

HERALD

SERVING SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS IN THE LAKE UNION SINCE 1908

OCTOBER 2023

*Why
I Still
Choose
to*

PREACH



ANSWERING **THE CALL** TO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY



As you might expect, I spoke with many pastors in preparation for this Herald which focuses on the call to pastoral ministry. What you might not expect is how so many bemoaned a disturbing problem. More than a few signaled an alarming decline in the number of young people who felt called to ministry. The pastors' concerns spilled over into statements such as, "I became a pastor because someone encouraged me." "We have to mentor the next generation."

This is Amen territory.

The call to pastoral ministry can, at times, be the voice of God calling Samuel out of his slumber. Or that same Voice calling Elisha to support and then carry on the work of Isaiah. But what happens when the modern-day Timothy responds to Paul with a polite "No, thank you"?

As I listened to these pastors, I was reminded of Neal VanderWaal. Neal, a retired realtor, is in his 80s and resides in Battle Creek, Michigan. [You may recall his story in last year's Herald where he wrote of his cherished time in a one-room schoolhouse.] He cares deeply for our youth and wants nothing more than for them to experience what he felt growing up in Rockford, Illinois.

"When I came home from Broadview Academy on weekends or for the summer," he wrote, "at church I was met with open arms, and lots of hugs and affirmation, because these people were my family and they loved me. I never wanted to disappoint them in any way. When I sold books as a student literature evangelist in the summers, they were interested in hearing stories of my sales and contacts and successes."

If you distill Neal's story, it boils down to a simple formula for keeping our youth engaged in the mission of the church. Affirm them. Heap lots of love on them. And one more thing.

The church is Christ's body. Perhaps we can do what Paul did in Acts 20 when a youth named Eutychus lost interest in church affairs, and eventually fell out of the church and lost his life. Paul stopped the program, and as a representative of Christ's body, he covered the youth with his body and, beloved, prayed until Eutychus came back to life. ■

Debbie

Debbie Michel

P.S. October is Pastor Appreciation Month. Don't forget to thank your pastor for all they do!

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FEATURE

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Why I Preach

By Beverly Matiko

ON THIS PAGE: JEFF VELDMAN PHOTOGRAPHED BY SANDRA MENDEZ
COVER PHOTOS: BY SANDRA MENDEZ (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF STEPHANIE PETERSON, TOP RIGHT, TAKEN BY ALEX MAYEUR)

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TELLING THE STORIES OF WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THE LIVES OF HIS PEOPLE

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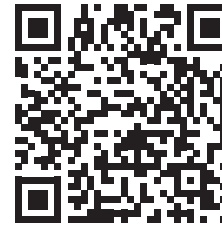
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Caring for Those Who Care

THE WEIGHT OF PASTORAL RESPONSIBILITIES OFTEN GOES UNNOTICED, HIDDEN BENEATH THE FAÇADE OF STRENGTH THAT MINISTERS PROJECT. HOWEVER, ACKNOWLEDGING AND ADDRESSING PASTORS' MENTAL HEALTH IS ESSENTIAL FOR SUSTAINING THEIR WELL-BEING AND EFFECTIVENESS.

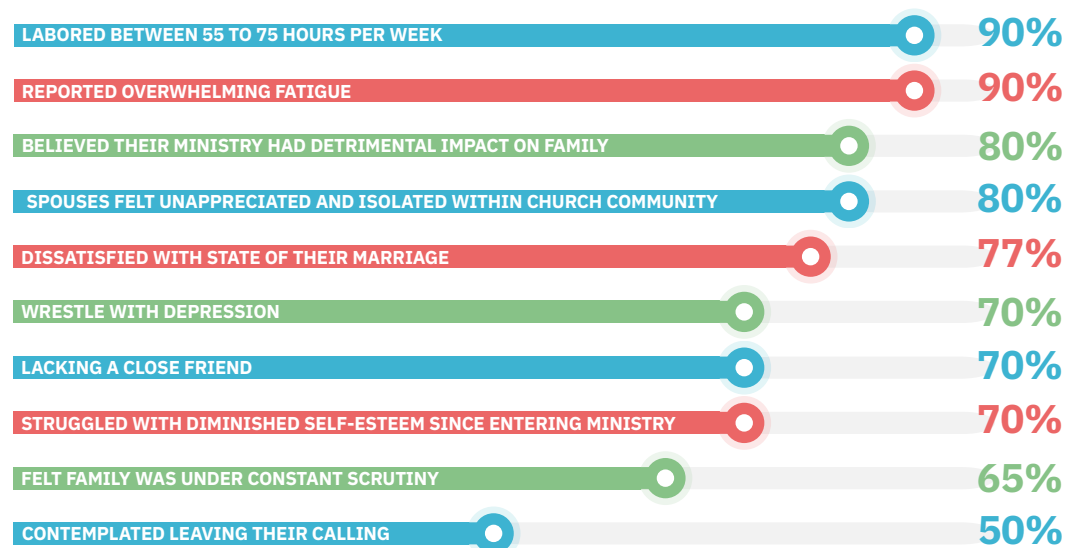


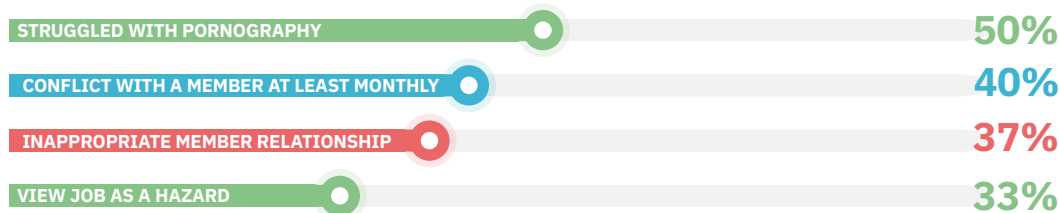
▲ ELDEN RAMIREZ

Several years ago, I read a book by Lucille Lavender titled: "They Cry, Too: What You Always Wanted to Know About Your Minister but Didn't Know Whom to Ask," shedding light on pastors' emotional challenges. It revealed that ministers, like anyone else, grapple with feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, stress and even depression. These struggles arise from the immense pressure of offering spiritual guidance while maintaining balance in their own lives. Pastors, the book emphasized, are human, susceptible to the same emotional turmoil as those they serve. Consider how ministers,

entrusted with shepherding souls, often share messages of hope even when they carry silent anguish. It's clear that pastors worldwide, at times, journey through what I term "The Valleys of the Prophets." This highlights that spiritual leaders also experience emotional challenges in times of hardship.

Recently, I came across a heartbreaking article written by Bill Gaultiere, titled "Pastor Stress Statistics." He presented distressing statistics gathered from surveys of Protestant pastors across North America. The statistics are sobering.





While mental health research in the Adventist pastoral community continues, a noteworthy General Conference study, “The Adventist Pastor: A World Survey,” engaged pastors globally. Although not primarily focused on mental health, it revealed impactful insights. Surprisingly, 23 percent of Adventist pastors considered leaving pastoral roles, akin to a 2021 Barna Group study’s 38 percent contemplating leaving full-time ministry. The General Conference survey revealed more concerning facts: 25 percent felt discouraged, 51 percent sought greater support from local conferences, and 50 percent desired increased backing from their very own congregations.

During my tenure in the North American Division, I attended ministerial gatherings across North America and globally. In these sacred pastoral retreats, I engaged in private conversations, discovering the profound pain and struggles many pastors face. Severe depression was widespread, mirroring the challenges seen by their counterparts in other Protestant denominations. A recent survey by Faith Life, creators of LOGOS Bible software, underscores this issue. Shockingly, over 10 percent of pastors contemplated suicide in the past year per the 2021 Pastoral Mental Health Report. It’s crucial to acknowledge that Adventist pastors, despite their spiritual roles, aren’t immune to such trials. Tragically, just last month I learned of an Adventist pastor’s heartbreaking suicide, leaving a grieving family behind.

So, how can we support pastors silently navigating their valleys of despair? Like the prophet Elijah, they often face anguishing times unknown to us

but in great need of our fervent prayers. Therefore, I urge every congregation to create prayer partner groups for pastors and their families. Throughout history, figures like patriarchs, prophets, disciples and apostles found comfort in fervent prayer during challenging times. Scripture reminds us that even the strongest need fellow believers’ prayers to persevere. The apostle Paul, for instance, often asks for others’ prayers. In Romans 15:30–32, we see his genuine concern as he faces relentless hostility from religious leaders who wanted him dead. Faced with this threat, he appealed to the Christian believers in Rome, recognizing that without their prayers before the Lord, he felt death was imminent. His appeal for prayers is evident throughout his letters.

In closing, let us remember the words of Ellen G. White from “Testimonies for the Church 5:162,” emphasizing the importance of our prayers for our pastors: “Brethren and sisters, have you forgotten that your prayers should go out, like sharp sickles, with the laborers in the great harvest field? As young men go forth to preach the truth, you should have seasons of prayer for them. Pray that God will connect them with Himself and give them wisdom, grace, and knowledge. Pray that they may be guarded from the snares of Satan and kept pure in thought and holy in heart. I entreat you who fear the Lord to waste no time in unprofitable talk or in needless labor to gratify pride or to indulge the appetite. Let the time thus gained be spent in wrestling with God for your ministers. Hold up their hands as did Aaron and Hur the hands of Moses.” ■

Elden Ramirez is executive secretary and ministerial director for the Lake Union Conference.

Being a True Spiritual Leader



▲ ABRAHAM SWAMIDASS

I STARTED OUT IN THE MINISTRY AS AN ASSISTANT PASTOR, AND I WAS FOCUSED. I WAS GONE ALL THE TIME DOING THE WORK OF GOD! WHAT COULD BE BETTER? BUT AT THAT TIME, MY WIFE JOAN AND I HAD TWO LITTLE CHILDREN.

While Joan was at home with our kids, I was out, winning people to Jesus. When I came home Joan would say to me, “Are you going to be gone again tonight?” I would respond, “Honey, this is God’s work. If I don’t do this, it’s not going to get done!”

One day, Joan sat me down in the kitchen and said, “Honey, I just want to tell you I am never going to ask you again, ‘Are you going to be gone tonight?’ If you believe God wants you to lead us by being gone all the time, then I’m not going to argue with you.” That was a turning point in my life. I

realized God doesn’t call a man to be both a father, the spiritual leader, and a pastor in such a way that those two roles constantly war against each other.

In 1994, a study was done in Switzerland to determine whether a person’s religious beliefs and practices carried through to the following generation—and why or why not. It found that “It is the religious practices of the father of the family that, above all, deter-

mines the future attendance at or absence from church of the children.”¹ But a father’s spiritual leadership role in the home is more than just taking his children to church regularly.

I would like to suggest three spiritual qualities for being a true spiritual leader: First, *the father will endeavor to live a life worthy of his children’s*

*imitation.*² Spiritual truth is more likely to be caught than taught.

Second, *build a lifetime relationship with your spouse.* By focusing on your spouse, you are showing your kids what love and family look like.

Third, *the father affirms each child as a unique and special gift from God.* A child’s identity comes through the father. The last thing a child should hear before drifting off to sleep are words like, “*I’m so happy you are my daughter (or son), you’re exactly what I would have ordered if I could have special ordered you from God!*”

There are millions of young adults wandering the landscape of America in search of themselves, looking in every dark cultural hole for an identity to claim—young adults for whom there was no father to pronounce a unique blessing and benediction upon them when they need to hear it.³ If God the Father said to His Son, “*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased*” (Matthew 3:17), how much more should an earthly father tell his children the same thing? ■

¹ Robert Lowe, “The Truth about Men & Church,” a paper summarizing the implications of the Swiss study (Quoted in Stephen Arterburn, *The Secrets Men Keep* (Integrity Publishers, Nashville, TN: 2006), 120

² David C. Bental, *The Company You Keep: The Transforming Power of Male Friendship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2004), 56. Quoted in Arterburn, 12

³ Bental, 114. Quoted in Arterburn, 126.

Abraham Swamidass, DMin, pastors the Beloit and Delavan churches in addition to serving as family ministries director for the Wisconsin Conference.



