, without hope of being remembered. It was here that God brought Ezekiel in vision.



PHOTO: JACOB RUGLIG/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

The vision is recorded in Ezekiel 37. God asks a question in verse 3: “Can these bones live?”\* Ezekiel answers, “O Lord God, you know.” God says to him, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord” (Eze. 37:4-6).

And so Ezekiel prophesied. There was a great rattling noise, a thundering, a knocking of bone on bone—the foot bone connected to the leg bone,

the leg bone connected to the knee bone, the knee bone connected to the thigh bone, the thigh bone connected to the hip bone, which connected to the backbone. Marrow slipped through the bones; muscle generated; tendons and ligaments rushed up the bones, forging connections; skin crawled from the toes to the head, covering the restored bodies of thousands of dead men.

### BREATH OF LIFE

Yet Ezekiel 37:8 identifies a problem: “There was no breath in them.” So again God commands Ezekiel to prophesy: “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live” (verse 9). Ezekiel obeyed. Breath entered the bodies, and an army of slain warriors, once skeletal remains, stood up to Ezekiel’s height. They were new men.

For several summers in college I worked as a lifeguard and was certified in first aid and CPR. In training we were taught that the moment there is irregular or no breath, resuscitation must be given—a human body cannot function without air. When God created humans, He “formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Gen. 2:7). Adam did not become a living being until he received breath, just as the army did not stand up until they received breath.

God made a point of not immediately resurrecting the army. By delaying the complete resurrection, He emphasized the importance of breath. Without His breath, even a perfectly new body is useless. Without His Spirit, the dead cannot live. God wanted Ezekiel and the remaining Israelites to understand how important His Spirit is.

Have you ever felt that your community, your work, your life, your relationships, have fallen apart and are dry bones in a forsaken valley? And if, miracle of miracles, the pieces of your life have come together like those ancient bones, have you felt that there was still no *Spirit* in it? The breath of God makes all the difference in the world. The *Spirit* and *life* of God differentiates between a skeletal army and a living, breathing movement of the present.

## DESPAIR AND DIVISION

At the time of Ezekiel's vision the Israelites were discouraged. Their nation had been divided by civil war, and they were now exiled to various locations across the Babylonian Empire. Ezekiel himself was in the twelfth year of his exile in a small Jewish colony on the Chebar River. A priest by trade, Ezekiel was called to prophesy to the remaining people in Jerusalem, his fellow exiles in the territory that was once Israel. The latter part of Ezekiel focuses on the restoration of Israel as a nation. In this section of the book we find chapter 37.

In His address to the Israelites, God identifies two maladies that weakened the Israelites: (1) their despair in captivity, and (2) their national division. First, God addresses their despair. God explains the vision to Ezekiel, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off'" (Eze. 37:11). God identified His people as weak and pitiful, dry as bones. But He would not leave them in that state. After promising to open their graves and raise their dead, He continues in verse 14, "I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it." Again He emphasized the essential quality of the breath of God.

Second, God addresses their division. In Ezekiel 37:16-19 God commands Ezekiel to create a visual aid to help Him illustrate the fulfillment of His promise: two sticks tied together representing the tribe of Judah and the rest the house of Israel. In this way God declared through Ezekiel that the nation of Israel would be united in one purpose, under one King, in one kingdom. They would worship one God and follow one law. Here God painted a picture of post-Advent Jerusalem, where all of God's people will be gathered together under the one eternal King and descendant of David.

## LIFE AND UNITY

God gives two solutions to the two maladies. The solution to the first, despair, is breath or the Spirit of God that gives life. The solution to the second, division, is unity under one God. When God gave this latter solution to the Israelites, He had the future in mind. We know from His prophecy about the unification of Israel that the application of His promise stretches from Ezekiel's time

**God's final miracle in the valley of dry bones was restoring the bodies by His breath. With His Spirit in them, they stood, an army ready for battle.**

to our present and on into the future until we *are* united as promised.

No doubt Ezekiel himself had often despaired over the state of Israel. No doubt the division of his people broke his heart. Ezekiel's vision would have been a comfort to him, too, reminding him that God was in control and the true people of God would one day be reunited under the Messiah.

Could Ezekiel's vision have an application to our contemporary church community? Is it possible that we are not fulfilling Christ's desire of John 17:21, 22 for believers to "be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me"? Is it possible that some of us are not just lukewarm but spiritually dry? Could our focus on nominal Christianity and doctrinal distinction be leaving us brittle and dusty on the floor of a forgotten valley?

It takes individuals to form a church. Along with millions of others, we make up the Adventist Church and are therefore responsible for the spiritual growth and formation of our church, locally and globally. If we are dry, our church is dry. If we are divided, our church is divided. But if we are on fire, our church is on fire. And if we are united, our church is united. Examine yourself. Are you dry? Do you resonate with the Israelites? If so, do not lose hope.

God's final miracle in the valley of dry bones was restoring the bodies by His breath. With His Spirit in them, they stood, an army ready for battle. Our church may be dry. Our church may be divided. But if we ask for His Spirit to fill us personally and our church corporately, God will not leave us desolate. God will raise us up as an army, prepared to meet any difficulty that comes our way, because we have the Spirit of the living sovereign Lord in us. ♣

\* Bible quotations in this article are from the English Standard Version.

**Sarah Gane Burton** is a freelance writer and copy editor based in Berrien Springs, Michigan, where she lives with her husband and two children.



# THE INTROVERT'S COMPASSION MANUAL

This is the first column I've written since becoming a middle-aged orphan. I've learned that it's a disorienting experience to face the challenges of life without the people who first introduced me to the world.

For this column I'd like to do something a little different. I'd like to widen the definition of witnessing just a bit to include our ministry to our fellow church members as well as those outside the church and provide you with my manual on how to support someone who is grieving. The ideas in this manual come from real-world experiences of those who have been kind enough to support my family in our grief, even when their introverted natures may have tempted them to do otherwise.

**Be present.** It was a Sabbath afternoon a few weeks after my mother's death. I was visiting with my dad in his living room when Ray dropped by. Ray was a quiet man married to an outgoing woman, but his wife was not with him. He came in and sat across from my dad, saying nothing. Slowly he joined in on our conversation. When he left, our hearts felt warm. A visit from anyone would have been welcome, but knowing this man had stretched himself outside his normal comfort zone to sit with my dad meant more than we could express.

**Share a memory.** Of all the condolences I received when my mother died, the ones that affected me the most were those in which people told me something they remembered about her. My pastor recalled her smile. Several women told me how she'd looked out for them when they were in college, sometimes taking them shopping or providing them with gift baskets. Their stories made me want to continue her legacy.

