

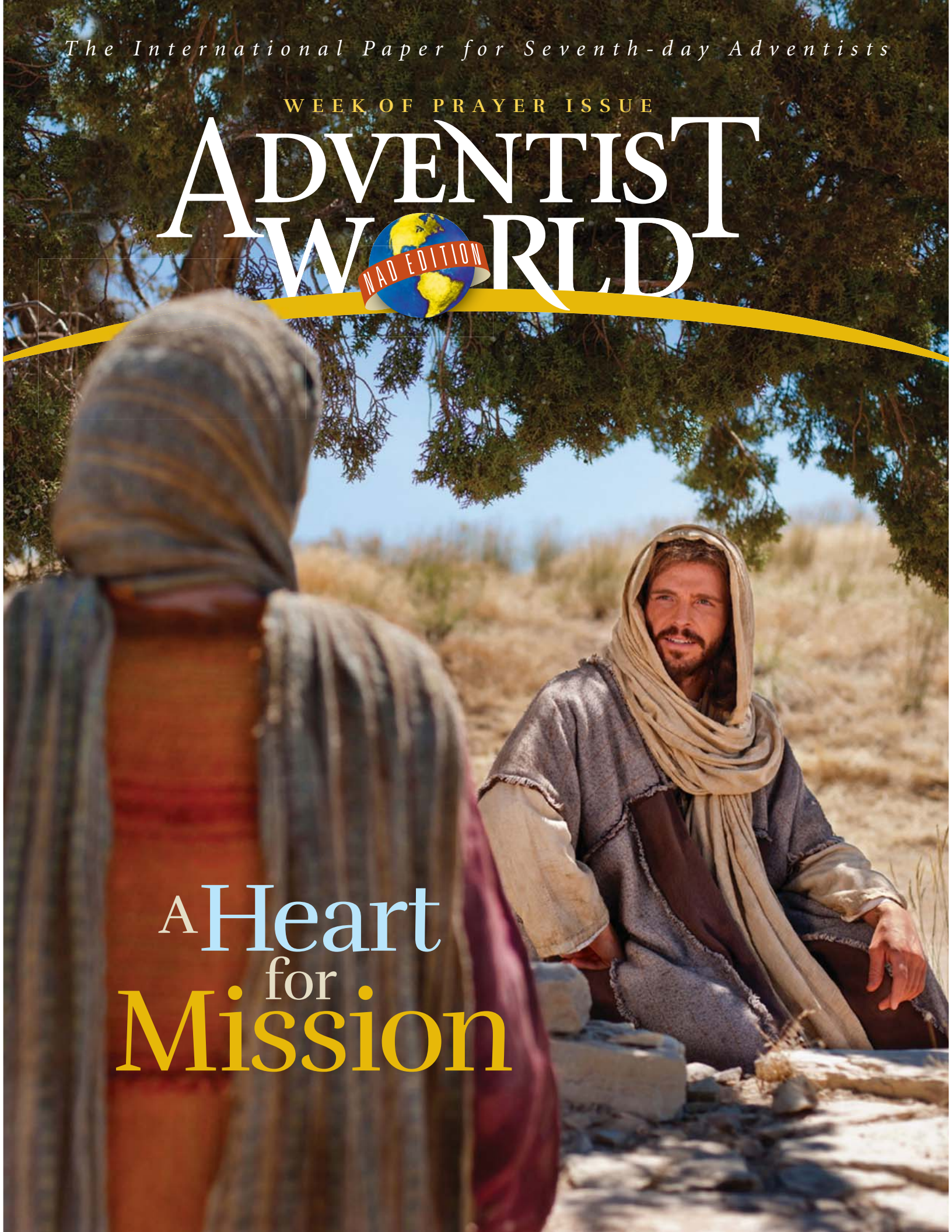
The International Paper for Seventh-day Adventists

WEEK OF PRAYER ISSUE

ADVENTIST WORLD



A Heart
for
Mission





WEEK OF PRAYER 2016

“Everyone a Missionary”

The Great Commission is one of the most well-known passages in the Bible: “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’” (Matt. 28:18-20).

In this commission Christ urges His followers to become missionaries and reach the world for Him. But is this command, given 2,000 years ago, still relevant for us today? What is our mission, and what does it mean to be a missionary in today’s culture?

During this special Week of Prayer we will be focusing on mission. Each day will bring some new aspect to this important question: What is God’s mission? How can everyone be a missionary? We’ll look at the significance of encountering Jesus and walking with Him in mission.

Love is the foundation for mission—love to God, and love for others. Conviction in what we believe and integrating new believers into the church community are two more important topics that will be covered. Finally, we’ll look to the time the mission is accomplished! You won’t want to miss a single day of these inspiring, uplifting, biblically based readings.

I invite you to join me as we prayerfully consider these important topics, and—no matter who you are, where you live, or what you do—to commit to being a missionary for Him.

May the Lord bless us as we come together as a world church family to study and pray during this special Week of Prayer.

TED N. C. WILSON, *president*
Seventh-day Adventist Church

WEEK OF PRAYER

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NORTH AMERICAN
DIVISION

ON THE COVER: Jesus always had a heart for mission, whether it was reaching out to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, Roman officers, tax collectors, or mothers with their children.

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God's Mission

By
TED N. C. WILSON

The idea of being a missionary started in heaven. Even before sin entered the world, the Trinity designed a plan to save humanity should Satan succeed in causing them to fall. God the Father would send His Son on a mission to save lost souls.

It would be a costly mission. Emmanuel—God with us. “Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son. Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race.”¹

Christ—the adored of heaven—left the purity, peace, and joy of Paradise to go on God’s mission to this dark, sin-filled world. His mission was clear—to seek and save the lost.

Since the beginning, God’s mission has remained the same, and through the centuries He has sent missionaries to accomplish His purposes.

Going on God’s Mission

For 120 years Noah pleaded with the antediluvians to prepare for a coming flood (Gen. 6:3; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5). And for 120 years Noah clung tenaciously to the promises of God as he endured taunts and ridicule from the very people he was trying to save.

God sent Abraham on a mission: to go to the land that He would show him and to be a godly influence for the Canaanites in order that they

might repent before it would be too late. God gave them probationary time before their destruction (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:15, 16).

As a teen, Joseph found himself in a foreign country against his will. Nevertheless, he chose to be God’s missionary, bringing light and integrity into a heathen household. In spite of the most trying circumstances, he continued to let his light shine even through the bars of an Egyptian prison. Later God chose to use this faithful missionary to save the entire land of Egypt and beyond during years of terrible famine (Gen. 37:25-28; 39:8, 9, 21-23; 41:37-41).

Extensive “Missionary Training”

Moses went through extensive “missionary training”—first at the feet of his mother, who “endeavored to imbue his mind with the fear of God and the love of truth and justice, and earnestly prayed that he might be preserved from every corrupting influence. She showed him the folly and sin of idolatry, and early taught him to bow down and pray to the living God, who alone could hear him and help him in every emergency.”²

In the court of Pharaoh, Moses received the highest civil and military training, providing logistical training that would serve him well in leading a vast throng out of Egypt and through the wilderness (Acts 7:22). Yet before he was ready to do this work, Moses

needed a third phase of missionary training, that which God provided in the wilderness.

Ellen White wrote, “He had yet to learn the same lesson of faith that Abraham and Jacob had been taught—not to rely upon human strength or wisdom, but upon the power of God for the fulfillment of His promises. . . . In the school of self-denial and hardship he was to learn patience, to temper his passions. Before he could govern wisely, he must be trained to obey.”³ Only then was Moses ready to serve as one of God’s greatest missionaries.

To Seek and Save

Rahab, a woman from Jericho, helped save her entire family when she shared with them her encounter with the Israelite spies and her faith in their God (Joshua 2:12-14; 6:17).

Daniel and his three friends were sent as missionaries to the powerful kingdom of Babylon. Over the years they faithfully carried out God’s mission in the court of the king. Through their witness Nebuchadnezzar eventually surrendered his heart to the only true God. You can read the king’s testimony in Daniel 4:34-37.

A young Israelite girl served as God’s faithful missionary in the household of her Syrian captors, leading Naaman, commander of the king’s army, to declare: “Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel” (2 Kings 5:15).⁴

Even Jonah, the reluctant missionary, helped save his enemies by preaching the Word of God to the Ninevites (Jonah 3:4-10).

God’s Mission in the New Testament

God’s mission in the New Testament was the same as in the old, to

seek and save the lost.

Jesus, of course, is the ultimate missionary. He who “was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-14). He is the one who revealed God’s mission of love and mercy in all of its fullness.

While on earth, Jesus provided hands-on missionary training for the apostles. Ellen White observed: “As Jesus ministered to the vast multitudes that gathered about Him, His disciples were in attendance, eager to do His bidding and to lighten His labor. They assisted in arranging the people, bringing the afflicted ones to the Savior, and promoting the comfort of all. They watched for interested hearers, explained the Scriptures to them, and in various ways worked for their spiritual benefit. They taught what they had learned of Jesus, and were every day obtaining a rich experience.”⁵

When Jesus sent out the apostles two by two (and later the “seventy” [see Luke 10]), He instructed them to carry out God’s mission by preaching, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 10:7). In addition, the apostles were to “heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (verse 8), He told them, reminding His disciples that the power to do these things came from above, and not from themselves.

After the Resurrection

Shortly after Christ’s resurrection the women at the tomb were given a very special mission to “go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He [Jesus] is going before you into Galilee; there



you will see Him, as He said to you” (Mark 16:7).

On that same day two other followers of Jesus—Cleopas and his friend—became missionaries as their hearts “burned” within them when Jesus explained the Scriptures on the road to Emmaus. Unable to contain their joy, they hurried on their God-given mission to tell the disciples that Christ was risen (see Luke 24:13-35).

Just before His ascension Christ again commanded His disciples to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. . . . And they

went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs” (Mark 16:15-20).

When we think of missionaries we remember Philip, who was sent to give a Bible study and baptize an Ethiopian official of the royal court (Acts 8:26-40). We also think of Stephen, who so bravely witnessed to the Jewish Sanhedrin, although it cost him his life. But from the blood of his martyrdom sprang up one of the greatest missionaries: Saul, who later became known as Paul (Acts 7:58; 9:1-22). We must also

“No matter your age, nationality, or gender, God is calling you to be part of His mission.”

remember Barnabas, Silas, John Mark, and Timothy, who all played important roles in carrying out God’s mission.

Other Missionaries

In the powerful book *The Great Controversy* we see how throughout history God has always had people willing to carry out His mission, even if it meant losing their lives.

In 1874 the Seventh-day Adventist Church sent out its first official missionaries: John N. Andrews, with his teenage children, Mary and Charles, to Basel, Switzerland. Andrews’ wife, Angeline, had died two years before. Sadly, in 1878 Mary caught tuberculosis and died. Five years later, while still in Europe, J. N. Andrews also died from tuberculosis and is buried in Basel.

Since that time many thousands of Seventh-day Adventists have gone as missionaries, and like J. N. Andrews and Mary Andrews, many young and old have given their lives while faithfully carrying out God’s mission.

Nevertheless, God’s mission has carried on, and today—thanks, in

part, to the sacrifice of the many who answered God’s call to go to foreign lands—more than 19 million people in more than 200 countries have accepted the truth as it is in Jesus and have joined this God-ordained movement.

God’s Mission Today

Today, in a world teeming with more than 7 billion people, there is still much work to do in carrying out God’s mission. God is calling each of us to play a part. No matter your age, nationality, or gender, God is calling you to be part of His mission. He may be calling you to be His missionary in your neighborhood, at your school, in your workplace, within your circle of influence. Wherever you are, He needs you in His mission of seeking and saving the lost.

Daily life interactions with others is the easiest way to witness. Let the Holy Spirit lead you to the right people, then calmly and naturally share your witness and encouragement in an appropriate manner under the Holy Spirit’s leading. Witnessing should be a joy and a natural outgrowth of our relationship with the Lord. God will open the way.

Everyone is to be a part of God’s mission! In carrying out this mission, it is so important that we stay close to the Lord through Bible study, study of the Spirit of Prophecy, and constant prayer.

Everyone a Missionary

Inspiration tells us that “if every church member were a living missionary, the gospel would speedily be proclaimed in all countries, to all peoples, nations, and tongues.”⁶

Jesus is coming soon! Lift that banner high and share it in practical

ways, pointing those around you to the One who has given us salvation and who has promised to take us home soon. Working together, let’s accomplish our God-given mission through His wisdom and strength. By God’s grace, everyone a missionary, producing Total Member Involvement to hasten Christ’s soon return! ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890), p. 63.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 243, 244.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁴ Bible texts in this article are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), p. 349.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, pp. 32, 33.

QUESTIONS FOR Reflection

- 1 What is your local church congregation doing to serve as missionaries to the community? To the world field?
- 2 Even if you have served as a missionary in another country, do you also see yourself as a missionary in your own neighborhood and community? If so, in what ways?
- 3 Do you find it challenging to talk with others about Jesus? If so, why? Is there something you can do to change that?



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This story was on the news a few years ago. Unfortunately, it is an all too common occurrence today. The story begins with a trip out to buy cigarettes at 2:00 a.m.—not a healthy craving or a holy errand—that sent Ashley Smith into the arms of accused rapist and murderer Brian Nichols. He forced her back into her apartment, tied her up, put her in the bathtub, and told her, “I won’t hurt you if you just do what I say.”¹

What would you do in such circumstances? Would you beg, scream, pray? Smith, in that terrible moment, blessed by a grace we all can access, saw an opportunity to serve. By her account, she talked to Nichols, made breakfast, told him her story, listened. She revealed her own openness to grace, revealed her own wounds that God was healing, and the moment was transformed.

