

SERVING SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS IN THE LAKE UNION SINCE 1908

HERALD

APRIL 2025



**STANDING
IN THE
GAP**

One Educator's Call
to the Ministry of
Special Education

? POP QUIZ

You reach your hand into your mailbox, and it comes back out holding the brand-new Lake Union Herald Education issue that you're gripping right now. Like an excited first grader, you flip to the editor's page and realize that the title announces a "pop quiz" for our magazine readers. Instant anxiety! You look to your neighbor to complain, saying, "This was not announced." They answer, "We didn't get to study either." You're soon reminded that that's exactly what a pop quiz is. Thankfully, Lake Union Herald readers are always ready. Plus, it's only a couple of questions. You grab your sharpened #2 pencil and begin.

QUESTION #1: In your lifetime, how many winters have you experienced so far? (A real question). Include both mild and harsh winters; include memories of ungloved fingers, frozen toes and stinging noses. Include the winter sun's acquired bad habit of leaving work early and of bright-voiced songbirds leaving vacancy signs in the branches of hushed Lake Union trees. Calculate. Check your work and note your answer. And just like that your pop quiz is halfway done.

QUESTION #2: Considering your answer to question #1, how many of those winters were followed by a warming spring? Show your work. How many of the frigid winters were followed by the relief of a brighter, warmer season that hand-delivered pastel flowers and whispered breezes?

For the high achievers who finished our quiz early, we do have an extra credit question: Have you yet found a dark night strong enough to prevent the soft greeting of morning light? Is not even mourning incapable of stopping the morning? True or false?

As you turn in your papers, I ask myself a question ... What lesson does the universe's Schoolmaster intend for us to glean from our "pop quiz" on nature's cycles and patterns, which Ellen White calls "next to the Bible, our great lesson book?"

I raise my hand to answer ... The paragraphs of this issue are loaded with lessons that testify of the exceeding goodness of a great God who educates us to make us better. His lessons are all around us; in all we see and in every test we survive. As you read the stories in this current issue, may we continue to consider His enveloping love. And may He continue to provide us, throughout our seasons, with opportunities to learn of Him.

Debbie

P.S.
 Would you please
 do us a favor and take the
 reader survey on p. 35?
 This helps us produce a magazine
 which best serves your interest.
 Thank you in advance.



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

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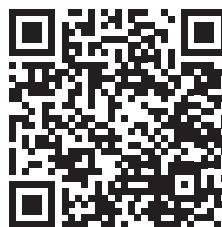
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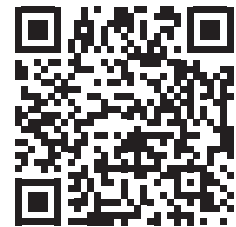
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Empowering Educators

LAKE UNION CONFERENCE EDUCATION TEAM ADVANCES SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

“He appointed some to be ... teachers ... to prepare all God’s people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–12, GNT), and for the Lake Union education team, this divine attribution is a high and humbling commission.



▲ RUTH HORTON

From providing teacher trainings and leadership development to facilitating school accreditations and providing targeted financial support, we aim to advance four priorities — continuing collaboration, focused support, growing empowerment, and responsive accountability. With enrollment of just over 2,900 students in 77 schools and education centers, the Lake Union Conference (LUC) education team gratefully embraces educational service through partnerships.

The current school year ushered in the department’s support for and participation in the *Believe the Promise* International Camporee. Administering an unexpected worthy academy student scholarship gifted for the 2024–25 school year and benefiting from STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), leadership training, special education and other grant supports, reminded us, that our earth truly is the Lord’s, and too, its *fullness*.

Annual Small Schools’ week-long intensive for newly hired educators, a one-day Registrars and Administrative Assistants’ conference, Science Teachers Professional Learning Community (PLC) forum, AU-LUC STEM Day for K–12 educators, AU-LUC Teachers Professional Day held for AU pre-service teachers, annual LUC Secondary Leadership Conference for academy student leaders combined for a robust and inspiring 2024 summer-fall season.

Our Early Childhood and Curriculum Advisories led by associate directors, Sue Tidwell and Nicole Mattson, provide direction and guide the framework, planning and cohesiveness for administering

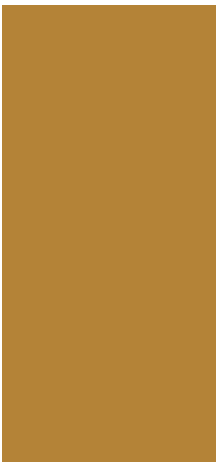
support in early childhood education (ECE) and EC–12 curriculum. Christ-centered, age and developmentally appropriate NAD curricula and resources are reviewed and made available for centers, daycare programs and preschools. From standards-based learning and training resources and social emotional support to the Science of Reading, the focus and curricula implementation direction are more clearly defined.

We take to heart that in our schools, educators serve *in loco parentis*, and to the best of their abilities, shield the vulnerable in their care. Two fall 2024 trainings on child sex abuse prevention, “Darkness to Light,” provided for the LUC Early Childhood Advisory members as well as K–12 education leaders, highlight added avenues of field support. ... All for equipping students, staff, teachers and educational leaders; for building up the body of Christ; and for the glory of our Savior.

This school year, recently hired special education coordinator and instructional coach, Wadzanai Bepe, PhD, is engaged in attending to the needs of exceptional learners, as invited to do so, through her work with our conferences, schools and educators.

In your hand is the April issue which highlights support for learners with exceptionalities. Journey with me along this newly routed, bustling, inclusively hope-inspired pathway in LUC education — Special Education. ■

Ruth Horton, EdD, is director of education for the Lake Union Conference.



Have No Fear



▲ INGRID WEISS SLIKKERS

Fear. So much fear. Fear can take over our minds and body systems. Maybe it starts with situations in our personal and family life. Then with a flash of a news report, events in our world feel like things are closing in – fires, plane crashes, safety concerns, school shootings, leadership, the economy, need I go on?

Maybe reading those words activates your fear response causing you to feel nauseous, your breathing changes and your heartbeat starts to go faster. Cortisol and adrenaline are being released as your body is activating your sympathetic nervous system (our stress response system) just when your intention was to simply read an encouraging article. It's no surprise that the Bible addresses fear so often. In fact, many English translations include around 365 verses on fear, which some interpret as providing one for each day of the year.

Fear affects both our brain and body, and it can disrupt our prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for reasoning. Our children are no exception – despite our efforts to protect them, they are not immune to fear. In fact, because their brains are still developing, they may experience fear more intensely. Often, we try to reason with our children about their fears, but we forget that the body needs to calm down first. Until that happens, the mind struggles to process the fear effectively.

Bruce D. Perry, a well-known neuroscientist and child psychiatrist, suggests a “3 R” approach in his neurosequential model. First, we **regulate**. Because our prefrontal cortex will be able to think more clearly if our body is calm, one immediate way is to do intentional deep breathing. God's first gift to Adam was the breath of life. Breath remains a gift from God, playing a vital role in helping to regulate our nervous system. There are many creative ways to do intentional breathing along with other activities (such as singing loudly) that can help us to regulate. A quick on-line search will offer many ideas. Learning and

practicing regulation is important for both us and our children, while also emphasizing the key role of co-regulation in this process.

Next, Dr. Perry suggests we **relate**. Children need to feel connected to us. This could be by our physical presence, giving a hug, verbally saying, “I'm right here.” We were not made to be in isolation even as adults. Speaking to a trusted person about our fears is important. Sharing our feelings and knowing that someone understands, or even relates, can be beneficial for both our minds and bodies. This connection can help reduce cortisol levels, which are linked to our stress response, promoting better regulation.

Once regulation and relating have occurred, we can move to the third R which is **reason**. It is in this state that children (and adults) are then able to reflect, learn, problem solve and build skills.

Mark 6 recounts the story of the disciples in a storm, filled with fear. In verse 50, Jesus appears and reassures them, saying, “It's all right, I am here! Don't be afraid,” and then climbs into the boat with them. In this moment, Jesus helps them regulate their fear by offering reassurance, His presence, and comfort. Only after their fear was eased did the deeper lessons follow. ■

Resources:

<https://www.bdperry.com/a-neurodevelopmental-approach>
<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/The-Three-Rs.pdf>

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



Understanding Weight Loss Drugs

Over the past couple of years, the term GLP-1 has taken center stage with names such as Trulicity (generic liraglutide), Wegovy and Ozempic (generic semaglutide),

What are these drugs, do they work, and are there natural ways to mimic the action of GLP-1? GLP-1 stands for glucagon-like peptide-1. GLP-1 is a naturally occurring hormone (chemical messenger) produced in the intestines. Some functions of GLP-1 include: Stimulating release of insulin from the pancreas, helping to lower blood sugar levels, and slowing down emptying of the stomach, which helps you feel full longer and reduces appetite.

GLP-1 agonists like Trulicity, Wegovy and Ozempic are a class of medications that mimic the actions of GLP-1 in the body. Wegovy is used for weight management, while Trulicity and Ozempic are used for management of type 2 diabetes. These medications work similarly, but Wegovy is dosed higher to optimize its appetite-suppressing effects, making it more targeted as a weight-loss medication. Common side effects of GLP-1 medications include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, constipation and low blood sugar. Less common but serious side effects include pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas), gallstones, thyroid C-cell tumors (rare) and allergic reactions.

There are many factors impacting weight management including diet, exercise, sleep, stress and hormonal balance. While medications can be helpful for some individuals who need assistance with weight management, these medications will not result in long-term weight management in the absence of incorporating lifestyle modifications.

Natural ways to increase GLP-1 in the body

Fiber is a power-packed carbohydrate that can increase GLP-1 in the body. Healthy gut microorganisms break down dietary fiber into substances called

short-chain fatty acids which signal cells in the gut to release GLP-1. Fiber slows down emptying of the stomach, increasing satiety and reducing appetite. This delay in stomach emptying, along with improved insulin sensitivity, also helps to lower blood sugar levels, reducing risk for diabetes and improving blood sugar control in persons with diabetes. Fiber improves gut health and reduces inflammation, also helping in weight management. Foods high in fiber include legumes (beans, peas, lentils), fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds.

Exercise, through the action of healthy gut microorganisms, can also produce short-chain fatty acids, increasing GLP-1 production.