**Invite them to talk.** Twelve years later my dad's death had me grieving in a different way. I had moved to a new community and was no longer surrounded by people who could share stories. I felt lonely in my grief. Then I logged in to my online class. My professor knew of my father's death, but he did not know my father. Before jumping into the agenda for the evening, he created a space for me to share. He invited me to speak with words almost anyone can say, no matter how introverted they are, no matter how well they know the one who passed: "Tell me about your father." As I spoke, the lonely part of my grief faded.

**Write a letter.** This week I received an unexpected letter. It was from a distant colleague of my father's. The letter's author started by expressing appreciation for the work I had done when part of the community (commenting specifically on my smile, which I must have inherited from my mother). Then he went into great detail regarding his interactions with my father, telling me things I never knew about my dad, but so greatly appreciated learning. The letter was such a gift. It lifted my spirits and gave me something I can keep for future generations to learn about their ancestor.

Thank you to everyone who stepped forward to support me and my family in our different grief journeys. Your actions helped make the journey easier, and you taught me how I can be there for others when they experience their own grief. As all of us well-intentioned introverts learn from what your actions have taught us, maybe we can move one step closer to being the compassionate community Christ calls us to be. ♣

**Lori Futcher** is an editor for the new *Alive in Jesus* Sabbath School curriculum that will be released in the next few years.

WITNESSING  
FOR  
INTROVERTS  
LORI FUTCHER



THESE IDEAS COME FROM REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCES OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN KIND ENOUGH TO SUPPORT MY FAMILY IN OUR GRIEF.

*Pioneering  
contributions  
in history*

LEONARD BRAND

**H**ow do we respond to a scientific culture that says biblical faith and science have nothing to say to each other? In this article I will address three questions: (1) Is it OK to mix faith and science? (2) Can biblical faith inspire and even guide scientific research? (3) Has research like that ever been published in peer-reviewed journals?

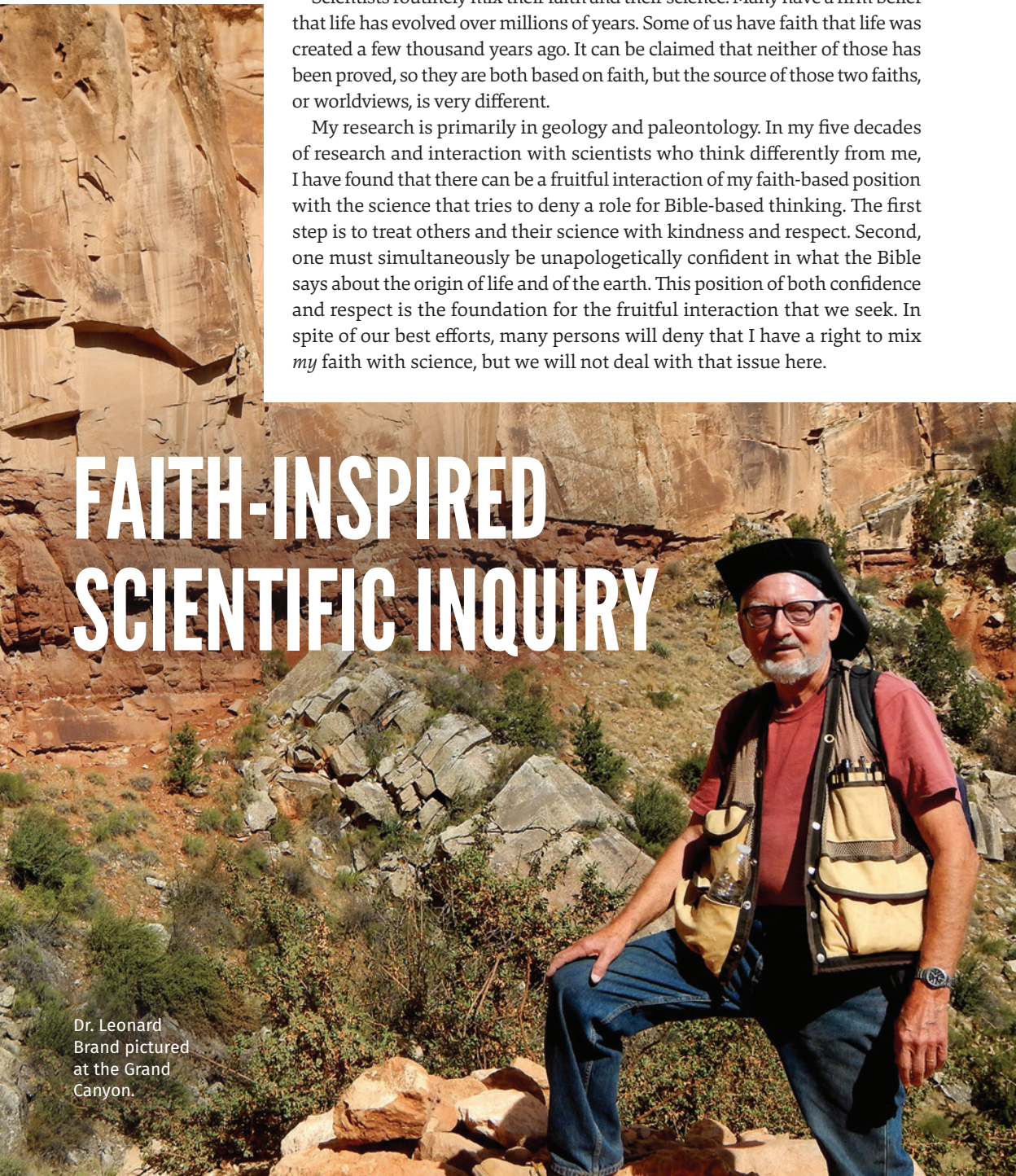
**MIXING THE TWO**

Scientists routinely mix their faith and their science. Many have a firm belief that life has evolved over millions of years. Some of us have faith that life was created a few thousand years ago. It can be claimed that neither of those has been proved, so they are both based on faith, but the source of those two faiths, or worldviews, is very different.

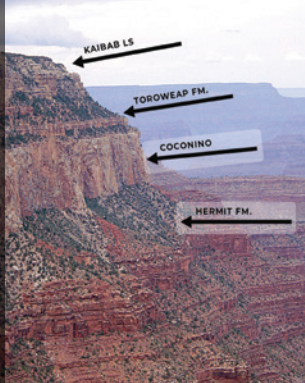
My research is primarily in geology and paleontology. In my five decades of research and interaction with scientists who think differently from me, I have found that there can be a fruitful interaction of my faith-based position with the science that tries to deny a role for Bible-based thinking. The first step is to treat others and their science with kindness and respect. Second, one must simultaneously be unapologetically confident in what the Bible says about the origin of life and of the earth. This position of both confidence and respect is the foundation for the fruitful interaction that we seek. In spite of our best efforts, many persons will deny that I have a right to mix *my* faith with science, but we will not deal with that issue here.