Here was a woman whose life was barely afloat. She couldn’t look after her own child, and she was out at 2:00 a.m. looking for cigarettes. Here was a man wanted for rape and murder. But in that instant something miraculous happened. Smith joined God at work, and Nichols encountered God. He saw that even though his life was saturated in the blood and pain of others, he could change course, free Smith, and serve God in prison. Ashley Smith’s life was also transformed by the experience. She was able to discard the drugs that had ruled her life. She realized, through sharing with Nichols, that God had changed her and given her life a purpose.²

A Transforming Conversation

On another day, another woman, broken, ashamed, living in sin, left home on an urgent errand. Going to Jacob’s well for water at noon, she had no idea that before the day was over

she would become God’s missionary to a whole town. Jesus, traveling from Judea to Galilee through Samaria, stopped to rest by Jacob’s well. “When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’” (John 4:7). It was a simple request that led to a life-transforming conversation.

In that conversation Jesus awakened the woman’s interest, patiently answered her questions, and lovingly confronted her life choices. When her heart was ready, the Messiah revealed Himself to her. “Then Jesus declared, ‘I, the one speaking to you—I am he.’ . . . Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?’ They came out of the town and made their way toward him” (verses 26-30).

Once the Samaritan woman found the Messiah, she immediately shared her experience with others, her urgent errand forgotten. People knew her broken life. They must have seen a change in her demeanor, the healing of her shame and fear through her encounter with the Savior, and they

All Believers in Mission

By CHERYL DOSS

See God at work in the world, and join Him in His work.

came to Jesus because of her testimony (verse 39). Ellen White observed, “This woman represents the working of a practical faith in Christ. Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary.”³

Jesus said, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18). God’s call to us is to share His good news with everyone we encounter. Paul puts it this way: “I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace” (Acts 20:24). After all, Paul tells us, we are all ambassadors—missionaries—who have been sent on a mission to share the grace we have received in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19).

A Message of Reconciliation

From the very beginning, when our great missionary God came in search of broken humanity in the Garden of Eden, He brought a message of reconciliation for this world.

“God wants to use all you are in His mission to the world.”

Throughout biblical history God constantly asked His people to cross every barrier—cultural, religious, social—with that message of grace. He used the unlikeliest people as His witnesses: lying Abraham, unbelieving Sarah, dreaming Joseph, fearful Esther, murder-plotting David, angry James and John, doubting Thomas, denying Peter, weeping Mary, persecuting Paul. Transformed by the message of grace and reconciliation, they turned the world upside down for God, and the stories of their lives continue to inspire us today.

God has called all of us, as members of His body, to join His mission to this world. What a privilege to work with God, to do something of eternal significance, to bring reconciliation, to prepare people for Jesus’ soon return! Such work takes commitment and intentionality in the midst of distraction, busyness, and

our self-centeredness. Yet God needs all of us, working together, because each of us encounters people we are especially qualified to reach.

God brought into Brian Nichols’ life someone whose testimony was peculiarly suited to touch his life. God wants to do the same for us if we are willing to be used by Him. We can all share lessons learned from a life with Jesus. Have you failed, been wounded, found comfort and healing in Jesus? How has God worked in your life? That is the message He wants you to give. What are your interests, your passions, your calling? God wants to use all you are in His mission to the world.

God has given each of us a unique testimony, a unique life experience, and a unique calling. Even though we may not feel we have anything to share, we may lack education or position or status, we can tell others what God has done for us. I love Ellen White’s comments on the story of the two demoniacs (Matt. 8:28-34; see also Mark 5:1-20): “The two restored demoniacs were the first missionaries whom Christ sent to teach the gospel in the region of Decapolis. For a short time only, these men had listened to His words. Not one sermon from His lips had ever fallen upon their ears. They could not instruct the people as the disciples who had been daily with Christ were able to do. But they could tell what they knew; what they themselves had seen, and heard, and felt of the Savior’s power. This is what everyone can do whose heart has been touched by the grace of God. This is the witness for which our Lord calls, and for want of which the world is perishing.”⁴

God will place in our lives those people we can serve best. Even in the most unlikely people and places, as

Ashley Smith realized, God gives us an opportunity to share His message of grace and reconciliation that we ignore at our own peril. After all, the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20) is not the Great Suggestion. It is every Christian’s duty and privilege to join God in His work in the world. And the best place to start is by sharing the story of God’s work in our own lives, wherever we live, with whomever we meet. God is at work in the world. Will you join Him in His work? ■

¹ *Time*, Mar. 20, 2005.

² Interview with Katie Couric, *Yahoo News*, Sept. 15, 2015.

³ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), p. 195.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 99.

QUESTIONS FOR Reflection and Sharing:

- 1 Why do we often feel that we have nothing to share with people around us?
- 2 Can you think of other biblical stories in which God used unlikely messengers?
- 3 How can we meet people who need to hear our testimony?



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Jesus' call is a call to mission. "Come, follow me," He says, "and I will send you out to fish for people" (Matt. 4:19). His goal in calling disciples was to teach them how to become missionaries. But how are fishermen transformed into divinely empowered witnesses?

From my earliest memories, I have longed to serve God with all my heart. But through our time together God has taken me on an unexpected and often challenging journey as I have become increasingly aware of my many weaknesses and my great capacity for sin. Why would God take my desire for transformation and witness and permit me to encounter what appears to be the very opposite?

It's because when Jesus calls us to join Him in His mission, He leads us into a journey of transformation that begins by causing us to feel our deepest need of Him.

Three Steps to Transformation

Jesus' baptism illustrates a process at the core of all spiritual transformation that provides the foundation of our response to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). His baptism ushered Him into a ministry that turned the world upside down. Luke records that as Jesus prayed, following His baptism, "heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove" (Luke 3:21, 22). We shall note how three sequential steps in this verse—death, prayer, and the coming of the Holy Spirit—result in supernaturally empowered mission. Let us unpack them.

First, death of the sinful self, as illustrated by Jesus' water burial. Death is always the beginning of transformation, because death creates the neces-

sary space for God to reveal Himself.

We should nevertheless remember that "Jesus did not receive baptism as a confession of guilt on His own account. He identified Himself with sinners, taking the steps that we are to take, and doing the work that we must do. His life of suffering and patient endurance after His baptism was also an example to us."¹

Jesus described death as a prerequisite to discipleship when He declared, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross *daily* and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Jesus' call to follow Him with a cross is not a call to carry a heavy object that makes life miserable. It is a call to die, to say with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). As Ellen White said: "We must depend wholly upon Christ for our strength. Self must die."²

We cannot follow Jesus in life until we follow Him to the place of daily death. Our lives thereafter are "living sacrifices" (see Rom. 12:1). But I don't do this naturally or eagerly. Conse-

quently, Jesus may lead me along some unexpected and humanly unpleasant paths that create a deeper sense of weakness and sinfulness, encouraging me to yield everything I have and am, to Him.

Second, prayer for preparation: Recognizing there is nothing naturally good in me drives me to my knees with urgent prayers for God to reveal Himself through me. I need the preparation that Jesus prayed for on the bank of the Jordan River: "The Savior's glance seems to penetrate heaven as He pours out His soul in prayer. Well He knows how sin has hardened the hearts of men, and how difficult it will be for them to discern His mission, and accept the gift of salvation. He pleads with the Father for power to overcome their unbelief, to break the fetters with which Satan has enthralled them, and in their behalf to conquer the destroyer."³

Only supernatural power from

By GAVIN ANTHONY

Transforming Mission

“When Jesus calls us to join Him in His mission, He leads us into a journey of transformation.”

heaven can make a broken human being useful for God’s cosmic purposes. That power comes in response to earnest prayer. “For the daily baptism of the Spirit every worker should offer his petition to God.”⁴ And this is exactly what is illustrated next as Jesus receives the Holy Spirit.

Third, the coming, or baptism, of the Holy Spirit for mission: What was the result of the coming of the Holy Spirit on Jesus? Note two clues that Luke presents. First he writes that Jesus, “full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil” (Luke 4:1, 2). Jesus overcame Satan because He was “full of the Holy Spirit.” Our second clue is the next story. Luke

explains that “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. . . . He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him” (verses 14, 15).

Jesus then explains His own baptism of the Spirit to the synagogue, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (verses 18, 19). The baptism of the Holy Spirit enabled Jesus to overcome Satan and proclaim the gospel with divine power.

This baptism of the Holy Spirit is also for us. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all report John the Baptist proclaiming that Jesus “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 3:16; Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8) As John the Baptist identifies him: “the man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit” (John 1:33).

Only by Divine Power

As a disciple called to be a missionary, I am utterly dependent on this baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is a truth God has reinforced throughout my life. For 20 years now, my heart has literally been dependent on external power—that of a pacemaker—because it does not have enough power by itself. Unfortunately, even as a pastor, I can find myself doing God’s work with my own power for a considerable time before I feel something is wrong.

What is true for me physically is true for us all spiritually. We cannot become transformed disciples, and therefore we cannot authentically be heralds of God’s character and purposes without a divine power from outside ourselves.

But as God takes us on a journey to show us that without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5), teaching us to die daily to our own agendas, and deepening our desire for Him to equip us for mission, Jesus will baptize us daily with the Holy Spirit. Then we will be able to launch into our neighborhoods with a power that will confound Satan and result in countless transformed lives. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), p. 111.

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, p. 219.

³ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 111, 112.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 50.

QUESTIONS FOR Reflection

- 1 What difference is there between the apostles’ call and ours today?
- 2 What is “baptism by fire”?
- 3 Has God been leading you through the three steps our reading outlines? In what way?



Gavin Anthony is a pastor serving in Dublin, Ireland.

Engaging in mission with understanding and empathy is to tell people what their soul needs to hear in the way they can best understand it.

“Excuse me, sir. Are you saved?” I turned from my quick sprint into the grocery store to face an earnest young man in his early 20s.

“I beg your pardon?” I responded, not quite sure that I had heard his question correctly.

“Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?” was his follow-up question. Before I could answer yes, the eager evangelist gave a two-minute summary of the gospel, replete with theological jargon. I finally managed to convince the young man that I was already a Christian.

While I did my shopping, I reflected on that encounter. I admired the man’s courage and boldness—he seemed to be without fear of rejection or disapproval—yet I felt disquieted, even sad. I wondered how many people would be turned off by his approach. Who but born-again Christians would even know what it meant to be “washed in the blood of the Lamb”?

Unfortunately, what the young man possessed in zeal he lacked in sensitivity to his intended audience. I feared that his chosen manner of communication, though it might have reached a few people, would perplex or even alienate the vast majority of potential converts.

Speaking the Language

As we seek to fulfill our mission to proclaim God’s last message of mercy to the world, it’s most natural for us to attempt to communicate this message from the perspective of *our* personal likes and dislikes, *our* personal experiences, and *our* personal needs. However, if we fail to understand and communicate from the perspectives of

those we seek to reach, our message will be foreign to them. We must seek to understand *their* personal likes and dislikes, *their* personal experiences, and *their* personal needs. Then, based on these, we must seek to communicate the message in a way they can understand.

This approach can be summarized by the words of Paul: “To the Jews I became like a Jew. . . . To those under the law I became like one under the law. . . . To those not having the law I became like one not having the law. . . . I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor. 9:20-22).

Paul first labored to understand his intended audiences: the Jews, those under the law, those without the law, and “all people.” Then he labored to communicate from the perspectives of these groups. Jesus’ example takes us even a step further. Whereas Paul, in this passage, identifies groups of people, Jesus applied this method to individuals.

The Lord desires that His word of grace shall be brought home to every soul. To a great degree, this must be accomplished by personal labor. This was Christ’s method. His work was made up largely of personal interviews. He had a faithful regard for the one-soul audience.

Mission With Understanding and Empathy

By EAN NUGENT

Beyond groups of people, Jesus labored to understand the individual Syrophoenician (Mark 7:24-30), the individual Pharisee (Luke 11:37-44), the individual tax collector (Luke 19:1-10), the individual paralytic (John 5:1-15), and the individual adulterous woman (John 8:1-11), among others. Then, having understood them, Jesus communicated to them from their individual perspective.

If we are to have success in our mission, we must follow this method. We must first labor to understand the family member, the neighbor, the coworker, the friend, the enemy, and “all people” individually. Then we must labor to communicate the message from their individual perspective.

While we can never fully understand the perspective of other persons, we can make meaningful progress toward this goal using the following questions: What are their strongest likes and dislikes? What have been and are presently their most impactful life experiences? What are their most significant needs? After patiently laboring to find answers to

these questions, we must patiently labor to discern the intersections between the answers and the message. Having thus labored, we are better equipped to fulfill our mission with the understanding and empathy of Jesus.

Success, Jesus' Way

The Bible provides many examples of this approach. In 2 Samuel 12, Nathan was sent to David with a message. How could he communicate to this mighty king the sinfulness of his sin? Nathan employed his knowledge of the answer to our first question. Nathan knew that David, the former shepherd-boy, loved his sheep. He also knew that David, the author of Psalm 12, strongly disliked "the oppression of the poor" (verse 5, NKJV).^{*} By discerning an intersection between these and his message, Nathan was able to communicate that message effectively.

Another example of this approach is Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4. Afterward she described Him as "a man who told me everything I ever did" (John 4:29). She declared that this confirmed Him to be the Messiah (see also verse 39). Of course, Jesus did not literally tell her *everything* she had ever done. Rather, He identified *her most impactful life experiences*, her previous failed marriages and present illicit relationship. Then He communicated the intersection between these experiences and the message of His Messiahship by lovingly and respectfully interacting with her despite His knowledge of these experiences.