While there is limited research on the impact of sleep and GLP-1 production, research has shown that consistent short sleep duration (less than seven hours per night) can impact the function of appetite hormones, increase food cravings, and lead to an increased risk of obesity.

While GLP-1 medications are helpful for some individuals, medications alone do not get at the root causes of disease and should never be considered a cure.

Incorporation of lifestyle modifications, including high fiber diets, at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise (brisk walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, etc.) plus two to three days of resistance/strength training per week, seven to eight hours of sleep per night, and positive stress management are essential in weight management.

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



▲ CHRISTINA WELLS



A Daily Conversion or A Daily Controversy



▲ DENIS KAISER

In the early 20th century, a theological debate divided the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The disagreement centered around the interpretation of the term “daily” in Daniel 8:11–13.

While S.N. Haskell and J.N. Loughborough believed it referred to pagan Rome, W.W. Prescott, A.G. Daniells, and others argued it symbolized the heavenly ministry of Christ. Haskell and Loughborough presumed that Ellen G. White had allegedly settled this question already in one statement 60 years earlier, yet Prescott and other younger leaders argued that the Bible should be the final norm in interpreting the term. Both sides were passionate, and the debate quickly became heated, with emotions, assumptions and hidden agendas coming into play.

Beyond the theological arguments, Ellen White saw a deeper issue. She observed that the real problem was not the debate itself but the attitudes and actions of those involved. She noted that both sides were focusing on a relatively minor point of interpretation while neglecting the more significant principles of love, unity and humility.

Ellen White cautioned both sides against using her writings as the final word to settle the dispute, emphasizing that she had no divine instruction on the specific question and considered it of minor importance. Instead, she encouraged church members to rely on the Bible as the foundation of doctrinal understanding.

But more importantly, she urged both parties to examine their hearts and consider the spiritual consequences of their actions. She warned that their arguments were giving room for “Satanic agencies” to sow discord and confusion among believers.¹ Instead of promoting Christian love and unity, the debate was causing division and weakening the church’s ability to spread the gospel message.

Her advice was clear: The church should focus on nurturing a spirit of mutual love, humility and

reconciliation. She called for church leaders and members alike to humble themselves before God, pray earnestly for guidance, and seek a “daily conversion” to renew their hearts and minds.² She believed that true Christian unity would come not through winning arguments but through a spirit of cooperation, respect and love for one another.

In today’s world, churches face similar challenges. Debates and disagreements can arise over various theological or practical matters. However, Ellen White’s message remains relevant: Rather than allowing differences to drive us apart, we should focus on what unites us — our shared faith in Christ, our commitment to care for one another, and our mission to share the gospel and God’s love with the world.

When conflicts arise, we need to remember that love, humility and prayerful reflection are more important than competing with one another and winning arguments. By putting these principles into practice, we can foster a spirit of unity and peace that points to Jesus and draws others closer to Him. We may learn from the past and seek to resolve conflicts in a way that reflects Christ’s love and brings us closer together as children of the Heavenly King.³ ■

- 1 Ellen G. White, “Manuscript Releases,” 10:334–337, 12:224–225, 9:106, 20:17–22; “Selected Messages,” 1:167–168.
- 2 Ellen G. White, “Selected Messages,” 1:165. See also Manuscript Releases, 20:20; “Selected Messages,” 1:167–168.
- 3 For more information on the conflict, see Denis Kaiser, “The Word, the Spirit of Prophecy, and Mutual Love: Lessons from the ‘Daily’ Controversy for Conflict Resolution,” Ministry, December 2014, 16–19.

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



Cómo “Conectate”, cambió mi vida

Es un placer anunciar que en este año la Unión del Lago estará auspiciando el Congreso Bilingüe de Jóvenes – Conectate. Es increíble pensar que nuestro primer Conectate tuvo su comienzo en el año 2010 con el Pastor Jose Rojas como nuestro primer orador.

En los años que hemos realizado este Congreso, cientos de jóvenes han asistido con mucho entusiasmo; contando sus experiencias de como Dios les bendijo al asistir a este evento, el cual es especialmente diseñado y dirigido por jóvenes de nuestra, Unión. Para este artículo invité a Marilyn Campos para que compartiera su testimonio acerca de cómo este evento impactó su vida.

“Mi nombre es Marilyn Campos. Cuando supe del Congreso de Jóvenes de la Unión, decidí invitar a un amigo, Walter Paul Schmid, para que me acompañara a Conectate 2023. Él aceptó, nos inscribimos y asistimos al evento. Fue una experiencia única y maravillosa. Nos sorprendieron las canciones, el mensaje del pastor y todo lo que vivimos allí. Algo curioso fue que Paul entendía muy poco español, pero yo me encargaba de traducir lo que el pastor compartía. Ambos disfrutamos enormemente de cada actividad y momentos vividos durante la programación.

Lo más significativo de esta experiencia fue el fortalecimiento de nuestra conexión, tanto como amigos como con Dios. Llegamos como amigos, pero a medida que compartíamos experiencias, nuestra relación creció y se transformó. Al final del Congreso, salimos tan bendecidos que nuestra amistad se convirtió en una hermosa relación de pareja. Reflexionamos mucho sobre todo lo que aprendimos y estoy convencida de que fue Dios quien nos unió a través de Conectate. Con sus bendiciones, nos casamos y ahora soy Marilyn

Campos-Schmid.

Estoy profundamente agradecida con Dios y con Conectate, no solo por habernos acercado como esposos, sino por habernos ayudado a fortalecer aún más nuestra relación con Él.”

Me complace informarles que este año el Congreso llevará por título ‘Without Fear’. El evento se realizará del 18 al 20 de Julio en la Universidad de Andrews y tendremos como oradora principal a Yamileth Basan, presidenta de Union Adventist University. ¡No te lo puedes perder! Las registraciones ya estan abiertas. Visita el sitio web de Conectate: <https://conectateluc.com>. ■

▼ *Walter Schmid and Marilyn Campos
asistiendo Conectate 2023*





▲ Mikey and his brother Gaby are surrounded by Florida's Rock Springs crystal-clear water and lush greenery. For Gaby, autism can sometimes limit his interactions and experiences, but here, in the cool, rushing water, he is free. This is where he moves with ease, unburdened, where joy isn't just seen but felt.

The Neurodiverse Evangelist

BY MIKEY AYALA

Growing up in Florida, our family attended Apopka Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church, which remains dear to us. There, we experienced community, challenges and transformation. However, it was my younger brother Gabriel, who became our greatest inspiration and teacher.

Gaby was born in 1999, during a time when research on neurodiversity was still emerging. Diagnoses and treatments for conditions like profound autism were not as advanced. As a baby, Gaby rarely cried, which raised concerns for my parents about his lack of eye contact and delayed developmental milestones. As he grew older, these challenges became more complex.

One of the most challenging moments during Gaby's early years was his struggle to regulate emotions. When overwhelmed, he would bang

his head against surfaces in frustration, and it was heartbreaking to witness. I felt desperate to help him, knowing he wasn't acting out but rather crying out for understanding, safety and clarity in his world.

Those early years were marked by trial and error. We were trying to navigate uncharted waters, often feeling like we failed to meet Gaby's needs. It's painful to admit, but in those days, we focused on fitting him into our world instead of trying to understand him. We wanted him to adapt, to meet

us halfway. But we didn't realize then that the key wasn't forcing him to understand us; it was immersing ourselves in understanding him.

Everything changed the day our family decided to stop trying to mold Gaby into our way of life and instead do everything in our power to embrace his world. We learned to listen to him in ways that didn't rely on words. We studied his behaviors, patterns and needs. We sought resources, tools and technology to help him express himself. And when we did that, miracles began to happen.

Gaby may not speak verbally, but he communicates uniquely through modern technology. He can share his thoughts, needs and feelings with us using electronic communication charts. For the first time, we began to understand him on a deeper level, and in turn, he could feel seen and heard. This shift not only transformed our family dynamic but revolutionized our church's approach to neurodiverse worship experiences.

For many years, Gaby was left on the fringes of church life. He wasn't intentionally excluded, but no one seemed to know how to include him. Departments were hesitant to engage with him, perhaps out of fear of his unpredictability or simply a lack of understanding of how to approach his needs. Whatever the reasons, Gaby wasn't being poured into the way other children were. He didn't have the same opportunities to be part of the community, and as his older brother, it was hard to watch.

But in the 2010s, a new Adventurer director joined our church, and everything changed. When this director met Gaby, he asked my mother if he could join the club. He admitted, "I don't have a lot of experience with neurodiverse children, but please, show us how best we can love your son and your family because everyone deserves community." That simple yet profound gesture shifted the course of Gaby's life and the life of our church.

Once Gaby joined the Adventurers Club, other departments began to follow suit. Sabbath School teachers started inviting him to participate, and soon, he was involved in children's Sabbath programs, like choirs and unique presentations. The church members watched as Gaby's unique presence became a central part of our congregation. His involvement wasn't just tolerated it was embraced.

I'll never forget how this inclusion had a ripple effect. Visitors would come to our church and see how Gaby was treated with dignity, love and care. Some families, particularly those with neurodiverse children, decided to transfer their memberships to the Apopka Spanish church because they saw that our church didn't just preach about God's love — we lived it. Gaby became an unwitting evangelist, drawing people closer to God, not through words but through the quiet testimony of his life.

Today, when I visit my home church, I see a growing number of neurodiverse individuals in the congregation. It is a beautiful testament to how one person's presence can inspire a community to grow in understanding and compassion. Gaby preaches without ever speaking a word. As a preacher, I often marvel at how his silent ministry speaks volumes. While I stand at the pulpit, sharing the gospel with words, Gaby shares it through his very being.

Gaby has taught me more about the love of Jesus than any sermon or theology class ever could. He has shown me what it means to genuinely meet people where they are and to seek understanding before seeking to be understood. His life is a living reminder of Christ's inclusive love — a love that breaks down barriers, challenges assumptions, and welcomes everyone to the table.

One of the most profound lessons I've learned from Gaby is the importance of presence. In a world that often values productivity and achievement, Gaby's life reminds me that being can be just as powerful as doing. His presence in our family and church has transformed hearts, not because of what he accomplishes, but because of who he is.