# FAITH-INSPIRED SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

Dr. Leonard  
Brand pictured  
at the Grand  
Canyon.



The Coconino Sandstone is one of the distinctive formations visible among the layers of the Grand Canyon. Dr. Brand's research has focused on characterizing the process and environment of deposition of such sandstone.



Dr. Brand using a circular drill bit to collect a rock sample.



## THE BIBLE GUIDE

To address the second question, my Bible-based collaborators and I have experienced several episodes of earth science research inspired and guided by our biblical beliefs. To stay within the limits of this article, I will describe only one research project as an example of how this works.

Near the top of the walls of the Grand Canyon is the Coconino Sandstone, which extends over much of central Arizona and is composed of sloping layers of sandstone like the deposits that form on the front faces of sand dunes. This cross-bedded sandstone can be formed by wind or water, but the geological community is convinced the Coconino Sandstone is from sand accumulating in a vast desert. This explanation is the best fit in their millions-of-years story of earth's history.

When the sand was being deposited, vertebrate animals walked on the sand surfaces, leaving trackways that became fossils as the sand turned to stone. I began studying these trackways, and did not find the eolian (desert) interpretation convincing.\* Field study and a series of laboratory experiments confirmed that underwater trackways of amphibians offered the best comparison with the fossil trackways. Two features were of primary interest. In some trackways, the animals seemed to be walking sideways, which vertebrate animals don't do, unless, perhaps, a gentle water current was pushing them sideways. Also, some trackways began or ended suddenly. Birds can do that, landing on the ground, walking, and then flying away. Four-footed vertebrate animals can't do that unless they are underwater and can swim down to the bottom, walk around, and then swim away. Why had no one else seen this evidence? The biggest reason is that the accepted desert model is so strongly held that no one was asking whether the Coconino was a desert or an underwater deposit of sand.

A major benefit of a biblical worldview is that it

opens our minds to recognize the need to ask more questions that others are not asking. Right here is a key point in this discussion. The Bible does not say anything about the Coconino Sandstone, so our geological questions must be answered by careful research of the rocks and fossils. What the Bible does is tell us about two events revealed by God (we could not have discovered them ourselves): (1) God created the earth a few thousand years ago, and (2) there was a geologically significant, catastrophic global flood. Only if we believe these two points that God told us can we understand earth history. If I was happy with the accepted naturalistic explanation, I may not have seen reason to ask more questions about the Coconino Sandstone.

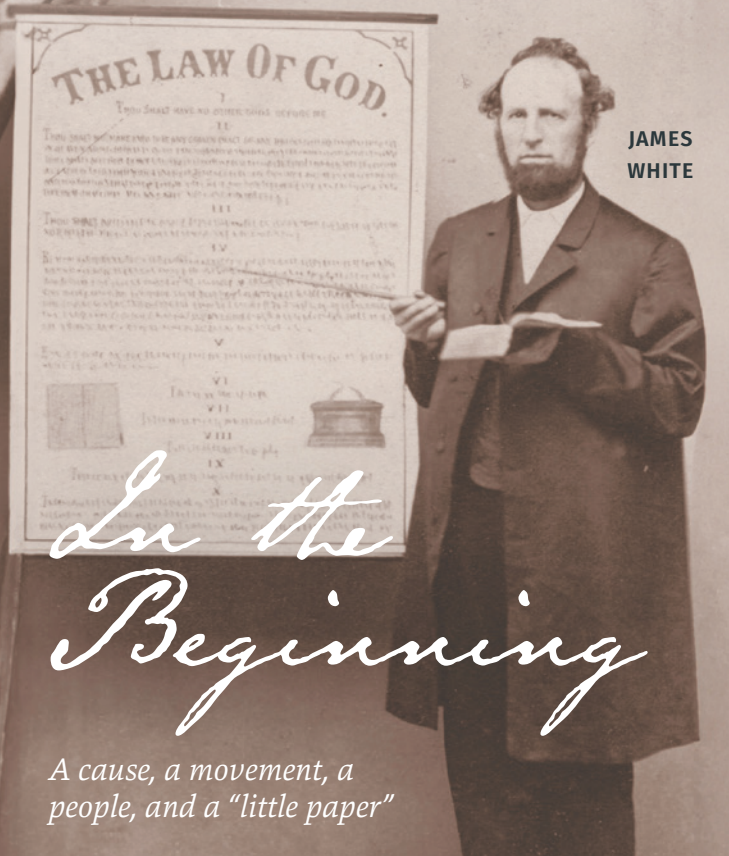
## PUBLISHING THE RESEARCH

My graduate students and I, and other collaborators, have done much more research beyond the trackways. However, the example provided above illustrates the lesson on faith and scientific research. We have published nine Coconino Sandstone research papers in peer-reviewed professional research journals. Two are listed below. We have also published 19 other peer-reviewed research papers from other geology/paleontology research projects.

Our experience convinces us that if we believe the Bible account of origins, our scientific research is more successful. We hope that our experience can help others to realize that the Bible gives us the only reliable account of ancient history. 🦋

\* L. R. Brand and T. Tang, "Fossil Vertebrate Footprints in the Coconino Sandstone [Permian] of Northern Arizona: Evidence for Underwater Origin," *Geology* 19 (1991): 1201-1204; L. Brand and S. Maitzel, "Small-scale Soft-Sediment Deformation Structures in the Cross-bedded Coconino Sandstone (Permian; Arizona, United States); Possible Evidence for Seismic Influence," *Frontiers in Earth Science* 9 (2021): 2395, doi: 10.3389/feart.2021.723495.

**Leonard Brand, Ph.D.**, is a professor and past chair of Loma Linda University Department of Earth and Biological Sciences.



**JAMES  
WHITE**

*In the  
Beginning*

*A cause, a movement, a  
people, and a "little paper"*

**MERLE POIRIER**

To tell the story of the *Review* is to reveal the beginnings of a movement and the people who gave their lives to its cause, because they are inextricably intertwined. James White was born into a farming family in Maine in 1821. James was a sickly child; an illness resulted in his eyes becoming crossed. While he attempted to attend school, all efforts to learn to read were useless. He was eventually sent home to work the farm.

White was a strapping farmboy of six feet, giving his father much support in the field. Miraculously, in his late teens his eyes became uncrossed, and at age 19 he enrolled himself in the local school. The tall, muscular teen must have looked odd seated among the smaller pupils, but there he sat, determined to make up for lost time. His tenacity, later revealed as a strong personality trait, caused him to finish his entire elementary education in 12 weeks. At the end of the term the teacher not only awarded him a certificate of completion, but one that stated he was qualified to teach!

