

SERVING SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS IN THE LAKE UNION SINCE 1908

HERALD

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

Oh, Give
Thanks



For He is Good!



Like the pages of an old Bible, life has creases. If you will, these creases are the evidence spots where the pages of our lives have been touched and then pushed in the direction of change to reveal newer pages. You may be experiencing the textured creases in your own life, even now.

I can't be sure, but I believe that the creases that inevitably come to the lived life, are at least, in part, what Solomon alludes to in Ecclesiastes 12:1, where he calls the creases "the evil days."

The power of God is absolute and wonderful. This means that it is able to reverse creasing in the lives of those who have already experienced hurt. This is good news for those whose lives have already been marred. But this is not the point here. The miracle of the gospel here is that its medicine is effective, not only after you have been

wounded, but also before. The matchless beauty of this gospel is that it is deeper and wider than sin and doesn't need to wait for the cruel effects of sin before being applied.

One of the effects of sin is that lives inevitably come to an end, sometimes suddenly, sometimes gradually. But it doesn't remove the sting left in its wake. I don't know about you, but it feels like death and despair abounds around me. So many friends and loved ones are grieving individually and collectively. And with the holidays fast approaching, this grief is compounded by the thought of facing an empty seat at the dinner table.

But as we head into the holidays, let me propose we lean into gratitude. You may ask, gratitude in the midst of grief? I know it sounds crazy. But it's amazing how giving thanks can transform the thanksgiver. Let the stories in this issue serve as a triage of sorts to highlight the medicinal properties inherent in gratitude. ■

Debbie

Debbie Michel

THERE'S
always
SOMETHING TO BE
THANKFUL
FOR

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Grateful Hearts

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES LEADERS
PAUSE, REFLECT, CONNECT

COVER PHOTO BY SANDRA MENDEZ



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

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Women Leading in the Spirit of the Latter Rain

In this issue of the Lake Union Herald focused on Women's Ministry, I thought it would be appropriate to share the following recent article written by our North American Division president, G. Alexander Bryant. As you read it, remember that the call of Pentecost 2025 is a call for "all hands on deck" in the work of proclaiming the saving grace of God and the soon return of Jesus.



▲ KEN DENSLow

God has promised a special gift to His church and to His people living in the last days. This promise is illustrated in a very familiar passage found in Joel 2:28, 29: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit" (KJV). This promise is for us today. For all people.

As we prepare for Pentecost 2025,* there is a need to reiterate this promise and to clarify that God is inviting young people, old people, men, and women to receive His Spirit, and to teach and preach as a witness for Him in these last days.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church we believe in the priesthood of all believers—all have been called to proclaim the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. To be clear, women are a part of this calling, and our youth are a part of this calling. We need everyone to finish the work that God has entrusted to us. The Seventh-day Adventist Church still believes that God has called women to play a significant role in the advancement and the finishing of His work. The church still calls women to serve in leadership

roles in the local church as pastors, elders, departmental leaders, and as conference, union, division, and General Conference leaders.

I want to take this moment to celebrate and thank all the women who have served this church so faithfully over the years. I also want to acknowledge that this church would not be where it is today without women leading in various capacities and the pivotal role they have played in the advancement of our mission.

God calls us to make disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 and promises in Acts 1:8 that He will grant the power of the Holy Spirit upon us to be His witnesses. When the Christian church began, we see in its infancy a marvelous display of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Acts 11:15-17 says, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them [Gentiles], as upon us at the beginning. . . . Forasmuch then as God gave them the gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (KJV). The disciples discerned that the same Holy Spirit that fell upon them had also fallen upon the Gentiles. God was fulfilling His promise. He was, and still is, pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh.



It is my prayer that we earnestly pray for the outpouring of God's Spirit upon all of God's people. May His gift be seen in each of us! As we prepare for Pentecost 2025, the shaking time, and for the final and rapid movements of God, may the words of the prophet Joel be lived out in God's church: "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."

Let us pray fervently for the outpouring of the latter rain, and let us use everyone that God is calling to preach the everlasting gospel as a witness to all nations so that the end will come and we can see our Lord and Savior face-to-face. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! ■

**Pentecost 2025 is an evangelism initiative spanning the North American Division that encourages churches, schools, and members to pray for the Holy Spirit's power in conducting at least 3,000 proclamation events.*

Ken Denslow is president of the Lake Union Conference.

called from its farthest regions,
said to you,
My servant,
chosen you and have not cast
you away:
for I am with you;
mayed, for I am your God.
ngthen you,
elp you,
you with My righteous
and.' 19

Is There Someone You're Missing?



▲ INGRID WEISS SLIKKERS

"I MISS HER."
PERIOD.
TILL THE DAY I DIE.
RAW HUMAN
EMOTION.
IS THERE
SOMEONE YOU
ARE MISSING?

It seemed we had been preparing (if there's such a thing) for her death for some years. The initial cancer diagnosis had a life expectancy of 5-8 years, and we were entering year 12. We were grateful for the extra time with her.

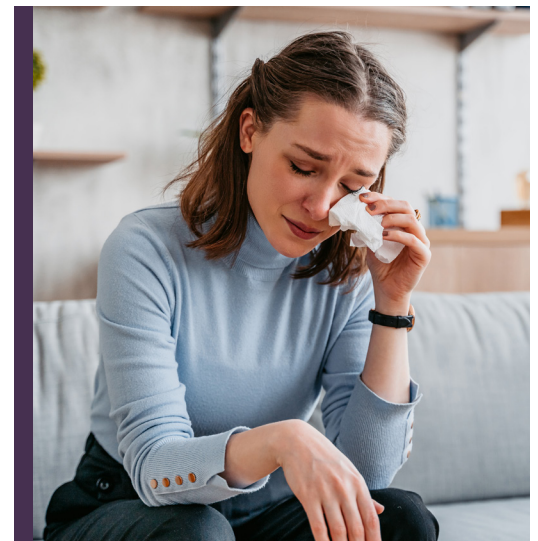
There had been difficult moments but when she breathed her last, she did so peacefully and surrounded by loved ones. My mom was an example of a life well lived. She had given beyond measure and her impact transcended continents.

It is now a few months later and due to my busy schedule, many in my support system have checked in with me and asked, "Have you allowed yourself to grieve?" It's hard for me to answer that question because, frankly, what does that mean? Does that mean a few good cries? Does that mean doing some intentional things such as making a memory bear with an article of her clothing or making that old black and white picture of her holding me as a child the lock screen on my computer? Do I have a checklist of the stages of grief on my fridge that I am marking off? Professionally I know the stages, I have counseled others through the stages, and I know that everyone grieves differently. But how do I know if I am allowing myself to grieve?

Our responses to death are very complicated especially when considering the age or how it happened. Although we have more and more studies that analyze and give us ways to acknowledge the impact and ways to work through grief, we continue to be quick to have pat, albeit true, answers that we tell ourselves, such as "We have this hope," "She lived a full life," or "He is no longer suffering." Grief is a human response to loss and is painful. Many books and articles have been written about the topic. Grief might come due to the death of a loved one, the end of an important relationship, part of the impact of traumatic events, or a significant life change.

I know that when asked by my support circles how I am doing, since many are professional counselors, they are encouraging me to process my emotions, understanding that identifying and working through the feelings is vitally important for my mental well-being. If that's the case, as kids today say, "I *am* having all the feels." I tear up when I automatically pick up the phone to call her and realize I can't. I roll my eyes when I hear her voice in my head about something I should or shouldn't do. I giggle out loud when I change the toilet paper roll and recall which way she insisted was correct! What about when I remind myself to intentionally tell the kids a story at dinner and ask them about moments when they miss her? Might writing this piece be grieving? I think my answer moving forward when asked will be, "I miss her." Period. Till the day I die. Raw human emotion. Is there someone you are missing? ■

Ingrid Weiss Slikkers, LMSW-C&M, CCTP, CFTP, is associate professor in the School of Social Work and executive director of the International Center for Trauma Education & Care at Andrews University.



Understanding the Silent Killer

Each year the silent killer creeps in and claims the lives of more than 50% of unsuspecting women.

Hypertension is a leading cause of heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States for women. But most women don't recognize hypertension as a major risk to their health. According to the American Heart Association, heart disease kills more women than all forms of cancer combined. New research has shown that Black women treated for high blood pressure in their 30s and 40s may have triple the risk of having a stroke, a form of heart disease.

A normal blood pressure is typically less than 120/80 but the optimal level should be based on individual factors. When your blood pressure consistently stays high, your heart is working too hard. The excess pressure on the artery walls leads to damage of blood vessels and organs which can ultimately lead to heart attack, stroke, and other forms of heart disease.

Risk factors for hypertension include older age, race (related to lifestyle and social determinants of health), obesity, inactivity, family history of hypertension, pregnancy, birth control, menopause (due to drops in estrogen levels), tobacco use, alcohol use, a high sodium diet (mainly intake of highly processed foods), and a low potassium diet.

Many times, women are unaware they have hypertension because they have no symptoms. The best way to know if you have hypertension is to get your blood pressure checked regularly.

Reduce your risk for hypertension and heart disease:

- Avoid tobacco and alcohol.
- Exercise 150+ minutes per week including strength and resistance training.
- Get plenty of sleep at night, 7-8 hours and go to bed before midnight.

- Drink plenty of water—half your body weight in ounces daily and more if you are engaged in strenuous activities during the day.
- Limit foods high in saturated fats (animal fats, palm oil, butter, cheese, baked goods, etc.), deep fried foods, ultra-processed foods (chips, crackers, sausages, bacon, lunch meats, hot dogs, etc.), sugar, and caffeine.
- Increase intake of high fiber foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. Also increase plant-based foods that are good sources of magnesium and potassium.
- Form positive stress management strategies.
- Avoid unhealthy relationships.

You can remember it as the ABC's.

- **A**ppetite. What are you using to fuel your body? Make your calories count by eating a heart healthy diet high in fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains and low in sodium, fat, and sugar.
- **B**lood pressure. Find out if you have high blood pressure. Monitor your blood pressure regularly.
- **C**holesterol. Check your cholesterol. Having high cholesterol may be a sign of high intakes of saturated fats and/or unhealthy carbohydrates. Both blood pressure and cholesterol can be better managed with lifestyle modifications.

In Ellen White's timeless classic, *Ministry of Healing*, we are reminded: "In order to have good health, we must have good blood; for the blood is the current of life. It repairs waste and nourishes the body. When supplied with the proper food elements and when cleansed and vitalized by contact with pure air, it carries life and vigor to every part of the system." (p. 272) ■

Dr. Christina Wells, MD, MPH, MBA, DipABLM, is health ministry director for the Lake Region Conference.



