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Remembering the Past,
Continuing the Mission

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THE LAKE UNION HERALD STAFF

P.O. Box 287, Berrien Springs, MI 49103-0287 | 269-473-8244
 Publisher..... Ken Denslow, president@lakeunion.org
 Editor/Managing Editor..... Debbie Michel, editor@lakeunion.org
 Circulation/Back Pages Editor..... circulation@lakeunion.org
 Assoc. Comm. Director Ruben Casabona, Ruben.Casabona@lakeunion.org
 Comm. Specialist..... Katie Fellows, katie.fellows@lakeunion.org
 Art Direction/Design..... Robert Mason, masondesign@me.com
 Proofreader..... Pat Spanger, spanglep@andrews.edu

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

AdventHealth..... Julie Busch, Julie.Busch@AdventHealth.com
 Andrews University..... Jeff Boyd, Boyd@andrews.edu
 Illinois..... Matthew Lucio, mlucio@ilcsda.org
 Indiana..... Colleen Kelly, ckelly@indysda.org
 Lake Region..... JeNeen Lendor, JLendor@lrcsda.com
 Michigan..... Andy Im, aim@misd.org
 Wisconsin..... Laurella Case, lcase@wi.adventist.org

LAKE UNION CONFERENCE DEPARTMENTS

P.O. Box 287, Berrien Springs, MI 49103-0287 | 269-473-8200
 President..... Ken Denslow
 Secretary..... Elden Ramirez
 Treasurer..... Glynn Scott
 Vice President..... Carmelo Mercado
 Associate Treasurer..... Richard Moore
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 Trust Services..... Jermaine Jackson
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 Children's, Youth, Young Adults Ministries..... Ron Whitehead

LOCAL CONFERENCES AND INSTITUTIONS

AdventHealth Great Lakes Region: Monica Reed, president/CEO, 5101 S. Willow Springs Rd., La Grange, IL 60525; 708-245-2211.
Andrews University: John Wesley Taylor V, president, Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0670; 269-471-7771.
Illinois: John Gry, president; Michael Campos, executive secretary; Doug Reeves, treasurer; 619 Plainfield Rd., Willowbrook, IL 60527-8438; 630-856-2850.
Indiana: Vic Van Schaik, president; Mark Eaton, secretary/treasurer; street address: 15205 Westfield Blvd., Carmel, IN 46032; mailing address: P.O. Box 5000, Westfield, IN 46074; 317-844-6201.
Lake Region: Garth Gabriel, president; Abraham Henry, executive secretary; Kent M. Nichols, treasurer; 19860 South LaGrange Rd., Mokena, IL 60448; 773-846-2661.
Michigan: James Micheff Jr., president; Justin Ringstaff, secretary; Michael Bernard, treasurer; street address: 5801 W. Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48917; mailing address: P.O. Box 24187, Lansing, MI 48909; 517-316-1500.
Wisconsin: Titus Naftanaila, president; Amir Gulzar, secretary/treasurer; street address: N2561 Old Highway 16, Fall River, WI 53932; mailing address: P.O. Box 100, Fall River, WI 53932; 920-484-6555.

Contributors: Writer guidelines are available online at <https://www.lakeunionherald.org/contributor-guidelines/> writer-guidelines.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR

From Your Herald Team - Ruben, Debbie and Katie

It wasn't long after my high school graduation that my parents decided I should leave the comfort of home for what they imagined would be a better life in the United States. We were living in Jamaica and the economic and political turbulence were taking its toll. So why am I telling you this?

We are facing a new year, a separation from that familiar space and span of time called 2024. For some of us, this separation can't come soon enough. But as we make the leap from one year to the next, questions abound: What will 2025 bring? Will we have the good health and prosperity that so many have wished upon us? Will we discard habits we desperately want to leave behind? Will we reconcile with friends and loved ones? Will we find that elusive peace?

As I look back on those seven difficult years spent apart from my parents — seminal years as I sought answers to many of life's pressing challenges — I'm reminded of this promise which still rings true:

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8: 38–39

Notice that Paul doesn't stop with the things that presently exist. He goes on to say that "things to come" are also *not* able to separate us from the love of God. These are things that haven't happened yet, but will take place in the days, months and years to come. Paul has already said that nothing currently existing is strong enough to separate us from the love of God. Now he boldly declares that nothing will ever happen in the future that will contain enough power to prevent you and I from knowing and experiencing God's love.

As we press ahead in 2025 — a white-knuckle ride for some, and for others, perhaps smooth sailing — know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is already there with you, guiding your journey, every single step of the way. Embrace the year ahead. Be ready to experience God's abundant love and His marvelous grace.

Debbie

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LAKE REGION CONFERENCE Remembering the Past, Continuing the Mission

ABOUT THE COVER: Lake Region leadership team photographed by Dave Sherwin. Left to right: Eddie Allen, vice president for multilingual ministries; Kent Nichols, chief financial officer; Abraham Henry, executive secretary; Garth Gabriel, president.

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

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Illinois: 630-716-3505, Indiana: 317-844-6201
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Our Greatest Work

“The greatest work that can be done in our world is to glorify God by living the character of Christ. God will make perfect only those who will die to self. Those who are willing to do this can say, ‘I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’” EGW SDA Bible Commentary, Volume 6, Page 1109



▲ CARMELO MERCADO

It's hard to imagine that ten years have passed since Elder Don Livesay, then-president of the Lake Union, offered an official apology on behalf of the union to the members of the Lake Region Conference for the racism that shaped Adventist work in our territory. I remember being there on that occasion, which took place at Camp Wagner to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the first regional conference. In the apology, he stated we should not dismiss the racism that was demonstrated in segregated churches and schools as a reflection of the broader culture because “God has not called His Church to reflect the evil of the world; God has called the Church to reflect His character, to treat each other in love — with the Golden Rule, in respectful ways, and to honor each other and all of God’s children.”

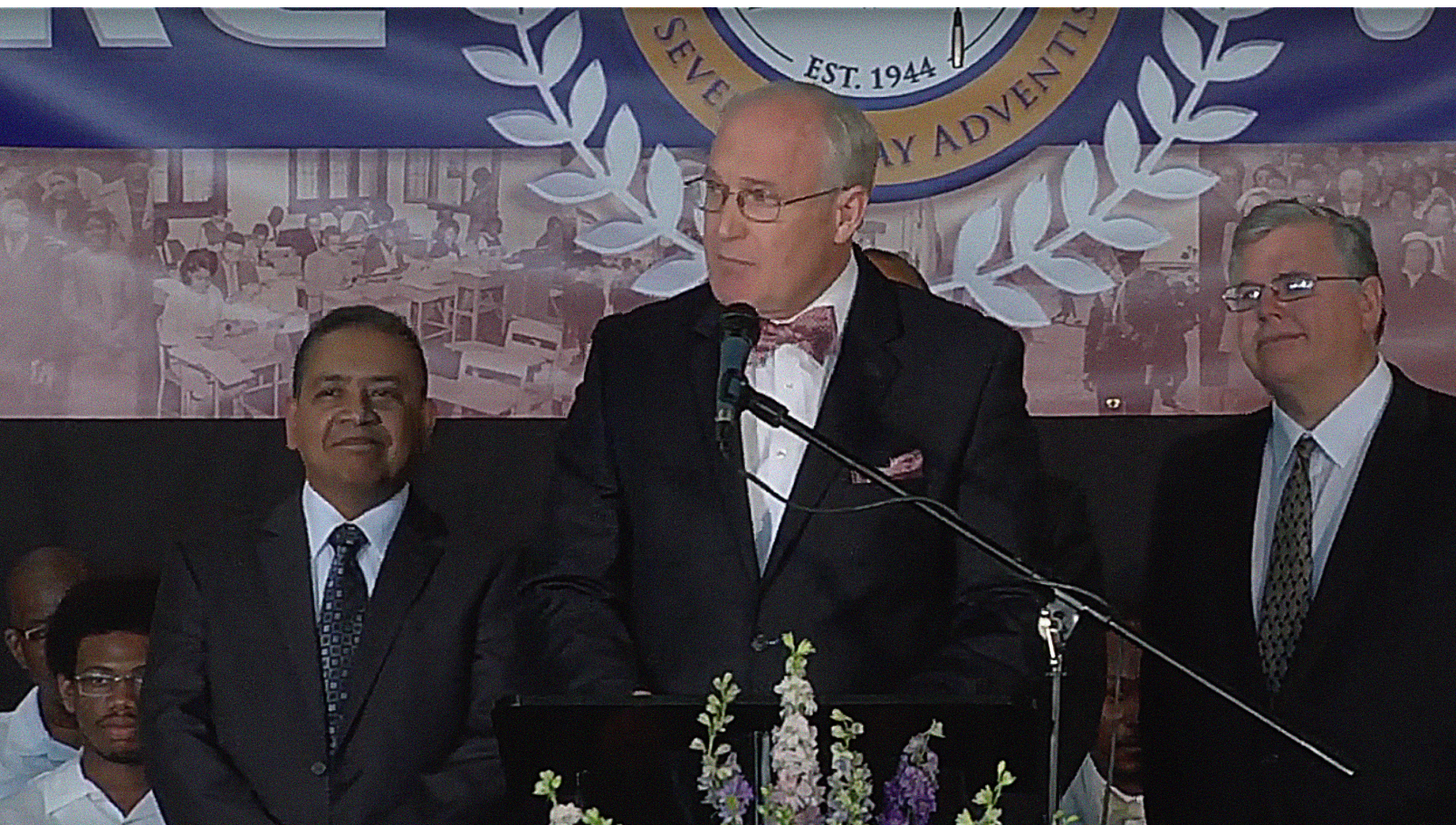
I had often wondered why our church, which started as being strongly abolitionist in the time when slavery existed, reversed its attitudes and behavior toward Blacks. Looking for a scriptural answer, I found it in reading about Paul’s encounter with Peter in Galatians 2:11–14. In that story, it appears that Peter was swayed by the cultural bias and pressure from the majority Jewish culture that surrounded him, which led him to fall to prejudice toward Gentile Christians and consequently face Paul’s rebuke. Confronting prejudice was not a unique problem for Paul, as he frequently addressed it in his letters to the churches. I believe prejudice is a sin problem that the enemy will continue to try to use by luring us to adapt to cultural bias to destroy the witness of the church.

One current example of cultural bias today is the xenophobic rhetoric that is prevalent and growing on several social media platforms. Merriam-Webster defines xenophobia as a “fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or anything strange or foreign.” Leviticus 19:34 teaches us that instead of fearing the stranger, we should “treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you.” Hebrews 13 also teaches that we should show brotherly love (Greek is *Philadelphia*) by showing hospitality (Greek is *Philoxenia*, “love of strangers”) to the strangers we encounter.

The problem, however, is that the simple reading of Scriptures did not stop the Adventist church from showing overt prejudice toward our Black members through much of our church history. My question for those of us living in 2025 is this — how can the church avoid repeating the evil of prejudice prevalent in our world, especially toward the strangers (including both documented and undocumented immigrants and refugees) who live among us? I believe that Paul again gives us the answer. After Paul recounts his rebuke to Peter about his surrendering to cultural bias, he also shares what he, as a former Pharisee raised in xenophobia, found as the key to eliminating prejudice in his life. His answer is found in Galatians 2:20:

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” ■

Carmelo Mercado is vice president for multicultural ministries at the Lake Union Conference.



▲ In June 2015, Don Livesay, then-president of the Lake Union, offered an official apology on behalf of the union to the members of the Lake Region Conference for the racism that shaped Adventist work in our territory. (Screenshot from video available at <https://bit.ly/4fg1pfC>)

The Family of God



▲ AMIE HUBBARD

Within each of us there is a need to belong, to be loved and valued, to recognize that we are a blessing, to feel connected, to share life experiences together, whether good times or hard ones.

When God created Adam and Eve, He placed within Eve a literal rib from Adam to show the closeness and connectedness God desires for humanity to experience.

Though we have made mistakes and poor choices, we have the incredible privilege of accepting the gift of salvation, of redemption, of transformation, of adoption back into the heavenly family of God! “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” John 1:12, 1 John 3:1. Incredible love! What value God has placed on every person! We belong to God first because He is our Creator and Sustainer, and again as our Redeemer and Restorer!

We have an adversary though. This enemy is stealthily, insidiously, laboring to alienate us from our spouses, children, church families and neighbors. He has created so many distractions that we don’t “have time” to connect with each other, to experience the joy of true companionship. We don’t talk about what is important to us — because who has time to listen or to share? Instead, our time disappears minute by minute on social media, YouTube or a million other distractions carefully designed to disconnect humanity from God and one another. In May 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, issued a report that drew attention to an epidemic that affects one out of two American adults. Half of us are lonely. The devil has done his work well, what are we to do?

“Every member should be a channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that the Savior desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and His character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Savior’s love. All heaven is waiting for men and women through whom God can reveal the power of Christianity.” The Acts of the Apostles, Page 600

You belong to God. He needs you and me to reveal to our families, our neighbors, our communities our Savior’s love and their value as sons and daughters of God. There’s a world out there longing to know that they DO belong. They are a sought-after part of a big, loving family — a vital part of the family of God. ■

Amie Hubbard is family ministries director for the Michigan Conference.



Boost Your Brain Health

When it comes to brain health, a single natural compound may be more powerful than any drug currently available. Brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a natural compound made by our brains, shows promise of helping with conditions as diverse as depression, addiction, stroke, dementia and Parkinson's.



▲ DAVID DeROSE

Interestingly, a growing body of research suggests that conventional medications used to treat anxiety, chronic pain and/or depression — like Prozac® (fluoxetine) and Cymbalta® (duloxetine) — may exert some of their benefits by boosting brain levels of BDNF. But the catch is this: every BDNF-enhancing drug is associated with a long list of potential side effects.