Don't Sleep on This

IN 1986, 27-YEAR-OLD ROBERT MCDONALD STAYED AWAKE FOR 18 DAYS, 21 HOURS AND 40 MINUTES. AS A PROFESSIONAL STUNTMAN, MCDONALD HAD JUMPED MOTORCYCLES AND CLIMBED MOUNTAINS, BUT THIS WAS PERHAPS THE MOST CHALLENGING AND DANGEROUS ENDEAVOR OF HIS LIFE.



▲ RACHEL KEELE

McDonald's record survives to this day, not because of how incredible it was but because Guinness World Records stopped monitoring the feat in 1997. One reason for this was the discovery of "microsleeps," or lapses into sleep lasting only a few seconds. Many now believe that McDonald and other previous record holders likely experienced microsleeps that weren't observed. Another reason was due to the existence of fatal familial insomnia, a rare genetic disorder causing hallucinations, dementia and eventually death. Victims typically survive for several months without sleep, making someone suffering from the disorder the inevitable record holder but certainly no cause for celebration.

Ultimately, the record is no longer tracked because mountains of research show that sleep is fundamental to all aspects of human performance and forgoing it can wreak havoc on our health.

Adequate sleep is a key component of our physical wellness. It's known to regulate hormone functions, assisting in appetite control, muscle development and intentional fat loss. It also bolsters the immune system, aiding the prevention of common illnesses, like colds and flu, as well as cancer, heart attacks, stroke and diabetes.

In addition, sleep is essential to our brain health, improving mood, creativity and decision-making. The effects of sleep on memory and learning are particularly well understood, with deep sleep leading to the synthesis of information and the transfer of memories from short-term to long-term storage. It also helps us process the emotions related to experiences from the day, taking the edge off

embarrassment, anger and sadness, so the adage of "just sleep on it" rings true.

Science is just catching up to what our Creator has known all along. In 1 Thessalonians Chapter 4, Paul likens death to sleep three times, giving insights on the events of Christ's second coming. Our nightly slumber serves as a type of earthly death. We rest quietly and at peace, disconnected from the troubles of the world, and wake to find ourselves renewed. And so it is with death; God's followers rest until His return, when they will awake in bodies and minds made perfect and whole.

Sleep is yet another example of God's perfect design. A delightful break from the worries of the day that not only improves how we think and feel but points toward His soon return. Perhaps it's time we truly cherished such an extraordinary gift from our Maker. ■

Rachel Keele is director of University Wellness at Andrews University.



People Make Mistakes



▲ DENIS KAISER

A COUPLE YEARS AGO, I STUMBLED OVER A PUZZLING PRIVATE LETTER BY F.M. WILCOX (1865–1951), A FORMER LONG-TIME EDITOR OF THE REVIEW AND HERALD (1911–1944) AND ONE OF THE ORIGINAL TRUSTEES OF THE ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE AFTER HER DEATH IN 1915. SOME STATEMENTS IN THAT LETTER SEEMED CONTRARY TO EVERYTHING ELSE I HAD READ FROM HIS PEN.

On Aug. 5, 1928, he had written, “In my judgment, the historical teaching of the denomination is in favor of verbal inspiration of the Testimonies. This is the position I have always taken myself with reference to the subject. Indeed, I hold to the verbal inspiration of the Bible.”¹ These statements led several writers to presume that Wilcox truly believed in verbal inspiration and given his remarkable influence on the church, they concluded that he was responsible for the widespread acceptance of the belief in verbal inspiration among church members from the 1920s to the 1940s.

But when I continued reading the very same letter, I saw the words, “I believe in thought inspiration as applied to both the Bible and the Testimonies.” Did Wilcox just contradict himself in the same document? It seems so. Just four days later, the Review and Herald printed an article by Wilcox which contained striking similarities to the letter, yet its ideas were incompatible with verbal inspiration. Already nine years earlier, at the 1919 Bible Conference, the attendees heard Wilcox stress, “I have never believed in the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies.”² In fact, any other document from him prior to, and after, 1928 consistently attests to his rejection of the theory of verbal inspiration and his affirmation of thought inspiration, a term it appears he introduced to Adventists.³

From a quick reading of the first statement anybody would have to presume that Wilcox believed in verbal inspiration, yet a little bit of digging showed that he may likely have committed a *lapsus linguae*, a slip of the tongue. While it is certainly true that

a belief in verbal inspiration became more widely accepted among church members, we may have to look in a different direction if we want to identify the reasons for its reception. How often have I said the opposite of what I was trying to say simply because I was thinking of my objections against another perspective? Those mistakes happen to all of us. So, let us be gentle with each other and our religious forebears.

In personal relationships we are sometimes puzzled over what the other person says, and we would probably do well to ask for clarification to avoid misunderstanding that person. By asking what they really mean, we exemplify what we want others to do to us too. ■

¹ F.M. Wilcox to L.E. Froom, August 5, 1928, Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, General Conference, Silver Spring, MD.

² Report of the Bible Conference, 1229.

³ For more information on Wilcox’s view, see Denis Kaiser, “Trust and Doubt: Perceptions of Divine Inspiration in Seventh-day Adventist History” (St. Peter am Hart: Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen, 2019), 338–364.

Denis Kaiser is an associate professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.



Nueva Iglesia Latina Guía a Los Asistentes Por El Buen Camino

EN EL AÑO 2018 UN GRUPO DE PERSONAS PROVENIENTES DEL BRASIL, COMPUESTO PRINCIPALMENTE DE ESTUDIANTES DE LA UNIVERSIDAD ANDREWS, COMENZÓ A REUNIRSE EN LA IGLESIA HISPANA ADVENTISTA DE BERRIEN SPRINGS ANTES DEL SERVICIO.

Después de más de un año de reuniones regulares, esta comunidad sintió la necesidad de expandir sus horizontes, así que empezó a dirigir su atención a establecer una presencia en la ciudad de Saint Joseph, Michigan, donde existe una concentración significativa de brasileños. Al buscar la orientación divina e inspirados por un profundo sentido de propósito, decidieron plantar una iglesia de habla portuguesa en Saint Joseph. Kleber Gonçalves, uno de los pastores voluntarios del grupo, dijo: “Tenía todo el sentido del mundo plantar una nueva iglesia entre las otras ya conectadas a la Universidad Andrews si el propósito era promover la misión de la iglesia”.

Sin dejarse desanimar por los desafíos presentados por la pandemia, el grupo se mantuvo firme en su fe y continuó sus reuniones en línea mientras continuaba en la búsqueda de un lugar adecuado para reuniones presenciales. En el año 2020, con el apoyo de la Asociación de Michigan y la Unión del Lago, adquirieron un edificio bien ubicado que se ha convertido en su hogar espiritual. Inspirados por el encuentro de Jesús con los discípulos en el camino a Emaús, la iglesia tomó el nombre “On The Way” (“En el Camino” en español), lo que simboliza el viaje transformador de fe y el compromiso inquebrantable de seguir a Jesús.

Desde su primer encuentro público en este nuevo lugar, *On the Way* ha experimentado un crecimiento notable. Lo que comenzó como un modesto grupo de quince miembros, se ha convertido en una congregación de setenta a noventa personas que asisten, y cada semana se suman nuevas visitas. Wagner Kuhn,

vicedecano del Seminario en la Universidad Andrews, expresa su gratitud, y afirma lo siguiente: “Creemos que Dios nos ha bendecido de varias maneras al concedernos un edificio bien ubicado, pero, sobre todo, al enviarnos familias e individuos con un corazón dispuesto a servir”.

Además de los servicios regulares de adoración, la iglesia se involucra activamente con la comunidad local. Por ejemplo, ofrece semanalmente durante la temporada de verano lo que llama Feria Gastronómica Brasileña. Este deleite gastronómico muestra la auténtica cocina brasileña que ha cautivado el paladar de numerosos asistentes. Durante su edición inaugural en 2021, la feria atrajo a más de cien personas, muchas de las cuales tuvieron su primer encuentro con la iglesia y posteriormente se convirtieron en miembros valorados de la comunidad.

Al mirar hacia el futuro, la iglesia se mantiene firmemente comprometida en cumplir su misión mediante la oferta de una amplia variedad de cursos como clases de inglés, educación musical para niños, estudios bíblicos, talleres de cocina saludable, sesiones de acondicionamiento físico y apoyo educativo para las familias que se han unido recientemente a la comunidad. A través de estos esfuerzos, la Iglesia Adventista *On The Way* busca participar en un ministerio integral, atendiendo las necesidades físicas, emocionales y espirituales de las personas en su jornada de fe. ■

Bruno Menezes, pastor de la Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día *On The Way* ubicada en St. Joseph, Michigan, es el autor de este artículo



▲ BRUNO MENEZES



▲ La Iglesia “On The Way” adora en su nuevo templo.

In Tune With God's Voice

EARLY IN LIFE, STEPHANIE PETERSON FELT A CALL TO HELP OTHERS. LITTLE DID SHE KNOW THAT CALLING WOULD LEAD HER TO A LIFE OF SERVICE AS A HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN AND LAY PASTOR IN HER HOME CHURCH. ALONG THE WAY, GOD HAS BROUGHT HER TO EACH NEW PLACE IN LIFE, PROVIDING JUST WHAT SHE NEEDED AT EVERY STEP, PREPARING HER FOR WHAT WAS NEXT.

Raised in Berrien Springs, Michigan, by loving parents who created a harmonious environment for spiritual growth and development, Stephanie learned early to love the Bible and memorize Scripture. Her parents also set an example of hospitality and laid the foundation for her life of service. It was during these formative years that she had thoughts of becoming a nurse, following in the footsteps of her grandmother, Dorothy Starks.

While attending the Village Seventh-day Adventist Church school and participating in Pathfinders she was baptized, and when she moved on to Andrews Academy she says, "I began to discover God's truth for my life."

But by the time she enrolled in college at Southern Adventist University she was questioning if her beliefs about the church and God were her own, or if they were just her parent's beliefs. She rarely attended church, did not pay her tithe, and dated someone who was not a good influence. She found herself asking God why she was so unhappy. God was quick to encourage her to return to Him, go to church, pay tithe, and leave her boyfriend. As she responded to God's promptings, she felt impressed to enroll at Andrews University.

Not long after returning to Berrien Springs, Stephanie began working in Chicago, doing private-duty nursing alongside her grandmother. This time of one-on-one patient care grew to be very

important to her, and she reflected that it "has always been my love."

The next few years were busy as Stephanie completed her LPN, got married and gave birth to a precious daughter, whom she considers the highlight of her life. For many years, she was a stay-at-home mom. Once her daughter was in school, Stephanie returned to college, completing an A.S. in nursing, and passing her state boards to become an RN. Her childhood dream was being realized! Stephanie was seeing that God has "steppingstones in life that form a continuum of education and service."

Patient Challenges Present an Opportunity

Stephanie began working at Luther Hospital in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and during her time there, she was often given some of the more challenging patients. She wondered, "Why am I getting these patients?" Her co-workers saw that she was able to help them with more than just medical needs. They were going through very stressful situations, and she had a gift for helping them work through difficult emotions and deal with difficult questions. Although some of the work was quite challenging, God was preparing her for what was next as soon as she began volunteering as a hospital chaplain.

The opportunity came for Stephanie to begin working at the AdventHealth Clinic in Durand, Wisconsin. Again, Stephanie felt the call to chaplaincy and offered to fill in when the chaplain was away. The hospital instead asked if she wanted to

work per diem as a chaplain. People started saying, “This is who you really are!” Stephanie thought, “Oh, they’re being really nice,” but then realized, “I’m really having a lot of fun! I’m happy. I love what I’m doing!”

Stephanie clearly recalls the day she was officially called to ministry. On April 21, 2020, she was at home in her dining room and as she walked into the living room she said, “Lord, I see that You’re really calling me to this, and I say yes to whatever You say.” Matthew 9:38 came to mind, “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Realizing God was calling her to a life of ministry, Stephanie enrolled at Liberty University to pursue a degree in religion. From that point on she never looked back. Her classes renewed her commitment to Christ, and she learned a deeper dependence on Him as Satan tried to distract and discourage. She also reaffirmed her belief that Jesus is her Savior, and the Bible is the Word of God and the truth. Stephanie graduated at the top of her class but gives all the credit to God as she doesn’t know how it would have been possible in her own strength. “That’s how God is,” she says as she reflects on this period. “When you’re questioning and you feel like you’re nothing, He’s like, ‘Oh yeah? Well, you are created in My image and I’m going to show you right now what’s going on.’”