▲ CHRISTINA WELLS



A Place for Rest and Relaxation



▲ DENIS KAISER

Is it acceptable for those who believe in the imminent second coming of Christ and our mission to share the gospel with those in need of salvation to take time for vacation? Surprisingly to some, James and Ellen White, cofounders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, did indeed take time out of their busy schedules for vacations.

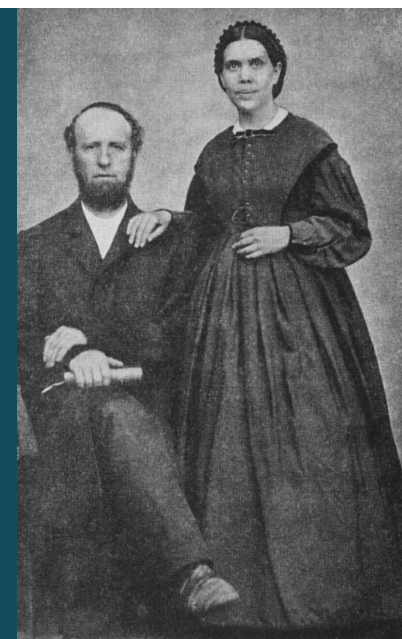
By the late 1860s, the Whites increasingly recognized the importance of incorporating rest into their schedule. Nearly every year, they attended almost every Adventist camp meeting across North America. The constant stress and recurring health issues that James faced made both him and Ellen acutely aware of the need to balance their demanding lives with physical exercise, adequate sleep, and relaxation. Thus, in December 1869, they purchased a cottage in Washington, Iowa,¹ as a “hideout” where they could relax and focus on their writing.

They enjoyed their Washington home so much that in 1871 they considered selling their Battle Creek residence to move permanently to Washington, Iowa. However, due to their commitment to the church, they decided to keep their Battle Creek home.² Despite this, they had a great fondness for their Washington retreat. James often worked in the garden there and found he could rest well at night. Ellen admired the beautiful and pleasant location, even wishing it could become their headquarters.³ She described it as “a good home for the weary pilgrims.”⁴ In June 1872, she wrote, “This is a very beautiful place and I prize it highly because it is so retired. . . . We are in the midst of flowers of almost every description, but the most beautiful of all is to be surrounded with roses on every hand, of every color and so fragrant. The Prairie Queen is just opening, also the Baltimore bell.

Peonies have been very lovely and fragrant but now they are fast going to decay. We have had strawberries for several days. . . . No one could help but like it. Very many visitors come to see the premises and look at the flowers and obtain a bouquet.”⁵

Until 1875, the Whites visited their Washington home annually during the summers, often spending several weeks there. These visits allowed them to recharge before returning to attend camp meetings in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and other locations. Their time in Washington, Iowa, serves as a reminder that even those devoted to a vital mission can benefit from moments of relaxation. ■

▼ James and Ellen White



- 1 Deed record, “Wm. H. Wilson and James White,” Washington County [Iowa], record date: January 12, 1870.
- 2 Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1863–1875*, vol. 2 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1986), 316.
- 3 Ellen G. White to W. C. White, May 20, 1872, Lt 6, 1872.
- 4 Ellen G. White to W. C. White, May 22, 1872, Lt 7, 1872.
- 5 Ellen G. White to James Edson and Emma White, June 19, 1872, Lt 5, 1872.

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

La bondad y la misericordia de Dios

“Pronto el año viejo, con toda su carga de información, pasará a la eternidad, y habrá comenzado el nuevo año. Reunamos los tesoros del año pasado, y llevemos con nosotros al nuevo año el recuerdo de las bondades y la misericordia de Dios. Iluminemos el futuro con el pensamiento de las bendiciones pasadas” (*Cada día con Dios*, p.356).



▲ CARMELO MERCADO

Es difícil pensar que ya nos estamos acercando al final del año 2024. Esto me lleva a pensar en lo que Dios ha hecho y sigue haciendo en nuestra Unión del Lago. Por ejemplo:

- El proyecto Perú – Al comienzo del año los administradores de las cinco asociaciones de la Unión del Lago y de la Unión fuimos a Perú con el propósito de empezar nuestro plan de apoyo recíproco con los administradores y pastores de ese país en su deseo de ganar almas para Cristo. A la vez, ellos nos apoyarían también en nuestro territorio. Pasamos diez días en ese bello país; vimos cómo Dios los ha bendecido y también las necesidades que afrontan. Como parte de un acuerdo de colaboración mutua, la Universidad Peruana Unión (UPeU) envió alumnos de teología para hacer evangelismo en varias iglesias en el estado de Wisconsin. Nuestros planes de apoyo para Perú incluyen regresar para ayudar en la construcción de templos y edificar casas para los pastores.
- Educación cristiana – Los pastores hispanos de las cinco asociaciones de la Unión del Lago visitaron la Universidad Andrews para conocer la institución e informarse acerca de los planes financieros disponibles para que jóvenes hispanos estudiar allí. Damos gracias a Dios que la Unión del Lago se ha comprometido a aportar \$1.000.000.00 para ayudar a alumnos que desean estudiar en el área de ministerio pastoral o a los que desean prepararse para ser maestros

en nuestras escuelas adventistas.

- Congreso de damas, *Mujer de valor* – El verano pasado más de 500 damas asistieron a este congreso que por primera vez se llevó a cabo en el renombrado teatro *Blue Gate* en Shipshewanna, estado de Indiana. Los oradores principales, César y CarolAnn De León nos proveyeron valiosos consejos de cómo mantener la fe en Cristo y ayudar a la familia en su crecimiento espiritual. Tuvimos también varios seminarios valiosos presentados por las doctoras Nayeli Nix y Esther Alva y la profesora Clem Sheppard. Muchas de las personas que estuvieron en el retiro comentaron que fue uno de mejores al que hayan asistido y están agradecidas por el ánimo que recibieron. Agradezco a Dios por Leny Vélez, Jackeline Ojeda, Sara García, Noemí Miranda y Carmen Ávila que hicieron un trabajo excelente en la organización de este evento.

También doy gracias a Dios por la cantidad variada de actividades que se han realizado a nivel de asociación y en las iglesias locales durante el año 2024. La sierva del Señor nos encomienda en sus escritos que “reunamos las bendiciones del año pasado” y expresemos nuestro aprecio por ellas. Por favor, únense conmigo en oración para que el año 2025 nos traiga muchas victorias y que como pueblo de Dios sigamos fieles en el cumplimiento de la misión que él nos ha dado. ■



▲ El verano pasado más de 500 damas asistieron a este congreso que por primera vez se llevó a cabo en el renombrado teatro *Blue Gate* en Shipshewanna, estado de Indiana.

Carmelo Mercado es el vicepresidente de la Unión del Lago



THE GREATEST GIFT

My Dearest Daughter,

It's been nearly eight years but I can still remember the day with such vivid clarity. I was sitting in class at the seminary when my phone rang. It was a call I had been waiting for, and yet when it came, I was filled with a mixture of excitement and nerves. I stepped outside the classroom to answer, heart pounding, knowing that my life could change in an instant.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS, TO STAND UP FOR WHAT'S RIGHT, AND TO SPEAK UP FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

It was your birth mother. Her voice was warm but filled with the weight of her decision, and when she asked me if I would be your mom, my entire world shifted. Holding my breath for a moment, and then with all certainty, I said yes. She chose me to be your mom, and in that moment, I chose you, too.

You were prayed for long before I ever held you in my arms. And when it finally happened, the sheer joy and awe were overwhelming. I was nervous, yes, but above all, I was so incredibly excited. Holding you felt like the beginning of a beautiful adventure, one I wasn't quite sure I was prepared for, but one I knew I was meant to be on.

Along the way, there have been a lot of celebrations. And we've faced challenges too, like when you crashed your first bike, and I had to wipe away your tears. There will be many more ahead of us but through it all, my prayer for you, my sweet girl, is that you always know where your strength lies. Life can be so unpredictable, filled with both mountain highs and valley lows, but no matter what comes your way, may you remember to lean on God. His word and His love will guide you through everything, and I will always be by your side to celebrate the victories and help you through the struggles.

Life is moving so quickly, and it makes me want to hold on to these moments with you a little longer. You remind me every day to pause, to breathe, to appreciate the small wonders all around us. I'll admit, there are times when I feel hurried, when we're rushing to get out the door, or I'm trying to make sure we're on time. But you, with your unbothered, gentle heart, remind me to slow down. Whether it's because you've spotted a caterpillar inching along the sidewalk or because you've found a beautiful leaf and want to admire its intricate veins, you teach me the value of being present. Please never lose that gift, that ability to notice the small, quiet wonders of this world.

As you grow, continue to carry that same strong spirit with you. Don't be afraid to ask questions, to

stand up for what's right, and to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Keep your faith simple, yet strong. Continue to raise your voice for those who need it and never shy away from being a light for others. There will be moments of doubt, of fear, and of uncertainty, but remember, courage doesn't mean you aren't afraid. It means you take the step forward, even when you are afraid.

Will there be moments when you find yourself in places where you feel like you don't quite belong, where you seem different, and perhaps, alone? Oh, yes. I've sat at tables where I wasn't invited. I've spoken in circles where my voice was the different one. I've worked in environments where I was the only woman and treated as less than. It's not always easy to stand out but remember this: Your courage to stay true to who God has called you to be in those moments is so very powerful. Don't back away or back down. Your very presence in those spaces not only challenges the norms but creates a path for others who come behind you. You can be a glass-ceiling breaker. You can be an example. With every step you take, you're showing the world, and yourself, that being who God has made you to be isn't just OK, it's what makes you extraordinary.

My precious daughter, above all, remember this: You are chosen. You are loved. You have a family, a whole tribe of people, who are cheering you on, supporting you, and lifting you up in prayer. And no matter what, God's love for you is bigger than anything you could ever imagine. His love will always be there, unchanging, unwavering, and it will carry you into eternity.

With all my love,
Mommy ■

Lindsey Pratt is associate pastor for youth ministry at the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan, a position she has held for the past five years.

THE GREATEST GIFT

INSPIRING WOMEN, FOLLOWING CHRIST

DEBORAH EGGER APPOINTED WISCONSIN'S WOMEN'S MINISTRIES COORDINATOR

It was early morning at Camp Wakonda in Wisconsin, the sun barely breaking through the trees, when Deborah Egger stepped into the old white wooden chapel. Inside, it was quiet, save for the gentle creaking of the rickety screen doors. Only one other person had arrived as early that morning—an elderly woman named Anna, sitting alone, reading aloud from Psalm 119. When Deborah entered, Anna turned and invited her to read along.