Jesus convinced her that He read the secrets of her life; yet she felt that He was her friend, pitying and loving her. While the very purity of His presence condemned her sin, He spoke no word of denunciation, but told her of

His grace that could renew her soul. She began to have some conviction of His character. The question arose in her mind, Might not this be the long-looked-for Messiah?

A final example of this approach can be seen in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3. Jesus discerned that Nicodemus' most significant need was not a response to the popular arguments against Jesus' Messiahship (see John 7:50-52). Nor was it a presentation of the gospel that would be more agreeable to his highly educated and religious mind. Though Nicodemus may have wanted these, his most significant need was the same as that of uneducated fishermen and irreligious prostitutes. He had to recognize his need of a complete reformation of mind, purposes, and motives: his need to be born again (John 3:7).

Constrained by Love

This brings to view an invaluable lesson. Engaging in mission with understanding and empathy does not mean we tell people what their itching ears want to hear in the way they want to hear it. Rather, like Jesus, we seek to tell them what their souls need to hear in the way they can best understand it.

What are their strongest likes and dislikes? What have been and are presently their most impactful life experiences? What are their most significant needs? Communicating in the context of these questions *enables* us to engage in mission with understanding and empathy. But what *motivates* us to do this? In the words of Paul, "Christ's love compels us" (2 Cor. 5:14).

As we meditate on the tender love Jesus has patiently extended toward us individually, our desire to extend that love to others will naturally increase. As we meditate on the

many ways Jesus has sought to communicate to us through *our* strongest likes and dislikes, through *our* most impactful life experiences, and through *our* most significant needs, our desire to communicate to others from *their* personal perspectives will naturally increase. As we fervently plead with God for the promised outpouring of His love into our hearts by His Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), we will receive more and more of that love motivating us in this direction. By the grace of God may we communicate the eternal truth in ways that are relevant to our friends and neighbors. ■

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QUESTIONS FOR Reflection and Discussion

- 1 What do you find most frightening about reaching those with whom you have little in common?
- 2 Are you friends with someone with whom you have few religious or cultural similarities? Describe that friendship briefly.
- 3 How will you know when it's appropriate to "take it to the next level" in your attempts to share Christ with others?



Ean Nugent is a software developer for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



Mission With Love, Christ's Method

By GARY KRAUSE

*Five steps to successful
witnessing*

In 1901 the Tenement House Act was passed to make New York's squalid tenement buildings safer and healthier. The New York Stock Exchange had its first crash. The city nearly melted under the deadliest heat wave in its history. And, at 68 years of age, senior Adventist pioneer Stephen Haskell and his wife, Hetty, went to New York as missionaries.

After a lifetime of mainly rural living, the Haskells landed in the heart of densely populated New York City, in a tenement building just a couple blocks from Central Park. Haskell seemed almost fearful that they would be lost in the crowds. "Do not let our brethren forget to pray for us," he wrote. "Do not forget the address. It is 400 West 57th St., New York City."¹

Haskell marveled at the urban jungle that he and his wife now called home. "In the building where we live

there are fifty-three families," he wrote. "The building is seven stories high, and two elevators run night and day."² The Haskells may have felt more comfortable living on an acre or two in rural New England. But they were following Ellen White's counsel that, instead of just preaching to people from a distance, Christ's followers should follow His incarnational ministry—living and ministering *among* the community. "It is through the social relations that Christianity comes in contact with the world,"³ she wrote. And further: "Our experienced workers should strive to place themselves where they will come in direct contact with those needing help."⁴

This, of course, was the method Jesus Himself used to reach out to humanity. And the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Reach the World strategic plan clearly identifies Christ's method of ministry as the blueprint for the church's mission. In her classic summary of this method, Ellen White

describes mingling with people as the first of five vital dimensions. She says that the Savior:

1. "Mingled with men as one who desired their good."
2. "Showed His sympathy for them."
3. "Ministered to their needs."
4. "Won their confidence."
5. "Bade them, 'Follow Me.'"⁵

The Savior Mingled

Jesus wasn't content to remain in heaven, separate from humanity, sending salvation by remote control. As John says: "The Word [*Logos*] became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14, NKJV).⁶ The word *logos* has a rich history in Greek and Jewish tradition. For the Greeks, it was a philosophical term, a unifying principle in the universe that keeps everything in balance, order, and symmetry. In Jewish thought, the *Logos* (Hebrew, *Davar*) refers to God's expression, His action and speech.

So John here draws on an extremely rich, multilayered word to describe Jesus. A Greek reader would picture an abstract cosmic principle being transformed into a person. A Jew would envisage God somehow revealing Himself in visible human form. The Incarnation literally put flesh and bones on the truth about God.

When He came to earth, Jesus didn't set up headquarters in some prominent place and expect people to come to Him, He went to the people. John says that Jesus "dwelt" among us. The Greek word *skenoō* means to "pitch one's tent" or "live in a tent" (see John 1:14). The *Logos* "pitched His tent" among us. He drank the same water, ate the same food, shed human tears.

Jesus did speak in the synagogues. But more often He was meeting sinful

women at village wells, locating tax collectors in trees, healing blind men beside dusty roads. Jesus came close to us in His wholistic ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing (Matt. 9:35). In Matthew 8 and 9 we see Jesus mingling with Jews and pagans, men and women, young and old. We see people physically touching Jesus (Matt. 9:20), and Jesus touching them (Matt. 8:3, 15; 9:25, 29). In fact, He mixed so much with “sinners” that the religious leaders criticized Him (Matt. 8:10-13).

Too often Christianity is relegated to cathedrals and seminaries, creeds and statements. But its true home is in the streets, in workplaces, in homes, and in our lives. Christ’s method teaches us that our mission must be more than just trying to attract people, like a spiritual magnet, into church buildings. Of course our churches should be attractive and friendly, with captivating preaching and programs. But the church’s main role is to inspire, train, and launch members out of their pews and into the community. The truth comes alive when it’s made flesh, intersecting with the lives of men and women, boys and girls. Doctrines are vital, but we must show how they work in our lives.

He Showed Sympathy and Ministered to Needs

As we follow Jesus’ example in mingling and meeting people, we show ourselves to be concerned about their needs, their interests, their families. As Ellen White says, we “show sympathy.” This describes the stance, the perspective, from which Jesus conducted His ministry: “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them” (Matt. 9:36). If our mission today is to be effective, it must operate from the same platform of love and compassion.

Jesus didn’t mingle among people like a salesperson trying to sell His viewpoints, or like a recruiter for a political party. He came as the living *Logos* to show sympathy and love, to minister to the needs of His children, to reveal the truth about God. Motivation for mission is so important. As the apostle Paul puts it, it’s the love of Christ that “compels us” (2 Cor. 5:14). Whether it’s ministering to needs through health care, education, humanitarian work—or even just providing companionship to the lonely—it’s Christ’s love that motivates us.

He Won Confidence

As we follow Christ’s example of ministry—mingling, showing sympathy, and ministering to needs—we naturally win people’s confidence. Our friendship, care, and concern lead to trust. And it’s from this context of trust that people open up and become willing to engage with us at a spiritual level. This isn’t some sort of artificial construct that we place on top of everything else. It naturally flows from the other dimensions of Christ’s method. Yet it doesn’t totally take care of itself. We need to pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance in the final and vital step: leading people to Jesus. And we must

look for and be open to doors opening to this step.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not called to become just another social welfare agency, as important as such agencies are. The spiritual framework and motivation of our ministry must underscore and inform everything we do: every bowl of soup we share, every coping-with-stress seminar we run, every vegetarian restaurant meal we serve. Certainly it’s wrong even to hint that someone must accept our message before we give him or her physical care. Our community work should show no-strings-attached compassion. But that doesn’t mean we should separate humanitarian care and Christian witness.

He Bade People to Follow

Through the years Seventh-day Adventists have strongly emphasized the final step of bidding people to follow Jesus. We’ve conducted millions of seminars and public evangelistic meetings, published billions of pages of “truth-filled literature.” But how much time do we spend on the other steps? To skip any step in Christ’s method is to short-circuit His wholis-



“Doctrines are vital, but we must show how they work in our lives.”

tic ministry. And short circuits lead to loss of power.

In the early 1900s Ellen White commended the work of the fledgling Adventist church in San Francisco for following Christ’s method of ministry. She called it a “beehive.” Church members visited “the sick and destitute,” found homes for orphans, and jobs for the unemployed. They visited from house to house, conducted classes on healthful living, and distributed literature. They started a school for children in inner-city Laguna Street, and maintained a medical mission and a “working men’s home.”

Right next to city hall, on Market Street, they operated a medical treatment room and a health food store. Also in the heart of the city a vegetarian café served healthful food six days a week. On the San Francisco Bay waterfront, Adventists ministered to sailors. And just in case they didn’t have enough to do already, they also held public meetings in city halls.⁷ Today, more than 100 years later, their work stands as a shining example to us of a church, motivated by love, working as Christ worked.

Putting Christ’s Method Into Practice

Christ’s method isn’t always easy. Today with the click of a remote control, vehicles disappear into suburban garages. Urban dwellers lock themselves in apartments and hardly see their neighbors. Long workdays leave little time for socializing. But Christ’s method isn’t an event we must find time for; it’s the way we should orient our entire life. It means taking what we’re already doing, and reshaping it with a purpose.

The important thing is to spend time with people who aren’t Adventists. Do you go for a walk each evening? Great. Now invite a non-Christian to go with you, or better still, join a community walking club. There are plenty of groups we can join: gardening, stamp collecting, book reading, etc. We can also work side by side with others in community services.

Do you eat every day? Terrific. Find opportunities to eat with friends and acquaintances who aren’t Adventists. In cultures in which it’s acceptable, the best place is in our homes. But a pizzeria or restaurant is fine. The important thing is that the best social connections are often made while sharing food.

We can’t minister to needs if we don’t know what they are. That means getting acquainted with our neighbors and communities. It means spending time mingling, listening, looking, and learning.

Ellen White counsels us that Christ’s method is the only method that will bring “true success.” In fact: “If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. . . . Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of

prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.”⁸ Stephen and Hetty Haskell knew it, and put it into practice. The “beehive” in San Francisco knew it, and put it into practice.

Will we know it, and put it into practice? ■

¹ Stephen Haskell, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 9, 1901, p. 14.

² Stephen Haskell, “The Bible Training School in New York City,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 12, 1901, p. 11.

³ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 480.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 8, p. 76.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 143.

⁶ Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁷ Ellen G. White, “Notes of Travel—No. 3: The Judgments of God on Our Cities,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 5, 1906, p. 8.

⁸ E. G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 143, 144.

QUESTIONS FOR Reflection

- 1 Why would anyone want to become a missionary at the age of 68?
- 2 How can timid individuals win the confidence of strangers?
- 3 Which of the five steps outlined here do you consider most important?



Gary Krause serves as an associate secretary and the director of Adventist Mission for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.


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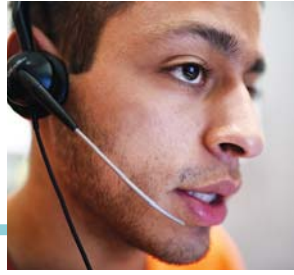
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The AIM call center is staffed by student customer service representatives from Andrews University who have been trained to connect callers with local Adventist church resources.



By KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

AIMing to Make a Difference

North America's contact center connects seekers to church

Adventist Information Ministry (AIM) is the central contact center for Seventh-day Adventist media outreach and evangelistic follow-up in the North American Division (NAD). It's located on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. More than 70 representatives comprise the contact center team, answering more than 200,000 calls a year.

AIM, which began service in 1982 when the 800-number concept gained traction, supports at least 30 outreach ministries (see sidebar) as well as registration and follow-up for major evan-

gelistic endeavors. "Church leaders saw this as a huge opportunity for people to connect with the church," says Twyla Wall, AIM director. "The people who started the ministry were employed at Andrews; they saw this as a dual opportunity for student labor and ministry. Students could help pay for their education by working there, but they could also learn an amazing ministry."¹

According to its Web site, AIM's primary function is to process requests, recognize interested persons who may be interested in further studies, and refer these interests to local churches. A "bridge ministry,"

AIM works closely with local churches to assist individuals into fellowship with the congregation. Wall says that reports back to AIM of baptisms are met with rejoicing.

"Our focus is not those who are currently church members," explains Wall, who has worked at AIM since 2000. "We're talking to people who are just hearing about us for the first time, or they see something that's introducing them to the Adventist Church. AIM is specifically intended for outreach."

In God's Time

In 2013 a friend gave Donald Gomer a copy of *The Great Hope* (an abridged version of Ellen G. White's book *The Great Controversy*). He loved it, and eventually requested Bible studies. Because of a backlog of contact follow-ups, it took awhile before the Ohio resident's interest was confirmed. He told the operator, though, that "everything happens in God's time."

Donald describes his former self as a liar, thief, and an alcoholic. He was in AA, but still found life difficult. He felt helpless. He found out from the AIM operator about an Adventist evangelistic series not far from his home. He attended, and noticed that the members believed in him. God was already in the process of turning his life around.

"This all started with a phone call," says Donald. "And I'm so grateful! What [AIM] does is amazing! If they hadn't called, I don't know where I would be."