As I reflect on Gaby's journey, I can't help but think that my brother's life is a living testimony to the truth of God's love and glory shining brightly through his challenges, triumphs and quiet witness.

To this day, Gaby remains my greatest inspiration. He has taught me patience, humility and the power of unconditional love. He has shown me that ministry isn't just about what we say or do; it's about how we make people feel, show up for them, and reflect God's love in our actions.



As his brother, I am proud to stand alongside him, knowing that his silent sermons continue to change lives. Gaby is proof that you do not need words to preach the gospel. You need love. And in that love, the presence of Jesus is undeniable. ■

Mikey Ayala is set to graduate from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in May 2025 with his MDiv and will soon serve as the new associate pastor of Highland Seventh-day Adventist Church in Portland, Tennessee.

Struck Down, But Not Destroyed

BY EMILY GIBBS

“God! What more do You want me to surrender?” I sobbed into the HEPA-filtered air of Room 52.

Was it not enough that I had been diagnosed with Primary CNS Lymphoma while pregnant seven months before? That two nerves had been severed during my craniotomy, resulting in permanent deafness and facial paralysis on one side? That I was only two weeks into a month-long stay at the C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital in Ann Arbor for an autologous stem cell transplant, and that my husband, newborn and toddler were two hours away?

I had already given up my health, my normalcy, my appearance, and — for a time — even my family. What more did He want?

It was 1:30 a.m. The stubble on my buzzed head itched against my pillow, the deadened roots loosening after ten consecutive days of chemotherapy. My mouth and throat throbbed with sores and thickened spittle. My abdomen roiled with an E. Coli infection. The tubing that connected my central line catheter to an IV pole beside my bed tugged at my chest as I writhed.

All those months ago, I had thought that God was promising me deliverance from my disease. He had given me 2 Timothy 4:17–18 just as my symptoms were beginning, and I had embraced His assurance that I would escape “out of the mouth of the lion.” But had I been mistaken?

“You’ve promised that You won’t give me more than I can handle,” I cried, “But I think You have.”

Wiping my eyes, I put on my glasses and felt for my phone. As the screen recognized my gaunt face, I opened BibleGateway to the first chapter of Lamentations — planning to wallow in my misery with Jeremiah.

“She weeps bitterly in the night, her tears are on her cheeks.” I took a screenshot — this was about *me*. “From above [The Lord] has sent fire into my bones, ... He has spread a net for my feet ... He has made me desolate and faint all the day.” Screenshot (Lamentations 1:2a, 1:13 NKJV)

I didn’t care anymore that I was subtly blaming God for my affliction. Although I knew that He hadn’t caused my suffering, I couldn’t understand why He wasn’t removing it.

“My eye, my eye overflows with water; because the comforter, who should restore my life, is far from me. My children are desolate because the enemy has prevailed.” I began to ugly-cry, snot and tears running down to my chin and



dripping onto my button-up shirt. (Lamentations 1:16b NKJV)

Keep reading, my thoughts urged, you know what's next.

“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed,

Because His compassions fail not.

They are new every morning;

Great is Your faithfulness.

It is good that one should hope and wait quietly

For the salvation of the Lord.

For the Lord will not cast off forever.

Though He causes grief

Yet He will show compassion

According to the multitude of His mercies.

For He does not afflict willingly,

Nor grieve the children of men.

You have heard my voice:

‘Do not hide Your ear

From my sighing, from my cry for help.’

You drew near on the day I called on You,

And said, “Do not fear!”

(Lamentations 3:23–24, 26, 31–33, 56–57 NKJV)

God had heard me. He was not allowing me to be consumed. I needed to hope and wait quietly for His compassions.

Although I willed for peace to settle in my soul and for the pain to subside, neither happened. Instead, I was still sleepless and messaging “this is finally absolutely breaking me” to my family at 3:45 a.m. It was only after my sister — beginning a night on call as a veterinarian in New Zealand — phoned to cry *with* me and to pray *for* me that I was able to doze.

When I was awakened by my nurse an hour later for a set of vitals, I gave up on rest and forced down some applesauce and Cream of Wheat before posting an SOS on Facebook that concluded with the words, “I need the prayers of those I love today.” Then I slipped into my Chacos, donned a mask, and stuffed an Airpod into my good left ear. I told myself that I could stop moving after two circuits around the unit, pressed play on a shuffle of my entire iTunes library and set out to see if God’s mercies were for me.

“Don’t give up

Victory is sure enough

For angels fight beside the one

Who desires to overcome

The victory is sure

The battle is the Lord’s.”

—Melissa Otto, “Don’t Give Up”

The lyrics that vibrated through me weren’t coincidental — neither were the next ones, or the ones after that. Before I had even realized it, I had walked five laps — a mile — empowered by the bravery that pulsed through my veins.

And then I checked my phone. My Facebook post had been *noticed*. Comments compelled me to hold on, to keep believing. Many of the 20 new texts in my message app shared strong impressions to pray for me in the night or early morning. The final surprise was a picture of my grinning brother, his hair clipped to match mine. “Brave the shave,” read the caption.

I had two visits that afternoon — one from a fellow teacher, mom and word-lover, and the other from a previous academy student. They didn’t mind that my outlook was dismal or that my hair was mostly gone. They came anyway, bringing tubes of natural lotion for my scratchy scalp and heaps of courage for my heart.

Several hours later, knowing that I should exercise once more before bed, I ventured out again, nearly bumping into a woman as she exited a room with her head down. “Nancy?”

I had met Nancy months before during an earlier phase of my treatment. We had connected over our previous careers in English, and over the fact that her husband and I both had blood cancers on University Hospital’s 8th floor. He hadn’t been doing well then, and as Nancy looked up at me now, I feared he was doing worse.

We wandered to the windowed sitting area at the end of the hallway, watching the light of the August evening recede over tree-covered hills — my IV pole between us. As I absorbed the hopelessness and exhaustion in Nancy’s voice from my stiff, teal couch, my own problems diminished. I was conscious. I was walking. I was eating. My doctors were expecting me to live.

“Can I pray with you?” I heard myself asking hesitantly after we had talked for an hour, reaching for her hand when I heard her quiet, “Yes, please.”

By the time I returned to my room and readied myself for bed, I could half-smile at my nurse’s chiding “where *were* you?” as I wiggled my toes



under my hospital blanket, my stomach quiet for the first time in days. Then I grabbed my journal. “Today has given me an incredible glimpse into God’s new compassions for me,” I wrote.

He had sustained me. He had held me all day long. And I *knew* that He was asking me to surrender my fear. ■

Emily Gibbs taught in the Michigan Conference for 11 years — in both peninsulas, in both elementary and secondary classrooms, and in both full-time and part-time roles — before dedicating her days fully to her two young daughters at home. In amongst the duties and demands of motherhood, she finds moments to write about the lessons God has been teaching her — many of which will be included in a memoir about her year of illness.



Designed with the help of
AI by Andrews University
student Gaetan Rutayisire

Naughty or NEURODIVERGENT?

Why Inclusive Learning Matters

Some years ago, a close relative observed that her toddler was not mirroring the developmental progress of his older sibling. Understandably concerned, she immediately secured medical, cognitive and other evaluations of her child. The immediate outcome of her investigations resulted in multiple adjustments, including repurposing selected rooms in the family's newly built home to meet this occasion. Maybe you or someone you know has faced a similar scenario. What does it all mean? Where do you begin? What is your next move? When and how do you pivot?

Parents and educators alike face questions and opportunities of how best to nurture and teach the spectrum of children and persons — those who learn differently; those with physical, learning, developmental and behavioral exceptionalities; who press educators to veer from scripted teaching plans to design instruction that is attentive to the neuropathways of learning; those who are responsive to *how* students learn, to their personal and academic success, and to embracing the reality that learning challenges has its roots in biology, and not exclusively, ability.

Approaching learner exceptionalities from the premise of a growth mindset, and doing so with honesty and with factual understanding, places parents and educators on divergent paths, from stigmatization and deficit thinking that potentially leads to failure, towards a strengths-based approach of instructing neurodiverse and other learners. Along with students and their families, educators, too, learn of the plasticity of the brain, and that learners benefit from being taught how their brains change in response to learning.

An ever-increasing population of children in the U.S., about one third in the 2022–23 school

year, some of whom are English learners facing intersectional issues, identified as having a specific learning disability. With the rapidly increasing number of neurodivergent learners and learners with other disabilities in classrooms across urban, suburban and rural landscapes, still, a corresponding increase in special education teachers and the funding to hire these specially trained personnel, continue to elude us. Yet, a heightened need lingers to persist in the face of those realities.

The Journey to Excellence 2.0's premise is that Adventist Education exists to create experiences that foster a lifelong love of learning in safe and secure environments, where students' abilities, gifts, and talents are both honored and accepted. In our Lake Union schools, we welcome students to inclusive Christ-centered learning spaces designed to help them succeed; where standards-based, differentiated learning is practiced; where the learner resides at the center of our planning and implementation; where learners can participate in age-appropriate, regular classes, and are supported in their learning journeys; and where they have opportunities to contribute and take part in various aspects of school life.

By Ruth Horton, EdD and Wadzanai Bepe, PhD

Signs and Symptoms of Learning Differences

Identifying students who may require special education services involves recognizing potential challenges, such as:

- Easily distracted or exhibiting task avoidance
- Disorganization and difficulty following instructions
- Social and emotional challenges
- Academic inconsistencies or difficulty retaining information
- Sensory sensitivities and self-regulation issues
- Oppositional behavior or excessive anxiety
- Hyperactivity, restlessness or lack of focus
- Advanced cognitive abilities (gifted learners) with asynchronous development

U.S. Students who Received Special Education Services in 2022–2023 school year

- Speech or Language Impairment — 18%
- Other health impairment, including ADHD — 17%
- Autism — 12%
- Intellectual cognitive disability — 6%
- Emotional disturbance — 5%
- Developmental delay — 4%
- Multiple disabilities — 2%
- Hearing impairment — 1%
- Visual impairment — 0.4%

U.S. Department of Education 2023

The majority of our LUC schools and learning centers provide multi-age, multi-grade classrooms which allow for flexible grouping that promotes collaboration among learners, allowing students to apply critical thinking strategies and enjoy opportunities for self-directed learning.