“We took turns, reading section by section,” Deborah remembers. “It was such a beautiful moment, just the two of us, sitting in that old chapel in the woods. It felt like a God thing.”

That was nearly 10 years ago, when Deborah was a member of the women's ministries committee for the Wisconsin Conference. Now, as the newly appointed women's ministries coordinator, moments like that continue to inspire her to help women connect with each other and with God.

Deborah's journey into women's ministries was unexpected. Born and raised in San Diego, she never imagined her path would lead to Wisconsin, much less to ministry leadership. “It all started with a simple offer to help,” she recalls. At a camp meeting years ago, the former coordinator, Pat

Antonine-Norton, asked for volunteers.

“I told Pat, ‘If you ever need help, let me know.’” That offer soon turned into years of service, as Deborah found herself drawn deeper into Women's Ministries, eventually stepping into the coordinator role in August of this year, following Pat's sudden and unexpected passing.

“Losing her was hard,” Deborah admits. “Pat was more than a leader—she was a mentor and a friend who brought me into this work. It was difficult knowing she would have been leading.”

Though her passing was a difficult loss for the women's ministries community, Deborah remains determined to carry on the work they shared. “I'm grateful for the way God has led my life, and for the chance to honor her legacy by serving in this role.”

Gratitude has been a central theme for Deborah as she reflects on her journey.

“When I received the news that I’d been approved for this role, I thought, ‘Who would’ve known that I would be here today, leading this ministry?’ I’m just so thankful for how God has guided me from my childhood in Pathfinders to this moment.”

This past October, the Women’s Ministries Fall Retreat focused on the theme of faith the size of a mustard seed and discovering one’s identity in Christ. In preparing for the event, they wanted every detail to align with the theme, including the gift bags they were assembling for attendees.

“We had the idea to include jars with mustard seeds,” Deborah explains, “but the bags felt like they needed something more.” During a planning meeting, one of the committee members, Tammy, remembered she had some scripture cards that might work. She promised to find them.

“When she brought the cards to our next meeting, we were all amazed,” Deborah says. “On the back of each card, it said ‘I AM,’ which tied in perfectly with the message we wanted to share about identity in Christ and embracing who God says you are. It was one of those little moments where we felt God had been guiding us all along.”

For Deborah, her passion for women’s ministries is rooted in the desire to support and encourage women where they are—just as Jesus does. “I think one of the most important responsibilities for me in women’s ministry is meeting women at their point of need,” she says. “Like Jesus meets us where we are.”

As Deborah looks ahead, the memories of both Pat and that quiet morning with Anna in the chapel stay with her—a reminder of the simple, sacred connections that form the heart of women’s ministries. ■

Danni Thaw is a freelance writer.

“I THINK ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ME IN WOMEN’S MINISTRY IS MEETING WOMEN AT THEIR POINT OF NEED,” SHE SAYS. “LIKE JESUS MEETS US WHERE WE ARE.”

▼ Wisconsin Women’s Ministries leader Deborah Egger, center, flanked by mentor and friend Pat Antoine-Norton, left, and Deborah’s husband Robert. Pat was serving as women’s ministries leader in Wisconsin until her sudden passing on April 7, 2024. Wisconsin’s executive committee members voted Deborah as the new leader on Aug. 20, 2024.



GOD is GOOD!



Laura
Lucio
ILLINOIS
conference



Photos by Sandra Mendez and
Design by Chloe De Leon

I have this formative memory from when I was about 8. I attended a visitation after Sabbath for a child a bit older than I was who had lost her battle with AIDS after an accidental needle infection. I was holding my grandmother's hand, and I remember the child's mother sharing how sweet and brave her daughter had been. I still remember the child's face as she laid there sleeping with her thick eyebrows and olive skin.

I remember the second funeral I attended... and the third, and the fourth. Dear friend, death is terrible. I was 17 when death screamed that my eldest brother's life had ended. I was also 17 when my grandfather lost his battle with cancer. Then I attended some more funerals of loved ones and loved ones' loved ones.

I was 30 when death shouted in my face that my third baby was not to be. And in the unfolding, it almost took me too. I was 32 when death took my adoptive mother (also my grandmother).

I don't have many memories of birthdays or weddings, but I remember funerals. They were formative. The wounds that loss leaves on our souls, minds and bodies are eternal. We weren't created to experience them. In full transparency, I rarely questioned whether God exists, but I've often wondered if God is indeed good.

In this season of thankfulness, how do we process loss? Do we need to pray more, or do we get an antidepressant prescription? Do we go to therapy or practice self-care at home? What do we do?

I would argue the answer is... yes. I'm thankful for nuance.

I pray that we leave room for the duality of grief and thankfulness. Can we stay thankful for the lives that are and allow ourselves to grieve the losses? I believe that when we grieve, we process what has happened to us, and when we express our thankfulness, we move through grief with hope.

In this season of thankfulness, I remember I'm on the other

side of EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) for my tragic losses. This helped me to finally believe to my core that **God is good** regardless of what happens to me on this earth.

This is the central element of our faith. When we commit our lives to God, we shout in the face of death that GOD.IS.GOOD. The challenges we face on this side of heaven are so nuanced. So should be our God-centered healing journey.

Dear friend, I am thankful when in the middle of your hard seasons, you shout that God is good. ■


Laura Lucio is the women's ministry director for Illinois Conference.



I'm THANKFUL!
For nuance

The

best EVER



It was two days till the Single Moms' Retreat. It was a small retreat. Eight moms and 14 children were attending. The gift bags were ready. Games were planned. Special snacks and treats were all packaged and ready to go. Personal items ready to be packed into the suitcase. The phone rang and it was the weekend special guest that would lead out for "Moms' Timeout Sessions." She wanted to warn me that she wasn't feeling well and may not make the retreat. She would let me know for sure the next morning.

Morning came and her message of sadness came. I was so thankful for her thoughtfulness in letting me know the night before. My mind went to a couple of things that I had recently participated in and had the resources handy. I grabbed the seminar handouts and a Bible study book that I had just completed with my daughters. I knew when I arrived at camp that I would have time to make my decision which one to share.

After I arrived, I laid everything out on the bed and picked up the book. Inside the front cover was a sheet of paper with 28 Bible verses. A study covering the power of the mind and the power of our thoughts and how they affect the decisions we make. The study focused on taking every thought captive, guarding your heart and mind, and watching what you think and say.



Tammy
Begley
INDIANA
CONFERENCE

I wasn't sure where this sheet of paper came from and didn't remember it from before. My thought was, "Is this too simple?" Just using our Bibles and a few scriptures. Would we have a discussion at all? Would the ladies respond?

First session, we discussed only the first five verses. Everyone seemed happy that it wasn't complicated. The discussions were so

open and honest. This small intimate group shared experiences from the past and present that related to each of the scriptures read.

At our last meeting, all the ladies shared a song on their phones that really spoke to them. A couple of the moms had attended many retreats before and felt this to be one of the best ever.

The Lord is so faithful in providing all the things we need even before we know we need them. I am so thankful for His never-ending love and leading. ■

Tammy Begley is the Indiana Conference women's ministries director.



I'M THANKFUL
for His
never ending
LOVE

DREAM believe. CREATE.

These three words challenge me. Displayed by my husband Shawn in a space he created for my relaxation, these word art pieces not only inspire faith in God but gratitude.

During a period when I was seeking God's focus for my ministry, the constituents of Lake Region Conference (LRC) invited me to assume the role of women's ministries director. However, a pressing question remained: What specifically did God want me to accomplish? The scope of women's ministries is extensive. My parents instilled in me the importance of prayer and obedience from a young age, a lesson that has stayed with me and one that I relied on as I sought divine guidance.

As I settled in that tranquil space Shawn created for me, my attention shifted to the words suspended from the wall - "Dream. Believe. Create." I whispered a prayer, "Lord what is your vision for LRC women?" In response, a soft, quiet thought emerged like gentle steam rising from a cup of tea: "Mother-Daughter Brunch."

"A Mother-Daughter Brunch?" I questioned. Then the word, "Dream" came into focus. "Lord, but I've never hosted one before." As I wrestled with this thought, I focused on the second word, "Believe." While I continued to reflect and pray, Proverbs 3:5-6 came to mind:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

In that instant, I made the decision to believe God.

I centered my thoughts on the final word of inspiration, "Create." This reminded me of a banquet center reservation I made for my church the previous year. Although the church could not keep the reservation, I was

Tricia Wynn
Payne
LAKE REGION
conference

compelled not to cancel it. Now God revealed the reason. But how could I undertake something entirely new? I realized I needed assistance. In prayer, the Lord brought Verneshier Roberts, our Motor City youth federation leader, to mind. Together with God's guidance, we planned and executed the vision.

We employed several strategies to get the word out, including announcing the Mother-Daughter Brunch at our Motor City youth

federation. As I made the announcement, I was impressed to ask any 13-year-old girl to stand and receive free tickets. Only one young lady, Dasha, stood to receive the tickets. When I inquired if she had a mother or a motherly figure to accompany her, Dasha gestured to a woman beside her. Unbeknownst to me, that woman, Sommer, had been praying for Dasha to view her as a mother figure.

Both attended LRC's Mother-Daughter Brunch and as God would have it, Dasha asked her "Mom figure" to give her Bible studies to prepare her for baptism. Several months later, Dasha was baptized! To God be the glory.

I am truly thankful God uses people, wall art and banquets for His holy purposes. I thank God His word never returns void.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isaiah 55:9-11

Oh, how good it is for us to trust and obey the Lord. ■

Tricia Wynn Payne is the Lake Region Conference women's ministries director and associate pastor of Detroit City Temple Church.

I'm thankful
for 
GOD'S
GUIDANCE

Look UP ↗

A young mother began feeling the symptoms of paralysis; she was unable to move, to walk, even to hold her baby. Sadly, she was diagnosed with polio. Just like that, her life changed dramatically. Walking with crutches and trying to care for little ones at home became a difficult task. The hospital was her second home. Her children were shipped off to different friends of the family during her frequent hospital stays, including for the iron lung.

This terrible virus was spreading very quickly in certain parts of our country, and she was one of the statistics.

She believed in God. She grew up in a Christian, Seventh-day Adventist home. But she had confusion, doubts, and wrestled trying to understand the question, “Why me? Why me, God?” These doubts led her to a life of discouragement. But she was also a woman of prayer. The Lord became her “every moment strength.” God was her refuge in the time of her trouble.

I thank and praise God to this day that my mother turned to God during her difficult moments. Yes, this was my mother, and this was my life.