Looking back over her life, Stephanie says she sees a clear trend. “The Lord always goes before us and prepares the way, and He sends His Spirit to fill us, to enable us to do what He wants.” She goes on, “There is tremendous joy in serving the Lord and He is the reason why we live ... our duty, our calling, our privilege is to love and serve Him.”

An Opening Leads in a New Direction

In 2022, Stephanie felt God calling her to serve as lay pastor for her own home church in Durand.

Through a series of events, their church was without a pastor and Stephanie began to wonder what would happen. She started praying, “Lord, is there something I can do?” As she prayed, she began to wonder, “Is this something God would want me to do? And why would He want me to do that? I’m a woman and I’m broken ... What will my church family think?”

As she was pondering these thoughts and questions, Stephanie felt like static was filling her mind, like a radio station that wouldn’t tune in. However, she felt impressed that if the conference asked her to fill the role of lay pastor, her husband was okay with it, and the church wanted her, she would be willing. As soon as she made that decision, the static cleared, and she had peace. Her husband gave the okay, the conference was interested and, much to her surprise, the church unanimously voted to accept her as their pastor.

Although still learning and growing in this new role, Stephanie is confident that just as God has led her in the past, preparing her for each new step, He will continue to lead in her future. Her parents’ example of love and hospitality prepared her for a career in nursing. Serving challenging patients as a nurse opened the doors for her to minister effectively as a hospital chaplain. And now, her experience as a chaplain has prepared her to serve as a lay pastor. “I don’t think Jesus wants us to stay on one steppingstone too long,” she says. “I think we move throughout our lives doing all these different things because we gain new insights and perspectives, and we have to rely on Him to survive.”

Stephanie believes that God calls us to serve Him, even at a young age, giving us dreams and abilities to do His bidding. He guides us as we listen and follow and, as we partner with Him, He will accomplish His purposes. ■

Laurella Case is communication coordinator for the Wisconsin Conference.

“I don’t think Jesus wants us to stay on one steppingstone too long.”

The Art of Connection

FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM LEADS TO BAPTIST PASTOR AND WIFE JOINING ADVENTIST CHURCH

FROM AN EARLY UPBRINGING IN DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS BACK-
GROUNDS TO DECADES OF WORK AS DEVOTED BAPTISTS TO THEIR
EVENTUAL DECISION TO BECOME SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS,
THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF DEBORRA AND ARTHUR JAGGARD, A
MARRIED COUPLE OF ALMOST 50 YEARS, HIGHLIGHTS THE POWER
OF COMMUNITY MINISTRY TO LEAD SOULS TO CHRIST.



Christa McConnell

Arthur's life began in Cleveland, Ohio, where churchgoing was common in the 50s and 60s, but his family wasn't religious.

"I tell people I was raised a heathen," laughed Arthur. "My parents took me to the temple, to a Presbyterian church, and a Jewish synagogue once."

They moved frequently due to his father's corporate job and religion was never a central part of their lives.

Then, during his college years, a sense of purposelessness weighed heavily on Arthur's heart. He began to question the meaning of his life. He started attending a German Baptist church in Apple Valley, Minnesota, during this time, not knowing how his life would take a profound turn.

At the age of 19, Arthur made a life-altering decision. Sitting on the edge of his bed one day, he whispered, "If You're the Truth, I'll serve You." It had been days since he last slept, and he was exhausted.

"I slept like a baby that night," shared Arthur. "I woke up the next morning feeling awesome, and I remembered the prayer I uttered the night before. I accepted Jesus then as the Master of my life."

Deborra's early life had been shaped by a diverse range of experiences. Born abroad in 1955 Germany to American parents while her father served during the Korean conflict, Deborra's family soon moved to the United States and settled in Minnesota.

"I was raised Lutheran, though I don't recall much of my time in that church," said Deborra. "But when I met Arthur in college, he took me to Apple Valley Baptist Church, and I was baptized around age 22."

Arthur's faith journey led him to become a Baptist pastor. He served diligently and passionately, sharing the gospel and impacting lives. However, his ministry was not without its challenges. Disagreements within the denomination over certain issues put Arthur in a difficult position, leading to his eventual termination from his pastoral position.

Meeting Adventists in a Health Class

But every cloud has a silver lining. Arthur's journey brought them to Anderson, Indiana, where they encountered the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Inspired by the ministry of the compassionate Adventist couple she met during a health class, Deborra soon began the "It Is Written" Bible study. As she delved into the Scriptures, a newfound understanding of the Sabbath emerged, a truth that resonated deep within her heart. The Adventist teachings shed light on the biblical foundation for observing the Sabbath, reaching back to the very dawn of Creation.

On a cool, sunny November day in 2021, Deborra stood before her husband and church family as she

declared her commitment to the Lord and allowed Pastor Anthony Nix to baptize her into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Deborra's heart overflowed with gratitude for the Adventist community that embraced her with open arms. She immersed herself in Adventist literature, finding solace and inspiration in the writings of Ellen G. White. Her faith journey found an anchor in the biblical principles that formed the foundation of the 28 Fundamental Adventist Beliefs.

Arthur also found himself drawn to the Adventist church's sense of community and the sincerity of its members.

"I had such a good relationship with the Adventists in Anderson," explained Arthur. "Debbie had been going to their church for some time. And honestly, after a while, I just wanted to be with her and hold her hand during church service. As a pastor, I hadn't had the chance to be able to just sit and do that."

The Adventist teachings began to resonate with Arthur on a deeper level. As he began to keep the Sabbath, he experienced physical and spiritual benefits that strengthened his conviction.

The transition from Baptist pastor to a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was a natural progression for Arthur. The Adventist emphasis on genuine worship, community service, and a deep personal relationship with Jesus was a perfect fit.

In reflecting on his journey, Arthur emphasizes the similarities rather than the differences between his former Baptist faith and his current Adventist beliefs. He stresses that both denominations are centered on loving the Lord and believing in His Word.

For Arthur, the real change was the peace and restfulness he discovered in observing the Sabbath and a more profound sense of purpose in his newfound freedom to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance.

The loving fellowship and supportive atmosphere of the Anderson Church touched their souls deeply. Their hearts felt at home among this community of believers. Moreover, the freedom Arthur experienced as a retiree allowed him to embrace the Holy Spirit's guidance wholeheartedly.

Embracing the Role of Disciples

Their journey to Adventism also opened new avenues of service and ministry. Embracing the call of "friendship ministry," Deborra spends hours with people in her community who yearn for a friend, providing solace and encouragement through their shared journey of faith.

"What really drew me to becoming Seventh-day Adventist is what I call 'friendship ministry,' explains Deborra. "I had attended a local Adventist health class in Anderson and made friends with the lady and her husband who taught the class. They kept in contact with me, and that connection made all the difference."

Arthur and Deborra now engage in a ministry of their own, reaching out to others through their shared interests, such as antique car restoration.

Arthur's artistic talents and connection with car enthusiasts allowed him to minister to others in unique ways. He mentors young individuals, teaching them the art of welding while sharing the love of Christ. During other free moments, he helps feed the homeless and has been blessed by the intentional work of the church in the local community.

Though he has no official role at the church, Arthur said, "Being retired, I feel set free to go with the flow and focus on Jesus and spreading the gospel to the people He's called me to serve. I just get to be where Jesus wants me to be."

Theirs is a testimony of the profound impact a loving and supportive community can have on shaping lives and guiding people toward a deeper, more meaningful walk with God. Through their ministry, Arthur and Deborra continue to shine brightly as beacons of God's grace, showing us all the power of living out our faith in the community and embracing the guidance of the Holy Spirit. ■

Danni Thaw is a freelance writer.



Theirs is a testimony of the profound impact a loving and supportive community can have on shaping lives and guiding people toward a deeper, more meaningful walk with God.

WHY I PREACH

FIVE PARISHIONERS TRADE PEWS FOR PULPITS

BY BEVERLY MATIKO

When **Jeff Veldman** decided to become more involved in his home church, he knew the perfect job for him: running the public address system. “I’m a ‘Don’t look at me!’ kind of guy,” Veldman admits. “I never want to be up front or in the spotlight.”

Becoming a pastor was the furthest thing from Veldman’s mind. “It wasn’t even on my radar,” he says. “When I graduated from Wisconsin Academy, I went straight to work. For the next 30 years I was a herdsman, first on my uncle’s dairy farm and then someone else’s. I also did other farming jobs and worked in a feed mill and with utilities for a time. “God kept stretching me in His service,” Veldman explains. “I accepted a wide range of church offices over the years. I started working online toward an associate degree in Bible—which I finished. I remember thinking, ‘Just don’t ask me to preach!’”

Clearly, God had more plans for this volunteer. Currently, Veldman pastors the Superior, Ashland and Hayward churches in Wisconsin, along with a church plant in Herbster.


“Pastoring was quite the leap for me,” Veldman remembers, “from pew to pulpit!” I started with prison ministry and as a part-time lay pastor, while retaining some of my other church and non-church jobs.” Eventually, when

the conference decided a full-time minister was needed, Veldman’s congregation made a request, “May we please have Jeff?”

When the official call to full-time ministry came, Veldman and his wife repeatedly prayed, “Close or open doors, according to Your will.” They knew full-time pastoring would require many changes at a life stage when most people are gearing down, not up. Accepting a multi-church appointment would mean relocating and other adjustments, including professional sacrifices for Veldman’s wife. These they accepted and never looked back.

As Veldman reviews his work history, he admits that farming and pastoring aren’t as different as one might think. “On the farm,” Veldman explains, “you’re on call seven days a week. Any time of the night or day, your plans can be derailed by a birthing, a storm, machinery breaking down, or cattle getting out. You learn to expect surprises. Pastoring is much the same. You never know what a day will bring.”

PHOTOS BY SANDRA MENDEZ

A man with a mustache and glasses, wearing a light-colored suit and a patterned tie, is sitting on a red tractor. He is holding a book in his hands and looking off to the side with a slight smile. The tractor is red with a large black steering wheel and a round headlight. The background is a barn with wooden beams and corrugated metal walls. A large silver metal pipe is visible on the right side of the frame.

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JEFF VELDMAN

BORING LIFE, BORING SERMONS.

Pastoring, Veldman discovered, also presents unique challenges. While he yearns to know his congregations better, they and Veldman acknowledge that this takes time. With four churches, Veldman typically sees most of his congregants just once a month. The round trip from home to his farthest church takes two hours and 40 minutes. “I use that driving time to pray, meditate or listen to recorded books and podcasts,” Veldman shares. “My wife always comes to Sabbath services with me. On the longer drives especially, we enjoy that together time. Occasionally, she also accompanies me mid-week for visitation or Bible studies.” Veldman laughs when he says, “She always lights up faces when the people see her. Sometimes I think they’re happier to see her than me!”

While Veldman finds strength and encouragement throughout Scripture, one verse particularly speaks to him: “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Timothy 1:12 NKJV). To anyone at any life stage who may be considering pastoring, Veldman advises them to pray earnestly and ask for direction. “If you’re married, be sure your spouse can support this direction for your lives,” he adds. “Your spouse must be ‘all in.’ And remember, you’re never too old to serve the Lord!”

Though Veldman’s move to ministry may seem the exception, current trends suggest we will be seeing more people following in his footsteps. “1 in 4 Pastors Plan to Retire Before 2030,” announces a recent Christianity Today headline. Citing research from the Barna Group, the article states, “In 2022, just 16 percent of Protestant senior pastors were 40 years or younger. The average age of a pastor is 52. Thirty years ago, 33 percent of US pastors were under 40, and the median age was 44.”¹ The numbers speak for themselves: we are witnessing the “graying” of our clergy.

The situation in the Adventist church is no exception. According to Rodney Palmer, chair of the undergraduate religion and biblical languages department at Andrews University,

just five university undergraduates with no previous college experience enrolled during the fall 2023 semester. About a decade ago, the numbers were 15–20. Several sister institutions are experiencing similar declines.