James took a job as a schoolteacher the following year. In addition, he enrolled in a Methodist school to complete his high school education, where he spent 29 weeks with his eyes set on college. When he was one semester away from completion, his life took an unex-

pected turn. Little did he know then that this would be the end of his formal education—totaling less than a year.

An Adventist meeting in 1842 convinced him that Jesus was returning soon. He vowed to do his part in warning others. Embarking on a preaching circuit in Maine, White traveled through the hot days of summer and cold days of winter, sometimes wearing only a thin jacket and riding a sick and weary horse. He went from schoolhouse to schoolhouse, where in four months it was reported that 1,000 people had joined the movement because of his efforts.

He met Ellen Harmon, a young woman with a prophetic gift. He believed in her visions and accompanied her from place to place until rumors began to circulate that what they were doing was dishonorable. She needed him and he her, so the obvious solution was to marry, which they did in 1846. In 1848 his wife gave him a message from God to publish a "little paper." By the summer of 1849, we find him pondering the important message to write in the paper he would call *The Present Truth*.

**THE BURDEN OF PUBLISHING**

It wasn't easy. He was not only the writer, but the publisher and the shipping and production manager. Eight-mile walks one way took the material to the printer in Middletown, Connecticut, with subsequent walks to bring the little paper back to Rocky Hill. There the small group prayed over the first 1,000 copies, then folded and hand-addressed them, with James again walking the eight miles to put them in the mail.

*The Present Truth* gave way eventually to a revised publication with a new name, the *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, with a new intentionality to carry specifically Sabbathkeeping Adventist truth. It was free, but readers were encouraged to give what they could. The financial burden and sometimes critical letters from readers often threatened to keep the publication from continuing. Six times James vowed to quit publishing, but each time God intervened, and he was told to continue.

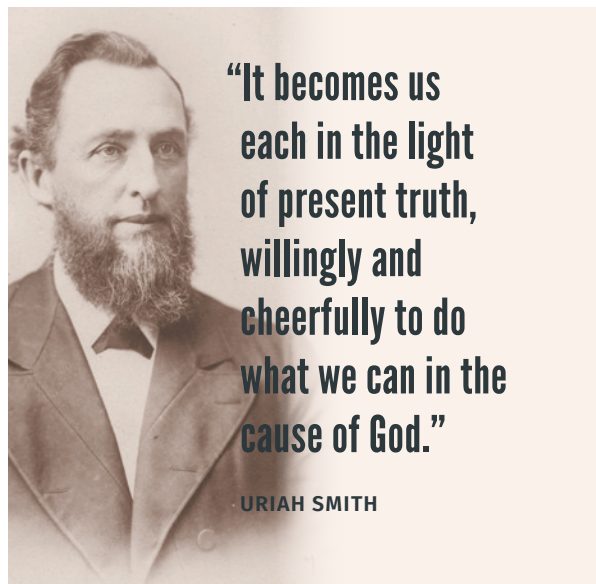
In 1851 the Whites moved to Saratoga Springs, New York, taking the publishing business with them. A young woman, Annie Smith, sent in a poem for publication. Intrigued, James offered her a position at the paper. Smith would go on to manage the paper, allowing James and Ellen White to travel on preaching circuits. But the burden of the publishing work took its toll on James.

“We are unusually well, all but myself,” he wrote. “I cannot long endure the labors of traveling and the care of publishing. Wednesday night we worked until two o’clock in the morning, folding and wrapping No. 12 of the *Review and Herald*; then I retired and coughed till daylight. Pray for me. The cause is prospering gloriously. Perhaps the Lord will not have need of me longer, and will let me rest in the grave. I hope to be free from the paper. I have stood by it in extreme adversity; and now when its friends are many, I feel free to leave it, if someone can be found who will take it. I hope my way will be made clear. May the Lord direct.”<sup>1</sup>

#### “U. S.”

That someone was found in Uriah Smith, who in 1853, at age 21, came to work for the *Review* office. His first job was learning to operate the hand press. By 1854 he was a member of the publishing committee, and had added the jobs of proofreader, mailing clerk, shipping clerk, treasurer, cashier, bookkeeper, and sometimes editor. In 1855, after the move to Battle Creek, Michigan, James relinquished his role because of failing health. Smith became the “resident editor” at age 23, with five “corresponding editors”—J. N. Andrews, James White, J. H. Waggoner, R. F. Cottrell, and Stephen Pierce.

“I do not enter upon this position for ease, or comfort, or worldly profit, for I have seen by my connection with the *Review* thus far, that neither of these were to be found here. But there are burdens to be borne, there are sacrifices to be made,



**“It becomes us each in the light of present truth, willingly and cheerfully to do what we can in the cause of God.”**

URIAH SMITH

and it becomes us each in the light of present truth, willingly and cheerfully to do what we can in the cause of God,” wrote Uriah Smith in his first issue as editor (known for the next 50 years as “U. S.”).<sup>2</sup>

In the beginning the work of editor was strictly volunteer. James White summed up the role in 1856 writing about Smith:

“It is all hurry, hurry, hurry with the Editor. He has no time to rest, or to be cheered and refreshed by visiting Christian friends, and looking out upon new scenery; but he must be shut up to his task, and grow pale, and hurry on towards the grave. One who served you five years, but just escaped the grave, with his life, and now (having taken leave of his editorial post) is fast recovering his health and former freedom of spirits. He can feel for our present Editor, as he knows his cares, his confinement, his sacrifices, while shut up to his duties fifteen hours of the twenty-four.”<sup>3</sup>

Three years later Smith was paid \$5 a week for his work as editor. White resumed editorship in 1861, serving until 1864, when he again lightened his load by returning the editorship to Smith. This seesawing back and forth between the two would continue until James died in 1881. 🗡️

<sup>1</sup> James White to Stockbridge Howland, Feb. 20, 1852, in Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> *Review and Herald*, Dec. 4, 1855.

<sup>3</sup> *Review and Herald*, Dec. 11, 1856.