I have my mother’s book of Scripture promises that I cherish. Her beautifully handwritten answers to prayer, her thankfulness to God’s guidance in her life are written all over in this book.

I would often see her struggling to accomplish even simple tasks; her determination and tenacity had such a positive impact on my life. She knew that God was her constant, period. These are moments that I have kept close. Visions of my mama looking up to God, leaning into Him. These “Looking up” moments are something truly beautiful to remember, and to be thankful for.

Our Heavenly Father is with us through the hills and the valleys that He allows. He is with us in every joy and in every pain, even during the times we may not feel His presence, He is there.

Our lives are full of change, both positive and negative. I want to deal with them through the lens of Jesus, as this is where there is peace.

When facing trials some questions I ask myself are:

OK Jane, how are you going to adapt? Are you going to sit and stew about the trials?

Or will you choose God to help you through these trials and changes?



Jane Harris
MICHIGAN
CONFERENCE

Beholding & Becoming

Even though as a young child I shifted from home to home, my Jesus was constant. He was my true home. Sure, the times were tough, but looking back, I was learning what abiding in Jesus really means. I was learning “to look up” without realizing it, and how to cling tightly to my true dwelling place – my home in Christ.

Whether I look forward or backward on this earth, I am learning that looking up is the best way for direction in my life.

Psalm 121:1, “I lift up my eyes to the hills -- where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.” ■

Jane Harris is director of women's ministry for Michigan Conference, as well as the Lake Union.

I'm THANKFUL
God's Word
never
returns VOID





Ukrainian Refugee Finds Relief at Medical Clinic

General surgeon Jason Goliath was volunteering as a patient navigator at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth's recent free medical clinic when a primary-care physician referred to him a Ukrainian man complaining of groin pain.

The 45-year-old man and his family had arrived in the U.S. about six months earlier after fleeing their war-torn homeland. They were among a group of non-English-speaking Ukrainians brought by their Ukrainian pastor to the June 8 clinic in Glendale Heights.

Mark Bondarenko, executive director of Mission Integration for UChicago Medicine AdventHealth, who is familiar with the Ukrainian language because of his Russian heritage, had been serving as an interpreter for the group at the clinic and helped the man communicate with Goliath.

"He complained of consistent pain in his right groin that bothered him particularly when he was walking," said Goliath, who immediately suspected the man was suffering from an inguinal hernia. An examination in a private area at the clinic confirmed his suspicion. Goliath knew the man would need surgery to avoid serious complications, and although he was willing to waive his fee for

performing the surgery, it also would involve other costs, and the man was uninsured.

While Goliath was talking with Bondarenko about options for making the surgery happen, Vladimir Radivojevic, president and chief executive officer of UChicago Medicine AdventHealth GlenOaks, overheard their conversation and interceded, saying the hospital would cover the costs of the surgery as charity care.

"Vlad understood the situation because he is from an immigrant family," Goliath said. "It was a godsend moment. When we told the man, he was very elated, and his Ukrainian friends and priest were very appreciative."

The man and his wife later visited Goliath in his office, where they discussed the surgery

with the help of a translation service. Goliath also performed a formal examination and set the outpatient surgery for June 28 at GlenOaks.

In a stroke of good fortune for the man, GlenOaks earlier this year added the Da Vinci Xi Surgical System, a state-of-the-art platform often used for robotic inguinal hernia surgeries. In addition, Goliath is a specialist in advanced robotic surgery at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth La Grange and Hinsdale and has performed more than 1,000 robotic surgeries.

After successfully repairing the man's hernia with the robotic system at GlenOaks, Goliath reported his patient was well on his way to a complete recovery. "It's such a blessing for him that everything came together, because he is a laborer, and having the hernia made it hard for him to find work," Goliath said.

The man's case shows that "God sometimes leads in different ways that we don't understand," said Goliath, a strong proponent of volunteerism who volunteers regularly with his wife and their two children at the Hinsdale Fil-Am Seventh-day Adventist Church. "I came to the clinic to volunteer – not as a surgeon, but just as a regular guy being part of the process. That led to me meeting this man. I didn't see it coming. And then Vlad happened to be there. All the pieces just fell into place."

Goliath, whose 22-year-old son also volunteered at the clinic, said the clinic underscored the importance of "being open to letting God lead you to opportunities where you can help people." He added, "That's really what it's all about. All we have to do is do the right thing, do good for people and share what we have, and God ultimately will bless it. That's the philosophy I live by." ■

UChicago Medicine AdventHealth



UChicago Medicine

Advent Health

Andrews University Hosts STEM Day for Lake Union Educators

On Sept. 5, 2024, Andrews University welcomed K–12 educators from across the Lake Union for an immersive, hands-on professional development experience focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).



World Changers Made Here.

The event, hosted by Andrews' STEM Division in partnership with the Lake Union Office of Education, provided an opportunity for teachers to engage in collaborative lab experiences and to equip themselves with new teaching tools.

With support from a \$60,000 grant provided by the Versacare Foundation, the event covered all expenses for the educators, including accommodations, meals and STEM resource kits for their schools. The kits, customized for different grade levels, contained materials for science, math and physics experiments, allowing teachers to implement the knowledge gained at the event in their classrooms immediately.

Monica Nudd, the event coordinator, emphasized the collaborative effort behind the day. "This grant was in collaboration with the Lake Union Office of Education, which wanted to boost STEM programs across five conferences. We aimed to create an experience where teachers could be hands-on in our labs and take what they learned back to their classrooms," Nudd shared.

Ruth Horton, director of education for the Lake Union Conference, spoke to the importance of providing educators with the tools to engage their students in STEM learning. "We want educators to be as best equipped as possible to provide STEM opportunities, starting from elementary through high school, so that students are exposed to these fields early on," she said.

The event's agenda was packed with various lab sessions and lectures led by Andrews University professors. Teachers participated in activities such as chemistry, math and physics labs, learning new techniques to make STEM education more interactive and accessible. One of the highlights was the "Mission: Invent" session, where educators collaborated on creative problem-solving tasks. The "Mission: Invent" program at Andrews teaches basic engineering and design thinking skills to K–12 students.

Deirdre Garnett, superintendent of schools for the Lake Region Conference, enjoyed the event's energy and collaborative spirit. Garnett shared, "This was a great day. It was hands-on, filled with movement, and exactly how we want our children to learn. We're excited to take these ideas back and work towards creating STEM centers in each of our schools."

Teachers like Kalicia Clements, a teacher from Charlotte Adventist Christian School, appreciated the practical approach of the day. "I loved that we could participate in activities our students would be doing, and everything was so hands-on. These simple yet profound experiments will help our students develop critical thinking and collaboration skills."

The event also included a tour of Andrews University's Agriculture Education Center as well as a series of breakout sessions designed



Nicholas Gunn

▲ Educators and attendees at Andrews University's STEM Day are pictured outside of the Science Complex on campus.

to create a deeper understanding of STEM concepts. Teachers left with not only new ideas but also the tools and confidence to transform their classrooms into dynamic STEM learning environments.

Nudd summarized the event by stating, "This was a day for teachers to stretch themselves and grow so that they can better prepare their students for the future." STEM Day at Andrews University provided educators with an inspiring and engaging experience that will have a lasting impact on both their teaching practices and their students' learning journeys. ■

Nicholas Gunn is a student writer for the Office of University Communication.

“Believe the Promise” International Pathfinder Camporee by the Numbers

From Aug. 5-10, 2024, the “Believe the Promise” International Camporee was held for the first time in Gillette, Wyoming, on 1,000-plus acre complex transformed into a sprawling tent city.



58,000 attended

5,000 from the Lake Union

1,187 Total # of baptisms

74 Total # of baptisms from the Lake Union



Over **10,000** hours of community service hours were done via **45** projects including cemetery beautification, preparing food and care packages for veterans, clearing trash and painting wall murals.

Nighttime Program

36 core actors were in the play depicting the events of Moses' birth and early childhood, setting the stage for his eventual calling to lead Israel out of captivity in Egypt. There were **100** extras and the youngest actor was **6** years old.

334 costumes were used – **70** were for the crowd for the final night and **260** for the cast. Some of the more elaborate costumes, such as Pharaoh and Moses' stepmom, took up to

five days to be sewn by Denver-based seamstress Vanya Kovacheva.

It took **two and half** years from script outline to completion by writer Kathy Buchanan.





World Records Attempted

255 backpacks were packed simultaneously in under five minutes for a Guinness World Record. In the end, **6,200** backpacks were filled and distributed all across the U.S.

Pathfinders from around the world were asked to gather new or used postcards and they delivered! **50,000** were collected and the process of certifying the world record is underway.

Andrews University was one of the main sponsors of the camporee. Their presence included participation in the higher education exhibit space and teaching two honors, Endangered Species and Biblical Archaeology.

650 Pathfinders earned the Endangered Species honor during the camporee and **150** earned it just before.



AdventHealth debuted a new **11,000**-square-foot immersive showcase that featured hands-on interaction, including high-tech simulation labs, virtual and mixed reality stations, and custom health care-inspired video games, designed to showcase the wide range of exciting careers available in health care.

More than **100** countries were represented. Papua New Guinea brought their largest delegation to a camporee, **194**, and some were housed with the Pioneer Memorial Church Evergreens Club.



On day two of the camporee, Tuesday, Aug. 6, thunderstorms brought heavy rains, lightning and wind gusts of up to **60** miles per hour, sending campers scrambling for shelter and cancelling the nighttime program. Immediately following the storm, which produced an inch of rain in less than an hour, a double rainbow awed onlookers.

Within **24** hours of the storm, the city collected **50** tents, **120** sleeping bags and numerous blankets, pillows and canopies from residents.



UPTICK IN ENGAGEMENT

During the camporee, our social media engagement exploded. On Facebook, engagement in the last month went up **5,000%**, with our content reaching over **240,000** people.

The 2029 “Stand Strong” logo was developed in **two** years.

How Did the Herald Live Broadcast Come Together?

It was the engineering feat to get us on the air. To begin with, we were in a space with no power or internet service. Getting a regular gasoline generator would’ve been the easiest solution, but those generators transmit a highly variable voltage which could damage the expensive equipment. We eventually ended up finding a company to rent solar panels with a wind turbine system to capture energy which is then stored on a **700**-pound battery for a source of steady power. This turbine was installed on a makeshift building, which also served as our storage shed. The Gillette winds created a steady source for the turbine to go fast, producing almost all of the energy needed.