Increasing attention to ways we can better attend to learners with exceptionalities is top of mind for the LUC education department, a truth further advanced by the addition of a special education coordinator and instructional coach. Our desire is to provide our conferences, educators and students with support, training and resources in this area, as requested and needed.

UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special education is a specialized branch of teaching designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities or learning differences. It provides individualized instruction, accommodations and modifications to ensure students can access and succeed in the curriculum. Special education services are specifically designed for students whose cognitive, neurological or developmental differences significantly impact their ability to learn in a traditional classroom setting.

The history of special education dates to the Christian church, which was among the first institutions to provide care for individuals with physical or mental impairments. Many are familiar with the inspirational story of Helen Keller, showcasing the potential for individuals with disabilities to succeed.

Modern special education began developing during the Renaissance, emphasizing the dignity of all individuals. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) now provides a framework for ensuring students with disabilities receive appropriate educational opportunities.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN A LAKE UNION SCHOOL

The newly established Lake Union Special Education division, led by a special

education coordinator and instructional coach, plays a crucial role in ensuring individualized learning experiences. This division supports educators through professional development, seminars, school visits and consultations to help them develop effective strategies for assisting students with diverse learning needs. The goal is to create an inclusive learning environment where students can thrive academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Have you ever wondered why, for example, one individual feels the need to ask a question after or during every presentation, while another appears to grasp the content more readily? Or why does another individual prefer information delivered verbally rather than textually? How about a child who cannot sit still and talks excessively at inappropriate times? The answer lies in the profound diversity of human experience. No two individuals are alike. Even identical twins exhibit differences. These variations are shaped by a complex interplay of neurological, genetic and environmental factors, which influence how we perceive, process and learn information. The differences between neurodiverse and neurotypical children are often obvious but neurodiverse students are sometimes labeled and even punished as naughty.

For instance, students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which is a neurodevelopmental disorder, may display negative behaviors that neurotypical students may display. Some exceptionalities such as dyslexia, or being gifted, are hereditary, and students cannot just change that. This inherent diversity among students is not a hindrance, but a testament to everyone's uniqueness. Special education is dedicated to identifying the underlying causes of challenging behaviors and learning differences and implementing targeted interventions to address them effectively.

Under the umbrella of special education in LUC schools are students suspected of

or identified with disabilities, gifted and talented, as well as those with temporary disabilities. A student who sustains a fractured arm, for example, may be allowed to use speech-to-text technology to complete her work while she recovers. Similarly, a student diagnosed with ADHD, whether or not they have undergone formal school-based evaluation, may be eligible for accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or through the Measurable Action Plan (MAP) developed by the NAD's Reaching to Educate all Children for Heaven (REACH) Committee.

While there is often a stigma surrounding students with learning differences; providing specialized instruction in an Adventist inclusive environment offers valuable opportunities for differently abled students to learn from one another. Peers of students with disabilities can become advocates for rights and access, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of diversity.

Inclusion nurtures an environment where students with disabilities not only gain knowledge and skills but also develop social and emotional resilience as they interact with their non-disabled peers.

Early intervention works — remarkably. My close relative embarked on asking countless questions to persons she knew,


as well as her child's pediatrician, to better understand and process the full import of observations of her toddler, diagnosed with profound autism, but who, with early detection, intense intervention, and learning supports in an inclusive classroom, led his graduating class into the auditorium — 13 years later. The journey continues.

Collectively, we are invited to debunk skewed narratives and misconceptions about learning differences and exceptionalities, and more heartedly embrace cognitively and other diverse learners. We are charged to learn and grow as parents, educators and influencers, in ways that increase our effectiveness and impact in best attending a population who learns differently. And too, how important it is to *teach up*, to every learner. Every Learner. ■


Ruth Horton, EdD, is the Lake Union director of education. **Wadzanai Bepe, PhD**, is the special education coordinator and instructional coach for the Lake Union.

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Collectively, we are invited to debunk skewed narratives and misconceptions about learning differences and exceptionalities and more heartedly embrace cognitively and other diverse learners.



Glossary of Terms

Inclusion: *Educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms with necessary support.*

IEP (Individualized Education Program): *A personalized legal plan outlining specific goals, services and accommodations for students with disabilities.*

504 Plan: *A plan providing accommodation for students with disabilities to ensure equal access to education.*

LRE (Least Restrictive Environment): *The principle that students with disabilities should be educated in the most inclusive setting possible.*

Accommodations: *Adjustments made to help students access the curriculum, such as extra time or different formats.*

Modifications: *Changes to the curriculum or assignments, such as reducing difficulty or altering content.*

BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan): *A plan to address and manage challenging behaviors in students.*

FBA (Functional Behavioral Assessment): *A process to identify the causes of challenging behavior.*

Differentiated Instruction: *Adapting teaching methods to meet the varied needs of students.*

Specialized Instruction: *Research-based teaching strategies specifically designed for students with disabilities.*

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act): *A law ensuring students with disabilities receive appropriate education and services.*

LEA (Local Education Agency): *The school district responsible for delivering education services to students in non-public schools.*

UDL (Universal Design for Learning): *An approach that promotes designing educational opportunities with students of all abilities.*

RTI (Response to Intervention): *A tiered approach to identify and support students with learning and behavior challenges through targeted interventions based on progress.*

Transition Plan: *Part of the IEP that outlines the steps and services to help students with disabilities transition to post-school life, like higher education or employment.*

STANDING IN THE GAP

One Educator's Call to Special Education Ministry

“Pray for strength and guidance, then move forward with resolve.” This became Wadzanai (Wadzie) Bepe’s mantra in 1991 as she began her teaching career in Gweru, Zimbabwe. At 23, fresh from college and standing in her first classroom, she felt the weight of being a pioneer — the first Black teacher many of these students had ever encountered.



But she drew strength from her faith. “I was at a church school,” she recalls. “And I believed I could overcome any challenge with the Lord on my side.”

Then she met her student, Adam.

MORE THAN TEXTBOOK SUPPORT

On paper, Adam had everything going for him. He came from a prominent Adventist family — his father was an elder, his mother a deaconess, and his older sisters were college graduates. But as the weeks went by, Wadzie noticed concerning patterns.

While most third graders read chapter books, Adam struggled to recognize words beyond his name. Initial strategies that helped other struggling readers, like lessons in phonics, extra practice, and one-on-one attention during class, didn’t help. He needed more than textbook support.

After consulting his parents, she learned more.

“His parents had always known he was different,” says Wadzie, who now serves as special education coordinator for the Lake Union Conference.

“When he was a toddler, he had erratic sleeping patterns, so they built him a special room. But when it came to his education, they didn’t have access to the kind of specialized support he needed.”

It became clear to Wadzie that she needed more than her standard teaching toolkit.

“I realized I needed more than what I had learned in college,” she says. “This went beyond typical reading difficulties.” Adam required a different approach.

She understood it was her responsibility to stand in the gap for Adam. And that by providing the proper support, she could bridge the distance between his current abilities and his potential.

That realization would spark a journey of advocacy that would span continents and transform countless lives, including her own. But first, she had to navigate the immediate challenges before her.

Like many Adventist educators, Wadzie taught multiple grades in the same classroom. “I had third and fourth graders together,” she explained. “This meant balancing different lesson plans and developmental stages.”

Yet, amid juggling these daily demands, Adam’s needs remained at the forefront of her mind.

Today, statistics show that approximately 15% of public-school students receive special education services. In a typical classroom of 21 students, three likely need accommodations¹

But back then, in that classroom in Zimbabwe, Wadzie only knew she had a student who needed help and was determined to find a way.

She began staying after school to tutor Adam; his parents drove 30 minutes each way to accommodate the extra sessions. For two semesters, they worked together, but progress remained elusive.

Eventually, Wadzie recognized the signs of dyslexia and knew she needed to push for professional evaluation — something that, to her knowledge, had never been done before at their church school.

“It was a struggle,” she remembers. “I had to jump through a lot of hoops because public school psychologists handled these evaluations, and I was at a church school. Thankfully, the principal was highly supportive, and the parents — who were influential in the community — also backed the initiative.”

Their persistence paid off. Adam received an evaluation and diagnosis, which led to tailored accommodations and teaching strategies that helped him thrive. He went on to earn a national diploma in fine arts and is now a successful fine artist and graphic designer, with his work displayed in several galleries.

“That experience opened my eyes to the world of special education,” Wadzie says. “I started wondering what other disabilities were out there, why resources weren’t widely available, and how I could continue to stand in the gap for students.”

STANDING

CROSSING OCEANS FOR A CALLING

Just as Christ stands in the gap and advocates for us before the Father, Wadzie found herself called to advocate for students who needed someone in their corner.

“I have always been drawn to students who struggle,” she says. And her advocacy journey eventually led her across the pond.

At age 32, Wadzie arrived in the United States and faced the daunting task of navigating an entirely new educational system. She found her entry point through substitute teaching in special education classrooms.

“It was a small group instruction setting, which felt like a softer landing for me,” she explains. “While adjusting to the differences in the American system, I could focus on working closely with students who needed extra support.”

What began as a “softer landing” would become solid ground as she pursued her master’s in special education at Indiana University South Bend, followed by a post-graduate certificate in intense interventions. For the next 13 years, she taught in Mishawaka, Indiana, where each year brought new challenges and revelations about the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

Her calling to advocate for students would continue to shape her path, deepening her expertise in special education and preparing her to work with students with multiple disabilities, including specific learning disabilities, autism, muscular dystrophy and spina bifida.

Over the years, she’s witnessed countless transformations. There was a Ukrainian student with autism who progressed from sitting alone crying to confidently advocating for herself.

“She went from being unable to ask for a pencil to being able to tell people, ‘I have autism, and I don’t look at people in the eyes because it hurts my eyes,’” Wadzie shares.

Or a student with emotional disabilities who would freeze in class, unable to move or speak.

“I would just sit with him on the floor silently,” she recalls. “Eventually, he asked, ‘Are you just going to sit there?’ and I said, ‘Yep, I thought that’s what we’re doing.’ That simple exchange opened the door to a conversation, allowing me to help him process his emotions so he could follow through on what was expected.”

These experiences taught her that, just as God meets each of us where we are, every student requires personalized support tailored to their unique needs and circumstances.