Alarm bells are sounding. In the next five years, says Ivan Williams, North American Division ministerial director, 2,000 new pastors will be required to fill openings created by retirements in the NAD. In 2022, the most recent year available, only 82 theology majors graduated from undergraduate programs in all the NAD Adventist colleges and universities, according to Carl Cosaert, chair of the School of Religion at Walla Walla University, who keeps track of these numbers. While the situation seems bleak, Luis Fernando Ortiz, director of the MDiv program and adjunct professor of Christian ministry at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, acknowledges that one easy place to start is through local church members encouraging youth with potential to choose pastoring and teaching occupations.

Ortiz admits, however, that many young Adventists have become disillusioned with their church. Pastoring no longer seems to be the attractive choice that it once was. When asked why so many of their peers reject a career in ministry specifically, and church employment generally, young church members often list these reasons: inadequate compensation, work-life balance challenges, hierarchical work structure, equity and inclusion issues, and insufficient resources to foster employee success and satisfaction. In short, the widespread perception among the young is that the demands of ministry are too numerous and onerous, and the rewards too few.

Priorities and perceptions can and do change, however. Some Adventists, after enjoying fulfilling, successful careers, choose to set them aside and join the ministry instead. According to Ortiz, over the last ten years about 40–50 percent of students entering the seminary are second-career students. The reason most often given for abandoning a career and pursuing ministry? Divine calling.



OVI RADULESCU

Ovi Radulescu heard the call while growing up in Romania during its Communist era when it was virtually impossible to get seminary training to become a minister. He worked as a firefighter, welder, public school teacher and watchmaker. Sometimes Sabbath observance became a point of contention, necessitating more changes. When communism fell, Radulescu began working for Voice of Hope Radio while finishing his theology degree.

Radulescu had no thoughts of emigrating, but when his wife surprisingly won a visa through the United States government lottery system, they decided that the family would step out in faith. They knew almost no English when they arrived here, and immediately set about taking English classes. Radulescu found work in construction, eventually becoming a licensed contractor. An official call to ministry came a few years later from the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference. Currently, Radulescu pastors the Northwest and Hammond Adventist churches in Indiana.

Radulescu remains grateful for each of his earlier careers. “Everything adds up, builds up,” he explains. “You gain a greater understanding of life and people with everything you do. One of my seminary professors, Dr. George Knight, once told us, ‘Boring life, boring sermons.’ He warned us against getting stuck in a rut. He encouraged us to live full, rich lives, to pursue interests, opportunities, hobbies, travel and embrace new ideas. I have done that all my life. Some of it by necessity. Much of it by choice. These pursuits

continue to make the best possible difference to my ministry and to me.”

Radulescu acknowledges that ministry, like any vocation, does present its own challenges. “There is the temptation to ignore self-care,” Radulescu counsels. “I am a strong advocate of ‘Prevention, prevention, prevention!’ Establish positive habits and boundaries early and stick with them. Encourage your congregations to do the same.”

Along with the rewards of pastoral ministry, Radulescu has experienced heartaches. He cautions future ministers against giving up when bad things happen—which they will. Once, after dutifully traveling every Sunday for four months to study with a family in their home, Radulescu was met at the door with these words: “Don’t come back. You’ve been lying to us. We’ve talked to people in our own church. They told us Adventists are a cult.” Radulescu recalls, “After working so hard to establish trust and build relationships, such a response is devastating. It takes a toll. It took me a long time to process and recover from that experience.”

For strength and sustenance, Radulescu turns to Scripture. Especially meaningful to him are these Old Testament words: “‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward’” (Genesis 15:1 NIV). Radulescu clings to and celebrates the present tense in this passage. He explains, “We sometimes get so focused on a future reward that we forget we already have the greatest possible reward. The presence of God! Here and now!”

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TO THOSE CONSIDERING MINISTRY, TAYLOR SAYS, “TRUST IN THE LORD AND MAKE SURE YOU’RE DOING WHAT GOD WANTS YOU TO DO.”



LAMONT TAYLOR

Lamont Taylor, like Radulescu, knew early on that he wanted to be a minister. Now pastoring the Gurnee and Northbrook Adventist churches in Illinois, Taylor acknowledges, “The route I took wasn’t typical. For me it was ‘over the mountains and through the valleys’ to reach the High Way.”

Taylor worked for 15 years as a counselor to those with histories of sexual abuse, substance abuse and mental health issues. His clients, primarily in the 18–26 age range, often had more than one major challenge. “It could be difficult sorting out which problem was fueling the other,” Taylor discovered.

Taylor’s earlier professional experience continues to help him immensely as a pastor. “I learned to meet people where they are,” he says, “and to love without being judgmental. I refined my counselling skills. I also learned that it is possible to be loved one day and called every name in the book the next. Part of my takeaway from such episodes is that you must guard against the temptation of trying to be a people-pleaser. I was given that advice early on, and I share it with my clients as well as young ministers and anyone interested in ministry.”

To those considering ministry, Taylor says, “Trust in the Lord and make sure you’re doing what God wants you to do.” Taylor recalls planning a move to Phoenix, a change he and his wife felt would benefit their immediate and extended families. With his extensive

work experience and credentials, Taylor was sure he would easily find a new job in the counseling field. He sent out numerous resumes but was shocked to receive only one response. One day, still waiting for responses to his queries, Taylor received a call from the ministerial director for the Illinois conference: “Lamont, would you consider transitioning from the part-time pastoring you’re doing now to full-time pastoring?” Taylor remembers, “There I was, sitting in Olive Garden, watching God close Arizona doors and open Illinois ones.”

Taylor finds that some of the greatest rewards in ministry come from seeing individuals move from “down-and-out” to “Praise the Lord!” He clings to a verse in Romans for direction and stability: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (10:17 NKJV). This text reminds Taylor that he must stay grounded in the Word. He knows there are no substitutes, no shortcuts.

Taylor is a firm believer in “keeping me a Peter, James and John.” He explains, “It’s good to have a small support system—a few trusted individuals that you hold close. They need to be people who will tell you things straight, advise and counsel you, and be there when you need them—just as you will be there for them.” He adds that it’s important not just to seek out these companions for help. You must get together regularly to celebrate the good times and the ordinary times, too.



Thorly James is another pastor who believes in the importance of celebrating, though for him, those times may not typically happen spontaneously. They are more likely to come about from prompts on an Excel spreadsheet. “I live by spreadsheets,” James admits. “They help me be where I need to be so I can do what I need to do. They also help to ensure that self-care and family time happen, including date night with my wife. It’s too easy to let those things get pushed to the margins or disappear altogether. I’ve helped set up similar scheduling and accountability systems for ministerial colleagues. They tell me spreadsheets help them greatly, too.”

James currently puts his professional expertise and passion for the gospel into pastoring two Adventist churches in the Lake Region Conference: Calvin Center Church in Cassopolis, Michigan, and the Praise Fellowship Church in South Bend, Indiana. Superb organizational skills—often learned the hard way by many professionals, including ministers—have become second nature to James. Before earning an MDiv and MSc in community and international development, James graduated with a degree in manufacturing and engineering technology. He subsequently worked as an aerospace engineer for 14 years, overseeing the implementation

of innovative practices and methods for the military and the airline industry. “In addition to introducing and implementing change, I was charged with obtaining buy-in from all levels in the organization. That was often the steepest mountain to climb,” James says. Also in his portfolio was risk management.

While growing up in Jamaica, James never saw himself as a minister, even though his father and grandfather both were clergymen. When he immigrated to the United States, he became acutely aware of “how many were struggling in this land of opportunity.” This realization spurred in him a growing conviction: “The church should be the center of the community.” He became personal ministries director for his church in Brooklyn and “burned to open the church more than just one day a week.” He longed “to meet the needs of people and then say to them, ‘Follow me to Christ.’”

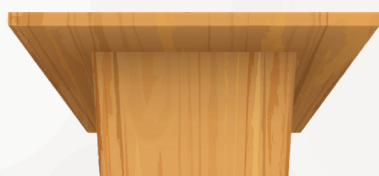
To anyone considering ministry, James admonishes them to “Count the cost.” He cautions the young especially not to be caught up in what some see as glamorous parts of the job—authority, respect, admiration. James strongly recommends first making a commitment to volunteering in your home church. There you will get a sense of the real work that needs to be done, while

A PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE THAT SUSTAINS JAMES IS “THIS IS THE CONFIDENCE WE HAVE IN APPROACHING GOD: THAT IF WE ASK ANYTHING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, HE HEARS US” (1 JOHN 5:14 NIV).



THORLY JAMES

**SPEND MUCH
TIME IN
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PRAY AS IF
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DEPENDS ON IT.
IT DOES.**



seeing that results are not always immediately apparent.

“Success in ministry requires the Usain Bolt Method,” James maintains. “It took this track and field phenomenon years of focused, dedicated training to reach that point where, in 9.58 seconds, he finally accomplished his dream of breaking the world record in the men’s 100-meter race. We only see the tip of the iceberg when we see such great things accomplished. We don’t see what’s below the surface. For Bolt, in addition to years

of intense training were personal sacrifices—things like giving up his favorite chicken nuggets and time spent just hanging out with friends. Commitment makes demands.”

In addition to commitment, confidence is essential for James—confidence that comes from a relationship with God. A passage of scripture that sustains James is “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14 NIV).



JENIFER DALEY

Another career-change minister who, like James, finds herself back in the neighborhood of her most recent alma mater is **Jenifer Daley**. She currently serves as pastor for administration at Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Previously, she pastored in Jamaica and at two churches in England while studying at Newbold College, where she earned a license in theology. She later earned an MA in religion and a PhD in systematic theology from Andrews University.

Daley brings to pastoring a wide array of expertise garnered earlier in the finance

and education sectors. Before answering the call to ministry, Daley earned a BSc and MSc in accounting, an ACCA (Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants), and a PhD in economics. She worked in financial analysis, accounting, auditing, consulting, commercial bank managing, as a senior central bank economist, and as a university professor.

Daley describes her current vocation, ministry, as “an act of obedience, a way of returning to God the life and the many gifts with which he has gifted me.” While some may struggle to see the connection between

DALEY IS GRATEFUL THAT “THE PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND ATTITUDES GARNERED IN MY PRIOR SERVICE CONTINUE TO PROVE INVALUABLE AND INDISPENSABLE TO WHOLEHEARTED MINISTRY.” SHE CLAIMS WITH CONVICTION, “NO EXPERIENCE OR GIFT IS EVER LOST.”

ministry and her previous professional realms, Daley is quick to point out that “economics and theology make for a priceless partnership for preaching and practical theology.” Daley is grateful that “the professional values and attitudes garnered in my prior service continue to prove invaluable and indispensable to wholehearted ministry.” She claims with conviction, “No experience or gift is ever lost.” She praises God for “the wonderful reality of how He weaves his grace into the tapestry of my life to bring me fulfillment and flourishing.”

To those who prayerfully may be considering becoming pastors, Daley points out that rewards can be observed outwardly but also felt internally. Key to her experience is this word: “transformation.” She explains, “It occurs both in the self and in others as a result of the work of the gospel. The ripple effect is wonderful.”

Daley admits that pastors are not immune to difficulties and discouragement. “There will be challenging times,” she says, and you will be called upon to “pastor effectively to challenged and challenging people.” What helps her through such times is following the advice that she offers to anyone considering becoming a minister: “Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone. Pray as if your life depends on it. It does.”

Daley knows firsthand that “pastors always seem to be at work—mentally and/or physically.” She stresses that self-care is crucial. “It takes tenacious intentionality,” she insists. Hosting people in her home for meals is one of the things she enjoys doing for a change of pace, especially as she combines it with “relearning the art of simplicity.”

Daley finds comfort, encouragement and direction from the apostle Paul: “We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the life of good deeds which God designed for us” (Ephesians 2:10 REB). That firm conviction helps Daley in other ways, too. She

knows that “to be in God’s will is the best place to be.” She faces each day’s tasks with this resolve: “I determine, by his grace, to bloom where I’m planted.” She is quick to add, “I also determine to be ready to be transplanted as He directs.”

So where will our next pastors come from? The lives of Pastors Veldman, Radulescu, Taylor, James and Daley testify that some will be “transplants.” These five also show us that pastors can and do come from many walks and many places.

Scripture also bears this out. Speaking at Pentecost, Peter quotes the prophet Joel who quotes the Almighty: “‘And in the last days it will come to pass,’ God says, ‘that I will pour out my Spirit on *all people*, and your *sons* and your *daughters* will prophesy, and your *young men* will see visions, and your *old men* will dream dreams. Even on my *servants, both men and women*, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy’” (Acts 2:17–18 NET, *emphasis added*).