It was interesting to see how the turbine became a landmark spot pointing campers to where to go in case they got lost. With the intense storm on Tuesday evening, we were relieved that it survived intact! ■



Chicago School Celebrates 111 Years

Chicago Seventh-day Adventist Christian School, formerly Shiloh Junior Academy, celebrated its 111th anniversary during its annual alumni weekend on Aug. 30-31, 2024, under the theme “We are Family. Always Bonded, Always Linked, in Christ.”

This year’s event welcomed more than 500 attendees to the worship service. There were representatives from over 30 states, including a 94-year-old alumna and a family from the Pacific Northwest, who traveled the farthest distance. “We are not just a school, we are a legacy,” said Anne Anobian, alumni association president.

The weekend’s featured speaker, Jerome Hurst of the Allegheny West Conference, emphasized the school’s far-reaching influence, sharing that his wife and many of his friends were from Chicago. “The impact of this school has circled the globe,” Hurst remarked, commending the efforts to revive the school’s mission. Special musical guest, Grammy- and Dove award-winning Pastor Smokie Norful, also participated, making a significant donation in support of the school’s mission.

Founded in 1905 by the historic Shiloh Seventh-day Adventist Church, the school began in 1913 as a response to the needs of Chicago’s South Side community. It grew to become a premier educational institution with an enrollment peak of 417 students in grades K-8, alongside an early learning center. The church, one of the largest Adventist congregations in North America at the time, purchased the properties at 7000 and 7020 S. Michigan Avenue in the 1940s and opened its current worship facility in 1969.

The Chicago Seventh-day Adventist Christian School, as it is known today, continues to serve under the leadership of newly appointed principal, Gene Miller Wade. Addressing the alumni, Wade called for support, saying, “God has called our school to

be a light, and we need everyone’s prayers, donations, and encouragement. We will not fail because God will not fail us.”

Efforts to revitalize the school began in earnest in 2022 when John T. Boston II, pastor of the Shiloh Church, launched a need-based scholarship program, which more than doubled enrollment from 21 to 44 students. This interrupted a years-in-the-making downward trend. Boston, now the school board chairperson, emphasized the school’s critical role: “Schools grow churches in the urban context, and we have to make that a priority. Our schools in Chicagoland present us with an incredible opportunity to fight against the enemy’s attack on the minds and hearts of the children in this great city.”

The City of Chicago has also recognized the school’s contribution, with a special citation presented by the mayor and city council in 2023, acknowledging the “profound impact” the school has made in transforming lives. Alderman William Hall of the 6th Ward praised the school’s work, and David Graham, a member of Shiloh’s finance committee, affirmed the ongoing commitment to the mission: “We have done so much for so long, but we cannot slow down or give up yet.”

As the school continues to grow and seek God’s guidance, the alumni weekend served as a powerful reminder of the legacy Chicago SDA Christian School represents—a beacon of hope, education, and faith for the community. ■

A.B. Anobian is president of the Chicago SDA Christian School alumni association.



▲ Top to bottom:

Former Alumni President Antoniah Lewis (left), paying tribute to alumna Marilyn Fouché.

Special musical guest, Grammy and Dove award-winning Pastor Smokie Norful, also participated, making a significant donation in support of the school’s mission.

Featured speaker Jerome Hurst of the Allegheny West Conference.

Alumni with Friday night speaker, Lake Region Pastor Christopher Clark.

Photos by Stanton Witherspoon



▲ Members gathered outside the Jackson Church after the 175th anniversary celebration on Sept. 14, 2024.

Jackson Church Marks 175 Years

Jackson Church, the oldest continuous Seventh-day Adventist congregation in the world, celebrated its 175th anniversary on Sept. 14, 2024, marking nearly two centuries of remarkable contributions to the Adventist movement.

The celebration highlighted the church's role as a spiritual and historical landmark within the denomination, with a rich legacy of firsts that continues to inspire generations of Adventists.

At the heart of the festivities was a powerful presentation by Brian Strayer, PhD, a historian and expert on Adventist history, whose deep dive into the church's origins left the congregation both reflective and energized for the future. Titled "Jackson, Michigan: God's Great Battleground," Strayer's presentation painted a vivid picture of the church's foundational moments, starting with Joseph Bates' fateful arrival in Jackson in 1849.

"Jackson is where Adventism took root in Michigan," Strayer remarked. "This is where Joseph Bates, led by a dream, came and found a tiny group of former Millerites, including blacksmith Dan Palmer. Together, they embraced the Sabbath truth and set the stage for the creation of the Jackson Adventist Church, a congregation that would go on to lead the way in many pivotal moments of Adventist history."

From the very beginning, Jackson Adventist Church was a place of pioneering

"firsts." It was here that the first Sabbath-keeping Adventist church in the Midwest was established in August 1849. This tiny congregation, meeting in the home of Dan Palmer, would grow into a cornerstone of the early Adventist movement, sending ripples across the region and beyond.

Strayer detailed a long list of historical milestones achieved by the Jackson church, including its leadership in evangelism, mission work, and institutional support. "Jackson financed the very first evangelistic tent meetings in Michigan in the 1850s," Strayer noted. "In fact, the entire evangelistic tent work in the state was funded by this one church."

Throughout the years, Jackson Adventist Church continued to set precedents, both spiritually and institutionally. Strayer highlighted 50 key "firsts" in the church's history, including:

- The first Adventist congregation to fund two evangelistic tents for Michigan in 1854–55.
- The first church to support the relocation of the Review and Herald press to Battle Creek in 1855.

- The first Sabbath-keeping Adventist band in the Midwest, established in 1849.
- The first Adventist church to build a dedicated meeting house in 1854.
- The first camp meetings, held in Jackson in the 1880s, which drew thousands of attendees and became a model for Adventist camp meetings nationwide.

Reflecting on the church's enduring legacy, Pastor Ian Santos encouraged the congregation to embrace their heritage and build upon it. "Jackson Church has always been a lighthouse of faith," Santos said. "As we look to the future, may we continue to be that light, sharing the love of Christ with our community and beyond."

The Michigan Conference's ministerial director, Pastor Cody Francis, echoed these sentiments, calling on the congregation to honor their past by continuing to share their faith and to look toward future ministry opportunities. "God has blessed your past, but God has even greater blessings for the future." ■

Stanton Witherspoon is a freelance multimedia journalist based in Berrien Springs, Michigan.



▲ Current Jackson Church Pastor Ian Santos expresses gratitude to historian Brian Strayer.

Chicagoland Churches Convene as One in Christ

After an 11-year hiatus, the Illinois Conference revived its Chicagoland Convocation, an occasion for area churches to gather for a “camp meeting for the city.”

On September 14, more than 1,000 members attended the event—hosted by the Yellowbox church in Naperville—with another hundred tuning in to the livestream. The two identical services featured concerts by Watchmen Acapella and preaching from Ivan L. Williams, vice president of Strategy and Leadership for the North American Division.

The Chicagoland Convocation’s theme was “Parade of Nations” – a celebration of the diversity among Adventists in Chicagoland as representative of the kingdom of God. After a warm welcome by President John Grys, flags were paraded in and planted on the

platform. Prayers were offered in English, Romanian, Spanish, Polish, Tagalog, and Ukrainian, among others, in the confidence that God understood each person clearly, even if we may not. This was a fitting representation of the Chicago area, one of the top 10 most diverse cities in the U.S.

During the convocation, Williams drew from the Apostle Paul’s conversion, affirming that God sometimes uses confrontation to create transformation. For his second message, he appealed to Peter to remind the congregation that proximity to Jesus doesn’t guarantee faithfulness. Nor, he added, does



position or privilege result in spiritual power. Through both messages, Williams urged Adventists to remain devoted to Jesus.

Feedback from the Chicagoland Convocation has been overwhelmingly positive. In a post-COVID world, many people appreciate the value of in-person connection, as well as the convenience of livestreaming. It is hoped that the 2024 Chicagoland Convocation is the first of many to come.

To view highlights from the Chicagoland Convocation, visit the Illinois Conference YouTube channel and Flickr page. ■

Matthew J. Lucio is the assistant to the president for communication at the Illinois Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Indiana Membership Reaches 10,000

The Indiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists held its required constituency session at Cicero Church on Sept. 29, with 375 registered delegates in attendance.

Five new churches, all within the Indianapolis area, were approved to join the Sisterhood of Churches. They are Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church, Maranatha Haitian Seventh-day Adventist Church, Philadelphia French-Haitian Seventh-day Adventist Church, Zomi Seventh-day Adventist Church, and Greater Indianapolis Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist Church. Indiana Conference now has a total of 101 congregations in the state.

Mark Eaton announced that conference membership has reached 10,000, which was received with gratitude by the delegates.

To conclude the meeting, Vic Van Schaik presented an overview of the IN Mission strategic goals for 2024-2028, highlighting the ministry objectives and opportunities for the conference.

We praise the Lord for the sweet spirit reflected in the day’s proceedings and for the strong support expressed for conference leadership.



▲ President Vic Van Schaik (fifth from left) and Secretary-Treasurer Mark Eaton (fourth from left) were returned to office for four more years, as were the following departmental directors: Noel Ojeda, multicultural ministries director; Vialo Weis, Planned Giving & Trust Services, public affairs and religious liberty director, Stewardship ministries director, and Indiana association secretary; Charles Thompson, youth and young adult ministries director; Robb Long, ministerial and evangelism director; and Peter Cousins, education department director.

We look forward to seeing God’s plans being carried forward in the Hoosier state. ■

Colleen Kelly is the communication director for the Indiana Conference.

Andrews University Employee Honored with Statewide Award

Elynda Bedney, assistant vice president of Student Financial Services at Andrews University, was recently awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Michigan Student Financial Aid Association's (MSFAA) annual conference. This accolade recognizes her decades of dedicated service to student finances, reflecting her impact on the field.

Bedney, who began her career at Andrews University in 1987, has devoted nearly 37 years to advancing student financial support. Her journey began as the student accounts supervisor, a new position at the time, and progressed through various roles, including associate director, director and eventually assistant vice president of Student Financial Services.

The MSFAA, founded in 1967, is an organization dedicated to enhancing student financial aid awareness, promoting access to postsecondary education and offering professional development opportunities for its members.

Reflecting on the award, Bedney shared her initial surprise and gratitude. "I was pretty surprised and overwhelmed, but happy," she said. "I have been working in this area for quite a few years, and I just felt privileged and honored to receive this award."

Bedney's commitment to student finances at Andrews has been marked by significant contributions and changes, including the merger of Student Accounts and Financial Aid into the unified Student Financial Services department. This integration aimed to provide a seamless, one-stop service for students, enhancing their financial management experience.