This all brings us to the really good news: research reveals that a growing list of natural strategies can boost BDNF levels — without significant side effects. Consider the follow strategies to boost your brain's BDNF content.

1. Ratchet up your daily activity. Increased aerobic exercise as well as better aerobic fitness have been linked to improved BDNF levels. Therefore, why not increase your commitment to walking, running, swimming, cycling, racket sports or other activities that involve your large muscle groups and challenge your heart and lungs?

2. Increase your intake of omega-3 fats. Sure, you could accomplish this by eating more fatty cold-water fish. But that approach can significantly increase your exposure to a range of pollutants that are concentrated in aquatic creatures. A better strategy appears to be eating more plant sources of omega-3 fats like flax seeds, chia seeds and walnuts.

3. Consider intermittent fasting. One of the hottest trends in nutrition research involves eating fewer times per day. Looking for a simple way to tap into the power of this trending approach? Follow the time-honored Spirit of Prophecy recommendation and leave off the evening meal.

4. Avoid beverage alcohol. Although this advice

may seem unnecessary in a Seventh-day Adventist periodical, some church members have been lured into “moderate” drinking by unwarranted health claims and/or social pressures. The bottom line is this: alcohol is bad for brain health — and those hazards include deleterious effects on BDNF.

5. Stock up on phytochemical-rich plant foods. One category of BDNF-enhancing plant chemicals is called *polyphenols*. Our Creator has placed over 8,000 different polyphenols in plants, so any increase in your consumption of whole plant foods is calculated to boost your intake of these brain-healthy compounds. Examples include *flavonoids* in fruits, *phenolic acids* in vegetables and whole grains, and *ellagic acid* in berries.

The emerging conclusion seems straightforward: continue to prioritize natural lifestyle strategies to increase your likelihood of brain health throughout your lifespan. ■

David DeRose, MD, MPH, is a physician holding board certifications in both internal and preventative medicine and pastors the Fort Wayne Church in the Indiana Conference. Learn more health tips at timelesshealinginsights.org.



Little Acts of Kindness



▲ DENIS KAISER

In the 1910s, Sebastian Lewis, a native of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, arrived in Puerto Rico with his family. There, they met Rafael López, a recent convert to Seventh-day Adventism and a literature evangelist. Moved by compassion, Rafael offered the Lewis family a house he owned across the street and trained Lewis and his eldest son in literature evangelism.

Not long after, Rafael left for Venezuela to continue selling Adventist books. Unfortunately, his work was met with hostility. A local Catholic priest warned him to stop, but Rafael persisted. Tragically, a group of thugs ambushed and killed him. News of Rafael's death in 1922 devastated the López family and plunged them into financial hardship. Two years later, Rafael's widow, Esperanza, realized she could no longer support her six children. Desperate, she sent her eldest daughter, 15-year-old Carmen, to live with relatives in New York City, hoping she might earn money and eventually prepare a new home for the family.

Though Carmen struggled to make much money, she managed to rent a small apartment in Manhattan and later brought her mother and siblings to join her. However, the López family found life in New York difficult, and without the close-knit Adventist community they had known, they slowly drifted away from the faith for which Rafael had given his life.

Meanwhile, Sebastian Lewis learned of his friend Rafael's tragic death and the López family's move to New York. Determined to help, he relocated to the city and searched for them. When he finally found their home, he knocked on the door, greeting Esperanza with a big smile and broken Spanish: "Hermana Esperanza, it's me, Sebastian Lewis."

When he discovered they had stopped attending church, Sebastian urged, "Hermana, you must come back to the Lord, for your husband's sake and

for God's sake. We must raise up a church here, a church for Puerto Ricans."

Moved by his words, the López family began hosting weekly prayer meetings in their home. Carmen, often busy with work, usually excused herself. But one evening, returning home while the meeting was still in progress, she overheard her name being lifted up in prayer. Deeply touched, she felt her need for Christ.

Sometime later, Lewis encountered Carmen on the subway as she returned home from work. Looking her in the eye, he said, "Carmelita, I've thought about this for a long time. I believe you should be our new Bible worker."

Though Carmen felt unqualified, she sensed God's call. She enrolled in a Bible doctrine course through the Home Study Institute, and at the age of 19 became the first Hispanic Bible worker for the Greater New York Conference. Through her efforts, many Hispanics in Harlem, the Bronx and Brooklyn joined the church. Her work was instrumental in founding the first Hispanic church in New York City.¹

¹ The information is based on Manuel Vasquez, "The Untold Story: 100 Years of Hispanic Adventism," 1899–1999 (Silver Spring, MD: North American Division Multi-Lingual Ministries, 2000), 84–89.

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



▲ Carmen López Morales

Nuestra ciudadanía verdadera

“Pero nuestra ciudadanía está en los cielos, de donde también esperamos al Salvador, al Señor Jesucristo” (Filipenses 3:20).



▲ CARMELO MERCADO

Al leer la Biblia se puede encontrar muchos temas diferentes. Por ejemplo, hay temas acerca de la salvación y el amor de Dios. También se puede ver muy claramente el tema de la migración. Joan Maruskin, autora del libro titulado *Immigration and the Bible* dice lo siguiente (traducido al español): “La Biblia es una historia del pueblo de Dios desarraigado, que busca seguridad, santuario y refugio y del Dios viviente que da instrucciones de cómo acoger al extranjero. Desde Adán y Eva hasta Noé, Abraham, Moisés, José y María, todos se encontraron en movimiento, migrando, buscando una vida mejor”.

No es difícil leer la Biblia desde el punto de vista de la migración. Comenzando con Adán y Eva uno se da cuenta que el pecado los forzó a emigrar del Jardín del Edén hacia un mundo ya contaminado por el pecado. Abram recibió el llamado de Dios de emigrar del lugar donde se creció a uno desconocido, y como consecuencia tomó el estatus social de un inmigrante. En el Antiguo Testamento se encuentran muchos más ejemplos bíblicos de personas que técnicamente se las puede denominar migrantes.

¿Qué en cuanto a nuestro Señor Jesús? Si aceptamos el significado de la palabra inmigrante como una persona que se muda del país donde ha vivido a otro con la intención de establecerse por un período prolongado, creo que Cristo podría identificarse con los inmigrantes. ¿En que sentido? Cristo, el Creador del mundo, decidió mudarse del cielo a este mundo. Al inmigrar a este mundo Cristo se encontró con desafíos tales como prejuicios y malos entendidos que enfrentan algunos inmigrantes. Sin duda lo más difícil fue tener que sufrir la injusticia social y ser condenado por ser diferente de los demás que lo rodeaban y llamarse Hijo de Dios.

En este nuevo año se oye de incertidumbre y circunstancias difíciles que muchos inmigrantes indocumentados posiblemente tendrán que enfrentar. Y aunque muchos no comprendan lo que esto significa, quiero que sepan ciertas realidades. Primero, Cristo entiende su situación como un inmigrante indocumentado porque Él también pasó por la persecución y condenación de otros. Segundo, quiero que sepan que la Unión del Lago está vigilando y orando por ustedes para que Dios los proteja y mantenga la unidad en las familias. Tercero, quiero recordarles que la Biblia nos enseña que todos somos peregrinos en este mundo porque nuestra verdadera ciudadanía es la que está en los cielos y de allí nadie nos podrá deportar.

Al comenzar este nuevo año deseo animarlos a que sigan orando y confiando en las promesas de Dios. Mi promesa preferida se encuentra en Jeremías 29:11,12: “Sólo yo sé los planes que tengo para ustedes. Son planes para su bien, y no para su mal, para que tengan un futuro lleno de esperanza. Entonces ustedes me pedirán en oración que los ayude, y yo atenderé sus peticiones” (Reina Valera Contemporánea).■

Carmelo Mercado es el vicepresidente de la Unión del Lago.





▲ Derek is pictured with his grandma, Carol Cole, in their second-row seats.



▲ Derek is a willing participant in several aspects of worship at the Paw Paw Church in Michigan, including preaching his first sermon on Nov. 30.

A Sign from Above

When 15-year-old Derek Ruimveld entered Paw Paw Adventist Church (PPAC) in February, greeter Chuck Randall asked what brought him to church that day. He simply said he was there for the 10 a.m. Bible Study as advertised on the church sign.

Derek was introduced to the high school Sabbath School class and quickly made new friends, but it was apparent that he truly was most interested in studying the Bible, which he has done with Pastor Sean Reed and member Stanley Lebrun. They both report that he is a serious Bible student, one who studies the lessons ahead and comes with questions and insights.

Derek's journey is a case study of the power of the Holy Spirit — and what happens when we submit completely to His leading. As in many families,

God wasn't a priority at his house as he was growing up. He remembers visiting extended family years earlier, and attending a church, his only exposure to anything religious, which he called boring. However, Jesus had His eyes on Derek and used a novel approach to capture his attention initially.

While watching "Young Sheldon" reruns one day, he was struck by a discussion between a pastor and the child genius about whether God was real. This sketch was designed for laughs, but the Holy Spirit prompted Derek to start wondering if God existed

and if He did, what happens when someone dies? It was a thought that stayed with him, so he found a Bible and started reading, on a mission to prevent “going to hell.”

Instead of finding a God only interested in punishing bad behavior, what Derek found out about God has surprised him, “He always forgives, He never withholds His love, He is so wise, and His love is so great, there is so much mercy!” he says, with enthusiasm. He says he doesn’t remember exactly how it happened, but he started having conversations with God, causing him to feel connected to Someone far greater than himself, and he prayed for a way to find answers.

Search for a Church

After reading several books of the Bible, he considered finding a church where He could worship and learn more about God. When he asked his grandma, who had grown up attending a church, she agreed to go with him. Since she had watched a few Doug Bachelor sermons online, she suggested the Adventist church they drove by every day. He quickly agreed because the church sign promised a 10:00 Bible Study on Saturday mornings. That was the part Grandma initially found to be strange; who goes to church on Saturdays?

Derek and Grandma have rarely missed a Sabbath since their first visit and they both consider PPAC to be their home church these days. She says she is glad to worship again with other believers. He has found great joy in keeping the Sabbath and wishes everyone knew how valuable Sabbath is.

The Lawton High School junior was baptized on Aug. 3 and is an active member at PPAC, playing piano, reading Scriptures, participating in skits, helping with Feeding America mobile food pantries, and taking a major role in the VBS play. He’s part of the Paw Paw Harvesters Pathfinder Club this year, planning to be a TLT soon, and is a dedicated member of the 2025 Pathfinder Bible Experience team. When asked how his life is different, this high school junior showed maturity beyond expectations for someone who turned 16 in September.

Although we only saw an eager young man, Derek says he was on a “pretty bad path” involving some destructive choices before last February. He

has been amazed by the Holy Spirit, who has led him through every stage, bringing him to Jesus through an unlikely sitcom, convicting him of the need for confession and change, and teaching him to obey, which gives him peace. “Man shall not live by bread alone” (Matthew 4:4) is one of his favorite scriptures because it reminds him of the value of consuming the Word of God as we would food. He thinks missing a day of reading the Bible makes it harder to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to him. As soon as he returns to his Bible, he says he can feel the joy again because there is no joy without God.

Sharing His Faith with Classmates

Of course, this dramatic change in Derek’s life has impacted his social life. Even though a couple of the relationships in his life have become awkward, his very best friend and another friend have also ended up coming to Christ. He says they talk about how God is working in their lives, calling it man sharpening man; he’s grateful they can encourage each other. Since his best friend isn’t attending his own church much, Derek is wondering if God wants him to extend an invitation to join him at Paw Paw. With each day, he is finding more people who love Jesus, and he is eager to take their conversations deeper. He believes that confessing shortcomings to friends, removing the masks that we falsely think make us look perfect, allows us to know how to pray for others and find encouraging Scriptures.

Derek has his own mission in his high school, evidenced by his final comment, “I wish more people my age wanted to talk about God.” Keep talking, Derek, because the Holy Spirit is working on them, too. Paw Paw Adventist Church is praying for Derek because we know how committed he is to the guidance of the Holy Spirit — and we are praying for the contacts in his life, too. His willingness to follow God without compromise or negotiation has been a powerful witness for us, as well. Not only does God have special plans for this young man, He is using him already. ■

Jan Bermingham is a member of the Paw Paw Communication team.



▲ **Top:** Derek enjoyed helping out with the PPAC Feeding America Mobile Food Pantry during the summer.

▲ **Bottom:** Derek played one of the main characters in the 2024 VBS drama at PPAC.



Closer to Jesus than I Thought

Dr. Irada Flood is no stranger to long and life-altering journeys. Not only did she leave her native Kazakhstan and travel over 6,000 miles to a new life in the United States, she also moved from an atheistic upbringing into a new spiritual home — Christianity.

“In Kazakh culture,” Irada explains, “my educational, social and political influences were all atheistic. But with the fall of the Soviet Union, religion became tolerated, and to some extent even encouraged, though often with a ‘This can make you a stronger citizen’ component. As we began to hear about the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule, we also heard, ‘Honoring parents, treating others well, not stealing, not killing — all these things are good for the state. They strengthen the nation — and the individual.’”

While huge cultural, political and social changes were swirling around Irada as a young schoolgirl, a confession her mother made to her one day was especially memorable in her own spiritual development. “When I gave birth to you and first looked into your eyes,” her mother shared, “I sensed the Divine. Right then I prayed for the first time. ‘Save this child,’ I pleaded with God. I was filled with gratitude for this new life entrusted to me. Having just given birth for the first time, I sensed a presence much larger than myself, my daughter, or any human.”