Full Circle

Although being baptized when she was 12 years old, New Yorker Hilda

Thomas drifted away from the church, and even a friend's invitation didn't stir her. But one day she heard Walter Pearson preach on a Breath of Life broadcast. Moved, the 80-something-year-old agreed to visit church with her friend. Illness kept Hilda from attending again. As she recovered, Hilda felt convicted to return to church and contacted AIM for prayer. She also requested that AIM connect her with a local church.

Hilda fell sick again and went to the hospital, where an Adventist pastor visited her. Once she was out of the hospital, Hilda started to attend the church regularly, and accepted the Sabbath truth. She was baptized in August 2015 and calls herself "an evangelist for the Lord."

Another Branch of Evangelism

The customer service representatives (CSRs) consider themselves evangelists too, and they are also changed by working for AIM. June Price, university chaplain and student mission director of Andrews University, reports that AIM's "effort and care for our students is changing lives." Price says that in answer to the question *During your time at Andrews University, what has been the most influential experience on your faith development* (on the 2016 faith development survey)? many students answered: "Working at AIM." Price is thankful for the opportunities students have at AIM, and for AIM's ability to "share Jesus with our students."

Wall asserts that Jesus told His followers to go and tell others personally about Him. "The gospel itself involves telling, sharing personally," she says, citing Mark 5:19 and Matthew 28:19, 20 as just two examples. "The church makes all these wonderful programs and puts them out there; and there's nothing like talking to someone about what you've just seen and being able to ask questions or get more information."

Below: Twyla Wall, AIM director, looks over the ministry program schedules with a staff member.



Wall explains that some people call in for what's been offered, often a book or pamphlet. But CSRs are trained to gently attempt to engage them further, because many who call want to make a personal connection and have a conversation about spiritual things.

When calls are answered by a live CSR, says Wall, "there's often a pause and then they'll go, 'Is this a real person?' Then we'll say, 'Yes, it is.' To which they respond, 'Oh, wow, that just never happens!'"

Wall understands that North Americans are used to getting their information through automated services, Web sites, and social media. But she says that "even though there are people who want to do everything in an anonymous and distant way, I think we're swinging back to wanting human connections; and there's still a fairly large segment of our society who

aren't always comfortable with the technological side of things."

Whether calls are program-based or random-based (including calls from years-old printed materials), "all of this could go to voice mail," admits Wall, "but talking to the person is better. In service scenarios there's a point when a person just wants to talk to somebody."

When the Call Comes In

During an average weekday five to seven CSRs (up to 30 on Sundays) answer the calls that pop into their queues. The calls are coded so operators know better how to assist, and what ministry is getting the call. They answer with that ministry's name, and that organization's information automatically opens up on their screen.

Client ministries also provide AIM with their airtime schedules so that more CSRs can be on hand if needed. Each CSR has access to an online cli-

Left: The AIM computer servers connect callers and customer service representatives seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

*A “bridge ministry,”
AIM works closely
with local churches
to assist individuals
into fellowship
with their
congregation.*

ent resource (OCR), with all the information for each client available through various clickable tabs. “It’s a library of information,” says Wall. “A tool important for each call we take.”

But facts aren’t the only important thing about taking the call. As previously mentioned, the connection with the person is vital. After the initial greeting, the trained CSR tries to gauge where callers are in their spiritual journey, and what type of follow-up might be needed. “Some people are very businesslike and quick,” says Wall. “They saw a program and want to order the [item]. That’s it.”

The CSR tries to initiate a little bit of conversation, asking what touched callers about the program they watched or the book they read. The CSR is able to see how often individuals have called. This helps them determine the caller’s level of curiosity and interest. Says Wall, “The Holy Spirit is

prompting the caller, and AIM CSRs seek the Holy Spirit to guide their care of the caller.”

The CSR asks if callers are interested in free Bible studies, and if they’d like to be connected with someone locally. “Callers are often surprised that there is a local option for care, which is another great reason to have a conversation!” says Wall.

The Bible studies, explains Wall, are either mailed, available through a Web site, or given by a designated local Adventist, often a church pastor, Bible worker, or church elder. Chaplains who work at AIM, up to six at a time, manage the referral work, including contacting pastors and verifying that callers are, what Wall calls, “vetted interests.” An average of 60 local referrals occur every month.

“In the referral chaplain part of the ministry, our number-one goal is to connect people with a local Seventh-day Adventist church through Bible Studies,” says Don Lopes, head chaplain. “At AIM we realize the importance of the person building relationships with the local church and pastor, elder, or Bible worker if they are to become integrated into the church.”

Calls for books, calls for prayer, calls for information: AIM is a 24/7 central contact center for NAD outreach. As described on its Web site, AIM helps the church’s evangelistic outreach by taking orders, processing requests for literature, registering attendees, and assisting interested persons to further studies by referring these interests to local churches. AIM also assists “in building relationship through outbound calls as well as offering the opportunity to support various NAD entities with fund-raising.”

AIM is available to help with short-term projects, such as the Adventist Community Services (ACS) emergency needs donation calls. Recently AIM took calls for several free mega health clinics hosted by Your Best Pathway to Health.

“We pray with every caller who wants to have prayer,” Wall says. “We’ve now taken that person from just watching TV to literally being connected with the local church.”

Beginnings in Sin City

“It’s truly a blessing to be able to provide all of our services in Spanish. In fact, one of the great joys of working at AIM are the Latino young men and women God brings to our ministry,” says Sara Ledezma, Spanish and outbound coordinator.²

AIM typically operates with a bilingual staff of about 15 to 20 CSRs, phone chaplains, and referral chaplains. “These are students committed to the kingdom of God, and having them around means that we get to showcase Christ to more people,” Ledezma says. Mario and Ofelia Fuentes are two of those people.

Ledezma shares their story: In the midst of “Sin City” (Las Vegas), Mario Fuentes had a thirst for God. During the 40 years he lived in Las Vegas, Mario learned plenty about the world, yet knew little about the church. Other than a casual encounter he’d had with some missionaries in Colorado, he had no idea who Seventh-day Adventists were.

One day, however, the church came to his home.

As Mario flipped through the channels of his TV, he came across the Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN). Although he’d watched other religious channels before, something about the message of the speaker captivated Mario’s attention. He sat through the entire program that morning, and came back to watch more the following week, and the next! Soon the testimonies, music, and health presentations began to change Mario’s life.

As Mario continued to watch 3ABN, he came across the New Perceptions ministry with Dwight Nelson. It didn’t take long before the broadcasted

Pioneer Memorial church (PMC) service became Mario's main worship experience, all from his living room!

Mario watched 3ABN for eight years, and the PMC service for a couple more. He and his wife, Ofelia, who had also started watching, decided to call the number on screen, regarding an offer they'd seen on the It Is Written program. The AIM CSR took their request, offered prayer, and asked if they were interested in receiving free Bible studies. They accepted both offers and soon received their first Discovery Guide, along with an extra, unexpected gift: a copy of Ellen G. White's book *Steps to Christ*. This was just the beginning for the couple.

The Fuenteses could never have imagined how reading *Steps to Christ* together would change their lives. As they learned about Jesus' character through its pages, they were impressed to call AIM once again. They wanted prayer for Ofelia's brother, Ruben, who was seriously ill. And they wanted more Bible studies. This time, however, they also wanted a Seventh-day Adventist to visit their home.

Joe Arellano, an AIM referral chaplain, prayed for Ruben and connected the Fuenteses to a local church. Within days they received a visit from Benjamin Acevedo, the first elder of the

A customer service representative uses the AIM ministry database to provide support for NAD outreach ministries.



Maranatha Spanish church. Acevedo not only began to study God's Word with them, but also offered prayer for Ruben's health. This simple act of kindness made an impression on the Fuenteses' new experience of faith. They discovered life-changing truths and also enjoyed the support of church members through regular visits and prayer.

Ruben's health did not improve. A few months later he passed away. But in the midst of this tragedy, the Fuentese family found comfort and hope. Before Ruben's passing, Ofelia had shared the good news of salvation with her brother. As a result, Ruben accepted Christ as his Savior. The Fuenteses now look forward to meeting him again at the second coming of Jesus.

On June 8, 2013, Mario and Ofelia decided to seal their commitment to Christ through baptism. The Fuenteses are now learning how to share

Jesus and His Word with Native Americans. They have also put their faith in action by taking the good news of salvation to people in their native Mexico. They drive from Nevada to the mountains of Rosita, where they still have family and friends. Their love for Christ has turned them into active disciples for His kingdom.

It all started with a TV broadcast, a phone call, and prayer. ■

¹ Visit <http://callaim.org/about/> to read AIM's history.

² Sara Ledezma became assistant to the director for projects and Spanish ministry for AIM in June 2016, after she shared this story.



Kimberly Luste Maran is assistant director of communication for the North American Division.

Three More AIM Stories

Daniel Bluford contacted AIM after his move to North Carolina. In a new town, he was searching for a church. Daniel grew up as a Baptist, but was considering a local Church of God. He contacted AIM in the winter of 2014, and one of AIM's CSRs upgraded him to be connected with an Adventist church in his area. When Daniel spoke with an AIM chaplain, he expressed a desire for a closer relationship with Jesus and a wish to begin Bible studies. On June 6, 2015, after four months, he became part of the church family at the Washington Seventh-day Adventist Church in Williamston.

Frank Buchholz called AIM in November 2014. While on the phone he decided he wanted to be connected with the Adventist

church for Bible studies. Frank's wife, Suzie, also joined the studies with Larry Cates, a Sioux City, Iowa, church member. On August 22, 2015, both Frank and Suzie joined the church by profession of faith. They have a friend named Wes, who lives in a nursing home. Cates has also given Bible studies to Wes, who plans to join on profession of faith.

"Lee" was raised Lutheran but never felt at home in the church. In 2013 he called AIM. Once he started attending an Adventist church in South Carolina, he loved it! After visiting the church, Lee began attending their weekly Wednesday evening Bible study. Lee, who was baptized in 2015, is now a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Aiken, and he still enjoys the church!

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Adventists Gather in Washington, D.C., to Pray, Call for Action

By V. MICHELLE BERNARD,
Columbia Union Visitor

On July 9, 2016, more than 1,000 Seventh-day Adventists gathered in Washington, D.C., to pray, mourn, and acknowledge the recent killings of two African American men and five Dallas police officers. The group, most wearing symbolic red shirts, walked together from the Lincoln Memorial to the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial.

“This is a coming together of people of like minds to join hands in like faith and like purpose to pray for our nation,” said Debra Anderson, one of the event organizers and a member of the Restoration Praise Center in Bowie, Maryland. “We are in perilous times. . . . We are going to pray today more than anything else.”

Addressing the Silence

“In the midst of the heated rhetoric regarding the shooting deaths of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, God placed in my spirit that across the nation a significant population of our church community was hurt and confused,” said Anderson.

Anderson explained that she, and Emmanuel Brinklow church member Denise Creary; Miracle City member April Williams; and the Allegheny East Conference’s Washington Metro Ministerium, planned the march and rally to “combat the silence, confusion, and lack of empathy many felt following the deaths.”

“When someone dies, when we are grieving . . . sometimes it is the ministry of presence that allows us to feel

better. Today all of you are exhibiting a ministry of presence,” she said to the crowd at the memorial.

“You didn’t come here just because of a Facebook post. You came because you knew something in your spirit said, *We’ve got to do something, and we’ve got to pray before we do anything else.*”

Making a Difference

Several church leaders, including G. Alexander Bryant, North American Division executive secretary, denounced the killings. “The church is called to speak truth to power, no matter how unpopular or how inconvenient. . . . Many are now asking the question: What should we do? What should the church do? What would Jesus do? Jesus is not here today, but through us. He left us a formula, and the formula is love your enemies, bless

them that curse you, do good to them who despitely use you.”

Daniel R. Jackson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, said, “The problems in America cannot be easily [fixed]. . . .

Jesus said, ‘You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its [savor], ‘it is then good for nothing’ [Matt. 5:13]. The church cannot afford to stay behind its walls of comfort. We must reach out to our world. We must be agents of hope and compassion and healing in a fractured world.”

One of the other speakers, David Franklin, pastors the Miracle City church in a Baltimore neighborhood less than six miles from where Freddie Gray died in police custody in April 2015. Franklin’s church participates in service activities designed to break cycles of poverty, lower incarceration



JULIO C. MUNOZ

Adventists gather on July 9 at a rally at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C. to pray, mourn, and acknowledge the recent killings of two African-American men and five police officers.

rates, and help improve education levels. Franklin encouraged the crowd to get active to help communities similarly impacted.

“You cannot afford to wait for the organizers of this march to pull together events and activities for you to participate in so you can resolve the issues in your community. The key to solving our issues is everybody realizing the power that you have in your own hand,” said Franklin. “You need to go home, get in your prayer closet, figure out what you can do, then move out and make a difference.”

Moving Forward

In an effort move to forward with purpose and action, organizers have devised a three-point plan they are

encouraging churches in the area to take: (1) Engage in a #westandforall day of service in local communities to enhance the quality of life for our neighbors; (2) attend workshops by local law enforcement agencies for proper responses when stopped by law enforcement officers; and (3) address the issue of voter apathy with voter education forums and voter registration.

“We are in prayerful consideration of what God has for us to do in the immediate future,” Anderson said. “We know that the synergy experienced as we came together in like mind must be developed for the greater good of our communities and ourselves.”

—NAD Office of Communication contributed to this report.



JULIO C. MUÑOZ

With Dan Jackson, NAD president, listening in the background, Debra Anderson speaks at a rally where more than 1,000 Adventists gathered at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial on July 9.

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Help!