**Merle Poirier** is the operations manager for Adventist Review Ministries.



# Dear Editor

*The first printing of the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald was November 1850. Its forerunner, The Present Truth, began in 1849. Editor James White served intermittently as editor of both from the beginning until his death in 1881. Featured this month is a letter to the editor from December 18, 1860, along with the editor's response. This was not as we do today, but letters were often printed as articles. It was a way for the editor to share important doctrine and understanding with readers, all while answering the individual. The adjacent letter is from a non-Adventist believer to James White, then editor. Note first that it was not only Adventists that read the Review, revealing the magazine's use as a "missionary journal." Also note the level of proficiency and knowledge of James White, who candidly responds to the reader. When one realizes he essentially had only a year of formal education, he is remarkably well read, logical, and articulate.—Editors.*

*Mr. Editor:* I am seeking light on an important question. It is the subject of the Sabbath. In the position which you hold through the providence of God, you are enabled to accomplish much towards elucidating this question, which, to the minds of many, is obscure. The commandment is plain, but why, I would enquire, has not that commandment been kept by such great and good men as Luther, Whitefield, Wesley, and many others, whom the Lord used as especial instruments in the dissemination of His truth as it is in Jesus? To me it appears most unlikely that such men as the above-mentioned could, without a good or sufficient reason therefore, ignore, as it were, the fourth commandment. I want to keep the commandments. I mean to so do through the grace of God. During the last twenty-two years I have been taught to remember the first day instead of the seventh, apparently in direct violation of the holy Word of God. If it be true that I have throughout my whole life so grievously sinned respecting this, may the Lord forgive me, and shed abroad in my beclouded mind light, and enable me to set my face like a flint Zionward, and to turn my feet fully into His testimonies. Much depends upon your reply, if you kindly grant any. If you do notice this, do it as early as possible, for I am very anxious concerning it. O for light! I remain your brother in Christ.

*Henry C. Busby*

## THE EDITOR RESPONDS

You say, "The commandment is plain," and that you "want to keep the commandment." That is a safe position. Hold on where you are, Bro. B., while we take a second view of these reformers.

Why the reformers held opinions so unscriptural and various on the Sabbath question probably no one will be able to fully explain.

"As regards the Sabbath, or Sunday," says Luther, "there is no necessity to keep it; but if we do, it ought to be not on account of Moses' commandment, but because nature teaches us from time to time to take a day of rest." (*Michelet's Life*, Book iv, Chap. 2, as quoted by W. B. Taylor, in his discussion with J. N. Brown.)

Wesley, on the other hand, teaches the perpetuity of the moral law in a most clear and forcible manner, as you will see by the tract we send you containing extracts from his sermons on the law.

Here are two reformers, Luther and Wesley, taking opposite positions on this question. We cannot follow them both; therefore the teaching and practice of the reformers should have no weight in determining our duty in regard to keeping the commandments of God.

Again, to follow the reformers is to suppose they were exactly right on all points. But in taking such a position we have staring us in the face not only the fact that they differed among themselves, therefore could not all be right, but also another fact, that if Luther was all right on all points of theology, Whitefield and Wesley could not be reformers, but could only enjoy the benefit of the reformation under Martin Luther. We regard Luther, Whitefield, and Wesley as great reformers, therefore conclude that God has not laid the great work of reform upon any one man, to be accomplished in his short lifetime. And why not have a reform as to the Sabbath as well as on other important questions? And is it not possible that this is the very time for it? See Rev. 14:12; 12:17; Isa. 8:16.

The Lutherans may stop with Luther, the Methodists with Wesley, but God's free men will go on as the light opens before them from the holy Word of God.

We send you also a pamphlet entitled, "Truth Found," etc., in which you will see that Protestant divines are in confusion on the Sabbath question. As you read, think of what Isaiah says, chap. 2:22, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Also think of what the wise man has said, Eccl. 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

*J. W.*

\*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Battle Creek, Michigan, Dec. 18, 1860, pp. 4, 5.

**James White (J.W.)** was the founder of the *Review*, serving as its editor intermittently between 1849 and 1881.

**The Lutherans may stop with Luther, the Methodists with Wesley, but God's free men will go on as the light opens before them from the holy Word of God.**

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# PRAISE

*A most unusual battle plan*



**SHENALYN PAGE**





I'll never forget that day. I stood in our front yard, throwing our dog's ball and absentmindedly watching our three young children. Tears flowed out of my eyes and dripped off my chin. We'd recently been told that we would have to move out of a home we loved. We had been looking for a new home for weeks, and nothing fit what we felt we needed. Time was running out. If we didn't find a place soon, we would be stuck in a little apartment. With three little ones, this was far from ideal.

That's when God taught me a transformative lesson about praise and thankfulness. My mother-in-law suggested that I try thanking God for everything that seemed to be wrong. I had nothing to lose, so I took the kids inside and we wrote a list, thanking God for every single thing that was stressing me and praising Him for what He was going to do on our behalf.

I started with tears streaming down my face. I finished with hope again.

### **A MOST UNUSUAL BATTLE PLAN**

When was the last time you attacked your problems with praise? It's not our natural battle plan. And yet that is exactly what King Jehoshaphat did.

A great multitude of Judah's enemies had gathered to destroy God's people. The terrified people had rushed to Jerusalem to seek protection. King Jehoshaphat "feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah" (2 Chron. 20:3). The people "gathered . . . to ask help from the Lord; and from all the cities of Judah that came to seek the Lord" (verse 4).

God heard the people's earnest prayers and sent a prophet with the promise of victory. "Thus says the Lord to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. . . . You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you" (verses 15-17).

Enter the praise team! King Jehoshaphat and all the people joined in a joyous praise session. The next morning, the praise team "went out before the army and were saying: 'Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever!'" (verse 21).

God went to work when they began to sing praises, and set ambushes against their enemies. By the time the army arrived at the battlefield, all their enemies were defeated.

Praise may be an unusual battle plan, but it's an effective one!

### **PRaise INVITES GOD INTO OUR PAIN**

One of the Hebrew words for praise is *hālāl*. It is the word that gives us our English word "hallelujah," and means to "boast about" or "celebrate."<sup>1</sup> Praise is celebrating who God is and what He does. Praise is a choice we make to celebrate God's goodness, even when life is at its worst.

That is exactly what Paul and Silas did at midnight in the Philippi jail. They had been flogged and thrown into jail for casting the demons out of a slave girl. Instead of moaning and cursing, Paul and Silas did something that shocked their fellow prisoners. They prayed and sang praises because they knew that God had not changed even though their circumstances had.

When we choose to praise God in our difficulties, we invite God into them.

God inhabits the praises of His people (see Ps. 22:3, KJV). When you exalt God's goodness instead of your problems, you are inviting God to dwell with you more fully. I don't know about you, but that's something I want!

God showed up when Paul and Silas started praising, and His footsteps shook the earth. A mighty earthquake shook open the prison doors, and the prisoners' chains fell off. Praise invited God into their prison, and He set them free.

### THE REASONS FOR PRAISE

"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise" (Ps. 100:4).

God invites us to come into His presence with praise for several important reasons:

Praising God for who He is and what He does shifts our focus off of ourselves and our problems. It creates an attitude of awe in our hearts so that we can "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 96:9).