Like her mother, Irada too began to sense, “There must be something or Someone more.” As she grew older, changes in her homeland and especially in her immediate community caught her attention. She remembers her initial surprise at seeing imams, priests

and others freely walking around in religious garb. She was curious about the significance of such distinctive attire. She noticed too the appearance of religious discussions in newspapers. She read columns proposing new points of view and opportunities. One offer caught her eye. It was geared to children her age: Bible study lessons. She wrote away for the lessons, completed them, and shared what she was learning with her mother. “We found these Bible stories so interesting and exciting,” Irada recalls. “It was all so new. We had never heard anything like this before.”

Irada’s curiosity grew, and she began to explore the Muslim faith of her grandmother as well as denominations within Christianity, including the orthodox tradition. As she visited houses of worship and explored various sacred texts, she found places and passages that appealed to her, but others that she could not accept. What started as a search for answers seemed to be generating more questions.

Irada’s search continued into adulthood. By the time she immigrated to the United States seven years ago, Irada had decided that too much of what she had encountered in her study of various faith traditions was incompatible with her own beliefs grounded in her medical training, her sense of equality and justice, and her understanding of the Bible. “I couldn’t support the

meting out of harsh punishments for certain beliefs or actions,” she explains. “I also questioned the value and meaning of icons, saints and some rituals. I was uncomfortable with what appeared to be worship of individuals rather than worship of God alone. Also, I couldn’t accept the hierarchy inherent in some faiths. Growing up in the former Soviet Union, the equality of women was a given. For generations, we have been welcomed into all professions. We have been expected to do whatever needs to be done — from raising a family, to farming, providing food, working on machinery, pursuing higher education, entering any vocation of our choosing. No one ever said to us, ‘You can’t do this because you are a woman.’”

A Casual Invitation

Irada’s quest for truth and meaning continued, both on her own and in the company of others. One day, at the height of the pandemic, a Christian colleague named Dan invited her to attend some informal online discussions he was leading. These discussions, he explained, were open to all. He stressed that there would be no judgment, no pressure, but together they would explore questions and share beliefs about such topics as the existence of God, creation, suffering, injustice and more. Irada listened with interest to ideas shared by people from a wide range of faith traditions and from atheists, too. Before the close of each session, Dan opened his Bible and presented what it said about the topic.

Irada’s eventual introduction to Seventh-day Adventism came through a fellow Kazakhstani that she met at a get-together at another friend’s cabin. Here Irada and her new friend, Assel Burnett, conversed and bonded over their shared backgrounds and interests in faith and religion. Eventually, these and subsequent conversations led to Bible studies with Pastor Myoung Kwon. Irada decided to join this denomination and was baptized by Pastor Rowell Puedivan. Today she worships at the Evansville and Madison churches in Wisconsin.

When asked what appeals to her about Seventh-day Adventism, Irada explains that the emphasis on healthful living is important to her. After decades as a smoker, she was finally able to quit, and she remains grateful for the encouragement and support that led to this change. Sabbath, she explains, was a new concept for her. Initially, she thought that it was important to Jewish people only. She was

surprised to find the Sabbath included in the Ten Commandments. She now treasures its rest and fellowship. She enjoyed learning about Ellen White and the church’s beginnings. “I was pleased to discover,” Irada says, “that here was a denomination who had a strong woman as one of its founders, and yet this leader neither sought nor accepted worship directed towards herself.”

What was most instrumental in her decision to cast her lot with Adventism, however, was the welcoming acceptance and friendship she found within the church community. Bible-based doctrines were important to her. The concept of a triune God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — was in keeping with what she found in scripture. “But the loving acceptance of the church community and the beautiful life of my friend Assel,” she says, “spoke to me most powerfully, and still does today.”

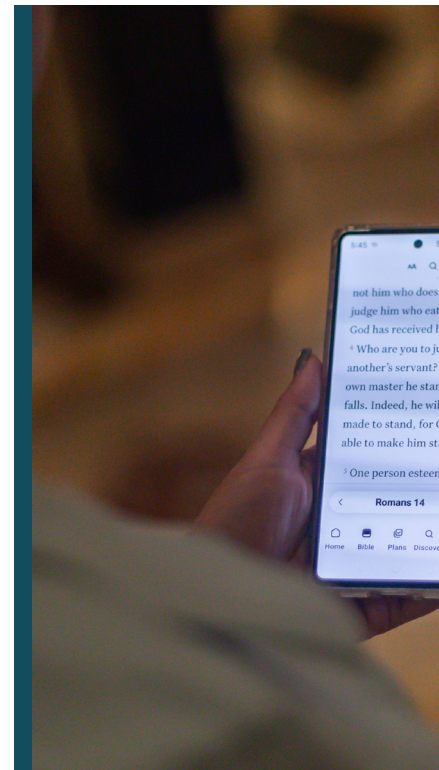
Irada continues to celebrate the positive changes that Christianity and Seventh-day Adventism have made for her. She isn’t alone, though, in marking the differences. Her husband and son tell her that she is a calmer, happier and more confident person since becoming a Christian.

When asked which passage of Scripture has special meaning to her, Irada quotes Romans 14:4: “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand” (NIV). How fitting that someone who was filled with questions for so many years finds herself drawn to a passage of Scripture that poses a question. The reminder that we are not appointed to judge others is central to Irada’s understanding and appreciation of her new faith. Especially reassuring is the promise of strength and endurance that comes from the Lord.

As Irada daily learns more about her Savior, she remains ever grateful for the support of her church family and her Christian friends. “Dan once said to me,” Irada recalls, “I always knew you were closer to Jesus than you thought.”

“Even though I still have much to learn about my Bible, my new church, and my new faith,” Irada concedes, “I can see that Dan was right. I was closer to Jesus all along, indeed much closer than I thought.” ■

Beverly Matiko lives in Niles, Michigan and is an associate professor emerita of English and Communication. Though retired, she continues to enjoy telling her own stories and the stories of others from the podium and in print.



Photos by Josue Peralta

Lake Region CELEBRATING

80 Years



Sept. 1944 — The Lake Region Conference is officially formed during a specially called meeting at Shiloh Church in Chicago.

June 1948 — The first annual camp meeting is held at Camp Wagner, vital for spiritual renewal and community bonding among members across the region.
(photo of one of the earliest camp meetings)



1944

1948

Jan. 1, 1945 — The conference becomes the first regional conference, organized with 2,320 members, and begins official operations in Indianapolis in the parsonage of the Capitol City church.

1945 — Conference office moves to 619 Woodlawn Park Avenue, Chicago

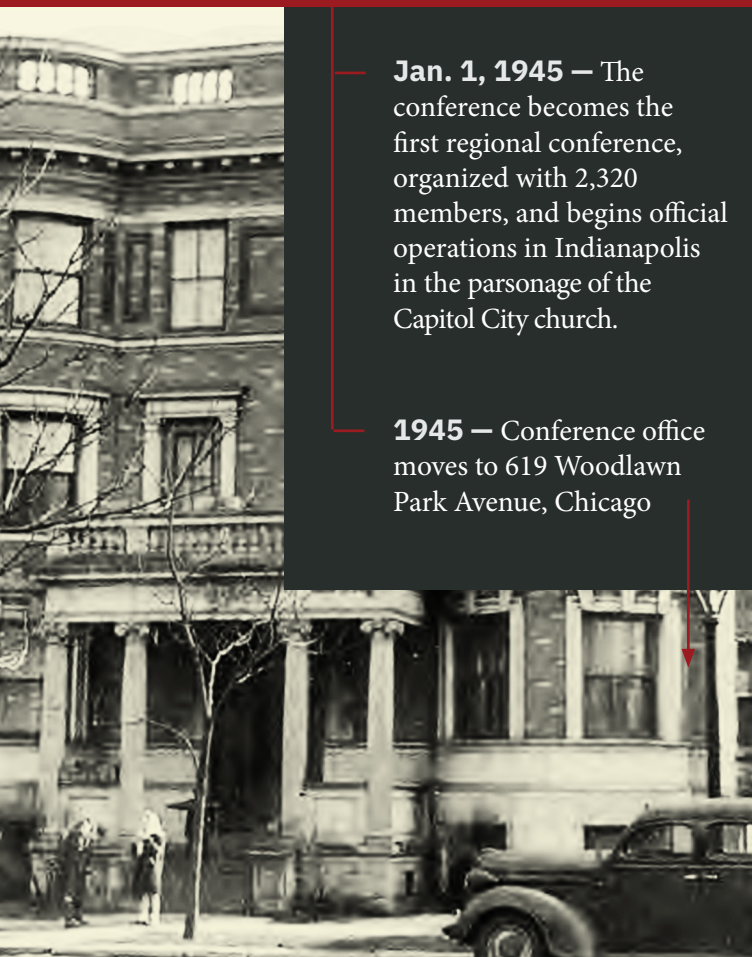
1960

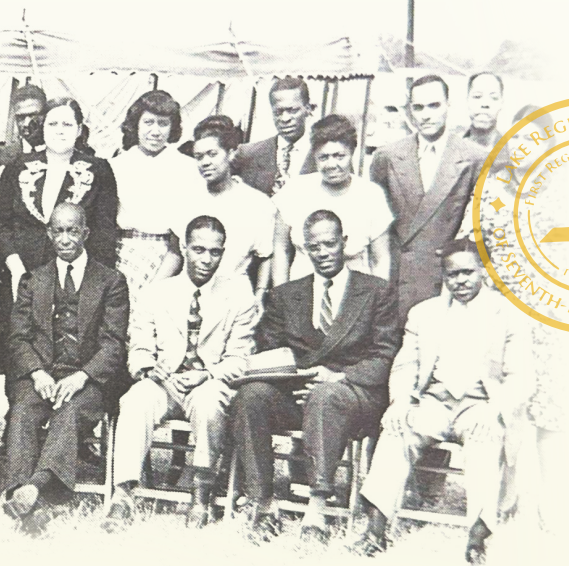
60s and 70s — The Temperance department conducts five-day Stop Smoking and other lifestyle care programs in the communities.

July 1973 — C.D. Brooks conducts an evangelistic tent meeting and 243 people were baptized at the close of the eight-week series. Straford Memorial was organized as a result. The church was named Straford after its first pastor.

1975 — Lake Region has the distinction of being the first regional conference to have an organized Spanish work connected to it, when a group of Hispanic laymen approached the conference asking them to accept their church, Spanish West/Logan Square, into the fellowship.

1975





2018 — Conference office moves to current location, 19860 La Grange Road, Mokena, Illinois

2021 — Through conference departments and the Conscience and Justice Council, nearly 60 virtual programs are held exploring relevant and timely topics such as Covid-19, mental health, police shootings, regional conferences, education, suicide, census, voter education and human rights.

2011 — Membership exceeds 30,000

2011

2018

June 2015 — In a significant moment at Lake Region's camp meeting, Lake Union Conference officers publicly apologize for past racial injustices and lack of support for African American members. This apology is part of a broader effort to acknowledge the historical struggles of minority congregations and to promote healing, reconciliation and unity within the Church.

1999 — First female pastor, Judy Crawford, is hired. She previously was a Bible worker and had a successful evangelistic series where 78 people were baptized. This launched the Tabernacle of Hope Church in Indianapolis, which she pastored until her sudden passing in 2005.

1992 — Membership exceeds 20,000

1980 — Membership exceeds 10,000

2020



2020 — During the pandemic, the Youth department pilots an online academy utilizing the Adventurer awards and Pathfinder honors, which draws over 15,000 participants.



1999

1980



LAKE REGION CONFERENCE

Remembering the Past,
Continuing the Mission



Seated: President

Garth Gabriel

Standing left to right:
Executive Secretary

Abraham Henry

Treasurer

Kent Nichols

Vice President for
Multilingual Ministries

Eddie Allen

Dave Sherwin

80
Years

It was April 1944 and a group of leaders met at Chicago's Shiloh Seventh-day Adventist Church. Their mission? To organize African American members in the Lake Union territory. Following that pivotal meeting, the Lake Region Conference was born on Jan. 1, 1945. This was the very first Black, or what's commonly known as, regional conference.

In 2025, the conference celebrates 80 years of ministry. It marks a journey that has grown in ways those early pioneering leaders may never have imagined.

In Nov. 2024, Lake Region's Communication Director JeNean Lendor sat down with the current conference leadership: Garth Gabriel, president; Abraham Henry, executive secretary; Kent Nichols,

treasurer; and Eddie Allen, vice president for multi-lingual ministries. Below is a transcript of the interview, as they reflected on the conference's mission over the years, the successes and challenges, and cast a vision for the future of Lake Region. The interview was edited for length and clarity. You can watch the full interview at www.youtube.com/lakeunionherald



LENDOR: You are all part of the fabric of the current landscape of the conference, and not many people may know you beyond your [current] positions, beyond your roles and responsibilities. Pastor Gabriel, you have a strong history in music. Pastor Henry, you know that without this position, you have led by being a significant youth director for so many years. Pastor Nichols, you've been a CEO of your own financial company before coming into ministry. Pastor Allen, you were an administrator in Africa. So, tell me a little bit about what brought you into these leadership roles.

GABRIEL: I know it seems somewhat trite, but the Lord has led me all the way, sometimes to paths unknown, and I love just being able to walk with Him daily. Sometimes I have no idea where He will take me. [My journey] may not have been linear, but it's

almost cyclical in that I'm able to do music still and preach. I believe that God has blessed me with the ability to put both together.