Sons, daughters, young men, old men, servants, men, women, all people. Each of us can find ourselves in this list. We can find everyone we know and all of humanity in this list. The prophets, visionaries and dreamers called to proclaim the gospel will come from every possible group. Of this we can be sure. God’s list excludes no one. The Father of all wouldn’t have it any other way.

¹ David Roach, Christianity Today, April 28, 2023, accessed July 22, 2023.

Beverly Matiko, a retired English and communication professor, lives in southwest Michigan. She enjoys writing, conversation, public speaking (including preaching), and just about anything involving words—except call-in radio shows.

Sandra Mendez has been a professional photographer and photography/art instructor in the Chicago and Indiana region for the past 25 years. Her work has been exhibited nationally and showcases her life story. Sandra’s passion for teaching and her love of the arts is demonstrated in the classroom, as she shares her talents with her students.



Hospice Chaplain Counts Blessings While Reflecting on Lifetime of Service

AFTER 52 YEARS OF SERVICE AS A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PASTOR, MISSIONARY AND CHAPLAIN, 78-YEAR-OLD BRANISLAV “BRANKO” DEDIC IS OFTEN ASKED, “WHY HAVEN’T YOU RETIRED?”



▲ Branislav “Branko” Dedic believes his career has been his calling and the greatest blessing God has given him.

“What I want to say is that I am so scared of retirement because I feel so blessed and called by God to do what I am doing and I cannot imagine not being active,” replied Dedic, chaplain at AdventHealth St. Thomas Hospice in Hinsdale, Illinois.

Dedic grew up in an Adventist family in former communist Yugoslavia and was inspired by his father and his uncle, both Adventist pastors, to pursue a life of service in the Adventist church. “My father was a church leader who fought the communist regime for religious liberty,” he said.

After completing seminary studies, Dedic served as a pastor in Yugoslavia and later as

a missionary in Cameroon in Central Africa, where he worked as a school administrator and secretary/treasurer of the local Adventist conference in Yaoundé, the nation’s capital.

“It was the best life experience, because every single day you help somebody,” he said. “At the end of the day you just say, ‘Thank you, God, for giving me the opportunity to help people who are suffering.’” The work was often physically and emotionally demanding, but very rewarding. That is why my heart is there forever,” shared Dedic, who has asked his family to send his ashes to Cameroon after he dies.

In 1987, he moved to the U.S. where he

was named pastor of a Yugoslavian Adventist church in Chicago, Illinois. For 14 years, Dedic oversaw a significant increase in church membership under his leadership.

By 2001, Dedic was ready for a new role in the church, and with encouragement from the Illinois Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, he assumed his current position as AdventHealth St. Thomas Hospice’s only chaplain. In this role, Dedic brings spiritual comfort to hospice patients and their families, in their homes and in hospitals and nursing homes. He works full-time from Monday through Friday and often visits patients and their families or officiates at patients’ funerals on weekends.

Just as Jesus used parables to instruct and to comfort people, Dedic uses spiritual stories to bring solace to those he serves. “These stories often open doors for me to continue my visits,” he said.

“Many families, after a patient dies, send me a note saying, ‘Thank you for bringing some sunshine to each visit during a time of clouds and storms in our life,’” he said. Those same families often ask him to officiate at a loved one’s funeral service.

Though the work can take an emotional toll, Dedic still finds it very rewarding. “You are blessed by God to provide your shoulder to patients and their families during the worst time in their lives.”

That’s why it’s hard for him to contemplate retirement. “My motivation every day is to go and be with patients and their families, and to do my best,” he shared. “I truly believe that this is the greatest blessing that God ever gave me.” ■

Julie Busch is associate vice president of marketing and communications for AdventHealth.



UChicago Medicine

Advent Health



▲ Raelene Brower

Raelene Brower joins staff of Andrews

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY WELCOMES RAELENE BROWER TO THE UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT TEAM AS THE NEW DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI SERVICES. RAELENE, WHO RETURNS TO ANDREWS AFTER A SUCCESSFUL ADMINISTRATIVE CAREER IN HIGHER EDUCATION, WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR OVERSEEING ALL ASPECTS OF THE UNIVERSITY'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALUMNI.

An alumna of Andrews herself, Raelene's first job as a student was in the Public Relations office (now University Communication). She loved the variety of assignments and PR-related tasks. "That was my first affirmation that my career would be somehow interactive, collaborative, creative and mission-driven!" she recalls. "This has been reaffirmed throughout my career, and these are still the pillars of my life, personally and professionally."

In the late 1980s, Raelene began working for Andrews as a financial aid administrator,

helping students navigate the process and acquire resources. Four years later, she transitioned to recruitment and enrollment, focusing primarily on the upcoming freshman classes from Lake Union academies. She is proud to hold the record for recruiting the largest Andrews freshman class, at 438 students.

Raelene went on to work in the physical therapy program as director of enrollment services for six years. She completed 15 years of service at Andrews, then chose to explore a variety of career paths. Her experiences

include direct sales, a family-owned business, and multiple administrative positions. She has utilized her skills at Midwestern University, Loma Linda University and two North American Division academies. "My parents were children of immigrants who came to America with nothing, worked hard and believed fiercely in God and the Adventist message," she shares. "I remain strongly committed to my church and Adventist education."

In 2019, Raelene retired and returned to Michigan to be with her family. After going through COVID-19 pandemic lockdown isolation, she realized that she missed her interactions with students and colleagues, as well as the mission of Adventist higher education. "I believe God brought me directly to the role of director of Alumni Services," she says. "It seems a natural and timely new chapter, and I am grateful to serve Andrews University again."

In her role, Raelene will have a variety of responsibilities, including welcoming new alumni at Commencement ceremonies, arranging regional events, recognizing honored alumni and planning the annual Homecoming Weekend. She is excited about several current initiatives in the office, including an "Up-and-Coming" Honored Alumni award and AU Network, which connects current students with alumni mentors. "It has always seemed like my 'mission field' is to serve families and help them feel connected to the Andrews community," she affirms. "For me, it's all about relationships."

Throughout her life and career, Raelene has been guided by God's promises in Jeremiah 29:11. "Like everyone, my life has peaks and valleys. I know where I am headed and *who* has promised me it's all going to be okay in the end. I receive continual reminders, which I call 'hugs from God,'" she notes. Raelene sees these promises in her new role, enthusing, "Working at Andrews University—again—is truly one of those 'hugs from God.'" ■

Isabella Koh is a writer for the Office of University Communication.



World Changers Made Here.



▲ Burned areas in Lahaina on the Island of Maui, Hawaii, Friday, Aug. 11, 2023, following a wildfire. [Photo provided by Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources.]

Amidst the Ashes

INDIANA YOUTH ESCAPE MAUI FIRE TO AID RELIEF EFFORTS

JOLTED FROM HIS SLEEP, IT WAS 3 A.M. ON THE MORNING OF AUG. 8 WHEN A PHONE CALL WOKE PASTOR KAMIL METZ, SENIOR PASTOR AT THE EVANSVILLE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH. THE CALLER WAS DALLAS MATTHEW, 26, ONE OF HIS MEMBERS SERVING THIS SUMMER AS A STUDENT LITERATURE EVANGELIST ON THE ISLAND OF MAUI IN HAWAII. DALLAS'S NEWS WAS GRAVE—HE CALLED TO REPORT THAT DEADLY WILDFIRES HAD ENGULFED LĀHAINĀ, THE TOWN IN MAUI THAT METZ HAD LEFT THE PRIOR WEEK.

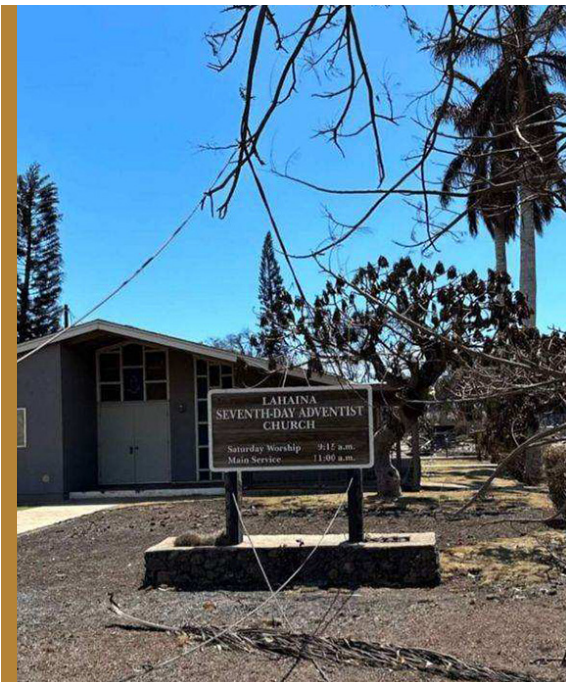
When Flames Ignite, God Has a Plan

When the unexpected fiery chaos ensued, the sun had barely risen over Maui's picturesque landscape.

Jaxson Maun, 29, is another member of Pastor Metz's church who found himself at the heart of a nightmare as devastating fires rapidly consumed more than 2,100 acres of the original capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom. The morning started with powerful winds, misidentified as a potential hurricane, only to escalate into an inferno of flames that engulfed the historic town of Lāhainā.

"When the fires started that morning, we had already been experiencing heavy winds from the night before. Branches were falling from trees. It felt extremely chaotic," said Jaxson. "We all thought it was a hurricane, but it started to pick up midday, so we decided not to go out into the field."

Jaxson, Dallas and a youth team had been working as colporteurs going door to door in Lāhainā to spread the gospel ministry. But when their group leader, Mario Bravo, noticed the severe winds that day, he made that providential decision.



▲ The Lahaina Seventh-day Adventist Church sustained extensive damage.

Sensing the severity of the situation, Mario made a crucial decision to evacuate the team. Little did they know they were escaping the path of destruction that would soon engulf the very area they had just left.

"Everything that we did that day was planned by God," related Jaxson. "Much later, we found out that if we stayed even a little bit later and if any part of our movements that day had been different, we would have been stuck in Lāhainā during the height of the chaos when the fire was spreading out of control."

As they drove away from the danger zone, the sight of yellow smoke transformed the island's serene beauty into a terrifying battleground that would take the lives of more than 100 people. It was quickly becoming the deadliest recorded wildfire in the history of the United States.

Miracles in the Madness

"Two parts of this experience blew my mind and demonstrated the power of the Living God," said Jaxson. "One of them is that everything surrounding the Lahaina Seventh-day Adventist Church where we were originally stationed was burned to the ground

by the fires, but the Adventist church is still standing.”

Jaxson and his team eventually found solace at the nearby Seventh-day Adventist church in Kahului, pastored by Vassili Khrapov, located just 35 minutes from ground zero of the disaster.

“The other thing that blew my mind is that Pastor Vassili’s house is also still standing,” said Jaxson. “When he went back to see what was left of his home, he realized that in his neighborhood, everything around his home was burned down. But the fire stopped at his doorstep. Praise God.”

The experience profoundly impacted Jaxson’s spirituality. Amidst the chaos, he found himself praying with the group for the community and reflecting on the impermanence of material possessions. This spiritual awakening taught him the importance of placing faith in God during times of uncertainty, an anchor that guided him through the storm.

“I feel very changed by this experience,” shared Jaxson. “Our group got together during that time of chaos and prayed. I feel more spiritually in tune with the Living God who guided our movements throughout the experience. While the chaos was brewing, we didn’t know what would happen to us the next day—we just prayed and believed. That was all we could do at the time.”

Back to the Frontlines: A Commitment to Relief Efforts

Jaxson was inspired by his grandmother’s involvement in disaster relief ministry and a previous but minor earthquake in Indiana. His dedication to helping others in times of crisis found a powerful outlet in Maui, demonstrating that passion and purpose can transform personal experiences into life-changing endeavors.

“I’m just so glad that Jaxson is able to spend his time working on his passion for disaster relief,” said Metz. “As his pastor, that’s really thrilling because I always look for how I can help my young people work on their

passions and further the kingdom of God. This was both a tragedy and an opportunity.”