“Even within the same disability category, you’ll find considerable diversity,” she explains. “Students with similar disabilities shouldn’t be grouped together and expected to behave the same way.”

The physical space requirements for truly inclusive education can also be daunting, particularly for smaller schools.

“Take something as basic as bathroom accessibility,” Wadzie explains. “A student with muscular dystrophy might need grab bars and someone nearby to assist them. Many of our schools don’t have these resources yet, making it difficult to enroll that student. But some accommodations can still be made, such as allowing that student to attend school for half the day before going home for personal care.”

GIVING STUDENTS A VOICE

Yet perhaps one of the most vital resources isn’t physical at all — it’s fostering an environment where these students learn to advocate for themselves. Wadzie developed a practice of having students create self-introduction cards before transitioning to middle school, explaining their needs and learning styles to new teachers.

“When students can confidently say, ‘I need more time to read’ or ‘I process information differently’ without shame, that’s a success,” she says. “They learn that their disability is just one part of who they are, not their defining characteristic. It’s important for them to understand that no one is perfect, yet God loves us all the same.”

“Sometimes educators worry about not having all the right equipment or training,” Wadzie observes. “But even a simple understanding can make a difference.”

Adjustments can significantly improve focus and classroom management. For example, using a compression vest for a kindergartener who needs deep physical pressure to stay calm or providing a student with ADHD an alternate seat that allows them to wiggle while they work.

Similarly, offering extra time for tasks or incorporating assistive technologies like text-to-speech for students with dyslexia can help create a more inclusive learning environment.

“Small, thoughtful accommodations like these can significantly improve access to the curriculum,” says Wadzie. “We can implement these solutions now while simultaneously working toward larger, long-term changes.”

Throughout her career, Wadzie has learned that successful advocacy requires partnership with parents.

“Being a parent of a child with special needs can be incredibly challenging,” she notes. “Sometimes parents just need someone to listen to their perspective — to truly hear their perspective.”

By working closely together, educators and parents can exchange strategies that support a child’s success both at school and at home. For example, if a student benefits from using a reading tracker in the classroom, teachers can share that insight with parents, who may introduce the same tool at home to reinforce learning.

Wadzie recalls one mother who initially disagreed with her educational approach for her son. Though they didn’t see eye to eye in that first meeting, Wadzie still took the time to listen. Years later, that same mother insisted on enrolling her younger son in Wadzie’s class.

“The parent told the principal that I was one of the few people who actually took the time to listen to her,” she shares. “Even when we can’t do everything a parent requests, listening to their hopes and concerns for their child can make all the difference.”



This collaborative approach reflects Wadzie's belief that everyone — teachers, parents and students themselves — has a role in creating meaningful, inclusive education. "With the right attitude and God's guidance, we can cater to their needs."

A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE, PATIENCE AND PERSISTENCE

As the special education coordinator, Wadzie now works to ensure teachers across the Lake Union have the resources and training they need to support all students. She conducts workshops on learning differences, disabilities and engaging gifted students. She also promotes use of resources available on the North American Division's REACH website for students with learning differences and provides consultative services for Pre-K to grade 12 schools.

"Students with disabilities belong in our schools and are already an integral part of our education community. We need to identify them and implement appropriate early interventions so we can make a meaningful and lasting impact on their development."

Wadzie sees her role as extending beyond just academic support.

"Understanding learning differences and uncovering how students learn best is vital for their self-esteem, as well as their social and emotional development," Wadzie explains. "Meaningful inclusion is a reflection of what God does for us. Despite our differences, we are all valued. He meets all of us where we are."

Advocacy will always be a crucial part of supporting our students. But for Wadzie the most fulfilling part is helping students overcome their challenges.

"The most fulfilling part of my work? Empowering students to advocate for themselves, helping them see that their disabilities are just one part of their lives — not their identity — and guiding them to believe that, with God's help, they can overcome their challenges."

Reflecting back to that young teacher in Zimbabwe, Wadzie marvels at how God used one student to reveal her life's calling. "If we want inclusion," she says, "we can achieve it. With the right attitude and God's guidance, we can better cater to all students' needs."

Just as Adam's story opened her eyes to the world of special education, Wadzie now works to open doors for students across the Lake Union, ensuring that students have access to Adventist education in a way that meets their unique needs and provides equitable opportunities for growth and success.

Wadzie embodies Christ's example of meeting people where they are and advocating for those who need support. It's a ministry of presence, patience and persistence — one student, one teacher, one school at a time. ■

Danni Thaw is a freelance writer.

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WADZIE EMBODIES CHRIST'S EXAMPLE OF MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE AND ADVOCATING FOR THOSE WHO NEED SUPPORT. IT'S A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE, PATIENCE AND PERSISTENCE — ONE STUDENT, ONE TEACHER, ONE SCHOOL AT A TIME.

Knee Replacement Journey Leads to the Mountain Top

After Darlene Day's husband passed away in 2018, she embraced traveling to fill the void in her life. She visited Paris in 2019, and although her arthritic left knee made walking difficult, she enjoyed it enough to make plans to visit South Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic caused that trip to be canceled, and while she waited for the pandemic to subside, her knee pain worsened.

Day connected with Andrew Ehmke, DO, a board-certified, fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeon specializing in minimally invasive robotic-assisted knee and hip replacement surgery at the Center for Advanced Joint Replacement (CAJR) at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth La Grange. After meeting with Day and confirming she needed a knee replacement, Ehmke replaced her knee in August 2022 with a Mako® robotic arm assisted surgery system. The next day, she went home and did physical therapy at the hospital for a month. About six weeks after her surgery, she was walking normally without any pain.

Reaching a peak

When an opportunity to travel to South Africa arose again in 2023, Day signed up without hesitation.

Day, 71, also climbed to the top of Table Mountain, at an elevation of more than 3,500 feet. "They take you in a gondola to a flat part of the mountain, but then you have to hike to get to the top," she said. "I don't believe God let me have this knee not to go. So, I went and made it to the top. I was very proud of myself."

Standing at the top of the mountain was an emotional experience. "I had never seen anything like it. I just thanked God."

Helping patients get lives back

Day's case was typical of those that Ehmke routinely handles, although he said hers was particularly inspirational because her surgery enabled her to resume traveling. Her experience exemplifies why he chose to specialize in robotic-assisted knee and hip replacements.

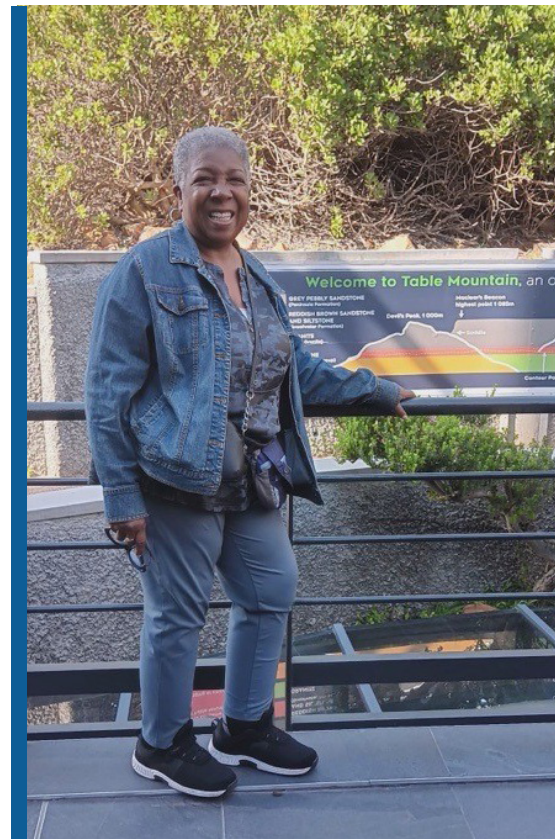
Since 2015, Ehmke has performed more than 1,000 robotic-assisted knee and hip replacement surgeries. These surgeries offer many benefits, including a smaller incision, less time in surgery, greater surgical precision, reduced pain, faster recoveries and joint replacements that fit better and feel more natural, Ehmke said.

"Once the patient has recovered and returned to their full activities, their new knee mimics their natural knee so much better," Ehmke said. "It allows them to do more rigorous activities on the knee. Because it fits comfortably and smoothly, it's going to last longer."

"The precision of the robot allows me to be a much better surgeon because I can fine-tune the knee in ways I never could before."

Caring for others again

Day's newfound mobility allows her to enjoy other activities, including spending time with her children and grandchildren,



▲ Darlene Day at Table Mountain in South Africa

socializing with fellow seniors at a local community center and caring for relatives and friends.

"It has changed my life," she said. "I can help take care of people because I don't have that pain in my knee anymore. I just thank God every day that I can get up and help others." ■

Chris Zurales is manager of marketing and communications at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth.



UChicago Medicine

Advent Health

Professor Named Christianity Today's Book Awards Finalist



World Changers Made Here.

The book “Why We Pray: Understanding Prayer in the Context of Cosmic Conflict,” written by John Peckham, research professor of theology and Christian philosophy at Andrews University, was recently recognized as one of the top works in academic theology in the 2024 Christianity Today Book Awards.

In his book, Peckham addresses many of the complex and complicated questions surrounding prayer and communication with God. Although made for an academic setting, “Why We Pray” is intentionally written to be accessible to all who are interested in matters of theology.

“Why We Pray” addresses various prayer-related questions from a biblical perspective and by incorporating insights from Peckham’s previous book, “Theodicy of Love: Cosmic Conflict and the Problem of Evil.” “Why We Pray” is broken up into six sections that look at different aspects of prayer. Peckham discusses the necessity of petitionary prayer, understanding the God individuals pray to, the Lord’s Prayer, the rules and potential problems that can be encountered with petitionary prayer, seemingly unanswered prayers, and praying when God seems hidden.

Peckham shares that while he covered some of these topics briefly in his previous book, “Divine Attributes: Knowing the Covenantal God of Scripture,” he was motivated to explore prayer more deeply by some of his students. “I talked about it a little bit in class, and I had ideas,” says Peckham. “I would like to do some work on the so-called problem of petitionary prayer because a lot of people have questions about how prayer works.”