HENRY: I sincerely appreciate the opportunities that God has given me. My local church first trusted me at a young age and gave me responsibilities and opportunities for growth. I had a pastor who poured into me at the local church and a board who trusted me. I'm so grateful that I have a president and colleague who I work with who trust me, and constituents who took a leap by giving me this opportunity. It's been an opportunity to learn and to grow and be able to make a difference in representing individuals in my sphere and in my age group, not far removed from being a young adult myself. So, it's been an awesome journey, so far.

LAKE REGION PRESIDENTS OVER THE YEARS



J.G. DASENT
1946–1949



T.M. FOUNTAIN
1949–1951

As far as my ministry, you're always surprised by something. Don't take it personally because it's the Man upstairs' business anyway. Just do what He called you to do.

– ALLEN



Watch the full interview online.

NICHOLS: It may sound cliché, but just like the president said, I feel like the Lord led this journey. I never had any aspiration to be a chief financial officer (CFO). I always wanted to run my own company. I feel like one of the pivotal things that happened to me is that something happened in my life where God said, “Okay, I’m going to stop something that you’re doing well financially, and I’m going to make you look up to Me and realize that you have to depend on Me completely for everything.” It changed my whole trajectory of how God wanted to lead me and take me. Eventually I would go into ministry. I never thought I was going to be the CFO for Lake Region Conference. I was just happy to get into ministry, to be a pastor and to be faithful at work. And so, I feel like God has led that journey all the way

ALLEN: I was in the country of Zambia, speaking with my wife, when she said, “Hey, Dr. [Walter] Wright (Lake Union president at the time) called you twice, and said that you need to call him back.” So eventually I called. He said, Eddie Allen, we need you over here. I had no idea what a regional conference was, because in the Northwest, where I studied and worked for many years, we did not have that. I have had a wonderful time working with my colleagues. I believe I have the best job in the Lake Region because on any different Sabbath I’m exposed to so many different language and cultural groups. It’s just amazing.

LENDOR: So, January 2025 will mark 80 years of the Lake Region Conference. Is there any one word or phrase that encapsulates the significance of 80 years as a regional conference?

GABRIEL: We are part of history — serious history. After the Lake Region Conference, we had eight other conferences join at different times, but we are the original regional.

HENRY: I would say, still paving the way. We’re growing in leaps and bounds. I always think, if the original administrators at this conference had a chance to watch us on the television screen, would they be proud of what they’re seeing? I believe they

would. We are just shy of 32,000 members. That’s something to be proud of, but that’s also an indication of how many more souls we have to win in our major cities and all throughout our fields. So, we have work to keep on doing, paving the way.

NICHOLS: I’m going to say that we’re historically strong, relevant, persevering and moving forward dynamically. We keep that history before us to move forward, to be strong, to make sure that we’re always persevering in what we do and what we believe, and then also making sure that we’re dynamic for the new generations.

ALLEN: I am here thinking the word challenging. Always expect the unexpected. There’s no dull moment. As far as my ministry, you’re always surprised by something. Don’t take it personally because it’s the Man upstairs’ business anyway. Just do what He called you to do.

LENDOR: There are some who celebrate the relevance of regional conferences, but then there are those who don’t appreciate their relevance. Unfortunately, some of those might be our young adults. There’s a generational gap, which unfortunately might have been caused by the pandemic, because it caused a generational spiritual gap as well. People stopped going to churches as often, their interest in even watching church online might have waned. How would you respond to someone who might say, “Why are regional conferences still significant?”

HENRY: We’re on the front lines. I think about one of our pastors in South Bend, Pastor Claval Hunter. I think about pastors like him who choose to engage in frontline ministry. We’re called to not just shape communities and impact lives. Yes, we’re called to kingdom impact. But we also have so much work to do down here. We’ve been relevant. We tune in to what’s happening outside, what’s happening in the world. If there’s a shooting in our community, our pastors are there; if there’s someone hurting, our pastors are there; if a school is shut down for a specific reason, our pastors are involved; if there’s a



H.W. KIBBLE
1951–1961



C.E. BRADFORD
1961–1970

need for funding, our pastors are trying to find ways to do it.

GABRIEL: [You talk about young adults] we are one of two regional conferences that has a young adult leader, and if we look at the statistics of the church, we've lost many of our young adults and with good reason sometimes. We are trying to make up for lost time, change some of our attitudes and how we were brought up, and recognize the difference between the young adults of today and the young adults of yesterday. And so, we have a young adult leader, Pastor James Doggette Jr., who is geared to bringing those young folk back into the fold.

LENDOR: We have many schools in our conference, some now have not quite gone back to being K through 12. Some of them are just [grades] one through eight. Tell us a little bit about the status of education in our conference.

GABRIEL: A few years ago, we had to close a few schools. We lost a lot of students, and I don't really know what caused this demise. We found out it was not just in the Lake Region. There were several conferences where schools were being closed, not enough money. Where we are right now, we are making a comeback. Praise God! Our enrollments have spiked, our school buildings have been worked on, and we have spent quite a bit of money to ensure the success of our schools.

HENRY: We have record-breaking numbers in Indianapolis, exceeding 75 students at our school there. At several of our other schools, enrollment is at an all-time high. Also, when we speak about infrastructure, not only did the conference make an investment in our schools — we're talking about well over \$250,000 — we're also speaking about our greatest resources, the people.

NICHOLS: As treasurer, I see that we are committed financially to our teachers. We have phenomenal teachers, teachers who are doing phenomenal work in our school system. We are committed to that in our budget. We're committed to that and giving money for fixing the schools. But we do have

some challenges. How do we meet the demands of what the world is offering, be competitive and also be Christian at our schools? Because there are some places where people can go to a public school, they can get a great education without paying anything for it, except out of their property taxes. So, we do have to look at some other ways. There are things that we can do that bridge that gap and provide other sources of funding to help those who are worthy for those scholarships, so that everyone who wants to have a Christian education can go. We also must make sure that we not only keep our education and curriculum excellent, but also keep it in an environment that people are proud to be a part of.

ALLEN: We have a lot of young people, but a lot of them are not in our schools — we have to be true. I've spoken to the pastors and I've spoken to churches about it. I think when we are intentional with recruiting staff [who speak the language of the immigrant group] it's effective. You could see the difference, for instance, in Indianapolis with the Burmese or the Hispanic in South Suburban. Kudos to Superintendent Deirdre Garnett. She is intentional about that.

NICHOLS: If I could just add, our president came up with the idea that we need to look for alternate sources of income when it comes to our schools. He thought it would be a great idea to look into grants. We just finished out a school grant for almost \$289,000. We have another grant that we can use with our schools and our churches for over \$1.2 million. So, we are thinking outside of the box.

LENDOR: During the last two quarters of 2024, there were in-person midterm reports taking place around the conference. What feedback have you gotten?

GABRIEL: The directive from the constitution and bylaws of Lake Region Conference is that we have midterm reports. I like having to do it because it keeps us in touch with the members. They know what we've done thus far in our ministries, and it's a way that we can get support from them. In other

Praise God! Our enrollments have spiked, our school buildings have been worked on, and we have spent quite a bit of money to ensure the success of our schools.

—GABRIEL

**80
Years**



J.R. WAGNER
1970-1977



C.D. JOSEPH
1977-1987

What I'm loving to see is total church involvement. Members are involved. They're doing the work. They're winning souls.

—HENRY

80
Years

words, if a presentation is made and we can do better, usually the members speak up. We are here to serve the members and serve God, of course.

HENRY: Midterms is an awesome opportunity to refocus on who Lake Region is. Lake Region Conference is not individuals sitting in an office in Mokena, Illinois. Lake Region Conference is officers, administrators, departmental directors and pastors, but Lake Region conference is 32,000 people. So, at midterm reports, it's not one small, elevated group that feels they're giving a lecture about what they've done to others. No, it's our conference coming together and having conversations about what we're doing together.

NICHOLS: We work for the Lake Region Conference, indirectly and directly, but at the end of the day, our success is [the constituents] success. We are successful because we have people paying faithful tithe and offering. We are successful because we have pastors that are being supported by their members to grow their church. We are part of a family that is doing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

LENDOR: When you're having discussions with church members, what is the feedback on evangelism in the conference?

ALLEN: Evangelism is alive and well in this conference, and I could speak from the multilingual ministry — we're growing quite a bit there. Since the last quadrennium [three years ago], we have planted and organized seven new multilingual churches. We have two Kinyarwanda [Rwandan/Congolese] churches, two Filipino churches, a Korean church, a Hispanic church, and we just voted to organize a French-speaking church.

GABRIEL: This year [2024], we've had more baptisms than we've had in 10 years. So, we are busy.

HENRY: We've had over 500 baptisms and counting. And this is humbling because we didn't even notice. It was only as we were preparing for midterm reports that we began to see just how good God is. What I'm seeing coming out of the pandemic is that ministry can't happen on the backs of

administrators and pastors. It has to be churches coming together. What I'm loving to see is total church involvement. Members are involved. They're doing the work. They're winning souls. I'm excited for next year!

NICHOLS: If I could add something. You asked the question, "What are we doing about that gap of young adults, or that generation that is on social media that doesn't really feel like there's a need to come to church, or why do we have to have a regional conference?" This perfectly explains it. Until we start engaging, until we start interacting with people, until we start making a difference in their lives, they won't get involved. And so, we have to go out and meet them where they're at. Most of our younger generation don't want you just to tell them, they want you to show them. They want transparency. They want realness and when we engage like this, we will make a difference even in the generation of today!

LENDOR: There's a major evangelism effort coming in 2025. What will Pentecost 2025 look like for Lake Region?

GABRIEL: I'm excited. We're number one in the North American Division for having the highest rate of churches enrolled [More info on Pentecost 2025 at <https://pentecost2025.com>].

HENRY: Our president made it very clear to us that we don't have a position called manager in this conference. We're pastors, and as pastors it is our job to be in front pushing soul winning. And he said, "There ought not be a church or a pastor not involved in Pentecost 2025."

NICHOLS: We know every pastor may have a vision on what they want to do for evangelism, and those funds are going to be utilized for that. That aspect may be a community engagement, it may be doing a health fair, it may be a lay person that the [church] wants to support. But at the end of the day, we want to make sure that we represent the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then we point people to the Man who can change their lives and who can make



L.R. PALMER
1987–1990



R.C. BROWN
1990–1994



Watch the full interview online.

a difference. At the end of the day, we want to just make sure that we do [this] with excellence, that Christ is magnified and that souls have an opportunity to make a decision for Christ.

LENDOR: If you could think of one or two things that in 20 years, 25 years, 50 years, you would love to see the conference have, what would that be?

GABRIEL: If Jesus doesn't come [by then] it's because He's waiting for us to be ready. I would do my best, as I know my colleagues would, to do what we can to hasten His coming. You want that Holy Spirit falling upon us, like it did at Pentecost. We will pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, why wait? We can do it now.

HENRY: I want to see us close some generational gaps of working together. I think we've set the example of different age groups coming together on our team. All of us are different ages, and we work together so well. We want to see that at the local church. I want to talk to young adults and youth, and I want to appeal to them, "This is not your season for sitting out. This is not your season to be benched. This is not even your season just for preparation. This is your season to serve now where you are; use what God has given you. You

don't need a pulpit in front of a church. Take your pulpits and go to the highways and boundaries. This is your season. This is your call. Let's do the work. Let's finish it."

NICHOLS: One of the goals and desires of our conference is to make sure people fall in love with Christ, to fall in love with His character, fall in love with Him. If He does delay, one of my dreams here at Lake Region would be to have an educational endowment fund, so that we never have an issue when it comes to paying our teachers the best, to making sure that our schools are [the] most innovative and have the best structures, and making sure that every child that comes into our institutions, our churches, our schools, can go and get a Christian education.

ALLEN: My mind is refusing to grasp that Christ would delay in coming. If Christ would delay, I would hope this conference will always live as if Christ were coming tomorrow. That means we will be doing the work He called us to do. But at the same time, "God, won't You come soon?"

LENDOR: Thank you for the blessing you are to the conference, to each other and to me. You lead with humility and transparency.

“One of the goals and desires of our conference is to make sure people fall in love with Christ, to fall in love with His character, fall in love with Him.”

—NICHOLS



J.R. MILES
1994–2005



J.L. DAVIS
2005–2014



R.C. JONES
2014–2021

Team Members Mobilize to Support Micro Pantries

UChicago Medicine AdventHealth is increasing food access for families in need in the western suburbs through the organization's team-member-supported 24/7 micro pantries.

Food drives organized by the surgical services and cardiac catheterization team members at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Hinsdale recently provided nonperishable food items for a micro pantry that the hospital operates in partnership with the Hinsdale Seventh-day Adventist Church located across the street from the hospital.

The Hinsdale Community Orchestra hosted a benefit concert in fall of 2024 at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth La Grange, supporting the Hinsdale micro pantry and a new one set to open at the La Grange hospital. Concertgoers were asked to bring two or more nonperishable food items, and their generous response made a significant impact.

"We now have a good back supply for our new La Grange micro pantry," said Heather Hoffman, regional director of clinical mission integration at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth. "The concert gave us a big boost." Even team members who could not attend the concert supported the cause, emailing Hoffman to ask where they could drop off their donations. "Our team members just naturally have this desire to serve our community, which is a beautiful thing," she said.