By **CLAUDIO and PAMELA CONSUEGRA**

I'm a Parent!

Parenting: it's one of those words that elicit both joy and panic. For parents, nothing compares to the joy of seeing your baby for the very first time. Nothing warms your heart like watching them grow, hearing them speak their first words, and listening to them sing and giggle.

We love that childlike innocence as they joyfully describe the butterfly they just saw or the softness of the flower they are holding in their tiny hands; or as they try to convey the sourness of the lemon they have just tasted.

At the same time, nothing scares us more than watching them ride their bike for the first time down that steep incline; or letting them have the keys to the car on their own for the first time (or the one hundredth time). Nothing angers you more than when your child is hurt at the hands of a friend or a stranger; nothing gives you greater anxiety than watching them shiver with a high fever or suffer with a horrible disease; and nothing will break your heart more than if you must lay them to rest in their grave.

Ellen G. White wrote: "Great is the responsibility of those who take upon themselves the guidance of a human soul. The true father and mother count theirs a trust from which they can never be wholly released. The life of the child, from his earliest to his latest day, feels the power of that tie

which binds him to the parent's heart; the acts, the words, the very look of the parent, continue to mold the child for good or for evil."¹

Parenting is a lifelong job, and one for which most parents don't feel qualified, even after doing it for several years. We have spoken with many parents through the years who have told us they wished that they knew more before having their children, or that they wished their children had been born with some sort of an owners' manual. But we know that even if one existed, no parenting manual would answer every single question.

When we began our ministry to families at the North American Division five years ago, we were acutely aware of the need for a resource about parenting. From the outset we felt it was critical to hear from parents from every corner of our field. We conducted an electronic survey and received hundreds of responses telling us about specific challenges parents face in today's world. It was determined that the resource would be released in three phases: children from birth to age 7, from ages 8 to 12, and from 13 to 18. We consulted with experts in the field, read much research, and wrote the resources carefully and prayerfully. The final product is available under the title *Help! I'm a Parent: Christian Parenting in the Real World.*²

We're grateful that the first two phases have already been released and are being used in churches throughout North America and other parts of the world. Some of the ways they are being utilized include: parenting Sabbath school classes, parenting seminars in conjunction with Vacation Bible School, a seminar track that coincides with Pathfinder meetings, a ministry to single mothers in women's shelters. It's also being used as an evangelistic outreach tool by church members who hold small parenting group meetings in their homes and invite their neighbors to attend.

Evangelism is at the heart of family ministries. We were inspired to develop the resource with a discipleship mind-set when we read Ellen White's words: "The mission of the home extends beyond its own members. The Christian home is to be an object lesson, illustrating the excellence of the true principles of life. Such an illustration will be a power for good in the world."³

It is our prayer that this resource will remind parents that theirs is a high and holy calling.

For more information or to order this resource, contact your local Adventist Book Center on check online at www.AdventSource.org. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), pp. 280, 281.

² Available at www.AdventSource.org and Adventist Book Centers.

³ Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 31.



Claudio and Pamela Consuegra lead the family ministries department of the North American Division.



TREVINO WARREN NAIDOO



Left: Mike Dauncey, pastor of the Church in the Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church in Aldergrove, British Columbia, stands with the Scarrow family before their newly renovated home is revealed. **Right:** With her sister, single mom Sarah Scarrow (shoes in hand), takes a look around her new kitchen provided by the Extreme Home Repair (EHR) team.

Church and Community Volunteers Complete Fifteenth Home Renovation

Sarah Scarrow, a 47-year-old single mother of three adopted children, didn't mask her tears of joy as the bus blocking the view of her Aldergrove, British Columbia, house rolled away to reveal Church in the Valley's fifteenth renovated home. Overwhelmed with emotion, the Canadian mom exclaimed, "My house is gorgeous; strangers did this for me!"

Scarrow, a Christian but not an Adventist, works full-time, but most of her paycheck goes toward the mortgage, leaving little for home repair and upkeep.

Extreme Home Repair (EHR) team member David Russell said in a May 24 Langley Advance story, "We've moved rooms, we put in a brand-new legal suite so she can use it to rent for

income, plus we put in a new back entrance going downstairs to a new bonus room that they were not really using." In all, repairs are estimated to be worth about \$250,000.

Scarrow was surprised to see just how much had changed. Her first impression when she turned the corner of her street was shock at the huge amount of people. She said to her children, "Wow! If those are the volunteers, I get to thank them all!"

Josh Kwiatkowski knows the feeling. "The Church in the Valley dedicate so much time to a family they barely know; if more people were like that, everything would be better. I've never been a part of something so nice."

Kwiatkowski and his sister, Alex Weeks, have volunteered each year

since his mother's home was renovated in 2010. "I'm not part of the church, but seeing all these people come together to help people they don't know. . . . I'm just happy to help other people feel the same way," he said.

While this makeover is considered the most challenging one to date, with volunteers working right up to the reveal, project supervisor Lorne Brownmiller said, "Every year we have struggles. . . . To do what we do in 15 days is absolutely divine providence."

"The need is so great," added Mike Dauncey, pastor of the church. "This is one way we can reach our community for Jesus in an unobtrusive way; just meeting people's needs where they are." Dauncey says that the program wouldn't be the success it is without the huge community involvement. This year 85 construction sponsors, 100 church volunteers, and about 100 volunteers from the local community participated.

Read the full report and watch the video: <http://ow.ly/zHjD302e5yb>.

—Kimberly Luste Maran/NAD Communication

Voice of Prophecy's "Shadow Empire" Returns in September

■ From April 28 to 30, 2016, hundreds of churches across North America watched the Voice of Prophecy's "Shadow Empire" series. This four-part event, which focused on the life of the Roman emperor Constantine and his continued impact on religious liberty today, was so popular that the Voice of Prophecy (VOP) is running it again this month.

In addition to documentary-style segments featuring Shawn Boonstra, Voice of Prophecy speaker/director, half of the program was led by local pastors. This enabled guests to get to know their local church and register for follow-up Bible studies.

"Even though this was a seed-sowing event, some churches have already

seen amazing results, including baptisms!" said Boonstra. "It worked because it truly engaged at the individual church level; combining the local with the national, and the historical with the topical. People couldn't help being intrigued by the content."

Through a partnership with SermonView, an evangelism marketing ministry in Vancouver, Washington, hosts had access to a range of effective promotional resources, including direct mail and social media. Through the use of the series' accompanying book, *Shadow Emperor*, and Shadow Empire Bible lessons, attendees received additional resources for deeper study.

Local churches appreciated this opportunity to partner with the Voice of Prophecy. Murray Miller, pastor of the Anderson Adventist Church in California, said that his church had more than 20 visitors, many of whom signed up for continuing Bible studies. Miller said, "One man told me, 'I came because I have a huge interest in history and wanted to compare what I had studied previously to this program.'"

Part of this series' effectiveness was that it could only be seen in a local church. The Voice of Prophecy has made a commitment to empower and equip local churches for evangelism, and this event is one of many resources the ministry has provided to churches this year.

Shadow Empire returns this month, September 15-17, which coincides with National Back to Church weekend. The series will once again be shown exclusively in Adventist churches across North America.

Visit shadowempire.com/event for more details.

ACF Institute Encourages Personal Connection With God

■ From May 22 to 29, 2016, about 80 college/university students and campus ministers from across North America attended the Adventist Christian Fellowship Institute (ACFI) at the University of Houston (Texas). Those gathered worshipped together, attended training sessions, and participated in outreach at the university and around Houston.

The theme for the institute—"To the Unknown God"—was drawn from Acts 17:22-28 and echoed the aim of ACFI: for students to personally connect with God and make Him known on their campuses.

"The apostle Paul's message to the professors and students in Athens is so relevant for students on public college and university campuses today," explains Tracy Wood, North American Division (NAD) young adult ministries associate director. Wood, who also directs Young Adult LIFE, Adventist Christian Fellowship, and Teen Leadership Training for NAD, says that "the theme 'To the Unknown God' was reinforced throughout the week with the purpose of making 'The Unknown God' whom Paul referred to known on campuses throughout the North American Division."

Adventist Christian Fellowship (ACF) is the official organization for Adventist campus ministry on non-Adventist college and university campuses within the NAD. For the past five years ACF has hosted the weeklong mission training program known as ACFI.

This year, participants started each morning with small-group Bible

Continued on next page ▶



VOICE OF PROPHECY

Shawn Boonstra, Voice of Prophecy speaker/director, reviews a script during the filming of the evangelistic series "Shadow Empire." Boonstra taped his segments on location in countries such as Serbia, Turkey, and Italy.

ANDY IM/MICHIGAN CONFERENCE



More than 70 students and several campus ministers from around the NAD, Dominican Republic, and Germany attended this year's ACF Institute.

studies based on the book of Acts. The rest of the day included worship and sessions covering such topics as how to start and grow a campus ministry, leadership development, discipleship, apologetics, and personal evangelism. Students also participated in outreach at the university and other parts of Houston by doing random acts of kindness and inviting people to have “free intelligent conversations” with them.

A young adult small group Bible study guide with seven studies was developed and used throughout the ACF Institute. *To The Unknown God: Acts on Campus—Studies in Acts*, by Ron Pickell, pastor of the Berkeley Seventh-day Adventist Church in California and ACF/NAD volunteer coordinator, is now available at AdventSource.

Woods says that plans are already being made for next year's ACF Institute on May 21-27, 2017, with the location to be confirmed soon.

Pathfinder Bible Experience Continues to Grow

At the end of an eventful Sabbath in April, volunteers and organizers were busy cleaning up, drawing conclusions, and looking forward. The Pathfinder Bible Experience (PBE) had

just finished at Prescott High School in Prescott, Arizona, and people were already buzzing about next year's event, scheduled to be held in Michigan.

For the past several years attendance has surged at PBE to include many North American Division (NAD) and international teams. More than 600 Pathfinders participated this year, with 95 teams representing the nine union conferences of the NAD and five teams representing the British Union Conference.

In order to get to the Arizona “Bible Bowl,” Pathfinders, coaches, and families had to successfully complete conference and union level testing in the two months before the NAD PBE.

This year's testing focused on the book of Exodus. Many Pathfinders rose to the challenge and memorized entire chapters of Exodus.

Armando Miranda, Jr., NAD asso-

ciate youth director for club ministries, spoke Friday evening on the need for Pathfinders to step out of their comfort zone and do something with all the Scripture they had memorized and studied. A challenge was issued for them to lead Bible studies in their churches and find ways to conduct a seminar, or even preach, on the Bible book they were studying.

One of the most inspiring moments during the weekend occurred when Pathfinders from across the NAD gathered in one place on Sabbath, wearing the same uniform with the same insignias. Attendees said it was thrilling to see different patches showcasing the variety from union conferences and conferences. The British Union Conference brought its own flair with its uniforms, but they were united through the Pathfinder insignias.

The PBE was streamed live on Facebook, in efforts to make sure that parents and church friends could stay connected to the event. According to statistics provided, the video reached more than 19,000 people for the first part of the PBE testing, and more than 12,000 for the second half. People from South Africa, the British Isles, Canada, and South America asked about the event while it was being transmitting live.

—NAD Youth Ministries Department

AL CARRILLO



Pathfinder teams get ready for Pathfinder Bible Experience testing at the 2016 event in Arizona.



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

The LOMA LINDA REPORT

MANY STRENGTHS. ONE MISSION.

September 2016

Loma Linda University Health–San Bernardino ribbon cutting celebrates history, relationships, and future

By James Ponder and Nancy Yuen

The tone was joyous during the June 22 ribbon-cutting ceremony for Loma Linda University Health–San Bernardino.

An awareness and understanding of the area's great need (it is the poorest city of its size in California) and commitment to Loma Linda's mission to continue the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ inspired the project.

Not only will the new campus serve as a clinical and educational facility, it has the potential to become the largest outpatient facility of its kind in the U.S., providing health care for 200,000 people each year.

SAC Health System is the largest provider of health services in San Bernardino County, serving about 50,000 patients a year. The new campus will triple its space, providing enhanced care for patients who, because of their insurance status, would not otherwise be able to access health care.

San Manuel Gateway College, the first

of its kind in the United States, will integrate training programs in health careers with clinical experience, allowing students to benefit from hands-on training and mentoring by Loma Linda University Health faculty and students.

The college is named after the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, whose generous donation of \$10 million towards Loma Linda University Health's Vision 2020: the Campaign for a Whole Tomorrow enabled its construction.

Nancy Young, MHES, president and CEO of SAC Health System, has been administrator of the health system for 17 years. Arwyn Wild, MA, executive director of San Manuel Gateway College, worked as a principal in the San Bernardino City Unified School District for 20 years before being named administrator of the new college.

At the end of his remarks, Wild asked a group of students from San Bernardino City Unified School District to stand. "This is for you," he concluded.

"It's an amazingly emotional day," Young said at the beginning of her comments. "This building that we stand before is all of our dreams, for so many years, coming true, and it's a remarkable, remarkable thing to be a part of this team!"

After the ribbon cutting, many attendees enjoyed the opportunity to mingle inside the community resource center.

A press conference was followed by proclamations by government representatives and organizations including Congressman Pete Aguilar, State Senator Mike Morrell, State Senator Connie Leyva, Fifth District Supervisor Josie Gonzales representing San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, Assemblyman Mark Steinorth, San Bernardino County Superintendent Ted Alejandro, San Bernardino Mayor Carey Davis, San Bernardino City Council, and Fifth District Supervisor Marion Ashley representing the Riverside County Board of Supervisors.

To learn more and to view a video of the event, go to lluhsystem2020.org/stories.