"Every day that I'm here at Student Financial Services, there is some new law, technique, or problem that comes up. That

just continues to motivate me to learn more, teach more, and mentor more," says Bedney.

Her passion for student engagement and mentorship has been a cornerstone of her career. Bedney emphasizes the importance of understanding and advocating for students from diverse backgrounds, noting, "You have to get to know your students, care about the students, be a listener for the students, and be an advocate for them."

The MSFAA Lifetime Achievement Award stands as a testament to Bedney's remarkable career and unwavering dedication to improving the financial aid landscape for students. Her legacy at Andrews University and within the financial aid community is one of excellence, compassion and leadership. Throughout her 37 years of service, Bedney's influence on Student Financial Services has inspired many staff and students, and her work has always been propelled by her unwavering faith in God.

She says, "I pray, throughout the day as students come, for God to give me a solution to students' issues. The wonderful thing about working for a Christian institution is you can pray. You can pray with your students, and you can pray with your colleagues. That's a big thing that we do here in my office. We invite God into every decision that we make. We invite God into our lives daily." ■

Nicholas Gunn is a student writer for the Office of University Communication.



Nicholas Gunn

Special Education Coordinator Joins Lake Union

In response to the growing demand to provide specialized educational and behavioral support for students, the Lake Union Education Department created a position and hired a special education professional to meet the need.

Stepping into the new role of special education coordinator and instructional coach effective Sept. 1, 2024, is Wadzanai Bepe. Bepe has been an instructional coach and teacher for the City of Mishawaka school district for the past 13 years. While there she was responsible for collaborating with teachers, parents and therapists to define educational strategies for students with disabilities.

Before her time in Mishawaka, Indiana, Bepe was an elementary school teacher in

Zimbabwe, where she hails from, as well as in South Bend, Indiana. Bepe has a doctorate in psychology from Northcentral University and a Master of Science in special education from Indiana University South Bend.

In her position at the Lake Union, Bepe will collaborate with educators and parents to develop an individualized education program (IEP) to meet each student's unique educational needs. There can be multiple reasons a student needs an IEP, including physical or mental health conditions, learning disabilities, and developmental delays.

"Dr. Bepe brings a wealth of experience in assessing and improving the learning experience and outcomes for our exceptional learners," said Lake Union Director of Education Ruth Horton. "We are excited that her passion for helping students with specialized educational needs will help learners achieve their academic goals and milestones. No child should struggle because of an inflexible curriculum or classroom. It's important—not just to us, but to God—that every child in our 76 Lake Union schools reaches their maximum potential."

Bepe says that as an educator there is no greater satisfaction than helping students grow and reach their potential. "Helping students succeed begins with the recognition that every child is unique, not just in terms of personality, but in terms of strengths and learning support need," she said. "Success doesn't look the same for every student. As a teacher, being able to differentiate for each

student's individual needs is important, particularly for children with diverse support needs."

The number of students in special education in the U.S. has doubled over the last 40 years, which has meant schools are responsible for providing special services to this growing segment.

In 1976–77, the first year the U.S. Department of Education collected this data following the 1975 passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, students in special education made up 8% of the overall student population.

For the 2022-23 school year, the number of students needing special education services nationwide ranged from 12 to 21 percent.

Numbers are unavailable for students in Lake Union schools needing an individualized education, but parents are increasingly requesting this service. No longer is there a stigma for a child with a learning disability or on the autism spectrum. Experts say educators have become better at identifying when students need special services and parents have become less resistant to seeking them out for their children.

"Providing special education services has been viewed as a challenge in our system," says Horton, "but with the availability of more and more avenues to provide increased support for students with exceptionalities, coupled with the fraying of stigma once attached to exceptional learners, there's now a noted positive association with seeking out, receiving and benefiting from such assistance. We're delighted that the Lake Union Education department is now able to offer this support."

For more information on how you can enroll your child in a Lake Union Adventist school, here's a useful link for finding a school near you: <https://adventisteducation.org/schools>. ■

Debbie Michel is editor of the Lake Union Herald.



▲ Wadzanai Bepe

Lake Union Welcomes New Associate Director of Communication

Ruben Casabona was elected to the position of associate communication director for the Lake Union Conference during a specially called executive committee meeting.

Since 2021, Casabona served as the media and communication pastor at the Keene Seventh-day Adventist Church on the campus of Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas. He coordinated audiovisual production for worship services and special events, as well as produced content for the church's social media.

Before his time at Keene, he was a pastor and digital evangelism strategist in the Carolina Conference.

Casabona is no stranger to the Lake Union territory. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in religion from Universidad Peruana Union in Lima, Peru, he earned his MDiv at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He is in the process of completing a DMin with a concentration in mass media for ministry at Andrews University.

While at Andrews, he interned as media pastor at One Place Fellowship and produced videos for the multicultural ministry department at the Lake Union.

"I'm excited to join the Lake Union Conference team and to be part of its mission of sharing hope and building community," said Casabona. "I'm looking forward to leveraging communications and media to connect with our churches, conferences and the broader community in meaningful ways."

Debbie Michel, Lake Union director of communication, said she eagerly anticipates Ruben assisting departments with publicity

efforts while building on the 116-year history of the Lake Union Herald. "We're hoping to continue making strides toward building an extensive digital footprint," said Michel. "With Ruben's passion and creativity, we plan to utilize all available tools and platforms to reach our members and help our churches and conferences harness technology for effective evangelism." Casabona is married to Cassie, nee Gilbert, and together they have an infant son Isaac. He began on Sept. 1, 2024. ■

Debbie Michel is editor of the *Lake Union Herald*.



MILEPOSTS

OBITUARIES

BOISMIER, Oscar J., age 100; born Jul. 18, 1923, in Flint, Mich.; died Jan. 24, 2024, in Bryan, Texas. He was a member of the University Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Lansing, Mich. He is survived by his sons, Jim (Maria) and Gary (Marilyn) Boismier; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. An inurnment was conducted on Feb. 2, 2024, in Texas. A private service will be held later, where Oscar and Fern's urns will be buried at the cemetery in Davison, Mich.

BOYS, Ruth A. (Howell), age 73; born Feb. 25, 1951, in Shelby, Mich.; died Apr. 3, 2024, in Marion, Ind. She was a member of the Ephesus Seventh-day Adventist Church in Marion, Ind. She is survived by her husband, David L. Boys; daughter, Anna E Campbell; and brother, Franklin L. Howell. A memorial was conducted by Pastor Kent Nichols on April 12, 2024, at the LaFontaine Cemetery in LaFontaine, Ind.

CAIN, Mary, age 89; born Oct. 4, 1934, in Kansas City, Mo.; died Sept. 3, 2024, in

Noblesville, Ind. She was a member of the Cicero Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cicero, Ind. She is survived by her son, Jack (Carmen) Cain; daughters, Robbin (Michael) Dellen, Brenda (Lloyd) Draper, Lynnette Cain; eight grandchildren; and 14 great-grandchildren. A memorial was conducted on Oct. 5, 2024, with a private graveside service at Cicero Cemetery in Cicero, Ind.

CLARK, Delores (Swanson), age 93; born Jan. 12, 1931, in Merrimac, Wisc.; died July 14, 2024, in Columbus, Wisc. She was a member of the Wisconsin Academy Seventh-day Adventist Church in Columbus, Wisc. She is survived by her former daughter-in-law, Shelly Rosmann; three grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. A funeral service was conducted by Pastor Stephen Aust on July 25, 2024, at the Hillside Cemetery in Columbus, Wisc.

HAYNER, Lynn, age 86; born April 5, 1938, in Johnstown, N.Y.; died June 16, 2024, in Onaway, Mich. He was a member of the Onaway Seventh-day

Adventist Church in Onaqay, Mich. He is survived by his wife, Melinda Hayner; stepsons, Andre (Danielle), Sheldon (Shannon); daughters, Naomi (Arthur), Jessie (Anthony), Julie (Timothy); brothers, Russell (Debbie), Jeremy (Sandy); sisters, Judy, Margi (Wayne); son-in-law, Jerry; 14 grandchildren; and 20 great-grandchildren. A private funeral was conducted by Pastor Jim Nephew on June 25, 2024, at the Hillcrest Cemetery in Onaway, Mich.

HIITER, Gary B., age 81; born Nov. 14, 1942, in Pontiac, Mich.; died Sept. 25, 2024, in White Lake, Mich. He was a member of the Waterford Riverside Seventh-day Adventist Church in Waterford, Mich. He is survived by his wife, Judy (Jones) Hiiter; son, Bryant Hiiter; and sisters, Judy (Ricardo) Anderson, Linda (George) Wade, Pam (Joe) Gray. Private inurnment was conducted in Michigan.

MALEPORT, Robert Alfred, age 68; born Aug. 3, 1955, in Hoquiam, Wash.; died July 14, 2024, in Conklin, Mich. He was a member of the Wright Seventh-day Adventist Church in Coopersville, Mich. He is survived by his wife, Rose Maleport; stepsons, Rico Dunsmore, Jon Dunsmore, Kreenah Dunsmore; stepdaughters, Teresa Beagle, Sheri Childs, Beth (Jeff) Tinsler, Kreenah Dunsmore; father, Robert Maleport; mother, Clara (Bond) Maleport; sisters, PaMarie O'Dell; 22 step-grandchildren; and 28 step-great-grandchildren. A

memorial was conducted by Pastor James (Jim) Micheff on July 17, 2024, in Coopersville, Michigan.

RINGWELSKI, Daniel W., age 71; born Jan. 15, 1953, in Wausau, Wisc.; died May 20, 2024, in Sarona, Wisc. He was a member of the Rice Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rice Lake, Wisc. He is survived by his wife, Pamela (Thomas) Ringwelski; daughter, Lindsay Ringwelski; mother, Josephine (Benaszkeski) Ringwelski; brother, Mark (Susan Slikkers) Ringwelski; and sisters, Valeria (Carlton) Smith, Janice (Michael) Koerting. A memorial was conducted by Pastor Titus Naftanaila on May 28, 2024, at the Orchard Beach Cemetery in Rice Lake, Wisc.

STONE, Kathie L. (Hicks), age 73; born Dec. 28, 1950, in Marion, Ind.; died July 23, 2024, in Marion, Ind. She was a member of the Ephesus Seventh-day Adventist Church in Marion, Ind. She is survived by her husband, Ernest "Ernie" Stone; sons, Paul Daniel, Jason (Eric), Shawn; four grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. A funeral was conducted by Pastor Kent Nichols on Aug. 2, 2024, at Estates of Serentiy in Marion, Ind.