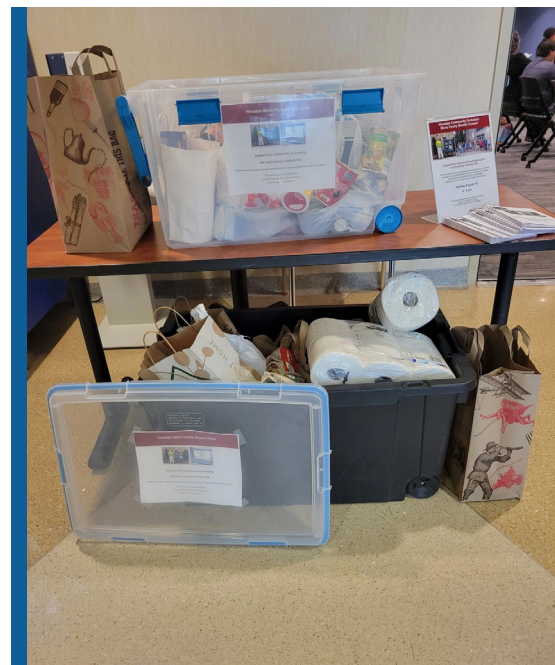
To raise awareness of the micro pantries among team members at Hinsdale and La Grange, the mission and ministry department at both hospitals distributed a flyer earlier in the year encouraging team members to organize departmental food drives. Additionally, Hoffman also began sending out a quarterly email to Hinsdale and La Grange team members, inviting them to support the initiative

by donating food or coordinating drives. She often receives enthusiastic responses, with many team members expressing their eagerness to participate by saying, "I would love to do that!"

Hoffman is also focused on establishing a sustainable framework for supporting the micro pantries at Hinsdale and La Grange, ensuring they are regularly monitored and restocked. She hopes to replicate a shared-ownership model similar to the successful approach used by UChicago Medicine AdventHealth GlenOaks and Bolingbrook, which has effectively supported their micro pantries for several years.

Under this model, individual hospital departments take responsibility for monitoring and stocking the micro pantry for a week or two each year, and a schedule is created to ensure each department is aware when they are in charge. "With this model, team-member donations are scheduled throughout the year," Hoffman said. "It's a very easy way for our team members and departments to get involved and to support our community in a different way."

It is also a great way to promote whole-person care and to further UChicago Medicine AdventHealth's mission of Extending the Healing Ministry of Christ, Hoffman said. "Christ's healing ministry came about because He was meeting people's needs, and He often would sit with a person over a meal to see what those needs were," she said. "To really care for people holistically to the best of our abilities, we must think creatively about how to meet their needs. Much of that is about building trust within



our communities. If people trust us because we are addressing food insecurity or other needs, then maybe they also will consider listening to us about diabetes prevention, healthy lifestyle tips and all the things we want to share with them to keep our communities whole and healthy."■

To learn more about how to support UChicago Medicine AdventHealth's micro pantries, contact Hoffman at Heather.Hoffman@AdventHealth.com or (630) 452-7386.

Katie Quirke is a marketing specialist at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth.



Old Clothes, New Purpose

Katherine Pierre, a senior biology major on the pre-medical track at Andrews University, has made a significant impact on the Andrews campus through a clothing donation initiative that promotes sustainability and supports those in need.

Katherine Pierre, a senior biology major on the pre-medical track at Andrews University, has made a significant impact on the Andrews campus through a clothing donation initiative that promotes sustainability and supports those in need. Pierre began this initiative during her sophomore year, beginning with the simple goal of recycling, but it has since evolved into an important resource for multiple local families.

Hailing from Maryland, Pierre attended Tacoma Academy before coming to Andrews. Her passion for service was ignited during a medical mission trip to Haiti in eighth grade, where she witnessed disparities in access to basic needs and education. This experience shaped her commitment to helping others, inspiring her to engage in various service projects both internationally and locally. The disparities in health care that she witnessed in Haiti encouraged her to pursue the pre-medical track at Andrews with the goal of one day becoming a doctor to help those in need. She chose to study medicine after discovering a passion for being hands-on and involved in the communities she has served.

While living in Lamson Hall on the campus of Andrews University, Pierre noticed an abundance of clothes left behind by students at the end of the school year, often destined for the trash despite being in fine condition. Determined to change this, she collaborated with dorm administrators to create donation bins in the laundry rooms, encouraging students to recycle their clothes instead of discarding them.

“At first, I would collect the clothes and take them to thrift stores, but I wanted to find a way to directly support those in need,” Pierre said. With the help of Diana Baltazar, custodial supervisor at Lamson Hall, Pierre was introduced to immigrant families living nearby who could benefit from the donations. Now, Pierre collects, washes and distributes the clothes directly to these families.

The initiative not only helps reduce waste but also addresses a critical need for clothing among local families. “For me, this isn’t a big deal,” Pierre shared. “It’s just about making a simple solution for something that should already be happening.” By transforming discarded clothing into a resource for those less fortunate, Pierre emphasizes the importance of community and environmental stewardship.



World Changers Made Here.

Now, as she approaches the end of her senior year, Pierre hopes to pass her project on to other students. “I want to find someone to take over this initiative and possibly turn it into a thrift store at Lamson Hall,” she shared. “There are many students here who might need clothes or want to recycle theirs, and I’d love to see this grow.”

For Pierre, the act of giving back is not a burden but rather a calling. “I feel like I’m just a connecting piece between surplus clothing and those who need it,” she said. “It’s rewarding to know that these clothes are being used rather than thrown away. I hope to inspire others to take up similar initiatives.”

Pierre’s vision extends beyond clothing donations. She encourages her peers to adopt sustainable practices, including recycling. “I think there’s a lot of room for improvement in recycling on campus,” she remarked. “I hope to see more students get involved in this and take it to the next level.” ■

Nicholas Gunn is a University Communication student writer.



▲ Andrews University senior Katherine Pierre stands outside Lamson Hall, showcasing a basket filled with recently donated items from University students.



▲ Andrew Mpita, intern pastor for administration and seminary student, makes an appeal at the revival series held at Chicago's Shiloh Church.

Twenty-two Decisions for Baptism at Bilingual Seminary-Led Series in Chicago

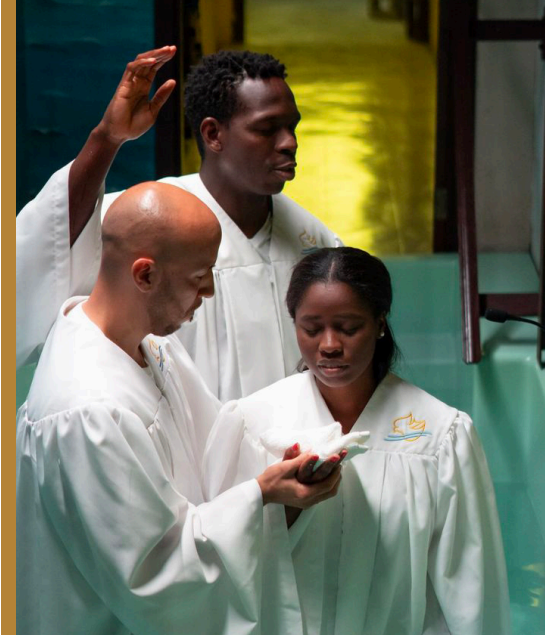
In a remarkable display of innovation and commitment, four students from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University orchestrated a bilingual evangelistic series in Chicago, igniting a powerful revival. On Sabbath, Oct. 5, 2024, ten individuals were baptized at the historic Chicago Shiloh Seventh-day Adventist Church, marking the beginning of a renewed faith journey for these precious souls.

What set this evangelistic series apart was not just its bilingual approach, but the fact that the entire initiative — from preaching to organizing — was driven entirely by the seminary students themselves and the local Shiloh leaders. Their dedication was evident as they engaged with the community through innovative programs like Taco Tuesday, diaper giveaways, and free grocery distributions, addressing immediate needs while fostering deeper connections.

The series drew guests every night on-line and in-person, thanks in part to Shiloh's robust transportation ministry, which ensured over 50 people were picked up each night. The evenings unfolded with a

Spanish-language session led by Pastors Oscar Güity and Jaffet Toledo at 6:15 p.m., followed by an English session at 7:15 p.m., guided by Pastor Andrew Mpita, focusing on the Sanctuary message, "Sacred Spaces." Behind the scenes, Pastor Cydreck Chintembo managed registration and follow-up efforts, ensuring that newcomers felt welcomed and supported.

Participants were also invited to ongoing ministries, such as KidsCamp, held every Sabbath morning at 9:30 a.m., where children were provided with meals and Bible study activities. Many attendees had previously participated in Shiloh's community initiatives, signifying the church's commitment



▲ Oscar Güity and Caleb Matias, intern pastors for Shiloh en Español, are both seminary students. Here Matias is baptizing a new member.

to serving its neighborhood and the healthy cycle of evangelism in place.

Travis Price, head elder at Shiloh, remarked, "The seminary students brought a lot of hope to many. Seeing so many people reached with the message of Christ's soon return is why we exist. These pastors are going to go on and do great work for God's kingdom wherever they serve."

Pastor John T. Boston II also emphasized the importance of the work done by the students, stating, "Evangelism is not an event. It is who we are called to be, not just what we do. I am proud of Andrew, Jaffet, Cydreck and Oscar for embracing the hard work that too many pastors avoid. This series is a living example of Scripture: 'My word shall not go out and return to Me void.'"

The impact of this initiative is expected to resonate far beyond the series itself, with 12 more baptisms scheduled in the coming weeks. Each new member will be integrated into a ministry at Shiloh, nurturing their faith and connection to the church community.

Launched in early 2024, Shiloh en Español was created to respond to the needs of over 45,000 South and Central American refugees settling in Chicago. This evangelistic series is a vital extension of that ministry, highlighting the church's commitment to meeting the needs of the city's diverse population. ■

Shiloh Communication

South Bend, Indiana, Church Opens as a “Place of Refuge”

The Berean Transformation Center’s commitment to community-based ministry in South Bend, Indiana, took another leap forward on Sabbath, Nov. 16, when Berean Pastor Claval Hunter wielded oversized scissors and cut a ribbon marking the grand opening of Berean’s new building in the heart of the South Bend community. In attendance were a number of Adventist church leaders and leaders from the community.

The grand opening of Berean’s new building is the next step in the realization of Berean’s vision to have a “Center of Influence” in the South Bend community. Under the leadership of Hunter, Berean established a monthly outreach ministry in June 2020 to meet the community’s needs, with the goal of reaching 10,000 souls for Christ. On the second Sabbath of each month, Berean closes the doors of the church and members hit the streets of South Bend to bring the church to the people.

When it comes to what he hopes will be accomplished now that Berean’s new building is open, Hunter says, “We want to provide that place of refuge, that place of hope. We want to provide the resources that will help someone to get back on their feet.” Such help includes mortgage and rent programs to assist community members with housing and help for community residents dealing with mental health issues.

Hunter adds that Berean’s message to community members is, “This is a safe place for you. We will get you to help. We have social workers, we have doctors, we have psychologists, we have individuals who are ready to make sure that your life can be better, your life can be whole. And we want to provide that space.”

As a part of Berean’s monthly outreach on second Sabbaths, the church prepares and hand-delivers meals to those deprived of

homes, reaching over 15,000 families in the past four years. Additionally, this monthly outreach includes empowerment and wellness programs for community children, youth and their families, bringing the church outside the building to where community members live.

Lake Region Conference President Garth Garbriel preached for the Berean Transformation Center’s grand opening and says he sees the fruit of Berean’s ministry in the community in the baptismal reports he receives. Part I and II of Berean’s Hope for the Hurting Heart seminar yielded a total of 60 baptisms between this year and last year.

When it comes to evangelism, Gabriel says tent meetings and other traditional evangelistic meetings are “not working as effectively” as in the past. “Maybe there are some places that it is still working, but I think [in] most places, most cities, you need more of this involvement in the community.” Gabriel adds, “I’m not going against ... putting a tent up. It’s good. You’re going to attract some people, but we want masses. We want our churches filled again. ... This transformation center is showing us new ways and creative ways of filling a church out.”

Also in attendance for Berean’s grand opening was Lake Union President Kenneth Denslow, who noted that students at the nearby Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary have the opportunity to learn best practices when it comes to urban ministry when serving with Hunter. Denslow sees great value when it

comes to Berean’s Seminary interns having the opportunity get a “vision for ministry in our cities, [which] I think is great.”

The opening of the Berean Transformation Center is just phase one of a four-phase vision. Hunter says that phase two will have a wellness center and gymnasium. Phase three will include an early learning center and affordable daycare. And phase four will feature a 500-seat worship auditorium.

“God has given me a vision to be able to move His people to truly be the hands and feet of Christ,” Hunter says. “There were moments where we thought that this was not going to happen, but yet God continued to push. He [brought] people alongside me and said, man, do not give up. Keep going.”

And Hunter says what keeps him going is when he hears someone reached by his ministry say, “Because of you, my life has been different. Because of you, my home is better. Because of you, I was able to give my life to Jesus Christ. Because of you, I was able to find a job. Because of you, I was able to get a Godly mate. Because of you, I’m making better choices in life.”

However, Hunter does not take the credit for the life changes of those he ministers to. “It’s not because of me. It’s because [of] what God has given me.” ■

David Pluviose has worked as a journalist and served as a volunteer lay pastor. He is now enrolled in the Master of Divinity program at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.



▲ Pastor Claval Hunter, center, surrounded by well-wishers. From left to right: Lake Region President Garth Gabriel, Berean Associate Pastor Desmond Sturru, Christina Hunter, and Elder Tracie Jacobs.



▲ A few years ago, Jean Hakiza began balancing his custodial duties at Andrews University while serving as part-time pastor of the Goshen Kinyarwanda Church in Indianapolis and the Berean Kinyarwanda Church in Lansing, Michigan.

Christa McConnell

Growing Need for Pastoral Care Among Refugee Congregations

As the number of refugee and immigrant congregations in North America rises dramatically, church administrators are increasingly turning to part-time pastors to meet the growing demand for spiritual leadership.