Even after being evacuated from Maui to Honolulu, Jaxson’s commitment to disaster relief led him back to Maui the following day. He began aiding the efforts in the church kitchen, assisting with community support, ensuring the safety of the church building, and helping provide essential supplies to those in need.

The fire’s aftermath forced Jaxson to confront the transient nature of our earthly possessions. In the wake of the devastation, Pastor Metz reassured him that prioritizing spiritual and communal values over material gains was essential.

“Every time we go through a natural disaster like this, we need to remember that Jesus is near to the suffering ones, and He cares. And for the rest of us, as we build our American dream, let’s consider that one day it can be taken away,” said Metz.

With the death toll over 100 and hundreds still missing, the fires serve as another

poignant reminder of the fragility of life and the importance of kindling meaningful connections with others while furthering the work of Christ.

The island and town will rebuild and recover, and Jaxson’s experience stands as a reminder that hope can rise amidst the ashes of tragedy—God has and always will have a hand in it all.

To learn how you can help, visit <http://www.hawaiisda.com>. ■



▲ Left, Kamil Metz during his stay in Maui a week before the fire, with his Evansville members Jaxson Maun, center, and Dallas Matthew, right.



▲ Don Tynes, (left photo) a local doctor specializing in internal medicine and pediatrics, invited health professionals from the Benton Harbor area, as well as from Grand Rapids. In addition, Tynes held his “Future Doctors, Future Leaders” program, which aims to inspire young people to pursue careers in health care.

Regional Church Tackles Health Care Disparity

ON JULY 22, 2023, A GROUP OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS PROVIDED MUCH-NEEDED SERVICES TO A BELEAGUERED MICHIGAN COMMUNITY. DR. DON J. TYNES AND JANICE MCLEAN, ALONGSIDE VOLUNTEERS FROM THE HIGHLAND AVENUE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH ORGANIZED A HEALTH EXPO AT THE BLOSSOM ACRES PUBLIC HOUSING COMMUNITY CENTER IN BENTON HARBOR, MICHIGAN. THEY OFFERED HEALTH SCREENINGS AND EDUCATION TO OVER 30 FAMILIES.



▲ The health fair coordinators followed the Gospel Commission’s call to “Go” and held the event at the Blossom Acres community center instead of Highland Avenue church.

“We can’t only be concerned about the health of our church and not be concerned about the health of our community,” said Highland Avenue Church Pastor Denry White.

Benton Harbor, a city with a population of 8,943, is in dire straits. According to the 2022 Census, an estimated 43.6 percent of the population lives in poverty with a household median income of \$24,549.

The health fair coordinators followed the Gospel Commission’s call to “Go” and held the event at the community center instead of the church. Tynes, a local doctor specializing in internal medicine and pediatrics, invited health professionals from the Benton Harbor area, as well as from Grand Rapids. In addition, Tynes held his “Future Doctors, Future

Leaders” program, which aims to inspire young people to pursue careers in health care.

Dr. Janice McLean brought services from her own organization, Uzima Lifestyle Center, and Wildwood Lifestyle Center and was aided by volunteers from the Trinity Temple Adventist Church. Highland Avenue Church members provided essential support for this initiative, including handling registration, and providing snacks and greeters. Services provided included blood pressure checks, glucose screening tests, podiatry, BMI screening, health education materials, vegan meal demonstrations and a prayer booth. ■

Lake Region Conference Communication



Northern Michigan Evangelism Series Attracts Community

THE MICHIGAN CONFERENCE DEDICATES EVERY YEAR TO EVANGELISM, AND THIS YEAR IS NO DIFFERENT. THROUGHOUT THE STATE EVANGELISM-BASED INITIATIVES HAVE TAKEN PLACE AS A LEAD-UP TO THE MICHIGAN-WIDE PUBLIC CAMPAIGN TO BE HELD AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER.

One church that held its evangelism series has already seen those efforts bearing fruit. Spanning four weeks, from April 16–May 13, 2023, the series was conducted by Elijah Ringstaff, pastor of the Ludington and Shelby churches, who spoke for all 19 meetings, including a follow-up vespers after the series concluded.

Church members in Ludington, a small town located on the north shore of Lake Michigan, were encouraged to see excellent community engagement. During the four weeks, nine non-members and their families attended the evangelistic series. Four of the guests attended opening night and every meeting after for a week and a half before becoming sick with pneumonia. Four other guests began attending in the middle of the series, but they also became sick. Finally, one more woman began attending near the

close of the series, “for the last four or five meetings,” says Ringstaff, and she has “been studying the Bible and is preparing to be baptized.” The other eight have also kept in touch with Ludington church members and are also participating in Bible studies. Despite the unusual circumstances that threatened to tear them away, the Lord grasped these families firmly, ensuring they would find the truth for which they were searching.

Several attendees are coming to church as often as possible and are resolving work issues so they can attend more frequently, according to Ringstaff. They are also coming to prayer meetings.

The Ludington Church understands the significance of reaching every soul for Christ, and their planning for the series began months in advance of the meetings. An evangelistic series isn’t just about the sermons.

There’s music to choose, children’s programs to plan, and health nuggets to be selected. And, of course, no series should be planned without careful and fervent prayer.

In addition, Ringstaff credits the conference-wide “Great Controversy” project as being a catalyst for turning the community’s mind toward Christ. The project took place right before the series began when church members passed out 1,200 copies of “The Great Controversy” with a flyer tucked into each book. Ringstaff believes that not only did the books pull in attendees for this series, but those left at homes will provide “curiosity” for future evangelistic events—a pull to learn more. ■

Judy Ringstaff is the Michigan Conference administrative assistant for communication.

Adventist college in El Salvador Nears Completion



▲ Pastors, professionals and youth from Michigan and Indiana work together like family to build first El Salvador Adventist college.

YOUNG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS IN THE COUNTRY OF EL SALVADOR WILL SOON HAVE A LOCAL OPTION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION. CURRENTLY, THOSE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING AN ADVENTIST COLLEGE MUST TRAVEL INTERNATIONALLY FOR HUNDREDS OF MILES, AT NO SMALL COST, TO REACH THE NEAREST OPTION.

For this reason, Senior Pastor Ron Kelly from Village Adventist Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan, in conjunction with members of his previous congregation in Cicero, Indiana, and Jack Cain of Reach Out Ministries have been leading a series of mission trips to build the first Adventist college in El Salvador. Accompanying them on the most recent trip were members from Stevensville and Gobles churches, plus volunteers from Pennsylvania, Kansas and Oregon.

Over spring break, 93 missionaries connected with the Village church and another 60 missionaries from the Cicero church met at the Adventist Training School of El Salvador (ECAS), the only Adventist boarding academy in El Salvador. Dan Bacchiocchi is the lead architect for the project. Yoshi Thiele, a student missionary from Village, has

served there several months to help coordinate construction.

Using ECAS as a basecamp, the missionaries are building Orley Ford Mission College adjacent to the academy. Main work projects during the most recent trip included: laying block for the septic system, painting classrooms, installing steel studding for the administration offices, pouring floors for offices, and doing flatwork for covered walkways. Volunteers also laid block to expand the existing cafeteria at ECAS and renovated a portion of the boy's dorm. Additionally, medical and dental services were offered to students on campus and those in the local community.

The group experienced an encouraging divine intervention after gathering for corporate prayer. Intercession was made for part of the

project that had already been held up for a year. Later that afternoon, after 90 people had prayed in small groups, God clearly answered with the solution. In reference to God's promise to answer prayers, Ellen White writes, "The promise is made on condition that the united prayers of the church are offered, and in answer to these prayers there may be expected a power greater than that which comes in answer to private prayer. The power given will be proportionate to the unity of the members and their love for God and for one another." (Letter 32, 1903, page 6, to Brother and Sister Farnsworth, Jan. 28, 1903).

Another interesting testimony of God's provision is the story of Joshua Harrington, an engineering student at Andrews University. He is taking one of the hardest loads this year (no generals, all his courses are engineering classes), so he was in the valley of decision over whether he should go on the mission trip or not. He determined he should go no matter what happened. Two days after he returned, he received a perfect score on two very difficult tests. These results were extraordinary and unexpected because of his limited amount of study time and the high level of difficulty of the tests. Joshua believes he did not deserve the score he received for multiple reasons. First, because he was tired from the trip and didn't get much study time. And second, the average score was only 50 percent for one of the tests, however he didn't miss a single point. God is good!

Through mission trips like this, church members, and especially the youth, are exposed to the great needs of humanity. By the grace of God, those with limited experience come home with a better understanding of what is important and have a testimony regarding the proper priorities of life. Additionally, the stories that are shared about the trip create ripple effects that spread and inspire others. ■

Robert Rice is a Bible worker at the Village church in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Illinois Conference Announces New Role for Stacey DePluzer

THE ILLINOIS CONFERENCE IS THRILLED TO ANNOUNCE THE PROMOTION OF STACEY DEPLUZER TO THE POSITION OF ASSOCIATE YOUTH DIRECTOR, WITH A PRIMARY FOCUS ON CAMP MINISTRY. THE DECISION WAS MADE DURING THE AUG. 16, 2023, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING, WHERE STACEY'S DEDICATION, LEADERSHIP AND GIFTS IN MINISTRY WERE AFFIRMED AND CELEBRATED.

DePluzer, who has previously served as assistant to the youth director, has demonstrated exceptional commitment and passion for youth ministry throughout her tenure. Her skills in guiding and nurturing young minds, combined with her unwavering faith, have left an indelible mark on the lives of many within the Seventh-day Adventist community.

"I am truly humbled and honored by this opportunity," said DePluzer. "I am excited

to continue serving our youth in this capacity and look forward to helping them develop strong faith foundations, lifelong friendships, and a sense of purpose through camp ministry."

We're excited for the future that will continue to develop in our Illinois youth department. ■

Illinois Conference Communication



▲ Stacey DePluzer

Science Educators Delve into Biblical Understanding of Earth History

JUST BEFORE THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION EDUCATORS' CONVENTION IN PHOENIX, SEVERAL LAKE UNION EDUCATORS WERE PART OF A GROUP OF 40 PASSIONATE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION SCIENCE TEACHERS WHO EMBARKED ON A JOURNEY TO EXPLORE VARIOUS GEOLOGICAL LANDMARKS.

The field trip led by Geoscience Research Institute (GRI) scientists offered participants a firsthand experience to enhance their appreciation and comprehension of geology and the history of the Earth, with the goal of enabling the teachers to integrate faith and

science more effectively in their classrooms. They visited the Petrified Forest National Park, the Grand Canyon, Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument, and more.

At the Petrified Forest National Park, teachers observed the remains of trees that

had turned to stone, revealing the wonders of natural transformation. Here they discussed the process of fossilization, how long it takes for wood to petrify, and how fossils paint a picture of past animal interactions and their environment. Walking amongst these fossilized tree logs provided an opportunity to discuss processes and sediment transport rates.

The trip through the breathtaking Grand Canyon offered a setting for discussions surrounding the origins debate and the geologic record. As the educators gazed into the vast chasm, they could not help but be humbled by the scale and complexity of the Earth's geological history.

They were presented with the unique opportunity to study the intricate rock formations that could be viewed through the lens of catastrophism or gradualism. Catastrophism is an approach to earth history that suggests



▲ Several Lake Union educators were part of a group of 40 North American Division science teachers who explored various geological landmarks, including the Grand Canyon.

that in the past the earth experienced a geological process or event of uncommon scale such as a flood. Gradualism or uniformitarianism is where it is thought that the geologic record formed gradually and not by sudden impulse such as a “big bang.”

They also observed footprints and other fossils embedded in the rock while hiking down into the Canyon on the South Kaibab Trail.

After experiencing the wonders of nature and absorbing the information presented, the educators engaged in in-depth discussions and workshops by the Geological Research Institute director, Ronny Nalin, along with senior scientists Ben Clausen, Tim Standish and Raul Esperante. They explored ways to effectively blend faith and science in their classroom teaching and were reminded to respect science while remaining faithful to God and the Bible.

“As educators,” said Evelyn Hainey, a teacher at the Thompsonville School in Illinois, “we stress the importance of learning to read for our students, and this trip gave

us the tools we need to begin learning to read the rocks. How the chemical composition of the rocks changes the shapes, colors and textures of the rocks. How the layers and distribution of fossils within the layers opens a window on how one can use challenge and contrast as a starting point for introducing a biblical timeline to a student.”