Exalting God's goodness shrinks our pride. When we realize how great He is, we recognize how weak we are and how dependent we are upon Him (Job 42:5, 6). That's a good thing for us!

Celebrating God helps us learn to speak the language of heaven. Revelation 4 and 5 give us a vivid description of God's throne room in heaven. Everyone there is all about praising God. "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" (Rev. 5:12).

Praise helps to strengthen our faith. Focusing on God's faithfulness in the past helps us to believe that He will be faithful to us today, too. "O Lord, You are my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, for You have done wonderful things; Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (Isa. 25:1).

Our praise will strengthen others' faith in God. Paul and Silas' praise session led to the conversion of the jailer. Your praise can do the same thing. When you trust God enough to praise Him in spite of the problems in your life, those around you will recognize that there is something different about your God and will want to know Him for themselves.

Ellen G. White put it this way: "If more praising of God were engaged in now, hope and courage and faith would steadily increase."<sup>2</sup>

# Our praise will strengthen others' faith in God.

### THE BATTLE WON

"God, I praise you that we can't find a home in the country that we can afford," I had prayed that day. I couldn't see it then, but God was working through the delay and apparent impossibilities. As we neared the end of the window for buying a house, my husband and I were led to the story of Jericho and the Israelites' seven-day march around the city. We decided to "march around" our Jericho—finding an affordable home out in the country that wasn't too far from my husband's work.

For seven days we stopped house hunting and spent our time praying and fasting. God worked miracles during that time and led us to a home that has been perfect for our family.

I still don't understand all of God's ways, but I do know this:

No matter what battles you are facing today or how overwhelming they may seem, this promise is for you: "Thus says the Lord to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed . . . for the battle is not yours, but God's. . . . You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you'" (2 Chron. 20:15-17).

Start praising God for His goodness and faithfulness. Then watch to see how He steps into your life in amazing ways. You won't be disappointed. ♣

<sup>1</sup> Shelley D. Quinn, *Pressing Into His Presence* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2010), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), p. 202.

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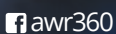
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# KEEP, GIVE AWAY, OR DISCARD

**B**e it a dish, shoe, tool, book, pen, or furniture item—for months we repeated the same line over every single thing we owned. As we prepared for an intercontinental move, we had to sort through everything we had accumulated in our large home in Maryland. This was not our first international move, but it was the most difficult on many levels. It's incredible how much stuff one can accumulate in 14 years.

We have never considered ourselves hoarders and like to think of ourselves as minimalists, but as we prepared for our move to Germany, we realized we had picked up too many things along the way. Emotionally and psychologically, it's often difficult to look beyond the history and the connected stories that everything holds and ask: "Do we keep this, give it to someone who can use it, or discard it?" We couldn't sidestep the issue and make no decision, because not actively giving the vase away or getting rid of it meant that it was coming with us into a much smaller apartment in Germany.

Strangely, despite the sometimes-draining task, it also felt liberating. There is something purifying about finally cleaning out that hold-all drawer that we only ever open to pop something in that we may need one day. There is a wonder to rediscovering things we had forgotten we had. And having a reduced wardrobe of clothes that fit and that one enjoys wearing is a lot better than hanging on to the expensive shirt that was last worn five years ago or that pair of shoes that was such a good buy but a half size too big. *Letting go and refocusing on the essentials is good, and we are discovering that it doesn't involve only stuff.*

Our boxes have all been unpacked, and our apartment is beginning to feel like home, but the sorting process has just moved onto another level. Confronted by a new culture, a new language (for Chantal), and a new church family, we have been pushed individually and as a couple to continue the sorting process onto a deep spiritual level. We are being forced to ask some hard questions—especially considering that we now live in a highly secular society: What is my faith really built on? What have I been doing and saying that was just part and parcel of the Adventist cultural environment I used to live in and that I have never actually thought about? What are the cultural practices and ways of doing things that are comfortable for me but not worth keeping? What habits and lifestyle choices have I slowly drifted into over the years that are destructive and should be discarded? What can I give to others around me of my walk with Jesus in a world that doesn't really care (or know) about Jesus?

Transitions are experienced not only by people moving intercontinentally. We remember our teenage years and the heartthrobbing yet scary feeling of discovering new things about ourselves and our world. Some of us have just recently transitioned into being parents or grandparents. Others wonder how they will manage the big transition into retirement. Wherever we are in our journey of transitions, we need to ask ourselves honestly: keep, give away (or share), or discard? The answers we will find will be life-giving and liberating. ♣

---

**Chantal J. Klingbeil**, Ph.D., and **Gerald A. Klingbeil**, D.Litt., served the Adventist Church for nearly three decades internationally as professors, TV host, editor, and associate director. They now live close to the beautiful city of Hamburg, Germany, and serve in the Hanseatic Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

**TRANSITIONS**  
CHANTAL &  
GERALD  
KLINGBEIL



**WHAT ARE THE  
CULTURAL PRACTICES  
AND WAYS OF DOING  
THINGS THAT ARE  
COMFORTABLE FOR  
ME BUT NOT WORTH  
KEEPING?**

# Called to Serve: Roselyn Nez

First, I would like to introduce myself. I am a Diné woman from the Navajo Nation. My clan is Saltwater. I was born from Salt people. As a child, I lived in Pinon, AZ, where my dad lived. Then I moved back to my grandma's residence in Whippoorwill, AZ. I remember as a little girl, me and my sister would go with my dad to NAC (Native American Church), and listen to him singing peyote songs.

One day, my dad sold our hogan that he built. We all moved to Chinle, AZ. That is where my journey began. My mom and my dad divorced. It wasn't an easy life, but I was free and did whatever a kid would do. I was mostly raised in government dormitories from kindergarten to fifth grade. Later on, my mom couldn't raise her children alone, and she needed help. So, my mother enrolled me and my other siblings in LDS (Latter-day Saints) placement programs in Utah. We all grew up in foster homes. My foster parents were good parents. And I love my foster grandparents as well. One thing I had to do was to learn to speak English. After three years in foster homes, my mom told the LDS church member that she missed her children.

When school was out, me, my sister, and other Navajo kids were ready to depart on the bus from Utah back to Arizona. It was a long trip, and I still remember when, on the bus, I saw my mom and older sisters waiting by the Chinle LDS Church. It was good to be back home, but at the same time, I missed my foster family. I didn't understand what my family was saying because they were speaking in the Navajo language. It took me about two to three years to understand my language again. We all moved back to my grandma's residence.