One such pastor, Jean Hakiza, is making significant sacrifices to effectively minister to two congregations in the Lake Region Conference, serving primarily Congolese and Rwandan refugees.

Since the establishment of the North American Division's Adventist Refugee and Immigrant Ministries in 2009, the number of refugee language groups has doubled, and congregations have tripled. Membership in these congregations has grown from 2,087 to over 9,960, alongside a remarkable eight-fold increase in both annual baptisms and tithe collections. Terri Saelee, coordinator of the ministry for the North American Division, emphasizes that these refugee language groups have become the driving force behind

growth in the church over the last 15 years. "These groups are responsible for most of the growth in the North American Division," Saelee notes.

Despite this explosive growth, conferences face challenges in hiring qualified pastors fluent in English, leading to the increased reliance on part-time pastors like Hakiza, who is employed full-time elsewhere. Hakiza, originally from Rwanda and a Tutsi genocide survivor, credits God for his resilience and current position. "The Lord saved me," he explains. "I promised to work for Him wherever I am called to go."

Since graduating from the Seventh-day Theological Seminary at Andrews University in 2008, Hakiza has worked as a supervisor

in Custodial Services at Andrews University. With a heart for pastoral ministry, he started volunteering at the Bethel Community Church in Lansing, Michigan.

In June 2022, he began balancing his custodial duties at Andrews while serving as part-time pastor of the Goshen Kinyarwanda Church in Indianapolis and the Berean Kinyarwanda Church in Lansing, Michigan. He manages to serve approximately 200 worshippers at Goshen and 130–150 at Berean on alternating Sabbaths, commuting four to six hours round trip every weekend. His typical Sabbath begins very early in the morning, around 5:30 a.m., and he often returns home around midnight after providing pastoral care, including visits to the sick. "That is a personal challenge," Hakiza admits, highlighting the demands of his dual roles. But his pastoral role is the one he most relishes.

To support his ministry, the Lake Union and North American Division have collaborated with the Lake Region Conference to provide Hakiza with a stipend, although he remains part-time. Saelee notes, "Pioneer workers like Hakiza work with much sacrifice, but it means the world to the churches." Such partnerships typically last for three years and aim to sustain the vital connection between pastors and their communities.

While the part-time scenario is only designed to assist churches for a relatively short time, Carmelo Mercado, Lake Union vice president for multiethnic ministries, said that one of the goals of the recently established multicultural committee at the union is to "help the refugee and immigrant churches through a strategy that includes applying for additional funding and providing the church members with stewardship training contextualized in their culture."

Hakiza expressed hope for a soon transition to full-time pastoral status, citing concerns about the wear and tear on his vehicle from extensive travel. "I have reported this

Chicago Central Hispanic Church Marks 90 Years of Service to the Community

The Chicago Central Hispanic Seventh-day Adventist Church commemorated a significant milestone in Oct. 2024, celebrating 90 years of its mission to preach the gospel to the Hispanic community in Chicago.

This year's celebrations highlight nearly a century of dedication and spiritual service, beginning with the formation of the first Hispanic Adventist group in the Lake Union in 1934.

Pastor Juan Daniel Villegas, who has been serving the congregation for just over a year, expressed his heartfelt gratitude during the Sabbath, Oct. 19, 2024, observance. "It was deeply moving to see brothers and sisters who, due to health reasons and advanced age, have not been able to attend church regularly. Some of them hadn't seen each other in over 10 years." He noted that this showed their connections within the community.

A memorable moment of the day included an interview with a couple who have been integral to the church since 1955, serving faithfully for more than 60 years. Additionally, another couple sang a special hymn they had performed in the church six decades ago, emphasizing the legacy left by previous generations to the new members now joining the congregation.

Pastor Villegas shared his encouragement from witnessing such unity and history within the church, stating, "It is indeed worth serving God in our local churches." The congregation continues to feel blessed and grateful for its longstanding commitment to the service of the community in Chicago.

In addition, members of the Central Hispanic Church's latest church plant, known

as Second Generation Church, also attended and expressed their appreciation for the church's support in planting this English-speaking multicultural church. ■

Debbie Michel is editor of the Lake Union Herald.



to the conference officers, and they told me they're trying to see how they can give me full-time status," he shares.

Lake Region Conference's Multilingual Ministries Coordinator Eddie Allen acknowledged Hazika's sacrifice, as well as the growth in both churches he pastors. "It's amazing," said Allen. "We are praying and intentionally looking for the opportunity as budget allows to bring him on as a paid full-time pastor."

In the meantime, Hakiza's resilience and commitment reflect the dedication of many pastors serving refugee populations despite numerous challenges. "I know that God has a plan for us," Hakiza concludes, underlining the hope and faith that drive his ministry and inspire those in his care. ■

David Pluviose has worked as a journalist and served as a volunteer lay pastor. He is now enrolled in the Master of Divinity program at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

Christa McConnell



▲ Lake Union exterior

One Million Dollar Grant to Support Lake Union Children's Ministry

The Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventist has received a \$1.2 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help nurture children in worship and prayer. This initiative is in collaboration with Illinois, Indiana, Lake Region, Michigan and Wisconsin conferences.

The program is funded through Lilly Endowment's Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiative, a national initiative designed to help Christian congregations more fully and intentionally engage children in intergenerational corporate worship and prayer practices.

The central goal of this program is to integrate worship and prayer into children's lives in an intergenerational worship setting. The Lake Union Conference believes that children were not meant to be mere observers of church worship but should be active participants, expressing their childlike faith in creative ways designed to enhance their love for God. This new initiative will support multicultural congregations by providing culturally intelligent resources and workshops specifically designed to assist children's ministry

leaders in welcoming and including children in their worship and prayer experiences.

Leading the initiative is Lake Union Vice President for Multicultural Ministry Carmelo Mercado and his administrative assistant, Magaly Torres.

"We are thrilled about the collaboration between the Lake Union and our conferences to launch this new resource," said Mercado. "We look forward to its potential impact in fostering a culture of inclusivity and participation within worship settings, where children feel valued, respected and encouraged to engage in worship, strengthening their connection to God and their faith community."

The Lake Union Conference is one of about 60 organizations funded through the latest round of the initiative. It represents and serves congregations in a broad spectrum

of Christian traditions, including Catholic, mainline Protestant, evangelical, Orthodox, Anabaptist and Pentecostal faith communities. Several organizations are rooted in Black Church, Hispanic and Asian American Christian traditions.

"Congregational worship and prayer play a critical role in the spiritual growth of children and offer settings for children to acquire the language of faith, learn their faith traditions and experience the love of God as part of a supportive community," said Christopher L. Coble, Lilly Endowment's vice president for religion. "These programs will help congregations give greater attention to children and how they can more intentionally nurture the faith of children, as well as adults, through worship and prayer."

ABOUT LILLY ENDOWMENT INC

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion and maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. The principal aim of the Endowment's religion grantmaking is to deepen and enrich the lives of Christians in the United States, primarily by seeking out and supporting efforts that enhance the vitality of congregations and strengthen the pastoral and lay leadership of Christian communities. The Endowment also seeks to improve public understanding of diverse religious traditions by supporting fair and accurate portrayals of the role religion plays in the United States and across the globe. ■

Debbie Michel is editor of the Lake Union Herald.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. Who will be the beneficiaries of this program?

“Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer” is a pilot program designed to enhance the spiritual lives of children through intergenerational worship and prayer in our multicultural immigrant/refugee churches and their communities within our Lake Union territory.

2. Who can participate in the program?

This initiative will be designed as a partnership with Lake Union, the children’s ministry leaders, and the multicultural ministry leaders of the five conferences. We will work with the local conferences to create an application process for churches interested in participating and provide

information associated with the application as soon as possible.

3. How long will this initiative last?

The program is designed to be implemented over five years, with the (intention of extending) to many other churches beyond the pilot phase.

Andrews University Celebrates Enrollment Increases and Strong National Rankings

During the current 2024–2025 school year, Andrews University is celebrating its 150th anniversary, honoring the school’s start as Battle Creek College in 1874 — the first institution of higher education to be established by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The young institution grew and moved from Battle Creek to Berrien Springs, Michigan, in 1901, where it took the name Emmanuel Missionary College.

In 1960, with the integration of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary on the Berrien Springs campus, the college became a university and chose a new name honoring one of the church’s first scholar-missionaries, J.N. Andrews. Since then, Andrews University has developed into a leading global university, significantly advancing the mission of the Adventist Church and impacting communities across the world.

During this sesquicentennial year of celebrations, Andrews University again celebrates a strong round of national university rankings and growth in enrollment.

NATIONAL RANKINGS

U.S. News Best Colleges

Andrews University was again named among the best national universities by U.S. News & World Report. Andrews climbed 47 spots from last year’s ranking of national universities, which represents the fourth largest increase of any university nationwide.

The selective 2025 U.S. News Best Colleges rankings are based on several metrics of academic strength, including a university’s graduation rate, class size and faculty to student ratio, all areas where Andrews outperforms the national average. This year, the ranking also gave additional weight to metrics that measure a university’s support for students from all social backgrounds, with Andrews being included in the list of

“Top Performers on Social Mobility,” reflecting the University’s success at graduating students with family incomes under \$50,000.

U.S. News also awarded Andrews the top position for ethnic diversity among national universities, tying for #1 with Stanford, Johns Hopkins and San Francisco University. Additionally, among national universities, Andrews placed No. 7 for most international students, with 20% of students coming from outside of the United States.

Of the more than 1,800 colleges and universities that U.S. News assesses, less than a quarter are recognized as national universities, as Andrews University is. This designation signals that a university offers a full range of undergraduate offerings as well as doctoral programs, where students at all levels are taught and mentored by research-active faculty. Andrews is the only national university run by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, offering students the full rigor of a premier higher education in a faith-affirming atmosphere.

Niche Best Colleges in America

Andrews University is No. 19 among Best Christian Colleges in America, according to Niche’s 2025 rankings, which included more than 500 Christian colleges and universities. Niche also recognized Andrews as the Best Christian College (#1 of 12), Top Private



▲ Andrews University's main campus is in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

University (#1 of 24) and Best Small College (#1 of 25) in the state of Michigan.

The Niche rankings are based on a detailed analysis of the academic quality and financial value of the University as well as a comprehensive student review system. Based on these factors, Niche assigned Andrews "A" grades in key areas such as academics, value, diversity, professors, campus food and safety.

More than 500 students and alumni have shared their experiences at Andrews with Niche. One review from a current sophomore expressed, "I love the fact that Andrews boasts of a rich diversity ... Each student is given an equal opportunity to explore other areas alongside academics. These areas include leadership opportunities, service-learning opportunities, career mentorship, support with small business startups, and community involvement."

Wall Street Journal 2024 Best Colleges in the U.S.

Andrews University was also named in the Wall Street Journal/College Pulse

"2024 Best Colleges in the U.S." rankings. Andrews is one of four Christian universities in Michigan and the only Adventist university in the United States included in this ranking of the nation's top 500 universities.

Andrews placed second among Michigan private universities in the student experience category, which considers student satisfaction with campus facilities, sense of community, mental health support and the quality of positive interactions within the ethnically and socioeconomically diverse student body.

"At Andrews University, we're proud to be providing an academically excellent and distinctively faith-based, world changing Adventist education," says Wagner Kuhn, interim chief academic officer at Andrews University.

"Taken together, these remarkable rankings all speak to the strength of Andrews as a recognized and acclaimed Seventh-day Adventist global university with outstanding academic offerings," says John Wesley Taylor V, president of Andrews University.

Fall Semester 2024 Enrollment Updates

Andrews University's headcount enrollment for fall 2024 showed 3,021 students — a 2% increase from last year and a 3% increase from the previous year.

Graduate headcount enrollment was 1,598 — an increase of 3% over last year. Undergraduate headcount enrollment was stable at 1,423. Additionally, undergraduate transfer enrollment was up 13%.

An additional 321 students are also registered and studying at international campus partners and programs this fall semester, which makes for an overall worldwide Andrews University 2024 fall semester enrollment of 3,342 students. An annual unduplicated headcount analysis showed 4,003 different students overall who enrolled at Andrews at some point between summer semester 2023 and spring semester 2024.

"Andrews University is deepening its commitment to being a truly Global Campus, which means that we are able to also offer that same quality and commitment to the additional Andrews students who study around the globe on partner campuses and through distance education options each year," says Alayne Thorpe, dean of the College of Education & International Services and dean of Graduate Studies.

"It's a particular privilege to take a measure of our remarkable University family in this 150th anniversary year," President Taylor notes. "As this year of celebration continues, I want to assure you that Andrews University remains fully committed to God and His calling for our lives — students, graduates, faculty, staff and administrators — and His ongoing mission for our University." ■

Office of University Communication and **Anthony Bosman**, chair, Andrews University Department of Mathematics

The Lake Union and Peru Build Partnership Through “Project Amigo”

In a growing effort to strengthen ties and share resources between church communities, leaders from the Lake Union and South Peru Union Mission are deepening their collaboration through a series of mission projects and cultural exchanges. This five-year partnership dubbed “Project Amigo” emphasizes mutual learning and support, creating opportunities for both regions to grow stronger together.

The Beginning of a Vision

The collaboration was inspired by calls from the General Conference for church leaders to experience global missions firsthand. A 2019 visit to South Peru proved pivotal for Lake Union President Ken Denslow, who participated by delivering sermons and encouraging baptisms. “That trip was transformative,” he recalled. “It was when we really began to see the potential for a deeper partnership. We met local leaders, shared ideas, and saw the incredible work being done there.”