TORBERT, Frank H., age 100; born April 15, 1924, in Thomaston, Ga.; died Aug. 20, 2024, in Orland Park, Ill. He was a member of the Robbins Seventh-day Adventist Church in Robbins, Ill. He is survived by his

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 front cover.

son, Carl Jones; granddaughter, Kenya Jones; nephew, Leonard; nieces, Rita Simmons, Ronde Stephens-Pitts, Zipporah Campbell, Brenda Von Prince; and many great nieces and great-nephews. A memorial was conducted by Pastor Marlan Branch at the New Harvest A.M.E. Church in Harvey, Illi.

VANDERWAAL, Neal J., age 87; born Nov. 29, 1936, in Rockford, Ill; died Aug. 14, 2024, in Battle Creek, Michigan. He was a member of the Battle Creek Seventh-day Adventist

Church. He is survived by his wife, Patricia; sons, Greg (Kim) VanderWaal, Curt (Rebecca) VanderWaal, Robert (Jennie) VanderWaal, Chris (Macie) VanderWaal; daughter, Gail (Jim) Micheff (VanderWaal); sister, Karen Kothe; 15 grandchildren; and 18 great-grandchildren. A private family burial was conducted by Pastor Jim Micheff at the Bedford Cemetery in Bedford Township, Mich. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Camp Au Sable and Battle Creek Academy.

CALENDAR OF OFFERINGS

NOVEMBER

- 2 Local Church Budget
- 9 Annual Sacrifice for Global Mission (GC)
- 16 Local Church Budget
- 23 Local Conference Advance
- 30 Union Designated

DECEMBER

- 7 Local Church Budget
- 14 Adventist Community Services* (NAD)
- 21 Local Church Budget
- 28 Local Conference Advance



Sabbath Sunset Calendar

	Nov. 1	Nov. 8	Nov. 15	Nov. 22	Nov. 29	Dec. 6	Dec. 13	Dec. 20	Dec. 27
Berrien Springs, Mich.	6:38	5:30	5:23	5:18	5:15	5:13	5:14	5:16	5:21
Chicago	5:43	4:35	4:29	4:24	4:20	4:19	4:19	4:22	4:26
Detroit	6:24	5:16	5:09	5:04	5:01	4:59	5:00	5:02	5:06
Indianapolis	6:41	5:34	5:28	5:23	5:20	5:19	5:20	5:23	5:27
La Crosse, Wis.	5:54	4:45	4:38	4:33	4:29	4:27	4:27	4:30	4:34
Lansing, Mich.	6:30	5:21	5:14	5:09	5:05	5:04	5:04	5:07	5:11
Madison, Wis.	5:48	4:40	4:33	4:27	4:24	4:22	4:22	4:25	4:29
Springfield, Ill.	5:55	4:48	4:42	4:37	4:34	4:33	4:34	4:36	4:41

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Are you an Adventist attorney living in the Lake Union? Are you looking to meet fellow Adventist attorneys in the Lake Union? If so, we are starting a Lake Union Adventist Attorney Network. For more information, please contact Jennifer Woods, legal counsel for the Lake Union Conference at jennifer.woods@lakeunion.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

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EVENTS

2025 Great Controversy Tours,

March and September. See the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation come alive! Visit 60 places in 15 cities, including Rome, Italy, and Reformation

sites in the Waldensian Valleys, Switzerland, Germany, and France. A truly exciting experience! Call +1-470-833-2887 or email Gctours@naver.com.

Singles Get-together at

Edenville Seventh-day Adventist Church on Sun., Nov. 10, from 4 -8 p.m. Address is 6530 Sandy Ridge, Edenville, Michigan (corner of M30). Meal provided. Call 989-435-9770 for details.

EMPLOYMENT

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY seeks qualified applicants: Andrews University is seeking qualified Seventh-day Adventists who may fill open roles in fulfilling our mission to Seek Knowledge, Affirm Faith, and Change the World. If this is of interest to you, please check out our current openings at: andrews.edu/jobs

UNION ADVENTIST

UNIVERSITY seeks applicants for an Expedition Coordinator/Faculty to lead in the International Rescue and Relief Program. This is a full-time, exempt, faculty position with generous benefits. The coordinator will work on campus during the fall semester and plan the spring semester abroad, as well as help with other program initiatives. The coordinator will lead out in the spring semester abroad, accompanying students and coordinating class instruction, planning, and logistics. Please

see the full job description and instructions for application at uau.edu/employment.

UNION ADVENTIST

UNIVERSITY is seeking applicants for a full-time nursing faculty. This individual will function as a lead course instructor for a medical-surgical or critical care course, including performing didactic and clinical instruction as well as recruiting and supervising clinical instructors. Doctoral degree preferred, master's degree with desire to continue at the doctoral level required. Full benefits package including health care, tuition assistance, retirement plan, and many other benefits. See job description and instructions for application at uau.edu/employment.

UNION ADVENTIST

UNIVERSITY has an opening for a Clinical Coordinator for the Physician Assistant Program. This position provides administrative support, organizes and schedules the clinical rotation year including clinical sites and housing, prepares affiliation agreements, and other duties. This is a full-time position with generous benefits including tuition subsidy for dependents. Please see the full job

description and instructions for application at uau.edu/employment.

UNION ADVENTIST

UNIVERSITY seeks applicants for Admissions Coordinator/Office Manager for the Physician Assistant Program. This is a ¾ time position with many benefits including health care coverage. Provides admissions management and general organizational support for the program. Process all applicant, student and graduate data, communicate with potential applicants, plan and participate in the interview process, assist in planning Orientation and other duties. Please see the full job description and apply at uau.edu/employment.

UNION ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

is searching for a Plant Service General Maintenance employee. This is a full-time position with generous benefits including tuition assistance for dependents. Responsible for performing a variety of maintenance tasks and involves routine inspections, repairs, and preventive maintenance across campus buildings and grounds. Please see the full job description and apply at uau.edu/employment.

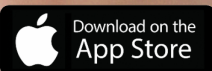
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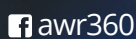
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SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY continuously seeks qualified candidates to fill various positions around campus, including faculty, salaried staff, and hourly staff positions. If you are interested in working at Southern, we encourage you

to view the positions that are currently open at sau.catsone.com/careers and apply as God leads. To view current open educational positions Pre-K through college across the North American Division, please visit jobs.adventisteducation.org.

IT IS WRITTEN seeks qualified and talented candidates for full-time positions, including: Director of Planned Giving and Trust Services, Trust Officer for the Central Region, and Associate Director of Development. For more

information about these and other positions, and to apply online, please visit itiswritten.com/employment.

November & December

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

GENERAL EVENTS

Nov. 2, 11:45 a.m.: Honors Church, Seminary Chapel

Nov. 3-4: Lake Union College Days

Nov. 7-9: Andrews Autumn Conference on Religion and Science: Creation Care

Nov. 15-18: Transfer & Health Professions Preview

Nov. 19, 7 p.m.: Ambassador Talks (Virtual)

Dec. 5, 4-6 p.m.: Fall Honors Thesis Symposium (formal talks only), Buller Hall

Dec. 13, 7 p.m.: Feast of Lights, Pioneer Memorial Church

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.

Nov. 2, 8 p.m.: Andrews University Choirs Fall Concert

Nov. 7, 7:30 p.m.: Andrews University Symphony Orchestra Fall Concert

Nov. 9, 8 p.m.: Andrews Academy Concerto Night

Nov. 16, 7:30 p.m.: Southern Adventist University & Andrews University Symphony

Orchestra Concert

Nov. 17, 4 p.m.: Sunday Music Series: Dawn Wahn

Nov. 24, 7 p.m.: Howard Center Presents: Moanin' Frogs

Dec. 7 & 8, 7:30 p.m.: Department of Music Christmas Extravaganza

Dec. 8, 3 p.m.: Lake Michigan Youth Orchestra Concert

Dec. 14, 8 p.m.: Andrews Academy: Christmas Pops Concert

Dec. 16, 7 p.m.: Ruth Murdoch Elementary School: Instrumental Christmas Concert

Dec. 18, 7 p.m.: Ruth Murdoch Elementary School: Vocal Christmas Concert

Nov. 27-28: Thanksgiving Office Closure

Dec. 25-26: Christmas Office Closure

LAKE REGION

Nov. 1-3: TLT Boot Camp, Camp Wagner

Nov. 9: Illiana Youth Federation, TBD

Nov. 16: Motor City Youth Federation, TBD

MICHIGAN

Nov. 1-3: Public Hi-C Retreat, Camp Au Sable

Nov. 8-10: Crystal Mountain Marriage Retreat, Crystal Mountain Ski Resort

Nov. 15-17: Youth Rush Summit, Camp Au Sable

WISCONSIN

Nov. 27-28: Thanksgiving Office Closure

Dec. 14: JAHWI Youth Rally, Milwaukee Seventh-day Adventist School

Dec. 24 - Jan. 1: Holiday Office Closure

LAKE UNION

Oct. 31 - Nov. 5: NAD Year-End Meetings

Events listed were scheduled to proceed at press time. Please call ahead or check event websites before making plans to attend.

ILLINOIS

Nov. 1-3: Young Adult Summit, TBD

Nov. 9-16: Evangelismo Metropolitano, Various Churches

Nov. 16: Master Guide Gala Dinner, TBD

Nov. 25-28: Thanksgiving Office Closure

Dec. 23 - Jan. 2: Holiday Office Closure

INDIANA

Nov. 8-9: Young Adult Retreat, Timber Ridge Camp

Whispers of Prayer

Growing up, my family often sung a familiar song during evening worship. The title of the song was “Whisper a Prayer in the Morning.” As a child, and even into my teenage and young adult years, this song was still a staple in my parents’ home, but I didn’t realize the impact the lyrics had on my life until I applied them just when I needed them most.



▲ JENEAN LENDOR

There have been moments in my life when I needed God to come through for me right then, at that particular moment, so I whispered a prayer. Not only did I feel God’s peace of mind but He came through right away.

I remember one particular day when my plate of various work meetings and tasks, home duties and personal errands that I wanted to take care of seemed too much for me to take. I literally felt like one more email or one more phone call would be the straw that would break me. The frustration of wanting to complete all my tasks along with not feeling as if the day was long enough to accomplish that feat led to my emotions finally spilling over into tears. I knew that it was too much for me to bear. In that moment, I recalled the verse that says, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28, NLT)

Amid my tears, I whispered my prayer for God to give me rest. I told my heavenly Father that on this day, I felt like my burdens were too heavy for me to carry. I asked for His yoke, because He said it is light. I whispered a prayer for God to make my load easier to bear and to finish my duties for the day without stress, worry or anxiety.