During my high school years, it was tough. I had to go to school and get my high school diploma. One day my mom and I were planning to go to the laundromat. As our clothes were washing, I started to read some announcements on the bulletin board. I saw a small card; it had "10 Commandments" written on it. One number caught my eye—it was

number four, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. I said to myself, "What is Sabbath?" The next day I got on the bus and was still thinking about what I read at the laundromat. I planned to go to the library during lunchtime, and I did. I looked up the word Sabbath. I was surprised and speechless. I had another plan: that weekend, I would rest. I still didn't know what it meant. I guess the Holy Spirit was with me and showing me something that I didn't know.

As the years went by, I wasn't interested in church, only traditional ceremonies. Then, my mom started to tell me to go to church because I didn't understand the Navajo ceremonies. My older sister was going to the local church. One day, she took me there. That was where I went back to church. The more I went, the more I wanted to know Jesus. I didn't know what I was searching for. I knew in my heart I was missing something. I prayed about it.

Another year went by. I was a volunteer in Chapter House. I was sitting in the office, and this lady came in and said, "May I put these flyers on the bulletin board?" I say, "Yes." Then I went to check it, and I saw it. I smiled to myself: "This is what I've been searching for!" The flyer was about the "Armageddon and the End" meeting at Chinle SDA church. I didn't know what SDA meant or its location. I had never been there...



To read the full story, visit [HolbrookIndianSchool.org/staff-stories](https://HolbrookIndianSchool.org/staff-stories)



PETER N. LANDLESS

ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

## THE ENIGMA OF STIGMA

**Q:** My son's limbs and face are badly disfigured. He has had three surgeries and will need more later. My bright, cheerful son has become withdrawn, antisocial, and sickly. He is bullied and stigmatized, which I believe is contributing to his health problems. Help!

**A:** Your concern is warranted, and we commend you for trying to understand and help your son (and yourself!). Individuals are commonly stigmatized when their physical or mental challenges are devalued, discredited, or misunderstood by others. Victims of stigma may be shunned, ridiculed, or even physically and emotionally abused. Supporting your son, or any stigmatized person, involves demonstrating compassion and providing a supportive environment. Your constructive, practical support will help counteract the negative health effects of being stigmatized: isolation, social withdrawal, apathy, reduced help-seeking, anxiety, depression, self-destructive thoughts and behavior, and acute and chronic stress, which themselves provoke physical and mental illness. Consider the following:

**Learn** all that you can about your son's condition, prognosis, and potential future state with and without further surgeries.

**Choose** respectful, inclusive words that focus on him rather than on his physical challenges. His condition does not define him.

**Encourage your son's self-expression and acknowledge his feelings** and views of the challenges he faces; **listen actively and allow him to share his thoughts and feelings without interruption.**

**Offer practical support**, such as helping with daily tasks and any of his specific challenges.

**Promote inclusion.** Encourage social inclusion to the extent he is willing and able to participate in activities and events.

**Help create** a safe, accepting, and welcoming environment and promote an inclusive, accepting

attitude among relatives, friends, church members, and community.

**Be a positive role model.** By setting an example, you contribute to creating a more supportive and accepting environment.

**Be positive, but be realistic in supporting his goals** and aspirations the way any loving parent would regarding education, career, and personal development. Offer encouragement and assistance without excessive pampering or acceding to unrealistic or harmful attitudes and behaviors on his part.

**Seek and encourage professional help and support** from counselors, psychologists, and age-appropriate support groups for his specific condition. Health-care professionals can foster stigma-free environments and provide compassionate care irrespective of the health conditions or personal characteristics of their patients.

**Be fervent and constant in prayer and help your son to place his confidence in God and cast his cares upon Him.**

Many people don't realize the enigma stigma causes. It negatively impacts the "stigmatizers" and the "stigmatized." So intercede in prayer and take every opportunity to educate the "stigmatizers." Terror management theory suggests *people shame* signs of sickness or misfortune to soothe their own fears, so they need help too. Facts dispel myths, understanding reduces ignorance, love and compassion reduce fear (theirs, his, and yours)! Let your son experience God's love through you, and remember, he can have hope. Just like the biblical story of Mephibosheth and King David, your son has a special place at the King's table. In the new earth all will be made perfect! 🍀

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**Peter N. Landless**, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist, is director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference. **Zeno L. Charles-Marcel**, a board-certified internist, is an associate director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference.

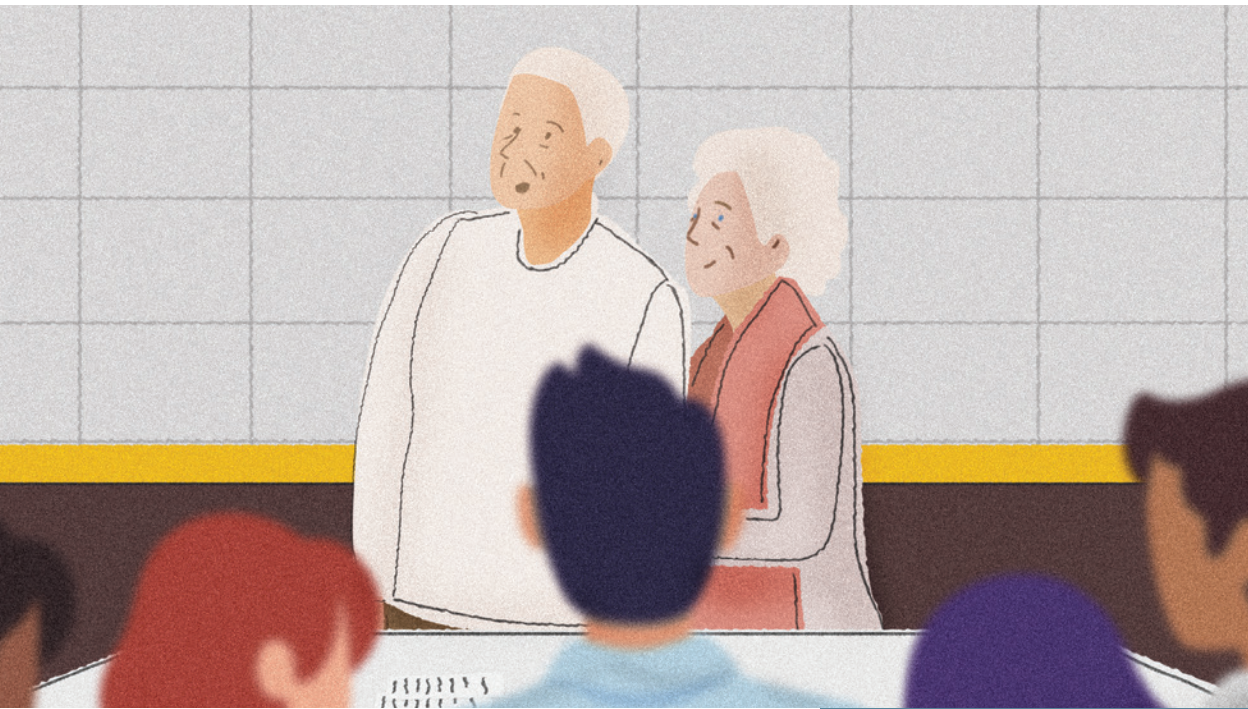
# Jim and Donna

are in good health,

happily retired, and love their community. They want to pass on their legacy of giving to their grandchildren and want them to have a say in how they begin to make donations with their funds each year. They've called a family meeting to explore interests and gauge how to move forward with exciting contributions that all can see the fruit of.