In addition, he says he has contemplated the complexities of prayers ever since

his childhood. “I was a PK, a pastor’s kid,” says Peckham. “I remember people praying that God would heal a sick person. ‘Please, God, heal this person if it is your will.’ And I remember thinking to myself, ‘Well, why wouldn’t it be God’s will to heal his servant?’”

Peckham draws from an impactful and Spirit-led career in theology and academia. He received his Master of Divinity and PhD in systematic theology from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He served as a pastor in the Indiana Conference and taught at Southwestern Adventist University before he rejoined Andrews University as a Seminary faculty member in 2013. He has since

received numerous awards for excellence in teaching and research. Peckham is also the main contributor to this quarter’s Adult Bible Study Guide for the Seventh-day Adventist World Church and currently serves as an associate editor of the *Adventist Review*.

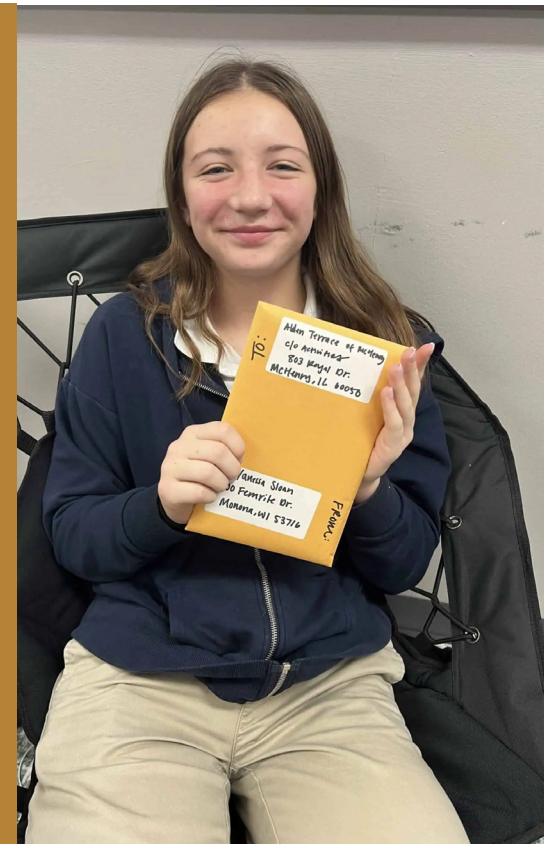
When the Christianity Today Book Awards were announced, Peckham was surprised. “I found out the day that they released it on their website,” he shares. “It’s a great honor and a privilege. The Christianity Today Book Awards are among the most, if not the most, prestigious book awards that one could be awarded in the area of theology. So, the fact that they named my book as a finalist for academic theology book of the year was just very humbling and very much appreciated and very encouraging.” ■

Andrew Francis is a University Communication student writer.



▲ John Peckham is a research professor of theology and Christian philosophy at Andrews University.

Gerald Paul New



▲ In December 2024, 20 letters were sent to residents in Fort Wayne, Indiana, while 48 made their way to London, Kentucky. Additionally, 10 Spanish-language cards were prepared for recipients in Henrico, Virginia.

Wisconsin Students Brighten Seniors' Lives Through Handwritten Letters

Students at Three Angels Christian School in Wisconsin are making a difference in the lives of seniors through heartfelt, handwritten letters. As part of their Students Engaged for Eternity (S.E.E.) service initiative, these middle school students have embraced the Letters Against Isolation project—an effort started during the COVID-19 pandemic to combat loneliness among elderly residents in care facilities.

Under the leadership of Vanessa Sloan, head teacher at Three Angels Christian School, students in Grades 6–8 crafted 78 personalized cards for seniors across multiple states. In December 2024, 20

letters were sent to residents in Fort Wayne, Indiana, while 48 made their way to London, Kentucky. Additionally, 10 Spanish-language cards were prepared for recipients in Henrico, Virginia.

“Service is at the heart of our Seventh-day Adventist schools,” said Sue Nelson, superintendent for education in Wisconsin. “Projects like Letters Against Isolation show students the power of compassion, empathy and community outreach. I am incredibly proud of the students and teachers who dedicate themselves to making a difference.”

The Letters Against Isolation project began when two sisters in Boston recognized the impact of loneliness on seniors’ mental and physical health. What started as a small effort has now grown into an international initiative, bringing joy to thousands of elderly residents in the U.S., Canada, the U.K. and Australia.

Sloan hopes this project will continue for years to come, emphasizing that it not only benefits the recipients but also helps students grow. “While we take joy in sharing these cards, we also recognize the personal growth we experience through this project. The card-making process has allowed our students to connect with one another, creating meaningful conversations and a sense of anticipation in bringing joy to those we reach,” she said.

Wisconsin’s Seventh-day Adventist schools encourage teachers to engage in one to two service activities each month, focusing on their local church family, community or global efforts. ■

Sue Nelson with Herald staff



Green Bay Students Put the Fun in Fundraising

In a display of enthusiasm and creativity, the students at Green Bay Adventist Junior Academy (AJA) embarked on a unique fundraising campaign, raising money to support Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) International. The campaign, centered around the purchase of chickens, showcased the students' commitment to making a difference in the world.

"We were thrilled to involve our students in the process," said Carmen Magray, a teacher for grades K–2 at the academy. "When we presented them with the various projects from ADRA's catalog, they enthusiastically voted for chickens, and it was clear that their hearts were set on this initiative."

Launching the month-long campaign in August 2024, the school community set a goal to raise funds through a walk-a-thon scheduled for Sept. 20. Each student aimed to raise \$44 — the amount needed to purchase two chickens and their feed — which would require them to walk a mile for each donation secured.

"We wanted to purchase two chickens per student, amounting to a goal of 58 chickens," Magray explained. To spread awareness about the campaign, AJA utilized their social media platforms, sharing vibrant photos of students dressed in chicken costumes at various locations on campus. Each post was cleverly captioned with chicken puns to engage the community.

The excitement extended to the local church, where the school communicated their goals during announcements. "The kids dressed in chicken costumes really made an impact when we shared ADRA's needs with the congregation," Magray recounted. "The support from our Green Bay church family was overwhelming."

On the day of the walk-a-thon, the students showcased their dedication as they collectively walked 71 miles. Students in

grades K–6 walked two miles each, while those in grades 7–10 walked three miles each. Following the event, additional contributions continued to pour in, further boosting their fundraising total.

Scott Davis, the school treasurer, joyfully called an ADRA representative and let them know he would be sending a total of \$3,036, which was enough for 138 chickens. "There was a pause on the other end of the line and the person replied, 'Wow!'"

The success of this initiative not only highlighted the power of community engagement but also served a greater purpose. The students learned valuable lessons about compassion and the importance of aiding others both locally and globally.

"We set out to not just raise money for chickens, but also to help our students understand the significance of caring for others," Magray remarked. "Together, we truly can make a difference!" ■

Curated by Herald staff



▲ Q: What did the chicken say to her friend? A: Om-e-lette you go first.



▲ Some of the fun puns included: Q: Why did the chicken join the school band? A: He already had drumsticks.



▲ Chicken Math 101: Math is eggs-iting and eggs-acting. Rule #1. Don't count your chickens before they're hatched!



▲ Q: Why do chickens like snacks? A: They're always feeling peckish.



▲ The student missionaries (SMs) celebrated Thanksgiving with the Kosrae Church pastor and his family. From left to right: Southern Adventist University SM Aaron Beltran, Walla Walla Adventist University SM Chet Gregg, Southern Adventist University SM Joshua Narvaez, Pastor Manny De Guzman, Betty De Guzman, Glenice De Guzman, Southern Adventist University SM Ben Ronneburg, Southern Adventist University SM Noah Seibel and Andrews University SM Rece Wightman.

Thank You for Helping in “Paradise”

Can you name the Lake Union Conference’s partner island in the Guam-Micronesia Mission? If you guessed Kosrae (pronounced Kos-rye), you’re right — but this island, nestled 370 miles north of the equator between Guam and the Marshall Islands, is more than just a name. It’s a paradise with a vibrant community of 6,000, pristine white beaches, and crystal-clear waters that attract surfers and snorkelers alike.

Since 2018, the North American Division Office of Education has partnered with Kosrae, where the Seventh-day Adventist School shines as a beacon of education and faith. With 80 students enrolled (58 in elementary and 22 in high school), the school is staffed mostly by young student missionaries from Adventist universities. Among

them is Rece Wightman, a junior from Andrews University pursuing a bachelor’s degree in graphic design, who has chosen a year of service at the Kosrae Seventh-day Adventist School.

In 2024, a long-awaited gymnasium was finally completed, thanks to generous donations and fundraising efforts. Despite

COVID-19 delays, the gym now serves both the school and the broader community, offering a recreational space for everyone.

The Lake Union Conference continues to support their partnership with Kosrae through:

- funding internet service for the school and church
- providing monthly speakers and children’s story presenters for a Zoom church service
- sending care packages and gifts for student missionaries and students
- offering curricular and classroom support

The latest and greatest news is that the Lake Union Conference has recently committed to reimbursing up to \$1,000 of travel expenses for student missionaries serving for at least one year on either Kosrae or in the South Peru Union, another region partnering with the Lake Union Conference.

Looking ahead, Kosrae faces challenges, including the need for a school principal. As Superintendent Karina Bresla reminds us, there’s much to pray for — but with continued support and collaboration, the future of this island community looks bright. Stay tuned as we seek God’s guidance to explore ways to support the ministries taking place there!

You can join us for the LUC-sponsored online church service and experience the warmth of the Kosraean people on the fourth Friday evening of each month. During Daylight Savings Time, the service begins at 7 p.m. ET, 6 p.m. CT. Scan the QR code below to sign up!

Kosrae is more than a remote island — it’s a reminder that when we answer the call, “Here I am, Lord, send me,” we can make a lasting difference. Please remember to keep Kosrae cared for and prayed for. ■

Nicole Mattson is the associate director of education for the Lake Union Conference.



▲ Academy student leaders, including Andrews Academy pictured above, spent time worshipping, having fun in nature and planning how to enrich the lives of their peers.

Lake Union Academies Converge for Leadership Retreat

More than 90 students from various Lake Union academies gathered for annual leadership training and team-building activities at Camp Au Sable in Michigan, from Oct. 2–6, 2024.