And you know what?

After I whispered my prayer through my tears, God began lightening my load. A meeting that was scheduled for later that afternoon got canceled. I received a notice that the deadline for a work assignment got postponed. My phone didn’t ring or

give text message alerts for the rest of the day! God gave me the peace that I needed.

Another verse that gives me peace to endure difficult situations is “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand.” (Philippians 4:6,7 NLT).

All I did was surrender my burdens to Him, whispered my prayer and God came through just for me. He can and will do the same for you. ■

JeNean Lendor is communication director for the Lake Region Conference.



Thou Shalt Not?



▲ JENNIFER GRAY WOODS

I saw there are some states that are trying to require posting the Ten Commandments in public schools. Is this a good thing and is it legal?

Over the years there have been states that have tried to incorporate the Ten Commandments into the classroom. Most recently, there is a new Louisiana law requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in all public-school classrooms, making Louisiana the first state to have such a requirement in over 40 years.

Advocates of the Louisiana law argue that the posting of the Ten Commandments has historical significance as a basis of some of our current laws, such as the laws against killing.

However, laws like this that try to bring religion into the public-school setting are filled with legal and religious liberty issues that make the law troubling and likely unconstitutional.

First, courts are likely to find that this law violates the establishment clause. The establishment clause says that Congress can “make no law respecting an establishment of religion.” By a state requiring religious documents to be placed in classrooms, the state is in effect endorsing religion. This could have the effect of making students who do not adhere to mainstream Christianity feel isolated and othered. This type of religious coercion from the state is something the establishment clause is designed to protect against.

In fact, this is why, in 1980, the Supreme Court found placing the ten commandments in schools unconstitutional in the case of “Stone v. Graham,” ruling that such a requirement violated the establishment clause of the U.S. Constitution.

Another troubling aspect of requiring the Ten Commandments to be posted in schools is it involves the state in teaching religion. While the Ten Commandments may seem like an innocuous document, they are foundational religious scripture for many people of faith.

A law like this unnecessarily involves the state in determining which version of the Ten Commandments will be posted. For example, while Jewish and Christian religious traditions include the Ten Commandments in their sacred text, the language of the text, and even how the Ten Commandments are numbered, are not identical, even among different Christian traditions. By allowing the government to decide what version of the commandments to use the government is endorsing certain religious views over others. And while the state may argue that it is including the Ten Commandments because of its historical nature, describing this as simply an historical document secularizes this sacred text.

As Adventists we have a strong history in advocating for the separation of church and state and it is clear that there are significant problems that can occur when that separation is not maintained. ■

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



The Mendoza Line

I'm guessing that only hard-core baseball fans have ever heard the phrase, the Mendoza Line. I heard about this term only recently. The Mendoza Line is a baseball term that refers to a player's batting average falling below .200, which is considered the threshold for offensive mediocrity in Major League Baseball.¹

The term originated from a clubhouse joke between teammates Bruce Bochte and Tom Paciorek about Mario Mendoza, a shortstop who struggled to maintain a .200 batting average during his 9-year career.

The joke might have ended there, but according to Mendoza, his Seattle teammates told Royals slugger, George Brett, who was off to a slow start, "Hey, man, you're going to sink down below the Mendoza Line if you're not careful."² With all due respect to Mario Mendoza, his batting skills clearly have become synonymous with a degree of mediocrity or even worse, subpar.

I'd like to relate the Mendoza Line to our Christian experience. Are we in danger of sinking down below the Mendoza Line...if we are not careful? What I'm trying to convey is, if the Mendoza Line is synonymous with mediocrity, or just barely getting by, then as a Christian, should I evaluate from time to time whether I've become content with the idea that mediocrity or just getting by is acceptable, thinking, "I just have to stay above the Mendoza Line?" Is it enough for a Christian to give God only the bare minimum?

Don't misunderstand me, if one is doing their very best, God, and in most cases even we can accept that (I'll put Mario Mendoza in this category). But if one has the ability to do better and is content with mediocrity that is a different mindset.

I like better the Apostle Paul's mindset: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord...it is the Lord Christ you are serving."³

The words "with all your heart" indicate a thorough wholehearted, passionate, and even an

enthusiastic approach in all that we do for the Lord. Paul says to "...do everything that way, heartily and freely to God's glory."⁴ Paul wouldn't be content with the Mendoza Line and neither should we! Glorifying God in all we do should be our priority. Paul again, jabs at our conscience: "when you think of what He has done for you, is this too much to ask?"⁵ These passages challenge us and protect us from being content with less than our best for God.

Let's not be happy with mediocrity in living for God. Let's resolve to give Him our best in everything we do, whether it's at work, at school, our ministry for the church, our giving, or whatever! So, are we going to resolve to give God our best? I can't speak for you, but my answer is a loud "yes!" ■

¹ This means they have fewer than one successful hit for every five turns at bat.

² Dave Seminara (July 6, 2010). "Branded for life with 'The Mendoza Line'" St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Also found on Wikipedia.

³ Colossians 3:23 NIV

⁴ I Corinthians 10:31, The Message

⁵ Romans 12:1b NLT copyright 1996

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From Burns Church to Brunch to Baptism

It was Women's Day at the Detroit Burns Seventh-day Adventist Church. Pastor Tricia Payne, Lake Region's women's ministry director, was talking about a special mother-daughter brunch that was coming up.

While she was speaking, she felt impressed to ask, "Are there any 13-yr-old young ladies here this morning?" I stood and looked around. I was the only one in the congregation on my feet. Pastor Payne looked at me and said, "I have a gift to give away—two tickets to our mother-daughter brunch next weekend. Would you like them?" Of course, I said "Yes." Next, she asked, "Is there a mother figure who could accompany you?" Elder Sommer Williams stood and said, "I'd be happy to."

You see, I lost my own mother to cancer two years ago. Sommer and my father had known each other for years and had recently reconnected. She invited us to her church. I was enjoying getting to know her, the people at church, and more about God and Jesus. Sommer gave us Bible studies. When she said she would accompany me and be my mother figure for this special event, it made me very happy.

Eventually, I decided to get baptized. I knew I wanted to get closer to God and to follow His commandments. Sommer was the one to baptize me. It was wonderful to have a mother figure do this.

I like to help at church by ushering, and I enjoy Pathfinders. I went to the big Camporee this August in Wyoming. One of the things I liked best was getting to know so many people there, especially people from different cultures. About 40 members from our club attended. Back at home, I work every week one-on-one with Sister Angeline Gardner from the London church. She helps me with my Pathfinder honors. I have earned more honors than anyone else in my group. Some of the honors I have completed are Pony Express, Christian Grooming and Manners, CPR, and Tie Dye.

I am thankful for all the people at church who are helping me to know God and Jesus better. From the very beginning they welcomed me and made me feel at home. Sommer, Sister Gardner, Pastor Trisha Payne, and our pastor's wife, Sister Cheryl Bell, are all good Christian examples and positive role models for me. And Sommer has become even more than a mother figure. She and my father got married. Now she is Elder Sommer Tucker.

My favorite Bible verse is Proverbs 3:5-6: *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* I know God will keep his promise. He will direct my path, just like He has been doing all along. ■

Dasha Aldridge is now 14 years old and in the 8th grade. She is considering a future career in the medical field.

◀ Dasha with her step-mom Sommer



Spreading Hope on TikTok

In August of 2022, DeeAnn Wallace felt moved to create a social media account to spread the gospel and share hope. Her TikTok ministry, called “The Melanin Blueprint,” has since reached millions of young people and over 59,000 followers by clarifying misinformation about Christianity and providing encouragement for the Christian journey.

It all started when nothing was going as expected. Her dream was to become an entrepreneur, a goal fueled by a passion for fashion. In March of 2022, she began a clothing company that was her only real vision for the future. However, as the fall approached, the company was not as successful as she had envisioned. She worked out a compromise with her parents and took online college classes so she would not miss freshman year while contemplating her path.

But just one week into taking her online classes she felt “a powerful, yet soft, presence” envelope her. She felt a calling to start a TikTok account to connect with other young Christians. “The idea was that as a person of color, I could serve as a blueprint, or source of support, for other Christian girls like me who are seeking inspiration or guidance in their journeys,” said the Andrews University junior majoring in digital communication.

As her page began to experience its first bit of traction, someone asked a question that would change the focus: “Okay so I want to get closer to God, but I think that means that I’m gonna lose some of the things that made me who I am,” said the TikTok user.

The commenter’s concern resonated with DeeAnn. Her response was simple, yet direct, “God made you exactly who you are, and He loves you more than anything, so if he would ask you to get rid of something in order to get closer to Him, it’s only because He has something even greater in store for you.”

The responses from this video were positive and the commenter followed up by saying that it made her feel acknowledged so DeeAnn decided to continue a path of encouraging and guiding others in their struggles.

When 2022 closed, there were over 13,000 individuals following The Melanin Blueprint. By 2024, over five million people have viewed her videos.

As she continues to post videos clearing misinformation and providing encouragement, she also hosts Bible study movie nights live on TikTok. Every Saturday night, some 2,000 individuals gather to read Bible stories together, play live Kahoot games, and watch animated Bible shows.

“The privilege I have to connect with such a broad and large audience on TikTok is not something I take lightly,” she said. “I fully recognize that the power to discern these difficult conversations and reach as many people as I do with hope and encouragement does not come from me alone but from God. This might not have been the turn I expected my life to take, but I am so grateful for what God is doing.” ■

As told to the Lake union Herald





New Ties to Care

This year, a group of 34 team members from the AdventHealth Mid-America region joined forces to leave their footprints in Kenya, AdventHealth's 16th international partnership location. With the company's overarching goal to grow its Global Missions program, this trip marked AdventHealth's official partnership with Kendu Adventist Hospital, where 15 nurses, four medical providers and two surgical teams saw over 500 patients each day and performed approximately 57 surgical procedures.

Established in 1925 by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Kendu Adventist Hospital, located in Homa Bay County on the eastern part of Lake Victoria, has 170 beds and offers preventive care and diagnostic, curative and rehabilitative services for its patients.

In recent years, Kendu Adventist Hospital has undergone significant growth, extending its reach to include a School of Medical Sciences, an elementary school and a Comprehensive Care Center, in addition to its existing hospital facilities. This institution's foundation lies in its commitment to serving others with dedication, empathy and a genuine desire to make a positive impact.

To learn more about AdventHealth Global Missions, visit AdventHealthGlobalMissions.com.

Several nurses from AdventHealth ICU and Labor and Delivery units worked with Kendu teams on quality and workflow tactics, assessing opportunities for future education.