To learn more about Jim and Donna's journey—  
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# LOOKING BACK

CONTINUED FROM P. 72

*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*

March 29, 1864

*We take the liberty to publish the following extract from a letter from a Missionary in Africa, to a sister in Mass., knowing that it will interest the readers of the Review, to learn that although no missionary has gone to Africa bearing the Sabbath, yet the Sabbath has gone to missionaries already there. Under date of Cape Palmas, West Africa, Jan. 2, 1864, she writes:*

Thank God I now see clearly that the seventh-day is the Sabbath of the Lord my God, and am keeping it according to the commandment. Mr. Dickson also is keeping it. It is quite singular to keep it here.

I do not know of any others on the Coast who keep the seventh-day. But that is no proof against its authenticity. I only wonder that many good people reject the commandments of God by their traditions.

Your people may now consider that you have whole hearted Seventh-day Adventists here, waiting with you for that blessed appearing of him whom we love and adore, and purpose to worship evermore. Oh it will be delightful to see him as he is, to worship him aright, and cast our crowns at his feet. Oh how sublime to see the time near even at the door. So I will labor on and pray on and may God's special blessing attend and prosper my feeble efforts in his vineyard. I trust you will sympathize with me in these efforts to glorify God and make ready a people prepared for his coming kingdom.

How I would love to recount to you all the way the Lord has led me, and how wedded I was to the traditions I was educated in, of keeping the first-day for the Sabbath. Oh, how hard I found it to decide against what good people had taught me, whose memories I still venerate. But all is over, and for some weeks I have been keeping with you the seventh-day.

How flimsy the excuse that days begin and end at different hours, in different parts of the earth. Our Heavenly Father knew this full well, when he appointed the Sabbath for a day of rest. Though the time here is four hours ahead of you, it furnishes no difficulty. The Jews never found any difficulty about the seventh-day Sabbath, and why should we? Difficulties have fled as they always do before true light.

We have here now warm summer weather. The birds are singing, frogs peeping, insects humming and flowers blooming, and all nature smiling. Man alone is vile. Oh what a pity that vile man should forbear while all nature sings.<sup>1</sup>

*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*

October 11, 1864

Letter from Africa.

*Sister H. More writes from Cape Palmas, Africa:*

I feel quite lonely keeping the Sabbath by myself. I hope your society may do something toward a Sabbath-keeping mission in this part of Africa. I do not wonder there has not been a greater outpouring of the Spirit, when I think of the follies and traditions which have been set against the eternal truth of God. Oh, that the time might be hastened when all God's people shall see eye to eye. I love the truth, and by it hope to be made free indeed. Till then I must labor in that sphere allotted me by a wise providence; and may I so labor that God's blessing may ever attend and crown my efforts with abundant success. I ask no higher boon than to be wise to win souls. I know God can perfect strength even through my weakness, and in him I will put my trust, and on him cast my care. I know not what awaits me, but leaning on his potent arm I am safe.

Oh, how sublime is the looked-for event of his glorious advent. We hail with joy the harbingers of that event to which the eyes of God's chosen ones are directed, believing "the wise will understand," and since God will do nothing but he revealeth it to his servants the prophets, Amos iii, 7, I love to think that those who are watching and waiting, will know more than those who are careless or indifferent on so momentous a subject. I can thus see a reason why none of the wicked shall understand. How important to keep our lamps trimmed and lights burning, that when the Lord comes, we may be found ready. Let our conversation be in Heaven, from whence we look for the glorious appearing of the Son of man, who will change our vile bodies and make them like unto his glorious body.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 23, no. 18 (Mar. 29, 1864): 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 24, no. 20 (Oct. 11, 1864): 155.

# ADVENTISM'S FIRST FEMALE MISSIONARY

*Ten years before the church sent its first official missionary, she was winning converts on the west coast of Africa.*

She is one of the lesser-known missionaries who carried the truths of Adventism across national boundaries in the decade before J. N. Andrews was officially sent by the General Conference in 1874 to launch the church's mission in Europe.

Augustin and Daniel Bourdeau were evangelizing the French-speaking population of Quebec, Canada, by 1858. Adventist preacher Michael Czechowski sailed for Europe in May 1864, albeit under the banner of Sundaykeeping Millerite Adventists. In 1870 Jakob Erzberger was ordained and commissioned by the General Conference to do mission work in his native Switzerland.

Unlike the others, Hannah More (1809-1868) became an international missionary for the just-organized Seventh-day Adventist movement while already serving as an independent missionary in West Africa.

Introduced to Seventh-day Adventism through conversations with the young evangelist Stephen Haskell just before returning to Africa in 1862, she was nurtured in her faith by copies of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (now the *Adventist Review*) that Haskell shipped to her on the coast of West Africa via monthly packet boat.

Raised in a devout Congregationalist family in Union, Connecticut, Hannah had for a decade petitioned the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM) to send her as a missionary to the Native Americans in present-day Oklahoma who had been forcibly exiled from the ancestral homelands in the American



Hannah More

South by the Federal government. Seven years of missionary service among the Cherokee and Choctaw tribes, whose languages she learned, eventually led her to another seven-year stint with the repatriated *Amistad* survivors among the Mendi tribe in present-day Sierra Leone. There she again learned the regional languages.

During a five-year span (1857-1862) in the United States to recover her health and continue teaching, Hannah first met Stephen Haskell at an evangelistic meeting he staged in her home region in Connecticut. Fascinated by the ways in which Seventh-day Adventism united the Bible truths to which her personal study had led her, she "read herself into Adventism" through the pages of this journal.

Two letters by Hannah More to the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, both written from Liberia in 1864, are reproduced here. The spelling and punctuation of the originals have been preserved.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 71**

**I WILL LABOR ON  
AND PRAY ON AND  
MAY GOD'S SPECIAL  
BLESSING ATTEND  
AND PROSPER MY  
FEEBLE EFFORTS IN  
HIS VINEYARD.**



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