Her colleague, Elizabeth Atencio, said her takeaway lesson was the importance of not trying to hide reality from her elementary school students. “Sheltering them from things like evolution will not help them as they will simply encounter it later in life somewhere else,” she said. “Instead, we need to address it, but also train them in how to see, understand and stand up for the truth of science from the viewpoint of creation.”

Armed with fresh perspectives and a commitment to nurturing their students’ spiritual and scientific growth, the participants seek to ignite a transformative spark in the education community. They are prepared to enrich the lives of their students by fostering a

deeper appreciation for the natural world and its Creator.

Rachel Jameson, a Michigan Conference 1–8 grade teacher at Edenville Elementary School, said she was resolved to “make a greater effort to give my students field experience in the sciences and to teach them that although we may not be able to explain all the evidence we find, we can still trust what God says in his Word.”

The mission of the Geoscience Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is to explore the natural world, seeking to develop and share an understanding of nature consistent with the biblical teaching as expressed in the Church’s statement of fundamental belief on creation. For more information on the resources we provide, please visit our website at www.grisda.org. ■

Emeraude Victorin Tobias is director of marketing for the Faith and Science Council of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

October

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

GENERAL EVENTS

Sept. 28–Oct. 1: Alumni Homecoming Weekend
Oct. 12–14: Conference on Wholistic Healing
Oct. 13–16: October Preview
Oct. 18, 7 p.m.: Kingman Lecture on Science & Society: Eugenia Cheng, Howard Performing Arts Center
Oct. 19: Celebration of Community Engagement
Oct. 20, 12:30–4:30 p.m.: Celebration of Research and Creative Scholarship, Buller Hall
Oct. 20–21: Andrews Academy Alumni Weekend
Oct. 24, 10:30 a.m.–12 p.m.: The Inauguration of John Wesley Taylor V, Seventh President of Andrews University, Pioneer Memorial Church
Oct. 27–28: Andrews Autumn Conference on Religion and Science

HOWARD PERFORMING ARTS CENTER EVENTS

For more information on the following events and to purchase tickets, call 888-467-6442 or 269-471-3560, or visit howard.andrews.edu.

Oct. 14, 8 p.m.: Howard Center Presents: Heritage Singers
Oct. 15, 4 p.m.: Sunday Music Series, Jason Gresl & Friends

Oct. 21, 8 p.m.: Andrews University Symphony Orchestra Fall Concert
Oct. 22, 4 p.m.: Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra
Oct. 28, 8 p.m.: Andrews University Wind Symphony Fall Concert
Oct. 29, 7 p.m.: Howard Center Presents: Take 6

ILLINOIS

Oct. 6–8: Pathfinder Fall Skills Camporee, Camp Akita
Oct. 13–15: Prayer Retreat, Camp Akita
Oct. 15: Master Guide Training, Illinois Conference Office

INDIANA

Oct. 13–14: Indiana Academy Alumni Weekend
Oct. 13–15: Indiana Conference Women's Retreat, Hilton Garden Inn, Edinburgh, Indiana
Oct. 14–15: Hispanic Married Couples Retreat, Location TBD
Oct. 20–22: Master Guide Campout, Timber Ridge Camp

LAKE REGION

Oct. 6–10: Oakwood Live (Student Preview), Huntsville, Alabama

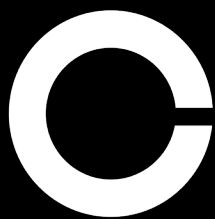
Oct. 13–15: Women's Ministry Retreat & Family Life, Tentative
Oct. 21: Global Public Campus Ministries Day, Virtual
Oct. 27–28: BAYDA Bible Bowl Championship, Apopka, Florida
Oct. 28: Better Health for You, Virtual

MICHIGAN

Oct. 2–28: Keys to Revelation; Local Churches
Oct. 8–11: LIFT (Lifestyle Improvement for Teens), Camp Au Sable
Oct. 6–8: Teen Leadership Training (TLT) Squared, Camp Au Sable
Oct. 13–15: Mother-Daughter-Retreat, Camp Au Sable
Oct. 27–29: UP Marriage Retreat, Camp Sagola

WISCONSIN

Oct. 18–20: LIFT (Lifestyle Improvement for Teens) Grades 7–10, Camp Wakonda
Oct. 20–22: Women's Retreat, Wisconsin Dells
Oct. 20–22: Club Ministries LeaderShop, Camp Wakonda
Oct. 27–29: JAHWI Youth Retreat, Camp Wakonda



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MILEPOSTS

OBITUARIES

BOYD, Annabelle, age 98; born Nov. 11, 1924, in Dowagiac, Michigan; died Aug. 11, 2023, in Dowagiac. She was a member of the Dowagiac Adventist Church. She is survived by her sons, James (Dana) Boyd, Bruce (Peggy) Boyd; daughter, Ernestine Wares; 13 grandchildren; and 16 great-grandchildren. A funeral service was conducted on Aug. 17, 2023, by Pastor Stacey Wilder at Clark Chapel Starks Family Funeral Homes, with interment at the Mission Hills Memorial Gardens in Niles, Michigan.

DAVIS, Warren "Bud" E., age 90; born Mar. 16, 1932, in Bedford, Michigan; died Dec. 11, 2022, in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He was a member of the Eau Claire Seventh-day Adventist Church in Eau Claire, Michigan. He is survived by his son Daniel M. (Marilyn D); daughters, Julie K. (David), Patricia J. (Douglas) Hawley, Pamela J. Johnson, Candy M. (Conrad Jr.) Reichert, Mary J. (Randy) Peters; 25 grandchildren, 28 great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren. A memorial service was conducted on Dec. 16, 2022, by Pastor Tom Shepherd, with interment

at the Rose Hill Cemetery in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

HAHN, Ilene (Laszlo) E., age 78; born May 11, 1945, in Detroit, Michigan; died Aug. 23, 2023, in Orlando, Florida. She was a member of the Wilson Adventist Church in Wilson, Michigan. She is survived by her sons, David (Kalinda) Hahn, Bruce Hahn; brothers, Dan Laszlo, Mark Laszlo; sister, Kathlene Wilson; and one grandchild. A private service will be held at a later date.

HIGGINS, Janice L., age 90; born Nov. 16, 1933, in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania; died May 11, 2023, in Ooltewah, Tennessee. She was a member of the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan. She is survived by her husband, Edward Higgins; sons, Bruce Higgins, Doug Higgins; daughters, Linda (Kurt) Wallack, Jannette Himer; nine grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren. A private family memorial was held.

MARKOVICH, Marjan, age 82; born Oct. 29, 1940, in Yugoslavia; died May 29, 2023, in Stevensville, Michigan. He was a member of the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He is survived by his wife, Savka Markovich;

son, Alex Markovich; daughter, Vesna Patterson; sister, Mara Regeljac; and two grandchildren. A funeral service was conducted on June 5, 2023, by Pastor Josip Horonic, with interment at the Rose Hill Cemetery in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

MENDEL, Marian, age 92; born Sept. 24, 1930, in Western Springs, Illinois; died July 26, 2023, in St. Joseph, Michigan. She was a member of the Chikaming Adventist Church. She is survived by her husband, John Mendel; daughter, Michelle (Winston) Nwoke; son-in-law, Michael Sauers; and many grandchildren and

great-grandchildren. A memorial service was conducted by Pastor Harry Rogers on Aug. 12, 2023, at the Chikaming Seventh-day Adventist Church.

WELCH, Vida L., age 73; born July 1, 1950, in Loma Linda, California; died July 13, 2023, in Chicago. She was a member of the Niles Westside Adventist Church in Niles, Michigan. She is survived by her daughters, Jennifer Minner (Jason) Payne, Megan Minner (Addison) Rook, Katherine Minner (Justin) Partlo; and seven grandchildren. A memorial service was conducted on July 21, 2023, by Pastor Alex Rybachek in Michigan.

CALENDAR OF OFFERINGS

SEPTEMBER

- 7 Local Church Budget
- 14 Union Designated
- 21 Local Church Budget
- 28 Local Conference Advance

Sabbath Sunset Calendar

	Oct. 6	Oct. 13	Oct. 20	Oct. 27
Berrien Springs, Michigan	7:18	7:07	6:56	6:46
Chicago, Illinois	6:23	6:12	6:01	5:51
Detroit, Michigan	7:05	6:53	6:42	6:32
Indianapolis, Indiana	7:19	7:08	6:58	6:48
La Crosse, Wisconsin	6:40	6:25	6:13	6:02
Lansing, Michigan	7:11	6:59	6:48	6:37
Madison, Wisconsin	6:30	6:18	6:07	5:56
Springfield, Illinois	6:33	6:22	6:12	6:02

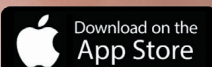
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Within the Lake Union, the officiating pastor or church communication leader is responsible for submission of information to this column. Forms are available in print format, or they can be filled out and submitted directly online. Milepost forms are available at www.lakeunionherald.org. Conference addresses and phone numbers are listed in the masthead on the inside back cover.

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CLASSIFIEDS

EVENTS

INVITING ALL ALUMNI from Adelpian Academy, Cedar Lake Academy, Grand Ledge Academy and Great Lakes Adventist Academy to Alumni Weekend 2023 from Oct. 13–14, 2023. Please call your classmates and encourage them to come to this wonderful event. The honor classes will be 1963, 73, 83, 93, 98, 2003, 2013. Please contact our office at 989-427-4444 or email bwallace@glaa.net or tmorgan@glaa.net for more information. We hope to see you there!

SERVICES

MOVE WITH AN AWARD-WINNING AGENCY— Apex Moving + Storage partners with the General Conference to provide quality moves for you. Call us for all your relocation needs. Contact Marcy Danté at 800-766-1902, or visit our website: apexmoving.com/adventist.

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EMPLOYMENT

Andrews University is seeking to fill the position of general manager for Dining Services. Bon Appetit manages an AYCTE Café, a la carte café, c-store and food truck. As a general manager, you will be directly responsible for the overall operation and cost-effective management of multiple dining service departments in more than one facility, as well as ensuring team achievement of financial goals and targets. Please contact Linda Brinegar at linda.brinegar@cafebonappetit.com

PACIFIC UNION COLLEGE is seeking faculty positions for the 2023–2024 academic year in the areas of **history and music**. Major duties include the responsibilities of assessment, planning, development and implementation of classroom experiences and course objectives. We desire those who will be committed to a collaborative working environment, as well as those who possess dedication in furthering the goals of excellence in student success and critical thinking skills. Most importantly, we desire those interested in bringing students closer to Christ by nurturing the whole person and embracing concepts for lifelong learning. If you are interested, please contact Human Resources at HR@puc.edu or call 707 965-6231.

UNION COLLEGE in Lincoln, Nebraska, is searching for a **program director** for the public

health graduate program. A doctoral degree in public health is required. This individual will be responsible for the implementation of and teaching within the graduate program. Please view the job description and instructions for application at ucollege.edu/employment or contact Debbie Eno at Debbie.eno@ucollege.edu for more information.

UNION COLLEGE in Lincoln, Nebraska, seeks applicants for **director of Student Financial Services**. The director is responsible for maintaining compliance with institutional, federal and state regulations and administering and managing a highly personalized financial aid process. Excellent benefits package and tuition assistance for dependents provided. See full job description and instructions for application at ucollege.edu/employment.

Fifty words maximum. No limit of insertions. Rates: \$36 per insertion for Lake Union church members; \$46 per insertion for all others. A form is available at <http://www.lakeunionherald.org> for printing out and filling in your ad. Ads must be prepaid. Make money order or check payable to the Lake Union Conference. There will be no refunds for cancellations. The Lake Union Herald cannot be responsible for advertisements appearing in its columns, and reserves the right to edit ads in accordance with editorial policies. The Lake Union Herald does not accept responsibility for typographical errors. Submission eligibility guidelines are listed at <http://www.lakeunionherald.org>.

ADVENTIST HISTORICAL MATERIALS NEEDED: Are there historical items in your home? The Center for Adventist Research preserves letters, diaries, manuscripts, photos, audio-visual materials, and artifacts. To donate, email car@andrews.edu or call 269-471-3209.