For the first time, student leaders from ASPIRE Academy, Michigan’s relatively new online school, were joined by seven other institutions: Andrews Academy, Battle Creek Academy, Indiana Academy, Hinsdale Adventist Academy, Great Lakes Adventist Academy, Grand Rapids Adventist Academy and Wisconsin Academy.

Why the Retreat Matters

Set against the vibrant backdrop of fall foliage, the Lake Union Secondary leadership camp offers students a welcome respite from the pressures of academic life, part-time jobs and personal relationships. Organizers emphasize that this gathering is a chance for students to connect with peers who share a commitment to leadership. The retreat provides valuable training for participants to exchange innovative ideas and insights with other academy leaders, which they can later apply at their respective schools.

“This weekend is about teaching that leadership is about servanthood,” says

Lake Union Education Director Ruth Horton. “Our department is always looking for ways to help our students grow, learn and be transformed into impactful leaders for their schools and beyond.”

What Happened

The retreat’s theme, “Consent to Trust,” guided keynote speaker Rahel Wells in her presentations. An Andrews University religion professor, Wells shared her personal journey of grappling with trust in God and people, while illustrating how God works even during our trials, transforming and reviving.

In addition to Wells’ presentations, the three-day agenda featured experts who led out in a full day of training;

- Steve Baughman, ACE Academy manager for the Bainum Family Foundation, coached Student Association leaders
- Matt Hill trained resident assistants for dormitories
- Debbie Michel, Lake Union communication director, Dave Sherwin, Andrews

University photography professor, and Doug Taylor, Andrews University design professor, oversaw yearbook editors and public relations officers

- Bruce Reichert and Jordan Reichert provided training for junior and senior class leaders
- Greg Edge and John Landis guided Campus Spiritual Life leaders

Participants enjoyed an engaging Sabbath School and evening program provided by the Andrews University Enrollment team. Team building activities included a “steal-the-Stripple” race, obstacle course, bonfire reflection session, T-shirt design competition and night-time hayride.

Communion Service and Testimonies

The Friday evening vespers program featured a foot-washing and communion service, during which students shared personal testimonies of God’s work in their lives. One student reflected on the spiritual growth among the spiritual life team at her school, noting the transformative experience of studying the Book of Genesis as a team with plans to read the entire Bible in four years. Another student expressed her initial feelings of unworthiness in serving as the student association pastor but finding solace in the messages shared during the retreat.

What Participants are Saying

Kate Yang, student association secretary at Andrews Academy, praised the engaging praise and worship sessions, which sparked discussions about team initiatives for the school year. “We’re thinking about having upperclassmen mentor the newer students,” she noted, emphasizing the need for connection. ■

Victor Mirindi, student association pastor from Grand Rapids Adventist Academy, found inspiration in the leadership presentations. He recalled a discussion on Moses, emphasizing that humility is a crucial aspect of effective leadership, regardless of one’s skills.

Escape Room Brings Sanctuary Lesson to Life

PMC Youth Chapel's Spelunker Quest escape room creatively brought the Mosaic sanctuary to life, engaging students, pastors and families in an interactive Bible-learning adventure through immersive puzzles and teamwork-driven challenges.

The youth Sabbath School at Pioneer Memorial Church (PMC) embarked on a fresh and immersive approach to biblical education with Spelunker Quest, an escape room experience designed to teach students about the Mosaic sanctuary. This innovative initiative, led by Janine Lim, a Sabbath School mentor and associate dean of online higher education at Andrews University, demonstrated the power of creativity in making biblical lessons engaging and interactive.

A Vision Takes Shape

"A couple of years ago, I designed an escape room for a family reunion, and 200 people went through it. And since then, I've been dreaming," Lim shared. "Wouldn't it be amazing to have one for youth Sabbath School? But I just couldn't figure out how we would do it. Then I had an idea for it to focus on the sanctuary."

In July 2024, Lim began working intensively on the concept, but the challenge of

decorations and execution remained. As momentum built and others stepped in with creative contributions, the vision gradually took physical form. Volunteers joined the effort, transforming the youth chapel into a dark, mysterious cave, complete with atmospheric lighting and immersive sound effects.

Beyond the mechanics of the escape room, Lim's motivation was rooted in her own experiences as a teenager. "I participated in an epic experience that I keep remembering for the rest of my life — visual, big, epic — that taught an important lesson about the great controversy. I want our youth to have a similar experience."

Expanding the Experience

The escape room officially opened on Sabbath afternoon, Feb. 8, running 45-minute countdown sessions from 3–8 p.m. for Sabbath School students and interested guests.

Due to overwhelming interest, Spelunker Quest was made available on additional days. On Monday, Feb. 10, pastors and other youth had the opportunity to navigate the escape room and experience its biblical lessons firsthand. Then, on Friday, Feb. 14, families were invited to participate, further broadening the reach of this unique learning experience.

PMC Youth Pastor, Lindsey Pratt, expressed excitement about the project and the impact of creative teaching on young minds.

"We have some phenomenal leaders who created this space and put these puzzles together to unearth the significance of the sanctuary. It's a cool thing because students can come, see and feel what it was like, and understand why the Mosaic sanctuary was so important and what it points to later in life," Pratt explained.

The Youth Perspective

For the students, Spelunker Quest was more than just an escape room — it was a challenging, thought-provoking experience that required teamwork, problem-solving, and biblical knowledge. Nontsi Jaricha, a PMC youth participant, noted how the clues



▲ Some of the escape room participants in the Pioneer Memorial Church Youth Chapel.

“Beyond the thrill of solving puzzles, Spelunker Quest fostered a deeper connection to Scripture and community among the participants.”

helped make connections beyond the book of Exodus.

“It is just so good. It was so fun! I think, personally, for me, I felt that there’s so many other things in the Bible outside the book of Exodus that connect to the sanctuary because like all the clues we were using, some of them weren’t even part of Exodus, which is crazy. I feel like it was a really good way to get your brain working too.”

Ana Slavujevic, another participant, highlighted the importance of communication and teamwork.

“You have to have lots of good communication skills with each of your team members. Once you find a clue, you can’t keep it hidden. You have to make sure that everyone knows, or else they’re just going to be looking for something that isn’t there.”

The design of the puzzles left an impression on Marina Slavujevic, who appreciated how the challenges interlinked seamlessly.

“I liked how one puzzle connected to another puzzle, and then from there on, another puzzle connected. We were able to gather all the pieces together to find the final message. Also, the props were so well done! The lighting and the music made it feel really spooky — it felt real.”

More Than an Escape Room

Beyond the thrill of solving puzzles, Spelunker Quest fostered a deeper connection to Scripture and community among the participants.

“I encourage other people to do this stuff,” Nontsi added. “Apart from encouraging Bible study, I feel like it builds team bonding among the youth. It was so awesome! I would do it again, definitely. And honestly, that’s what makes it fun. I can have fun

studying the Bible! It doesn’t always have to be just opening a Bible and sitting there. There can be a larger center, an interactive element, like doing it with friends.”

For Andrews Academy senior Kevin Mendonca, the challenge of solving the puzzles added to the experience.

“I just came out of the amazing escape room experience at Sabbath School, and I would definitely say it was great. I was part of the first group. That was so cool — being one of the first. All the puzzles were intricate and really well made. They were kind of hard, but they were all solvable. If you work together, it’s really fun.”

Looking to the Future

The success of Spelunker Quest has sparked enthusiasm for more interactive learning experiences in the future. The overwhelmingly positive feedback from students, pastors and families has shown that creativity is a powerful tool for bringing biblical lessons to life.

“We’re sending out an invitation for all you guys to drive down the next time we do it,” Nontsi excitedly announced. “It’s going to be worth it!”

Through creativity and collaboration, PMC’s youth Sabbath School has brought an ancient biblical structure to life, making the Mosaic sanctuary a tangible and unforgettable experience for a new generation. ■

More photos: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Fmw2BY5MJGaRUzwlTxJgflbbPxRczvmO?usp=drive_link

Stanton Witherspoon is a freelance multimedia journalist based in Berrien Springs. He also serves as a teacher in the PMC Youth Sabbath School.



▲ Kevin Mendonca with Pioneer Youth Pastor Lindsey Pratt



▲ Marina Slavujevic and Elena Hardinge try to crack one of the escape room codes.

Elden Ramirez Named Lake Union President

FIRST HISPANIC AND GEN XER TO LEAD THE LAKE UNION CONFERENCE

On March 5, 2025, members of the Lake Union Conference Executive Committee voted Elden Ramirez as president of the Lake Union Conference, effective May 1. Ramirez becomes the first Hispanic and Gen Xer, that is someone born between 1965 and 1980, to hold this position in the union's history.

Ramirez, the 19th president of the Lake Union, succeeds Ken Denslow, who has served as president since 2021.

Reflecting on the transition, Ramirez shared, "It is not easy to see a friend and mentor transition into retirement. I have deep appreciation and respect for Elder Ken Denslow's leadership and ministry. His steady guidance, wisdom and Christ-centered spirit have been a tremendous blessing to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and to me personally. His mentorship and friendship have left an indelible mark on my life and ministry." Ramirez continued, "I am grateful for the years I had the privilege of serving alongside him both at the North

American Division and now here at the Lake Union. As we move forward, we do so standing on the foundation of his legacy and those who have faithfully served before us."

Acknowledging the responsibility entrusted to him, Ramirez expressed his gratitude and stated this is a responsibility he does not take lightly. "I recognize that this work can only be accomplished through God's blessing and the collective prayers and efforts of my fellow union officers, the dedicated Lake Union team whom I am honored to serve alongside, the officers of every conference within our union territory, and our beloved Executive Committee. My prayer is that, together, we will move forward with faith and hope, trusting that He who began a good work in this great union will bring it to completion."

Outgoing Lake Union President Ken Denslow remarked positively about Ramirez's succession: "When you are getting ready to leave a post of responsibility, one can't help but wonder who will be the successor. I am so pleased that the Lake Union Executive Committee saw Elden Ramirez as the right person to take up the presidency of this great union. Elder Ramirez and I have worked together for a number of years, both here in the Lake Union and at the North American Division. I know him to be a spiritual and wise administrator but also a leader who cares deeply for the well-being of those he serves. I know that he will continue to be a blessing to this field as it carries on its mission to prepare a people to meet Jesus at His coming."