Loma Linda University Health leaders, local and state dignitaries, members of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, and leaders of various groups who will serve in the day-to-day operation of Loma Linda University Health–San Bernardino cut the lengthy red ribbon, officially opening the new facility.

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NAD Letters



Coming of Age

Regarding Dwain Esmond's article "Coming of Age" (July 2016): If I had to choose what book to pack in my suitcase, it would be *The Desire of Ages*. I have read it cover to cover, and highlighted and underlined my favorite quotes.

However, when I did a study on the life of Christ with young people, we used the paraphrase *Messiah*, by Jerry Thomas. That book is written in the language we used today in America. I believe it would be a good project for the White Estate to rewrite some of Ellen White's books (like *Christ's Object Lessons*) in the contemporary style our youth understand.

STEPHEN ADESSA
High Springs, Florida

The Great Task Before Us

I enjoyed the article by Ted Wilson on "The Great Task Before Us" (July 2016). I do have a question regarding his statement on counteracting mystic and emerging church influences.

Could you please be more specific about these influences? A broad statement like that leads to a wide variety of interpretations. I would appreciate more clarity as to what these influences are, and what the official position of the church is.

KEVIN FEDAK
Olympia, Washington

Light in a Dark World

I enjoyed reading the June 2016 edition. I am a former soldier who served in parts of the world where refugees are from. During my many deployments, from Bosnia to the Middle East, I have seen the heartaches that they have gone through. It's nice to know that we Adventist Christians are doing a great deed in helping those less fortunate who are surviving with only what they can carry. Thank you for this wonderful magazine that is showing light in a dark world.

GREGORY HALES
Fort Bragg, North Carolina

Beautiful People

I have searched at length in the June issue of *Adventist World* (NAD edition) without being able to find the identities of the beautiful young refugees pictured on the front cover. Who are they, and where were they photographed?

MYRON WEHTE
South Lancaster, Massachusetts

The two children on the cover are Syrian refugees photographed at an ADRA education center in Lebanon by Benedicte Dornonville, a staff member of ADRA Denmark.—Editors

We Are All Refugees

I read the *Adventist World* edition on refugees. Jesus was a refugee, first in Egypt, then in Nazareth. We are all refugees in a way. We leave the safety He offers. Christ wants all of us refugees to come back to Him.

JOSEPH COBB
via e-mail

Interesting Content

I have received *Adventist World* for many years. I enjoy reading it, as there are many interesting stories in it. I'm also interested in learning more about John Nevins Andrews. I'm not sure how to find out about him on the Internet. Thank you for your magazine.

ROBERT ANDREWS
Warwick, Rhode Island

If you type "John Nevins Andrews" into any Internet search engine, you should come up with several sites to investigate, including several Seventh-day Adventist-sponsored sites.—Editors



BENEDICTE DORNONVILLE

In his classic book on personal evangelism, *How to Give Away Your Faith*, Paul Little defines witnessing as “that deep-seated conviction that the greatest favor I can do for others is to introduce them to Jesus Christ.”¹ Early Christians would have said a big amen to such a definition. Wherever they went, Christians shared their faith with such dynamism and boldness that it either fascinated or troubled those with whom they came into contact. It left no one indifferent. No wonder that within a short time their faith spread like wildfire, winning thousands in a day.

What made early Christians so effective in reaching others? What can we learn from them? One key that explains their impact was that they were deeply convinced of the truthfulness and relevance of the gospel message. Why? Because it radically transformed their own lives!

No one illustrates this point better than the apostle Paul, whose wonderful conversion experience and subsequent ministry testifies to the transforming power of Christ. After relating his conversion experience, the Bible declares: “Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, ‘Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?’ But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 9:20-22).²

Conviction From Above

One thing that stands out in Paul’s conversion narrative is that his Damascus Road experience persuaded him

that Christ was the Son of God, the promised Messiah.

This is what shaped his new identity as a Christian and sustained his work as a missionary. In his own words, he was “apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12, KJV) to be a chosen instrument to bear the Lord’s name to the nations (Acts 9:15; 26:15-19; Gal. 1:15, 16).

Previously Paul firmly believed that Christians were deluded, blasphemous fanatics who deserved nothing but the severest of punishments. So he vowed to eliminate their influence by working havoc among them (Acts 8:3). Yet in spite of Paul’s mistaken zeal and persecuting spirit, Christ appeared to him (1 Cor. 15:8) and turned his life upside down. As a result, he immediately started to courageously share Jesus, who had bridged the gap between heaven and earth through His life, death, and resurrection.

Conviction Grounded in Christ

Paul’s experience teaches us that genuine faith and witness can be found only when we come face to face with the risen Christ. This is why it is imperative that we all have our own Damascus road experiences. They

might not be as dramatic as Paul’s, but a saving encounter with Christ is the most essential prerequisite and most important qualification for sharing the gospel with others. We cannot share what we do not know for ourselves. We can only testify of what we have experienced personally. Without that experience, our Christian faith lacks power and our witnessing has little impact.

We are not called to share simply a list of doctrines with those who have not yet embraced our faith. Rather, we are called to share Christ. Ellen White was so clear about it when she wrote: “Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. . . . The great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out.”³

This is what Paul did. Immediately after his conversion, “he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. . . . [He] confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ” (Acts 9:20-22). Later in his ministry we find Paul in Athens,

Mission With Conviction

By ALAIN CORALIE

preaching “Jesus and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18).

Interestingly, we find a pattern in Acts 9 and Acts 17 in the way Paul shared the gospel. These texts teach us at least three things about how to do mission with conviction:

1. Paul seized every possible opportunity to share Christ. For Paul, evangelism was not an occasional church program; it was his passion! He looked for every favorable moment to share his faith. Similarly, sharing Christ is not an option for Adventists; it is an imperative! Once we’ve met the risen Christ, we cannot remain quiet. Hence, it is our daily Christian duty to be engaged in some type of evangelism, whether it is testifying to our neighbors and colleagues, distributing literature, helping those in need, or giving Bible studies. There are so many ways of sharing Christ. Why not choose the ones that suit our temperament and gifts best?

2. Once Paul found an audience, he crafted his message according to his hearers. Whether with zealous Jews in a synagogue, passersby in a marketplace, or pagan philosophers on the Areopagus, Paul reached people on their own turf. What does this mean for us? We cannot reach the world for Christ unless we are involved in our communities. It means freely mixing with people, meeting them where they are, and doing our best to understand them so we can reach out effectively to them.

Ellen White put it that way: “Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart.”⁴ That was Paul’s strategy. Wherever he went, he made every effort to understand people, their religion, and their culture to such an extent that he could even

quote their poets (Acts 17:28). What was true of Paul can also be true of us if we take mission seriously.

3. Paul reasoned with people, trying to prove the validity and significance of the gospel. There is a particular application of this principle for us today. First, we do not have to suspend our thinking process when we share our faith. Quite the contrary! Christian faith is reasonable. It remains open to the most intense scrutiny. Second, it is vital that we understand our beliefs in order to communicate them effectively. The implication is that it is necessary for us to think through our beliefs.

We must know the tenets of our faith before we can articulate and defend them. Yet sharing our faith cannot simply be an intellectual pursuit. Witnessing cannot be reduced to winning arguments. Instead, our ultimate objective must be to win people to Christ.

Hence, the Bible’s admonition to us to “revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV). As someone once said: “People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Doing mission involves both bold declarations and tender compassion.

Take a Stand

Because of his unshakable faith in Christ, Paul was willing to experience mockery, beatings, imprisonment, shipwreck, and eventually martyrdom. Fifteen hundred years later Martin Luther, the German Reformer, met the same Christ. He was so persuaded of the Lordship of Christ that

when confronted by his persecutors at the Diet of Worms, he emphatically told them, “Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me.” Like Paul, Luther was not only willing to live out his faith. He was willing to die for it if necessary. Mission with conviction implies this level of commitment! ■

¹ Paul Little, *How to Give Away Your Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2008), p. 41.

² Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts in this article are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

³ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 156.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

QUESTIONS FOR Reflection and Discussion

- 1 If you had to identify the most significant difference Christ has made in your life, what would it be? How would you share it with others?
- 2 In your community, where would you go to exchange views with others about religion or philosophy?
- 3 Do you agree with the statement “Sharing our faith cannot simply be an intellectual pursuit”? Why or why not?



Alain Coralie is the secretary for the East-Central Africa Division.

What an extraordinary example of community in mission is reported in Acts 2:42-47: following the disciples' teaching, sharing food, property, and fellowship, praising God daily, and receiving more new followers every day.

It's an exciting picture. The day of Pentecost had come and gone, but the Spirit lived on. It did not end with 3,000 new believers. God was doing something new. The Christian church was born. For the first time in history the world would see what happens when God takes people from different backgrounds and cultures and creates His church—the body of Christ.

This is what God created in Jerusalem, for only He could. God's church is not just a collection of individuals coming together. It is more than a group or club. Instead, it is something that transcends the dynamics of human organization. It is a living organism, with Jesus Christ as the loving head. It is a community that is the result of a living connection with Jesus Christ. This connection creates a community that finds its identity in Him. New believers become part of that community and find new meaning for life. It is a place where believers find a sense of belonging and a place to grow.

A Contemporary Testimony

Service-oriented Ministries Attract. The experience of Penny Stratton¹ with the Seventh-day Adventist church in Paradise, California, illustrates what happens when the church community is involved with mission.

Penny first became acquainted with the Paradise Adventist Church through using water from the well on church property. After four years of drinking our water, she became curious about the church and went online to search for more information. She

talked about the church with her coworkers within the Paradise community. She began attending church services and taking her son, Elijah, to the kindergarten Sabbath School class. She offered to bring snacks and assist.

Personal Testimonies Strengthen Conviction. Dottie Chinnock, the kindergarten Sabbath School leader, befriended Penny. She invited Penny over for a meal with other church members. They showed love to Elijah, Penny's son, and genuinely shared their love in action. Penny asked each one at the meal why they were Adventist, and they shared their personal experience and testimony of how Jesus made a difference. She saw the fruit of the Spirit lived out in their stories.

A nonattending Adventist woman who worked at a local grocery store talked about the church and the joy she experienced as she began attending again. Penny had watched this woman and her difficulties for more than 10 years. She began to notice a change in her as she started attending church once again. She observed the woman's positive attitude, and how God made a difference in her life. Then the woman began sharing about

the Sabbath School class for children and how comprehensive the classes were, even for toddlers. This also encouraged Penny as she thought about attending.

Bible Study Transforms. Penny was impressed by the biblical truth presented at each service. Dottie invited Penny to the 7:00 a.m. ladies Bible study group, and friendships with other women developed. She saw people who were living the Word and always "in the Word." As Penny's friendship with Dottie continued, Dottie asked Penny to join the crew that worked in the church's Food With Friends ministry. Penny began to minister within the community and church.

Penny began to respond to God convicting her heart. She is now involved in the greeter ministry. Penny is taking Bible studies with a pastor as she journeys with God. She commented on her relationship: "God has proved to me His presence, and He has grown me in faith and continues to grow me. He has changed the way I think to a grace-minded perspective, and so much

By BEN and MARY MAXSON

Transformational Mission

“Penny was impressed by the biblical truth presented at each service.”

more.” She mentioned that this church has been a large factor in connecting with people and seeing God through the people in the church. This is what the body of Christ looks like.

Penny continues to see God working in and through her life daily. The Holy Spirit continues to work in her heart. She never knew that a drop of water would provide her with opportunities to share her story to those around her as she walks the journey with God, or that people would be influenced and encouraged by her testimony. This is the body of Christ: each person gathering around her with love and showing God through their actions.

Conclusion

A Recipe for Transformational Mission. How can a local church family become the safe, nurturing community where new believers can grow and discover their own ministry? It all starts with a concentrated focus on Jesus.

“There is a higher life for Christians to live than many of them are living. It is the new life in Christ. Those only who constantly behold Him—the One full of grace and truth—can live this life. Beholding Him, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory.”²

Only God can create what He wants in His church. And He has a vision of what He wants to happen in His church: a church that grows and works together. A church that “builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:16).

So how can we make this happen? How can we be God’s church, where new members grow and become active participants in the life, ministry, and mission of the church? We suggest five guidelines based on the Bible:

Strengthen new members in their relationship with Christ. Help them move from understanding truth to also growing in their relationship with Christ. They need someone who will help them learn how to pray and how to read the Bible in a way that will help them grow with Jesus (1 Thess. 2:7).

Make your church family a caring community where new members are safe: safe to grow, safe to struggle, even safe to fail. Those who are hurting or struggling can be helped by other parts of Christ’s body as we journey together and help lift each other up (1 Thess. 5:11).

Help new believers (and longtime believers) make the connection between doctrinal truth and Jesus. Doctrine becomes most relevant when it helps us know and grow with Jesus (John 14:6).

Encourage new members to share their story, the story of what Jesus is doing in their lives. Our mission is to help others meet and walk with Jesus. We do that best when we tell the story of what Jesus has done for us (Luke 8:39).

Invite new and existing members to become involved in ministry. Ask them to explore their areas of interest and passion, the areas of concern or special burden. Then help them explore possible spiritual gifts for ministry. Have them partner with other members who are already involved in ministry. Help them develop and use their gifts in ministry. Then stand back and watch what God will do (Eph. 4:11).

God has a dream for His church. You and I are part of that dream. God wants to use us to help others become a living part of His dream too.

Let God’s church be the church. ■

¹ Names used with permission.

² Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, Mar. 11, 1903.