A Two-Way Partnership

Unlike traditional mission projects that focus solely on giving, this partnership is built on the premise of mutual benefit. “This isn’t a



▲ Scholarship recipients, front row, left to right: Katelyn Bliven (Michigan), Seth McKelvey (Michigan), Valentina Rodriguez (Lake Region) and Pau Sian Khual (Indiana)

Conference Leaders Mentor Future Ministry Professionals

On Nov. 12, 2024, conference administrators and ministerial directors from across the Lake Union dedicated their time to mentoring theology students at the annual “Lake Union Day,” organized by the Andrews University Department of Religion & Biblical Languages.

The event’s primary objective was to strengthen the partnership between the department and the Lake Union, reaffirming their shared commitment to nurturing the next generation of pastoral leaders.

“This collaborative initiative equips our future pastors with the practical skills and core qualities essential for effective pastoral ministry,” said Rodney Palmer, department chair. This year’s event provided a platform for students to engage directly with experienced church leaders and gain insights into the realities of pastoral work.

The day-long program included interviews for junior and senior theology majors for potential pastoral openings, offering them a unique opportunity to network and make valuable connections. Meanwhile, first- and second-year students had the chance

to learn more about pastoral ministry and church organization.

Scholarship Recipients

One of the key moments of Lake Union Day was the announcement of the recipients of the Lake Union pastors’ and teachers’ scholarships. The theology scholarships were awarded to Seth McKelvey from the Michigan Conference and Pau Sian Khual from the Indiana Conference. The education scholarship awardees included Katelyn Bliven from the Michigan Conference and Valentina Rodriguez from the Lake Region Conference. ■

Debbie Michel is editor of the Lake Union Herald and director of communication for the Lake Union Conference.



▲ Artist rendering of one of the new parsonages which will be built

one-directional effort,” explained Denslow. “We need to recognize their strengths and what they can teach us while contributing what we can. We’re stronger together.”

One key lesson Lake Union members can take from their South Peruvian counterparts is their dedication to community service and outreach. “Their members are deeply engaged,” Denslow said. “They live and breathe church, not just for what the church can do for them, but how they can serve others. Seeing their passion in action is inspiring.”

In turn, the Lake Union’s resources provide critical support for infrastructure and other needs through funding and expertise. The union can help build facilities and supply equipment they wouldn’t otherwise have access to.

Current and Planned Projects

The partnership has already supported several key initiatives:

- **Parsonage Construction:** The program has committed to replacing aging and unsafe pastoral housing with new parsonages. Some pastors were living in homes made of deteriorating adobe bricks. The new structures, though modest, offer safe and livable conditions.

- **Church Building Projects:** Leaders from the conferences in the Lake Union will travel to Peru to work alongside local church members. They will be laying blocks together, while developing fellowship and shared purpose.
- **Media and Communication Support** South Peru’s strong focus on media outreach, including radio, TV and social media, has been a model for others. The Lake Union will explore ways to learn from them.
- **Educational and Healthcare Partnerships** Long-standing collaborations with institutions like AdventHealth and Andrews University are also being leveraged. For example, AdventHealth has provided medical equipment and training to Peruvian hospitals, while Andrews University has partnered with local institutions to enhance educational opportunities.

The Road Ahead

Looking forward, the partnership is set to expand. School groups from the Lake Union are planning trips to Peru to participate in service projects.

“This is about investing in relationships,” Denslow emphasized. “By working together, we’re reminded that the church is a global

community united by faith and service.”

This isn’t the first time the Lake Union has adopted an overseas mission. Some of you may recall “Operation Amigo” launched in 1992, whereby members of the Lake Union adopted the churches, conferences and missions of the new Dominican Union. Working together with our Dominican brothers and sisters we built churches and schools, something none of us could’ve have done alone.

If your church or school is interested in a mission project or trip to Peru, there will soon be a web page where you can see a variety of ways to engage in Project Amigo. Watch for the announcement and get involved! Remember, the Lake Union motto is: *Together In Mission: I Will Go.* ■

Debbie Michel is editor of the Lake Union Herald.



▲ Actual photo of a parsonage with crumbling adobe



Public Campus Ministries Spark Spiritual Renewal

During the fall semester, two new University of Wisconsin Public Campus Ministries were launched — one in Madison and the other in Milwaukee — with the goal of increasing spiritual growth among students.

“While many missionaries venture abroad, college campuses remain one of the most strategic yet overlooked mission fields right here at home,” said Joshua Guerrero, Wisconsin Conference’s Public Campus Ministry leader. “We believe God desires a transformative movement among young people that can impact the world for Christ.”

Amidst the excitement of college life, many students grapple with feelings of loneliness and the pursuit of the elusive “good life.” Public Campus Ministry aims to combat these challenges and provide a welcoming environment for students seeking community and answers about God. “Many students have never experienced a true personal relationship with Jesus,” Guerrero noted. “Our goal is to help them engage in relevant conversations and outreach initiatives that address their needs.”

During welcome week, the newly established campuses at UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee attracted many students eager to participate in events like the s’mores campfire and game nights.

Baptism at Bloomington

Meanwhile at Indiana University Bloomington, a student was baptized after attending small group meetings at the home of a fellow student.

Kevin Penley started coming to a CARE Group in Bloomington and the local Adventist church because of Mariana Luna, a fellow worker and an Indiana

University-Bloomington student. Mariana had been leading the group on Friday nights at her apartment with other Adventist Christian Fellowship (ACF) public campus ministry team members.

Kevin shared his testimony before his baptism. “Ever since I had accepted Jesus into my life I have been living with more peace and joy. My quality of life has been improved greatly when I put my focus and attention on God’s Word and the Bible.”

He further said that since he started meditating on Scripture first thing in the morning, his days have been more productive, and he has been happier. “It sets you in the right direction and strengthens my faith.”

He’s grateful for his new church family, which welcomed him “with open arms.” ■

Debbie Michel is editor of the Lake Union Herald.

▼ **Top to bottom:** Volunteer missionary Slava Cherempei and other students having fun at the UW Madison s’mores event

▼ Bloomington Indiana Church Pastor Sam Ngala baptizes Kevin Penley

▼ University of Wisconsin Madison students participate in an Adventist Christian Fellowship game night



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Explore Greeneville, Tennessee! Located near the Smoky Mountains, Greeneville Adventist Academy has an

accredited SDA K–12 day school program, supported by two constituent churches, prioritizing the Bible, evangelism, mission trips, academics and a high-quality music program (voice, band, bells and strings). MyGAA.org / 423 639-2011.

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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 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 seeks candidates for two nursing faculty positions. These are full-time exempt positions with a start date of 6/1/2025. Responsible for preparing undergraduate students to successfully complete the Union BSN curriculum and pass the National Council State Boards of Nursing Examination. Excellent benefit package that includes tuition assistance for dependents. See the full job description and instructions for application at uau.edu/employment.

Union Adventist University is seeking qualified candidates for Student Success Project Manager. This is a full, non-exempt position with excellent benefits including tuition assistance for dependents. The Project Manager will oversee and support student outreach and strategic initiatives that promote academic success, retention, and graduation. Involves data-driven insights and management, resource coordination, and continuous improvement of systems to optimize academic support resources. See the full 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.

Pacific Union College seeks qualified candidates to fill open positions in fulfilling our mission to Learn with Purpose,

Rise in Faith and Serve in Love. Beautiful mountain campus, minutes to shopping, an hour+ drive to ocean and skiing. If interested, please check out our current openings at puc.edu/campus-services/human-resources/current-job-postings.

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MILEPOSTS

OBITUARIES

COLLINS, Rowland "Row", age 67; born Aug. 27, 1956, in Kalamazoo, Michigan; died July 25, 2024, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He was a member of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He is survived by his brothers, Robert (Barb) Shultz, Herbie (Kathleen) Schultz, Ron (Pauline) Shultz; and sisters, Cheryl (Marvin) Button, Theresa Shultz, Vickie (Merlin) Lackie. Memorial services were conducted by Pastor David DeRose on Sept. 7, 2024, at the First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and inurnment was in Midwest Funeral Home & Cremation Society, with private inurnment.

EDERESINGHE, Esther, age 85; born Oct. 8, 1928, in Sri Lanka; died Sept. 30, 2024, in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. She

was a member of the Milwaukee Central Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She is survived by her son, Christopher (Traci) Ederesinghe; daughter, Jennifer (Timothy); sister, Jasmine; sister-in-law: Savinthri; brother-in-law, Samuel; many nieces and nephews; seven grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren.

GREEN, Sadie (Adams), age 82; born Jan. 11, 1942, in Flint, Michigan; died June 29, 2024, in Swartz Creek, Michigan. She was a member of the First Flint Seventh-day Adventist Church in Flint, Michigan. She is survived by her son, Gregory (Heather) Green; daughters, Sharie (John) Dengler, Laura (Marty) Richard; sister, Sally McKenzie; sister-in-law, Suzanne Green; 10 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. A memorial was conducted by Pastor Douglas Malcolm on July 2, 2024, at the

Great Lakes National Cemetery in Holly, Michigan.

ROBERTSON, Yolande O.

(Bouvier), age 72; born Aug. 4, 1952, in Algiers, Algeria; died Nov. 10, 2024, in Stevensville, Michigan. She was a member of the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan. She is survived by her husband, Terry D. Robertson; sons, Jean-Paul (Trisha) Robertson, Didier Robertson; brother, Thierry Bouvier; and one grandchild. A memorial was conducted by Seminary Professor Jo Ann Davidson on Nov. 24, 2024, with a private graveside service at the Rosewood Cemetery in Berrien Springs, Michigan. If you would like to send a card of sympathy or a gift in memoriam, please send to 8695 George Ave. Berrien Springs, MI 49103.

SMITH, Kenneth "Ken" M., age 73; born Sept. 3, 1950, in Rangoon, Burma; died Aug. 11, 2024, in Tacoma, Washington. He was a member of the Wisconsin Academy Seventh-day Adventist Church in Columbus, Wisconsin. He was survived by his wife, Heather (Rowell) Smith; sons, Joshua T. Smith, Jonathan K. Smith; brothers, Dr. Eden L. Smith, William D. Smith; and sister, Vikki M. (Smith) Clemons. A private memorial inurnment was conducted by his brother

and retired pastor, Bill Smith, on Aug. 22, 2024, at the Sandpoint Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sandpoint, Idaho.

STURDAVANT, Judy D. (Nolf), age 76; born Oct. 22, 1948, in Cadillac, Michigan; died Oct. 29, 2024, in Belding, Michigan. She was a member of the Edmore Seventh-day Adventist Church in Edmore, Michigan. She is survived by her husband, Miles "Gary" Sturdavant; brothers, Van Nolf, Victor Nolf; sister, Mary Burton; sister-in-law, Melany Nolf; and goddaughters, Robin, Anita, Katherine, Shelly, and Kimberly. A private memorial inurnment was conducted by Pastors Ryan Counsell, Robert Benson and David Gotshall on Nov. 17, 2024, in Michigan.

WERY, Edward J., age 89; born March 7, 1935, in Wilson, Michigan; died Sept. 30, 2024, in Escanaba, Michigan. He was a member of the Wilson Seventh-day Adventist Church in Wilson, Michigan. He is survived by his sons, Steve (Debbie) Wery, Ronald (Terri) Wery, Gary (Maggie) Wery; daughter, Debra (Steven) Besson; eight grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; and six great-great-grandchildren. A funeral was conducted by Pastor Jim Hakes on Oct. 6, 2024, at the Wilson Seventh-day Adventist Church, with interment in Wilson, Michigan.

CALENDAR OF OFFERINGS

JANUARY

- 4 Local Church Budget
- 11 Religious Liberty* (NAD)
- 18 Local Church Budget
- 25 Local Conference Advance

FEBRUARY

- 1 Local Church Budget
- 8 Adventist Television Ministries Evangelism* (NAD)
- 15 Local Church Budget
- 22 Local Conference Advance

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.

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January & February

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

GENERAL EVENTS

Jan. 30–Feb. 1: Newmyer Classic Basketball Tournament
Feb. 20–22: Music & Worship Conference
Feb. 26–March 1: Choir & Orchestra Music Festival

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.