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news

Getting Your Affairs in Order (Part I)

Q: I'M GETTING OLDER AND BEGINNING TO WORRY ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN I CAN'T MAKE DECISIONS FOR MYSELF. BESIDES DEALING WITH HEALTH CHALLENGES, I DON'T WANT TO WORRY MY LOVED ONES ABOUT MANAGING MY ASSETS. WHAT STEPS SHOULD I TAKE NOW TO MAKE LIFE EASIER FOR MY FAMILY. IN THE LONG RUN?



▲ JENNIFER GRAY WOODS

Estate planning is the process of arranging for and preparing the necessary documents to protect your assets and provide for your health care needs when you die or are no longer able to make decisions for yourself. It is something everyone knows they should do, but many of us avoid for various reasons—we don't like thinking about death, we don't want to upset loved ones with end-of-life discussions, or we think we have time and put it off until "tomorrow."

But the truth is there are at least some basic end-of-life documents we should all consider preparing sooner rather than later. Estate planning can provide peace of mind, not only for us but also for our loved ones who will be relieved of the burden of going through probate, possible litigation, or having to try to figure out end-of-life health care decisions on our behalf.

In this article, we are going to address health care related estate planning documents, also called advance directives. Next month, we will look at estate planning documents dealing with financial assets.

Advance directives are legal documents providing instructions for your medical care if you are no longer capable of communicating those wishes. The two most common advance directives are a durable medical power of attorney for health care and living wills.

A durable medical power of attorney for health care allows you to appoint someone (called a health care proxy) to make health care decisions

for you if you are incapacitated. It is important to choose your proxy carefully. At a minimum, it should be someone who knows and will follow through with your wishes.

A living will allows you to indicate your end-of-life health care wishes if you are incapacitated. In it you can indicate what medical treatments you want and which you want to avoid. A durable medical power of attorney and living will work well together because the power of attorney focuses on who can make decisions on your behalf while the living will directs what you want those decisions to be.

As difficult as it can be to confront end-of-life decisions, having an advance directive provides some assurance that your personal wishes will be honored at a time when you are not able to express them yourself.

For more information on advance directives or other end-of-life planning needs, please visit the Planned Giving and Trust Services website: <https://www.willplan.org>. ■

Jennifer Gray Woods is the lawyer for the Lake Union Conference, as well as the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director.

Generator Prayers



▲ CODY FRANCIS

WE BARELY THINK ABOUT THE ADVANTAGES OF ELECTRICITY UNTIL THE POWER IS GONE. AS I WRITE, A LARGE WINDSTORM BLEW THROUGH OUR AREA AND KNOCKED OUT POWER FOR SEVERAL DAYS. EVEN THOUGH I KNOW THAT THE POWER IS OFF, I FIND MYSELF TURNING ON A LIGHT SWITCH OR TURNING ON THE FAUCET, ONLY FOR NOTHING TO HAPPEN.

Our lives are altered significantly when the power is cut, and suddenly simple things become much more difficult or impossible.

As I think about our power, or rather our lack thereof, it reminds me of our need of power in our work and daily lives today. Jesus promised the disciples, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8). Jesus knew this was what the disciples needed more than anything else. Thus, He said, “Tarry ... until you are endowed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). They needed the power of the Holy Spirit to touch their hearts and touch the hearts of those around them. How did they receive this “power from on high”? “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14). Prayer was the key that connected them to heaven’s infinite powerhouse.

As the disciples needed that “power from on high,” so we need this power today. How do we receive the power that energized the early church and “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6)? The same way that they did—communing with God in prayer. “Prayer brings power.” (“In Heavenly Places,” page 83.) It is not that prayer itself is power, but it is prayer that connects us with the true source of power.

The problem is that too many times we treat prayer as a generator. I am very thankful to be able to turn on a generator and supply the lack that a power outage brings. We can run water, cook, charge devices, etc. while the generator is on. A

generator makes a very helpful backup power supply in an emergency, but prayer is not a generator. Too many times we pray when we are facing a crisis. We pray when we don’t know what else to do. We pray in an emergency. We should pray all those times, but prayer should not be limited to emergencies or formalities. If we only really pray during emergencies, we are treating prayer as a generator. When “prayer is the breath of the soul,” then it becomes “the secret of spiritual power.” (“Gospel Workers,” page 254) Breath is a constant, life-giving activity and thus prayer should be a constant, live-giving connection with God. Prayer is not a generator. Prayer is the powerline connecting us to the never-failing, constantly supplying powerhouse of the universe. My prayer is that prayer be our powerline and not our generator. ■

Cody Francis is the ministerial director for the Michigan Conference.



Stop Paying Your Tithe!

IT WAS SPRING OF 1989. THE BERLIN WALL WAS STILL STANDING, I WAS LIVING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE IRON CURTAIN, IN POLAND. THE WORLD WOULD WAIT ANOTHER FOUR YEARS FOR PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INTERNET, SO MESSAGING AS WE KNOW IT NOW DIDN'T EXIST YET.



▲ ARKADIUSZ BOJKO

I was a young minister serving congregations in Eastern Poland. My fiancée was studying in a big city in Western Poland. Those days we had just a few options to keep in touch. I could take an overnight train, spend a day together, and return home taking another overnight train. We were writing letters. Not emails, real ink and paper letters, which you put in the mailbox, and three days later your addressee gets the message. If you are lucky, you receive a reply letter about a week after the original message went out. There were phone calls too, but no cell phones. I soon discovered that using a street payphone was cheaper for my long-distance calls, so I started doing my evening trips to have a chat with Marzanna, who became my wife a year later.

One night, as I arrived at the familiar telephone booth after dusk, I noticed an object on the shelf. It was a wallet. Inside there were IDs, personal info and several U.S. dollar bills. Poland was then at an economic low, and the total amount in the wallet was more than my two annual incomes! What was I supposed to do? My decision was dependent on the principles guiding my life. If I followed the idea "Finders Keepers, Losers Weepers" I could have started making plans for my next shopping spree, right! Years earlier, when I was 5, my father taught me a valuable life lesson about treating other people's property. Because of this lesson, I didn't hesitate in my decision to *return* the wallet to its rightful owner. Note this—I didn't *give* it to the owner, nor did I *donate* it to him. Even though

the object was in my hands it did not belong to me. The only option left was to *return* it, so I did it the very next day.

I keep hearing the expression *paying tithe*, which I have a problem reconciling with my understanding of what *tithe* and what *paying* are. In the process of *paying*, I exchange my money for goods that are not mine but become mine after the exchange. The problem with paying tithe is, it is not ours. God calls it *His* and *Holy*, thus separated from our common use. It has a special, defined-by-God purpose, and as God's property temporarily placed in our hands, wallets or accounts, it is to be returned to its only rightful Owner, God. Think about it the next time you handle God's money in your wallet. You cannot *pay* using something that is not yours! Stop paying, join me in returning it to the rightful Owner. This change of perspective will transform your tithing experience! I promise! ■

Arkadiusz (Arek) Bojko
is the Stewardship, as well
as Planned Giving and Trust
Services director, for the Illinois
Conference.



My Times Are in Your Hand

ONE OF MY FAVORITE LINES IN SCRIPTURE IS A SIMPLE STATEMENT FOUND IN PSALM 31:15, "MY TIMES ARE IN YOUR HAND."

Life has not always been easy for me. I lost a number of key people in my life before I had even finished middle school, including my mother when I was 8 years old. I went to public school up until my junior year of high school, which was a real struggle as I never really had anyone I could truly call my friend. I always felt like the one, weird, Christian kid that no one really liked.

Everything came to a head my sophomore year of high school when it felt like every bad thing that had happened in my life was weighing on me. I felt so alone and questioned whether God was even real in my life or whether I had any real purpose. David sums up how I was feeling very concisely in Psalm 31:9–10, *Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; my eye wastes away with grief, yes, my soul and my body! For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing; and my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.*

But God brought me up out of the pit that I was in.

I remember the night that I was crying out to Him at my bedside, asking Him for help if He was really there. Almost immediately, a verse that I had discovered months prior came back into my mind with a power that could have only been Divine: *The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit* (Psalm 34:18).

It's important for us to remember that suffering was never part of God's original plan for humanity, and that through Christ we can overcome any obstacle because Christ Himself took

on all pain and suffering when He was on Calvary and overcame sin for us. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), and when we let Him into our hearts and work in us, He will impart His character to us and give us the strength to overcome any obstacle.

Some of Satan's greatest temptations in my life have been to make me doubt myself, let my life be defined by my shortcomings, and rely on my own understanding of things. When I feel tempted by these thoughts and doubts, I can look back on my life and see how God has brought me through challenging situations, see how He has used the negative things in my life for good, and remember that my life is not about what I can or can't do, but what God can do through me.

And it's the same for everyone, because in the eyes of our Father in heaven our worth is not defined by our sins and mistakes but by the blood of Christ, and our potential is only limited by how much we are or aren't willing to let God work in our lives. So, as I plan on going into ministry, look to the future and the unknown, and reflect on my past, my prayer will continue to be, "My times are in Your hand." ■

William Ramos is a recent graduate of Wisconsin Academy, and this fall he began the theology program at Walla Walla University.

“... in the eyes of our Father in heaven our worth is not defined by our sins and mistakes but by the blood of Christ ...”



Becca Cordwell

Eight Years Old and Spreading the Word

THERE'S AN ENERGY AT WORK IN EZRA JEAN-BAPTISTE. HE HAS A DISTINCT CONVICTION, A PROFOUND SENSE OF GODLINESS. THAT MUCH IS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR TO ANY OF THE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE WATCHED THE 8-YEAR-OLD PREACH. HE MEANS WHAT HE SAYS.

Ezra gave his first sermon when he was 6 at an Adventurers function for Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan, where he and his family are members. Since then, he has given multiple sermons across the United States, including at the 100-year-anniversary Master Guide convention in Colorado.

Ezra's brand of Christianity isn't especially prevalent within our faith. He says what he needs to say—what he's been called to say—and nothing more. He isn't extraneous; each word he speaks has a poignant weight to it. When I spoke with him, I found the same fundamental bluntness, the same strong, no-nonsense and practical conviction that underlies each of his sermons.

"God gave me the talent to preach," said the third grader at Ruth Murdoch Elementary School when asked about his call to ministry. "God saw through me and saw that, in the future, I would share the word with many people and let them know about God's love for every one of us." To Ezra, it's that simple: God gave him a talent, so he uses it. No questions asked because he has no questions about God's supreme intellect. All he wants to do, all he *can* do, is follow God's calling for his life, share His love with everyone, and remind us of the innocence and unquestioning drive of a child.

Jesus encouraged us to emulate children the likes of Ezra, but who does Ezra seek to emulate? "My mom," he told me. Why? "Because she works for God."

Ezra Jean-Baptiste has already been across the United States spreading the message of God's love. He isn't fearless about that calling—he openly acknowledged that he gets nervous preaching in front of large crowds. But, as he told me, "God helps me go through it." Because, as Ezra knows, anyone who fully commits to God's calling for their lives will not—cannot—be stopped. "Whenever you feel like Satan is bringing you down," he said, "just remember that God is always with you, and He will fight through it with you every single second of your life."

While Ezra enjoys preaching, he also takes time to enjoy reading, telling riddles and jokes, and building with Legos. His parents want to make sure he can still be a kid, but at the same time they are making room for the extraordinary way God is working in their son's life.

"We are in amazement of how God is using Ezra," his father said. "It is a verification that God can use anyone, at any age, in any circumstance. We hope and pray that Ezra's ministry shows that to many others." ■

Nate Miller is an Andrews University student who is triple majoring in English, French and music.

Sandra Mendez



Extending the Healing Ministry of Christ in All Stages of Life

AdventHealth, through its Global Missions program, has created partnerships with Adventist hospitals across the globe. One of these partnerships, established in Paraguay in 2022, provides cooperation, training, medical equipment and community care through medical mission trips to two medical facilities: the Asunción Adventist Sanitarium and Hohenau Adventist Sanitarium.

In a recent medical mission trip to Paraguay, a mother sought care for her three-day-old baby at an AdventHealth clinic. Through a careful wellness check, the baby was found to be in perfect health.

Thanks to this partnership AdventHealth continues to extend the healing ministry of Christ to more communities. And even to the tiniest patients!

**To learn more about
AdventHealth Global Missions,
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