QUESTIONS FOR Discussion

- 1 How can a local church family become the safe, nurturing community where new believers can grow and discover their own ministry?
- 2 What is involved in teaching people to pray? List the steps.
- 3 What person was instrumental in helping you connect with Christ and His church. Describe them in one or two sentences.



Ben and Mary Maxson serve at Paradise Adventist Church in California, where he is senior pastor.

By ELLEN G. WHITE

Mission Accomplished

Working to hasten that glorious day

Centuries have passed since the apostles rested from their labors, but the history of their toils and sacrifices for Christ's sake is still among the most precious treasures of the church. This history, written under the direction of the Holy Spirit, was recorded in order that by it the followers of Christ in every age might be impelled to greater zeal and earnestness in the cause of the Savior.

First-Generation Witnesses

The commission that Christ gave to the disciples, they fulfilled. As these messengers of the cross went forth to proclaim the gospel, there was such a revelation of the glory of God as had never before been witnessed by mortal man. By the cooperation of the divine Spirit, the apostles did a work that shook the world. To every nation was the gospel carried in a single generation.

Glorious were the results that attended the ministry of the chosen apostles of Christ. At the beginning of their ministry some of them were unlearned men, but their consecration to the cause of their Master was unreserved, and under His instruction they gained a preparation for the great work committed to them. . . . Their lives were hid with Christ in God, and self was lost sight of, submerged in the depths of infinite love.

The disciples were men who knew how to speak and pray sincerely, men who could take hold of the might of the Strength of Israel. How closely they stood by the side of God, and bound their personal honor to His throne! Jehovah was their God. His honor was their honor. His truth was their truth. Any attack made upon the gospel was as if cutting deep into their





“There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Savior’s love.”



souls, and with every power of their being they battled for the cause of Christ. They could hold forth the Word of life because they had received the heavenly anointing.

They expected much, and therefore they attempted much. Christ had revealed Himself to them, and to Him they looked for guidance. Their understanding of truth and their power to withstand opposition were proportionate to their conformity to God’s will. Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, was the theme of every discourse. His name—the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved—was by them exalted. As they proclaimed the completeness of Christ, the risen Savior, their words moved hearts, and men and women were won to the gospel. . . .

Not in their own power did the apostles accomplish their mission, but in the power of the living God. Their work was not easy. The opening labors

of the Christian church were attended by hardship and bitter grief. In their work the disciples constantly encountered privation, calumny, and persecution; but they counted not their lives dear unto themselves and rejoiced that they were called to suffer for Christ. . . .

A Firm Foundation

Upon the foundation that Christ Himself had laid, the apostles built the church of God. In the Scriptures the figure of the erection of a temple is frequently used to illustrate the building of the church. . . . Writing of the building of this temple, Peter says, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:4, 5).*

In the quarry of the Jewish and the Gentile world the apostles labored, bringing out stones to lay upon the foundation. In his letter to the believers at Ephesus, Paul said, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are

built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22). . . .

The apostles built upon a sure foundation, even the Rock of Ages. To this foundation they brought the stones that they quarried from the world. Not without hindrance did the builders labor. Their work was made exceedingly difficult by the opposition of the enemies of Christ. . . .

Fierce Persecution

One after another the foremost of the builders fell by the hand of the enemy. Stephen was stoned; James was slain by the sword; Paul was beheaded; Peter was crucified; John was exiled. Yet the church grew. New workers took the place of those who fell, and stone after stone was added to the building. Thus slowly ascended the temple of the church of God.

Centuries of fierce persecution followed the establishment of the Christian church, but there were never wanting men who counted the work of building God’s temple dearer than life itself. . . .

The enemy of righteousness left nothing undone in his effort to stop the work committed to the Lord’s builders. But God “left not himself

without witness” (Acts 14:17). . . . The workmen were slain, but the work advanced. The Waldenses, John Wycliffe, Huss and Jerome, Martin Luther and Zwingli, Cranmer, Latimer, and Knox, the Huguenots, John and Charles Wesley, and a host of others brought to the foundation material that will endure throughout eternity. And in later years those who have so nobly endeavored to promote the circulation of God’s Word, and those who by their service in heathen lands have prepared the way for the proclamation of the last great message—these also have helped to rear the structure. . . .

Paul and the other apostles, and all the righteous who have lived since then, have acted their part in the building of the temple. . . . To those who thus build for God, Paul speaks words of encouragement and warning: “If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (1 Corinthians 3:14, 15). The Christian who faithfully presents the Word of life, leading men and women into the way of holiness and peace, is bringing to the foundation material that will endure, and in the kingdom of God he will be honored as a wise builder. . . .

As Christ sent forth His disciples, so today He sends forth the members of His church. The same power that the apostles had is for them. If they will make God their strength, He will work with them, and they shall not labor in vain. Let them realize that the work in which they are engaged is one upon which the Lord has placed His signet. . . .

Christ has given to the church a sacred charge. Every member should



“Every member should be a channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ.”



be a channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that the Savior desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and His character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Savior's love. All heaven is waiting for men and women through whom God can reveal the power of Christianity.

God's Agency

The church is God's agency for the proclamation of truth, empowered by Him to do a special work; and if she is loyal to Him, obedient to all His commandments, there will dwell within her the excellency of divine grace. If she will be true to her allegiance, if she will honor the Lord God of Israel, there is no power that can stand against her.

Zeal for God and His cause moved the disciples to bear witness to the

gospel with mighty power. Should not a like zeal fire our hearts with a determination to tell the story of redeeming love, of Christ and Him crucified? It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of the Savior.

If the church will put on the robe of Christ's righteousness, withdrawing from all allegiance with the world, there is before her the dawn of a bright and glorious day. God's promise to her will stand fast forever. . . . Truth . . . will triumph. Although at times apparently retarded, its progress has never been checked. When the message of God meets with opposition, He gives it additional force, that it may exert greater influence.

Endowed with divine energy, it will cut its way through the strongest barriers and triumph over every obstacle.

What sustained the Son of God during His life of toil and sacrifice? He saw the results of the travail of His soul and was satisfied. Looking into eternity, He beheld the happiness of those who through His humiliation had received pardon and everlasting life. His ear caught the shout of the redeemed. He heard the ransomed ones singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

We may have a vision of the future, the blessedness of heaven. In the Bible are revealed visions of the future glory, scenes pictured by the hand of God, and these are dear to His church. By faith we may stand on the threshold of the eternal city, and hear the gracious welcome given to those who in this life cooperate with Christ, regarding it as an honor to suffer for His sake. As the words are spoken, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," they cast their crowns at the feet of the Redeemer, exclaiming, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power,

and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. . . . Honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Matthew 25:34; Revelation 5:12, 13).

There the redeemed greet those who led them to the Savior, and all unite in praising Him who died that human beings might have the life that measures with the life of God. The conflict is over. Tribulation and strife are at an end. Songs of victory fill all heaven as the ransomed ones take up the joyful strain, Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and lives again, a triumphant conqueror. ■

*All Scriptures quoted in this article are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

QUESTIONS FOR Discussion

- 1 Do you battle "with every power of [your] being" as the disciples did, for the cause of Christ? If not, why not?
- 2 Christ's apostles "expected much, and therefore they attempted much." What two or three things can you do to expand your vision for God's cause?
- 3 Do you ever envision heaven? What do you see?

This article is excerpted from *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pages 593-602. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.



A Symphony for Heaven

It began 150 years before the invention of radio, 200 years before television, and 250 years before the Internet.

As early as the 1740s, revived Christians in Western Europe and what were then the British colonies of North America began coordinating what they called “Concerts of Prayer”—by transatlantic letters that took six weeks to deliver on sailing ships. Stirred by reports of what the Holy Spirit was doing to spur revival in many places, leaders worked to plan joint times for prayer on both sides of the Atlantic. They trusted that the combined intercessions of God’s people would bring the promised showers of blessing so much needed in their communities.

From these efforts in what historians now call “The First Great Awakening,” many global prayer initiatives have sprung, now made instantly available through the worldwide Web. Inspired by the riveting accounts of the prayer meetings recorded in the Book of Acts—especially Acts 4—believers hunger for the knowledge that their prayers are mingling at the same moment with hundreds of thousands—millions—of others, pleading with heaven for new life in Christ.

It is this vital goal of connecting with other believers in prayer that undergirds the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s historic designation of an annual Week of Prayer. For decades, the church has prepared special materials to support and encourage a dedicated time of reflection, common study, and joint intercession. These materials are published for the first time this year in a unique edition of the church’s international journal, *Adventist World*. Due to regional needs, that Week of Prayer may be held at a slightly different time in one area than another, but the goal remains the same: to gather with other believers in a focused time of study and prayer.

While we hunger for the comfort that we are praying at just the same moment as millions of fellow Adventists in more than 200 nations around the globe, the most important group for each of us to be praying with is the one in which the Spirit has placed us—the community of brothers and sisters in Christ who know us best, love us best, and support us best. As you read, discuss, and intercede with and for fellow believers, know that you are lifting a beautiful concert of prayer to the throne room of heaven which moves the heart of Jesus, and gives Him even greater opportunity to bless His people.

BILL KNOTT,
Executive Editor/Director of
Adventist Review Ministries



WORLD REPORT

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

New SID Unveils His

Solomon Maphosa prioritizes “

Solomon Maphosa, the new president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID), said his top priority is to encourage each church member to lead at least one person to Christ every year under an ongoing division program called “One Member, One Soul.”

Maphosa, a Zimbabwean national who most recently served as the division’s executive secretary, replaced Paul Ratsara as president in late June. Ratsara resigned as division president on May 31, 2016.

“The vision I have for SID is ‘One Member, One Soul,’” Maphosa told *Adventist World*. “This is a call for all members to be actively involved in the mission of the church. This is taking the ministry back to members.”

He said the foundation of that vision was two Bible passages—1 Peter 2:9 and Ephesians 4:11, 12—and counsel from Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White, who wrote, “Those who have the spiritual oversight of the church should devise ways and means by which an opportunity may be given to every member of the church to act some part in God’s work.”*

The Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division has about 3 million church

President Vision

s “One Member, One Soul”

members and covers more than 15 countries, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia.

The General Conference Executive Committee, the leadership body of the Adventist world church, elected Maphosa on June 22. A day before the vote, the executive committee of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division recommended Maphosa's candidacy to the General Conference Executive Committee.

“The Holy Spirit was very much present in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division Executive Committee process on Tuesday, June 21, for the selection of a recommended name for division president and subsequently division secretary,” said General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson, who attended the meeting in South Africa. “We praise God for His leading and the sweet spirit exhibited in the committee. We engaged in much prayer interspersed throughout the process. We spent an appropriate amount of time on the needed characteristics for a president. We had an open process of discussion and then voting using secret ballots. The division committee chose Pastor Maphosa as the recommended president at the conclusion of the process.”

SOLOMON MAPHOSA / FACEBOOK



Above: Solomon Maphosa and his wife, Savie, celebrating their 32nd wedding anniversary in 2010. **Inset:** Solomon Maphosa, the new president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.

DAVID SHERWIN

On June 22 the General Conference Executive Committee also elected Gideon P. Reyneke as the new executive secretary of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division. Reyneke previously worked as the division's field secretary and director of the division's Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department.

Wilson asked church members to pray for the division's leaders “as they carry the spiritual responsibility of focusing the vision of God's people in SID on Total Member Involvement and the Lord's soon coming.”

“Pastor Maphosa has a great love for God's church and for evangelistic outreach and mission,” Wilson said. “I have known Pastor Maphosa for many years, and it will be a privilege to work closely with him, since, as with all division presidents, he also will be a General Conference vice president.”

Maphosa, a native of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, received his undergraduate degree in theology from Andrews University at the campus of Solusi University in Zimbabwe, and later graduated with a master's in religion and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Andrews University. He has served in a variety of roles in the church,

including assistant evangelist, distinct pastor, West Zimbabwe Field stewardship director (1986-1988), West Zimbabwe Conference youth director (1989-1993), West Zimbabwe Conference executive secretary (1995), Zambesi Union executive secretary (1995-2000), and Zimbabwe Union Conference president (2001-2005). He had served as the division's executive secretary since 2005.

Maphosa is married to Savie Maphosa (nee Zikhali), and they have a son, two daughters, and four grandchildren.

Maphosa, meanwhile, indicated that he would cling to his favorite Bible verses—Ephesians 3:20, 21—as he led the division forward. The passage reads: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (NKJV).

“I love this text because it informs me that there is no situation, no matter how impossible, that is beyond my God's abilities,” Maphosa said. ■

* Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 351.

By LINDA MEI LIN KOH

Missionaries for Jesus



Grab a pencil and a separate piece of paper to write down your answers for each devotional.

FIRST SABBATH

God's Little Missionary

Bible Gem:

"So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19, ICB).

Story:

Eight-year-old Mateo was excited to tell his papa and mama his great plan! As soon as he got home from school, he went straight to look for Papa.

"Papa, Papa, I want to do something for Jesus," said Mateo excitedly, "I want to run a small group for my friends and our neighbors!"

"That's a great idea, Mateo!" Papa responded with joy. "I'll teach you how."

"OK, Papa, show me how to give Bible studies. I can teach them songs and tell the kids Bible stories," Mateo said enthusiastically.

Mateo visited each of his neighbors to invite them to his small group. He invited his classmates to come too. His first small group meeting started with just eight children and adults. Mateo taught them many songs about Jesus and told them Bible stories. The people listened with great interest. They were given Bibles to use during

the meetings. Pretty soon more and more people joined Mateo's small group, and it swelled to 15 in attendance. Mateo gave his first Bible studies on John 3:16. He just loved the story of God loving the world so much He gave His only Son to save everyone.