Feb. 1, 8 p.m.: Wind Symphony & SMC Brass Band Winter Concert
Feb. 8, 8 p.m.: Symphony Orchestra Young Artist Concert
Feb. 22, 8 p.m.: University Choirs: Chasing Away the Blues
Feb. 28, 7:30 p.m.: Wind Symphony Vespers Concert

ILLINOIS

Jan. 8–18: 10 Days of Prayer, Online
Jan. 17–20: Youth Winter Retreat, Camp Akita
Jan. 24: Area Coordinators Retreat, Camp Akita
Feb. 1: Area Level Bible Experience
Feb. 1: Hispanic Elders Retreat, TBD
Feb. 9: Master Guide Training, Conference office
Feb. 21–23: Public Campus Ministries Retreat, TBD
Feb. 23: Alive in Jesus Sabbath School Training, Northern, TBD

INDIANA

Jan. 10–12: Hispanic Elders Retreat, Timber Ridge Camp
Jan. 17–19: Pathfinder Winter Campout, Timber Ridge Camp
Jan. 18: Indiana Conference Virtual Prayer Summit
Feb. 1: Area Level Pathfinder Bible Experience
Feb. 14–16: Hispanic Marriage Retreat, Timber Ridge Camp
Feb. 21–22: Conference Youth Rally, Indianapolis Junior Academy

LAKE REGION

Jan. 8–18: 10 Days of Prayer
Jan. 18: Capacitación de Nuevos Líderes, Logan Square Hispanic Church
Feb. 1: Area Level Pathfinder Bible Experience
Feb. 8–15: Christian Home & Marriage Week/Semana Cristiana del Hogan y el Matrimonio, Chicago area

MICHIGAN

Jan. 10–12: Teen Snow Outing, Camp Au Sable
Jan. 21–23: ASPIRE Outdoor Ed, Camp Au Sable
Jan. 24–26: Man Camp, Camp Au Sable
Feb. 1: Area Level Pathfinder Bible Experience
Feb. 2: Personal Ministries Workshop, Conference office
Feb. 9: VBS Workshop, Conference office
Feb. 14–17: CAMPUS Winter Retreat, Camp Au Sable
Feb. 21–23: Teen Impact, Camp Au Sable
Feb. 28–March 2: Health Ministries Retreat, Camp Au Sable

WISCONSIN

Jan. 10–12: Public High School Retreat, Camp Wakonda
Jan. 13–17: Summer Camp Recruitment, Wisconsin Academy
Jan. 17–18: JAHWI Leader Retreat, Location TBA
Jan. 17–18: Youth Rally, Wisconsin Academy
Jan. 24–26: Men's Retreat, Camp Wakonda
Feb. 1: Area Level Pathfinder Bible Experience
Feb. 7–9: Pathfinder Winter Retreat, Camp Wakonda
Feb. 21–23: Volunteer Lay Pastor Training, Conference office

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



Sabbath Sunset Calendar

	Jan. 3	Jan. 10	Jan. 17	Jan. 24	Jan. 31	Feb. 7	Feb. 14	Feb. 21	Feb. 28
Berrien Springs, Michigan	5:26	5:34	5:41	5:50	5:59	6:08	6:17	6:26	6:34
Chicago	4:32	4:39	4:47	4:55	5:04	5:13	5:22	5:31	5:40
Detroit	5:12	5:19	5:27	5:36	5:45	5:54	6:03	6:12	6:21
Indianapolis	5:32	5:39	5:47	5:55	6:03	6:11	6:20	6:28	6:35
La Crosse, Wisconsin	4:40	4:47	4:56	5:05	5:14	5:24	5:34	5:43	5:52
Lansing, Michigan	5:17	5:24	5:32	5:41	5:50	5:59	6:09	6:18	6:26
Madison, Wisconsin	4:35	4:42	4:50	4:59	5:09	5:18	5:27	5:36	5:45
Springfield, Illinois	4:46	4:53	5:00	5:09	5:17	5:25	5:33	5:42	5:49

Data procured from timeanddate.com. Error not exceeding two minutes and generally less than one minute.

Renewed Level of Commitment

“Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” Proverbs 16:3

Sometime ago when I accepted the position of prayer ministry leader at my church, after much prayer and patience, I awaited God’s answer. He sent me so many wonderful ideas. The prayer team and I began incorporating those ideas with the congregation; it was so joyous. This was while working full-time, keeping up with my family, and working with programs in the community.

I share all this to tell you that God will do wonders when we commit ourselves to Him. Never, ever say what cannot be done. God only needs a willing heart. There is so much joy and fulfillment when we put ourselves in the hands of God, like Isaiah we can say, *“Here I am Lord, send me.”* (Isaiah 6:8) *Nothing is impossible for the Lord! “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”* (Philippians 4:13)

Look at what He has done for you in your life. The blessings known and unknown. You already know there is nothing in this life that God cannot use for His glory. Become a teacher at Sabbath School with the children or adults or work in some other ministry. Give it your wholehearted effort because you love the Lord and want to give Him 100%. Have you really committed to Him your very best, including how you train your children or grandchildren? Are you teaching them how they can fully rely on God for everything?

You may say you do *not* have the time to commit to either leading out or working with a ministry. God does *not* call the qualified, He qualifies the called ... Y O U!

I am reminded of young David. He was committed to God when he chose to fight Goliath. He was used by God to win that battle. Or look at Hannah, Samuel’s mother. She committed Samuel to God. And she was blessed with other children. Some struggling soul needs you — through the touch of

the Master’s hand. That could be all it takes to win that soul to Christ. We just never know how God and the Holy Spirit can mold and shape the heart to do great things.

“He who truly loves and fears God, striving with a singleness of purpose to do His will, will place his body, his mind, his heart, his soul, his strength, under service to God. ... Those who are determined to make the will of God their own must serve and please God in everything. ...” (Ellen G. White, “In Heavenly Places,” Page 190)

As you begin this new year, 2025, may your commitment to the cause of Christ be stronger and more diligent. Be His faithful, committed servant ready to do great things in His name. Your life will never be the same. Remember, you are a child of God. May the love of God shine through all that you do and may it testify to others of God’s rich love for all. ■

Paulette Taylor continues to let prayer become central in her life. As the Indiana Conference Prayer Ministry leader, she enjoys working with the various prayer leaders and church families. She also regularly seeks creative avenues to work with the community as well, incorporating prayer as she shares the love of God.



▲ PAULETTE TAYLOR



Navigating Religious School Funding



▲ JENNIFER GRAY WOODS

Is it legal for a state to provide funding to religious schools?

The issue of public funds being used to support religious schools has been around for over 150 years. During the 1870s, U.S. congressman and speaker of the house, James Blaine, proposed a constitutional amendment to outlaw government aid to educational institutions that had a religious affiliation. Although the constitutional argument for the legislation was to defend the separation of church and state, the idea was also seen as motivated by anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic bias. The Blaine amendment ultimately did not become law, but many states established their own Blaine amendments, prohibiting states from funding religious schools. In fact, up until recently, 38 states had variations of Blaine amendments as part of their state laws.

However, recently, many Blaine amendments across the country were struck down in the U.S. Supreme Court's decisions in the 2020 case of

Espinoza v. Montana Dept. of Revenue and the 2022 case of *Carson v. Makin*. In those cases, the Supreme Court held that it is a violation of the First Amendment's free exercise clause for states to place restrictions on state scholarship programs or school vouchers that are offered to private schools just because students want to use them to attend religious private schools.

Instead, state funding programs must be neutral regarding religion. The court emphasized in both cases that states do not have to subsidize private education. However, once a state decides that it is going to subsidize private education it must do so in a way that doesn't discriminate against religious schools.

The dissenting justices cautioned though that these decisions eroded the principle of separation of church and state and the First Amendment's establishment clause in requiring states to fund religious institutions.

Additionally, just because states can't exclude religious schools when they provide funds to other secular private schools it doesn't prevent a state from attaching strings to the funding. For example, after the Supreme Court's ruling in *Carson*, the state attorney general now requires that schools receiving funds follow Maine's LGBTQ nondiscrimination requirements in student codes of conduct in teacher hiring. This requirement, in essence, precludes many religious schools from receiving the state funds.

Although recent Supreme Court cases have weakened states' Blaine amendments, this will likely not be the last that we see states grappling with whether, how and under what conditions they will provide funding to religious schools. ■

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



One Plus God Equals Abundance

“The more you give, the more you receive.” This simple yet philosophical principle echoed throughout time, reminds us of the blessings that come from a generous spirit. It’s a profound truth that the Lake Union witnessed firsthand in 2024.

Early in 2024, the Lake Union made a bold, faith-filled decision to invest in the future of ministry and education. The Union pledged \$1 million, to support incoming Andrews University students pursuing careers in teaching and pastoral ministry. This act of generosity was driven by a vision of strengthening the church’s capacity to nurture and lead, as well as a deep belief in God’s ability to multiply efforts made in faith.

What followed was nothing short of divine reciprocity. Just months after this initial gift, the Lake Union learned it had been awarded a \$1.2 million grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. This grant is designated to nurture our children’s spiritual development through worship and prayer, as part of Lilly Endowment’s national initiative, *Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer*. (See page 28 for more details).

In essence, the donation of a million dollars to Andrews University, returned to the Union — with interest — to support an additional ministry for children. What a powerful example of divine exchange!

The experience is a reminder of Christ’s words in Acts 20:35: “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” While financial gifts are remarkable, the true blessing of giving extends far beyond numbers. By giving freely, we create space for God to work in ways that surpass our finite understanding.

Generosity isn’t just about meeting needs — it’s about cultivating a spirit of abundance that reflects God’s character. When we invest in others, especially in their spiritual growth, we become part of a larger story of faith, hope and transformation. The

Lake Union’s experience demonstrates how giving can open unexpected doors, aligning our action of obedience with God’s greater purpose.

This offers encouragement for all of us. Whether we give our time, talents, or resources, God uses our contributions to create ripples of blessing that impact lives in ways we may never fully observe. As we trust Him with what He has originally entrusted to us, we not only witness material provision but also experience the gratitude of participating in His kingdom work.

As we begin a new year, let’s decide to give freely, trusting in the promise that our generosity will not only meet immediate needs but also paves the way for God’s blessings to overflow in unimaginable ways. Indeed, the more we give, the more we receive — not just in a financial return, but in experiencing the fullness of God’s provision and abundant love. ■

Jermaine Jackson serves the Lake Union Conference as associate treasurer and stewardship director.



▲ JERMAINE JACKSON



Extra to My Ordinary

We all desire to make a positive impact, but sometimes we feel like we must do something extraordinary for it to matter. I used to think that way, too. I used to look at people having deep, life-changing conversations with strangers and think, “That’s what I need to do.”

But when people learned I was a pastor, they would become polite but distant, especially young people. They seemed to build a wall when they heard I was a pastor.

The truth is that many people feel judged or misunderstood by the church. It was hard for me to accept, but it’s a reality. So, how could I share Jesus with them when there was so much mistrust? That’s when it hit me — on a riverbank with a fishing rod.

Fishing was more than just a hobby for me. It became my way of connecting with people who would never step inside a church. Something about fishing — standing shoulder-to-shoulder, waiting for a bite — makes conversation come naturally. No pressure, no agenda. Just like what is happening in the little moments.

One morning, I was finishing my fishing at the St. Joseph River in Berrien Springs, Michigan, when two college guys showed up to fish for steelhead. They had their gear, but I could tell they had not found a good spot. I was ready to head out, so I gave them mine — a place that had been working for me — and handed over the rest of my bait.

They were surprised. I could see it on their faces. Maybe it’s because most fishermen don’t give away their best spots. Many hold their “honey holes” tight, guarding them like treasure. But for me, fishing has always been about relationships, not competition. I’m willing to share everything I know if it helps me connect with others. It’s a small act, but it can change everything.

We chatted about fishing and swapped a few stories. No deep conversation happened that day, but I could see a connection had been made. Respect had been earned. That’s what mattered. The moment wasn’t about baptisms or a radical conversion — it was about planting a seed, opening the door for something more. One day, I believe these interactions will mean something even more profound.

I’ve learned that sharing Jesus only sometimes comes in big, flashy moments. It happens when we show up in life’s small, ordinary spaces. The times when we’re not preaching or handing out flyers but just being present, living life, listening and laughing. These are the moments that make a real difference.

Maybe you love fishing, or perhaps it’s something else — music, gaming, hiking. Whatever it is, use it. Those passions of yours are tools to build relationships. They’re ways to meet people where they are, in their ordinary lives. Don’t wait for a stage, don’t wait for the “right” moment. The right moment is right now. ■

Mikey Ayala is a student at the Seventh-day Theological Seminary at Andrews University and host of the “Jesus on a Jon Boat” podcast. You can follow him at Instagram/YouTube: @lovemasfishing



Lessons From My Father

Our blessings are all around us — if we just stop to look. My introduction to this truth began early in my childhood. The memories surrounded time spent in fellowship at the Potter's House in Maywood, Illinois.

I was 6 at the time and didn't quite grasp the confluence of circumstances that had brought us all under the same roof. Here were Black men striving to get back on their feet — strong men who had encountered some bumps on life's journey; recovering alcoholics, drug addicts, former inmates, homeless individuals, all attempting to assimilate back into society. There were men both feared and shunned by society.

Once a week I would accompany my father to the Potter's House. His paternal concerns for my safety were overshadowed by a deeper need to teach me lessons that he knew could not be internalized otherwise. There, he would introduce me to the gentlemen, and we would sit together in fellowship — brotherhood — over a meal. My dad would listen to their stories, and he would share his. After a few minutes of singing together, he would present a devotional thought, and the men would all pray together; "Men ought often to pray ..." (Luke 18:1) He always had a Bible verse, poem or quote for life's situations.

My father possessed an understanding of the need for genuine connection. He understood the issues of life that plague us all. Our battles with self-acceptance, hopelessness, failure, anxiety, inadequacy. He was a living testament that God's grace was unquestionably sufficient.

There was a certain humility with which he approached life. He understood that the best way to lead was in service to others. Life becomes more meaningful when we accept that the way we live is our strongest testament. Our actions — the way we speak to people, the warmth in our gaze, the tenor in our tone.

My father showed me what it was to be other-centered. You are rarely called to help at a

time that is convenient for you. For those in need, timing is even less convenient. His struggles early in life acquainted him with the symptoms of loneliness and despair. God had saved my father in his lowest moments, and he felt an obligation to ensure that his life was not lived in vain. He served a God that loved and cared so deeply for us. It would be inhumane not to make an attempt to love and care for those around us.

He was guided by the Holy Spirit and his keen intuition. Life is teaching us, constantly! Lessons abound in both our blunders and achievements. As a man who exhibited deep spirituality, he taught me the power of independent thought and belief in self. "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them," was his frequent reminder.

The moments I miss him most reveal to me how blessed I am. If my current grief is the price for experiencing the life of my father firsthand, I will gladly pay it 100 times over. He showed me that no matter what lies ahead, our duty is to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. ■

*A month before his 35th birthday, **Elijah Horton** suddenly lost his father, beloved pastor Michael Horton.*





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