"Papa, I think I want to be a pastor when I grow up," Mateo said passionately. "I want to be a missionary, telling people everywhere that Jesus loves them and wants them to be with Him in heaven!"

"Wonderful, son! Start being a missionary right here in your neighborhood," said Papa with a big smile as he ruffled Mateo's hair. "I know Jesus will be very happy."

Try It Out!

Make a few invitation cards, decorate them, and write a message to invite two friends or classmates to your Sabbath School.

AKSHAYA PATRA FOUNDATION



SUNDAY

A Sunbeam for Jesus

Bible Gem:

"Jesus said, 'Go home to your family and friends. Tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you'" (Mark 5:19, ICB).

Story:

Mom, the stories of Albert Schweitzer and David Livingstone are fascinating!" Gabriela exclaimed.

"Yes, these men sacrificed a great deal to help those who were sick and those less fortunate in Africa," mother explained. "They risked getting diseases and dying."

"I think I want to be a missionary when I grow up. Do I have to be baptized first?" asked Gabriela seriously.

"You don't have to be baptized before working for Jesus. In fact, every one of us who loves Jesus is a missionary for Him!" replied Gabriela's father.

"Do you remember the demon-possessed man in the region of the Gerasenes? After Jesus healed him, the man wanted to go with Jesus. But what did Jesus say?" asked mother.

"He told him to go home and tell his family about his marvelous healing," Gabriela answered.

"That's right. Jesus wants us to share the good news with our families, friends, and neighbors. They are all around us, and they can see the

SHANTELE MCCLIN





change in us!” Mother exclaimed.

“You can start right now, Gabriela. Look around you and see how you can serve and share God’s love with others,” Father suggested.

“OK. I think I know someone I can help,” said Gabriela thoughtfully.

“Wonderful, daughter,” Mother

said. “Remember the song ‘Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam’? Being a missionary is like being a sunbeam for Jesus.”

“Someday I may be a missionary to Russia, but for now we all can be missionaries right here!” Gabriela said earnestly.

Bible Search:

Identify three individuals from the Bible who were great missionaries. How did they share the good news of salvation?

DAVID AMSLER



MONDAY

An Unforgettable Summer!

Bible Gem:

“You will be his witness to all people. You will tell them about the things you have seen and heard” (Acts 22:15, ICB).

Story:

Summer vacation was coming soon, and everyone in Christopher’s class was already talking about the exciting adventures they would have with their families. But this summer would be different for Christopher. His heartstrings tugged at him to go a different way, to go on a different adventure! After last week’s presentation and appeal by one of the returned missionaries from Central America, Christopher and his buddy, Allen, felt called to join a mission trip organized by their school.

“Mom and Dad, can I join the mission trip to Guatemala this summer?” Christopher asked excitedly. “I want to do something to help others.”

“That’s a wonderful idea! OK, you need to raise some funds for your ticket, and we will match you half,” Dad responded without hesitation.

June 20 arrived, and Christopher, Allen, and 10 others said goodbye to their families as they headed off to

Guatemala City. After almost seven hours of flying they finally arrived. The group immediately transferred to a minibus for another three-hour journey before reaching their mission station. What a relief!

Christopher and Allen were asked to lead song service for the community children’s worship in the morning. They were happy to share Jesus with kids who had never heard of Him. In the afternoon they joined adults in laying bricks for building the jungle chapel. It was backbreaking work!

“I guess being a missionary is not that easy,” Christopher said to Allen with a sigh.

“You’re right! I hope we can last for the next 13 days, Chris,” Allen replied with some apprehension.

By the fourth day Christopher was really enjoying his work. He loved teaching kids. But it was most satisfying to see the chapel completed after 10 days of hard work. There was a big celebration to thank God as they dedicated this building of worship to Him.

Soon the mission trip was over, and the tired students headed home.

Christopher felt a joy and satisfaction he had never felt before. Yes, getting involved in missions transformed him. He immediately went to work to start a fund-raising project to purchase school supplies for poor children in Guatemala. He couldn’t stop sharing the joys of mission service with others at school and at church!

“We have received so many blessings from God that we need to share them with poor people,” Christopher said.

Remember the apostle Paul, who went on many missionary journeys? He simply loved to share his blessings!

Bible Search:

From the Bible texts below, can you find out the secrets of becoming a new and changed person?

- John 15:4-8
- John 4:1-42

Try It Out!

With your parents or friends, plan one specific mission project to help those who are needy and poor in your community.

TUESDAY

Unselfish Service

Bible Gem:

“The Son of Man came to find lost people and save them” (Luke 19:10, ICB).

Story:

Rain was pouring down as Pastor Chong got into his car to visit a newly baptized couple that was having problems with their 2-month-old baby. Some of the roads were flooded, but the pastor finally got to their house.

“I came immediately after you called,” said Pastor Chong briskly as he stepped into the apartment. “How’s the baby?” asked the pastor as he stroked the little one’s face.

“He’s hot all over; let’s take him to the emergency room right away!” the pastor said as he rushed the baby to the car with both parents following him, each grabbing a blanket and other necessary supplies on the way out the door.

Pastor Chong prayed earnestly, pleading to God to save the baby. He stayed with the parents at the hospital throughout the night. Thankfully, the baby’s condition stabilized, and the fever subsided. What a night! Before he left, Pastor Chong gave some money to help the couple.

After catching a little sleep, the pastor was up and ready for his counseling sessions with two young people who were struggling to quit smoking. Their parents were members of Pastor Chong’s church, and they begged the pastor to work with these two young men. No one liked them or trusted them.

Pastor Chong had known Elmo and Jeffrey since they were born. He watched them grow up and attend academy. But both dropped out of

school by their senior year. He understood the struggles and temptations they faced, and wanted to help them. But he also wondered if their parents were too busy for their sons. Could it be?

“You guys are making progress; I’m proud of you!” Pastor Chong said with a smile on his face. “Have you been following those steps each day?”

The battle was not over yet. But the pastor was always there to encourage them, to prod them on, and to pray with them. Some members felt the pastor was wasting too much time on these boys. They made sure their kids didn’t get near Elmo and Jeffrey. But the pastor believed Jesus Christ could change anyone if only they would let Him. He thought the church must love the boys, understand them, and accept them.

When Pastor Chong climbed into

bed that night, he was thankful for what God had done for Elmo and Jeffrey. He beamed with joy over a new idea that popped into his head. He would take these two young men with him tomorrow when he visited those who were sick. Involving them in ministry to those less fortunate would be a life-changing experience!

Bible Search:

Identify three individuals from the Bible texts below and describe how Jesus treated each person.

a. Luke 7:1-10

b. John 8:1-11

c. Luke 19:1-10

Try It Out!

List two things you can do for someone who doesn’t have very much. Write a poem about ministering in your community.



JEAN GERBER

WEDNESDAY

Kids' Haven

Bible Gem:

"Open your homes to each other, without complaining" (1 Peter 4:9, ICB).

Story:

Look at those poor kids out there," Donna said sadly. "They're searching for food in the garbage dump."

"We need to help them," suggested her husband, Dan. "I have an idea!"

Soon the couple began feeding these street kids home-cooked meals. At first about 10 children came and ate everything on their plates. For the first time their stomachs were full, and they could sleep better at night. Pretty soon more and more children came, lining up outside the Vargases' garage on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Before long, several friends of

Donna and Dan joined the ministry and dreamed big! They started building a shelter nearby on property donated by a church member. They had plans to feed these homeless children, educate them, and teach them practical skills.

"Let's call our center 'Kids' Haven,'" said Donna. "I love those smiling faces! They give me joy!"

"Donna, you're really Jesus' disciple," her husband said with a twinkle in his eyes. "You have such compassion for these kids. It's amazing what you're doing for them."

"I'm only following what God wants us to do. Remember Isaiah 58? True dedication and fasting is to care for needy and poor individuals," Donna reminded her husband.

"I love those Bible stories about Jesus helping those who are poor," she added. "They inspire me to help others too."



ELIAS MINASI

Together with their team of volunteers, Donna and Dan continued to feed the homeless children, sharing the love of Jesus, all while teaching them skills to help them earn a living. Kids' Haven became a little heaven on earth for hundreds of children.

Bible Search:

Read Matthew 8 and 9 and identify the mission of love shown here:

List five individuals that Jesus healed and ministered to.

What kind of people did Jesus help? How was He different from the Pharisees, Sadducees, and other religious leaders of His time?

THURSDAY

Olie's Testimony

Bible Gem

"Always be ready to answer everyone who asks you to explain about the hope you have" (1 Peter 3:15, ICB).

Story:

Olie settled comfortably into his seat and buckled his seat belt. He was ready for a smooth ride to Kalimantan, Indonesia, for an exciting mission trip. He had looked forward to it for the past month, and now it was finally happening! He looked around and saw several of his friends seated comfortably behind him.

Just as Olie was getting ready to

close his eyes, the gentleman next to him leaned over.

"So where are you heading to, young man? You look excited!" the stranger said as he nodded his head.

"Well, I'm going on a mission to help dig wells and build latrines for the people in a village in Kalimantan," beamed Olie with a big smile.

"Why would you do that?" asked the gentleman. "Wouldn't it be more fun going on a holiday than doing that?"

"The Bible teaches us to help and serve others, and I want to do that," Olie responded confidently.

"Wow, that is some conviction you have!" the gentleman replied with a thumbs-up. "Tell me more. I'm surprised to find such strong faith in young people like you."

For 30 minutes Olie spoke of how he got to know Jesus Christ. Just imagine: Olie walked into a Seventh-day Adventist school as a Buddhist, but became a born-again Christian! He talked about the difficulties he faced from his family when he decided to follow Jesus.

"Sorry, I've spoken too long. Here, I have a book to share with you," said Olie as he gave a booklet to the gentleman.

"Thank you, young man; I'll try to read it. You impressed me with your conviction," the gentleman chuckled. "I wish you well. God go with you!"

Bible Search:

Read Acts 9:20-22. What did Paul do, and what gave him such strength?

FRIDAY

Ohnma's Spiritual Gifts

Bible Gem:

“And Christ give gifts to men—he made some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to go and tell the Good News, and some to have the work of caring for and teaching God’s people” (Eph. 4:11, ICB).

Story:

Ohnma had just been baptized at the recent evangelistic campaign because she loved Jesus. On her first Sabbath at church the pastor’s wife, Mrs. Lywin, was at the door to welcome her.

“Ohnma, could you help serve as a counselor to a group of juniors in our Pathfinder Club?” Mrs. Lywin asked with a twinkle in her eye.

“Um, I’m not sure how to do that. I don’t think I have the talent,” Ohnma said hesitantly.

“Oh, don’t underestimate your abilities. I can see you already have at least two gifts God has given you,” exclaimed Mrs. Lywin.

“Really? I just love to talk and share,” Ohnma declared confidently.

“That’s what we need! Do you know that God has given each of us different spiritual gifts and talents for His work? Read Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. You may discover that you may be a great teacher,” smiled Mrs. Lywin.

“Every follower of Jesus is a missionary,” continued Mrs. Lywin. “So use your gifts to teach, help, and share the love of Jesus with others around you. You don’t have to go to Africa to be a missionary!”

Before long, Ohnma joined the Pathfinder Club as a counselor to a group of juniors. Soon she was out

with others running a Vacation Bible School. What a joy it was to share Jesus with kids who didn’t know Him. How exciting it was to work with Pathfinders!

Bible Search:

Read John 4:4-30 about the Samaritan woman. In what way was she a missionary on the day she met Jesus?

Try It Out!

On any colored construction paper, make a circular button measuring three inches (7.5 centimeters) in diameter. Write the words “ASK ME” with a marker. Attach it to your blouse or shirt. Knock on your neighbor’s door. When they open the door, simply point at your button. If they say, “Ask you what?” you can start to share Jesus with them.



XUAN ZHENG

“Behold, I come quickly...”

Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ, uniting Seventh-day Adventists everywhere in beliefs, mission, life, and hope.

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SECOND SABBATH

My Final Home!

Bible Search:

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain” (Rev. 21:4, ICB).

Story:

Everyone was excited! Kelly was counting the days! It was their grand reunion party at Grandpa’s huge house. All those who were related to Grandpa got together once every year for fun times. The kids couldn’t wait! They could play with their cousins, eat lots of food, and explore every mysterious room.

As the car got close to Grandpa’s house, Kelly was so excited she could hardly wait one more minute!

“How much longer, Dad? You’re driving really slow today,” Kelly said impatiently.

“It’s better to be safe,” Dad cautioned the impatient girl.

“I can’t wait to see what new gadget Grandpa has made this year!” Kelly exclaimed heartily. “It’s a prize I want!”

“You can have it if you do everything on Grandpa’s list,” Dad encouraged Kelly.

Yes, it was a wonderful reunion! There was much laughter and fun as families ate, played games, and did chores together. Imagine everyone helping to roast corn? There were at least 100 ears of corn!

As Dad drove home that night, a sleepy Kelly was quiet in the back seat. Suddenly she looked bright-eyed and tapped Dad’s shoulder.

“Dad, is heaven going to be a fun place like today?” Kelly asked. “If it is, I want to be there forever!”

“Heaven is going to be a better place, because Jesus will be there with us forever!” exclaimed Dad joyfully.

Bible Search:

Study Revelation 21 carefully, then identify the reasons we want to live in heaven.



Originally from Singapore, **Linda Mei Lin Koh** is director of Children’s Ministries for the General Conference.

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