Adding further affirmation, North American Division President Alex Bryant stated the Spirit of God was clearly present during the meeting, "There was a strong sense of seeking God's will and His discerning guidance. It was evident by the overwhelmingly strong support for Elder Elden Ramirez that God has chosen him to lead this territory in these perilous but exciting times to proclaim the everlasting gospel and Christ's soon return. With the strong support of his colleagues and the committee, I have no doubt that, by God's grace, the Lake Union will continue to be a tremendous beacon of hope and light for God and His Church as Elden takes up the reins of leadership."

Ramirez brings extensive leadership experience to the role. He joined the Lake Union as executive secretary in 2021, previously serving as undersecretary for the North American Division (NAD) since October 2020, where he oversaw secretariat functions, including general calls and policy development. Prior to that, Ramirez was elected president of the Montana Conference in 2017. From 2013 to 2017, he directed the NAD's Office of Volunteer Ministries, guiding student missions and serving as a resource for Adventist higher education institutions across North America. He also previously served as youth director for the Central California Conference (2005–2013), and earlier, from 1996 to 2004, ministered as a pastor, church planter and departmental director in the Iowa-Missouri Conference.

Fluent in English, Spanish and Portuguese, Ramirez also has expertise in graphic design, media content creation, and radio and television production. He is married to Jenny, a registered nurse, and together they have two daughters, Elennie and Jasmine.

Please keep Elden and his family in prayer as they embark on this significant chapter of ministry in the Lake Union. ■

Debbie Michel is editor of the Lake Union Herald.



▲ Elden Ramirez

2024 Lake Union Schools

Illinois

Alpine Christian School » Rockford
Downers Grove Adventist School » Downers Grove
Gurnee Christian Academy » Gurnee
Gurnee Christian Preschool » Gurnee
HAA Little Lambs Early Learning Center » Hinsdale
Hinsdale Adventist Academy » Hinsdale
Illinois Inspire Academy » Illinois Conference
Marion Adventist Christian School » Marion
Metro-East Adventist Christian School » Caseyville
North Aurora Elementary School » North Aurora
North Shore Adventist Academy » Chicago
Thompsonville Christian Junior Academy » Thompsonville

Indiana

Aboite Christian School » Roanoke
Adventist Christian Elementary » Bloomington
Cicero Adventist Elementary » Cicero
Cross Street Christian School » Anderson,
Door Prairie Christian Daycare » La Porte
Evansville Adventist Academy » Evansville
Indiana Academy » Cicero
Indianapolis Junior Academy » Indianapolis
Indianapolis Southside Christian Academy » Indianapolis
INspire Academy » Indiana Conference
Maple Creek Adventist Academy » Columbus
Northwest Adventist Christian School » Crown Point
Richmond Adventist Elementary School » Richmond
Riverview Adventist Christian Academy » Evansville
South Bend Junior Academy » South Bend

Lake Region

Chicago SDA Christian School » Chicago
Flint Fairhaven Elementary School » Flint, Mich.
Indianapolis Capitol City Elementary School » Indianapolis
Peterson-Warren Academy » Inkster, MI
South Suburban SDA Christian School » Park Forest, Ill.

Michigan

A.S.P.I.R.E. Academy » Michigan Conference
Adelphian Junior Academy » Holly
Alpena Berean Christian School » Alpena
Andrews Academy » Berrien Springs

Ann Arbor Elementary School » Ann Arbor
Battle Creek Academy » Battle Creek
Bluff View Christian School » Bessemer
Cedar Lake Elementary » Cedar Lake
Charlotte Adventist Christian School » Charlotte
Eau Claire Elementary School » Eau Claire
Edenville SDA Elementary School » Edenville
First Flint Elementary School » Flint
Gobles Junior Academy » Gobles
Grand Rapids Adventist Academy » Grand Rapids
Grayling Elementary School » Grayling
Great Lakes Adventist Academy » Cedar Lake
Greater Lansing Adventist School » Lansing
Hastings Elementary School » Hastings
Holland Adventist Academy » Holland
Ionia Elementary School » Ionia
Ithaca SDA School » Ithaca
Kalamazoo Junior Academy » Kalamazoo
Marquette SDA School » Negaunee
Metropolitan SDA Junior Academy » Plymouth
Mount Pleasant Elementary School » Mount Pleasant
Niles Adventist School » Niles
Northview Adventist School » Cadillac
Oakwood Junior Academy » Taylor
Pine Mountain Christian School » Iron Mountain
Ruth Murdoch Elementary School » Berrien Springs
The Crayon Box » Berrien Springs
Tri-City SDA School » Saginaw
Troy Adventist Academy » Troy
Troy Adventist Academy Preschool » Troy
Village Adventist Elementary School » Berrien Springs
Wilson Junior Academy » Wilson

Wisconsin

Bethel Junior Academy » Arpin
Frederic Adventist Christian School » Frederic
Green Bay Adventist Junior Academy » Green Bay
Hillside Christian School » Wausau
Milwaukee SDA School » Milwaukee
Milwaukee SDA School – South Campus » Milwaukee

Education statement

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in all of its church schools, admits students of any race to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at its schools, and makes no discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnic background, country of origin or gender in the administration of education policies, applications for admission, scholarship or loan programs, and extracurricular programs.



MILEPOSTS

OBITUARIES

BURNS, Velma J. (Dutton), age 84; born Jan. 7, 1940, in Greenfield, Wisconsin; died Nov. 30, 2024, in Keene, Texas. She was a member of the Keene SDA Church in Keene, Texas. She is survived by her sons, Joseph Shultz, Jonathan Shultz; daughters, Carol Allred, Myrna Carpenter; stepdaughter, Kathy (Danny) Kaesewurm; brother, Ken (Helen) Dutton; sisters, Joy (Gary) Alger, Carolyn (Danny) Bell, Patricia (Dana) Schnoor; four grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. Inurnment was in Texas.

CASTETTER, Philip M., age 69; born Nov. 3, 1954, in Louisville, Kentucky; died Nov. 2, 2024, in Leavenworth, Indiana. He was a member of the New Albany SDA Church in New Albany, Indiana. He is survived by his wife, Terresa (Shull) Castetter; son, Matthew (Kristin) Castetter; daughter, Elizabeth (Randy) Mongenel; brother, David Alan Castetter; father-in-law, Elwin Shull; mother-in-law, Marilyn Shull; brothers-in-law, Mark Edwin Shull, Kurtis Dean Shull; nephews, Michael Shull, Jeremy Castetter, Jonathan Castetter, Blake Castetter; and one grandchild. Inurnment. Gifts may be sent to Pineknoll.org

FLEMING, Eleanor, age 94; born Jan. 30, 1930, in Veedersburg, Indiana; died Jan. 19, 2025, in Stevensville,

Michigan. She was a member of the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan. She is survived by her son, Tim Fleming, daughter, Cindy Fleming (Wayne) Drier; three grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. A funeral was conducted by Pastor John Glass on Jan. 24, 2025, with interment at the Rosehill Cemetery in Michigan. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made in Eleanor's honor and memory to Fernwood Botanical Gardens or Camp Au Sable.

HAWLEY, Don, age 80; born Feb. 1, 1944, in Havre de Grace, Maryland; died Apr. 7, 2024, in Carmel, Indiana. He was a member of the Carmel SDA Church in Carmel, Indiana. He is survived by his wife, Lois Hawley; sons, Rick Hawley, Stan (Deann) Hawley, Greg Hawley,

Jeff Hawley; one grandchild; and two great-grandchildren. A funeral service was conducted by Pastors Jerryn Schmidt and Robb Long on Apr. 12, 2024, and interment at Summit Lawn Cemetery in Westfield, Indiana.

HAWLEY, Lois, age 88; born Mar. 23, 1936, in Tipton, Indiana; died Oct. 18, 2024, in Westfield, Indiana. She was a member of the Carmel SDA Church in Carmel. She is survived by her sons, Rick Hawley, Stan (Deann) Hawley, Greg Hawley, Jeff Hawley; one grandchild; and two great-grandchildren. A funeral service was conducted by Pastors Jerryn Schmidt and Robb Long on Oct. 27, 2024, and interment at Summit Lawn Cemetery in Westfield, Indiana.

HILL, Geraldine (Sutter), age 101; born Aug. 26, 1923, in Buffalo, New York; died Dec. 9, 2024, in Lawton, Michigan. She was a member of the Gobles SDA Church in Gobles, Michigan. She was survived by her sons,

Calvin (Jaimy) Hill, Brad (Cathy) Hill; daughters, Marge (Lorance) Vantassel, Sherrilyn Hill; brother, Don Sutter; sister, Judy Wright; eight grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren. Memorial services were conducted by Lyle Davis at the Gobles SDA Church on Dec. 20, 2024, and interment was in Tillamook, Oregon, on Jan. 8, 2025.

KURTZ, Frank Glenn, age 63; born Feb. 16, 1962, in Grand Rapids, Michigan; died Jan. 27, 2025, in Coopersville, Michigan. He was a member of the Wright Seventh-day Adventist Church in Coopersville. He is survived by his wife, Angela Kaye (Noonan) Kurtz; son, Frank Kurtz II; daughters, Alayna Kurtz, Kelsey Kurtz; brothers, Edward (Susan) Kurtz, Robert Kurtz, Mike (Holley) Kurtz; sisters, Kathleen (Tom) Smith, Noreen Kurtz, Janet (Ronald) DeVries; sister-in-law, Jennifer (Gary) Sprague; brothers-in-law, Chris Burgener, Mike Noonan, George (Pamela) Noonan; nieces and nephews; and seven

Sabbath Sunset Calendar

	April 4	April 11	April 18	April 25
Berrien Springs, Michigan	8:14	8:22	8:30	8:37
Chicago	7:19	7:27	7:35	7:42
Detroit	8:01	8:09	8:17	8:25
Indianapolis	8:12	8:19	8:26	8:33
La Crosse, Wisconsin	7:35	7:44	7:52	8:01
Lansing, Michigan	8:08	8:16	8:24	8:32
Madison, Wisconsin	7:27	7:35	7:44	7:52
Springfield, Illinois	7:26	7:33	7:40	7:47

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

grandchildren. A funeral service was conducted by Pastor Ted Toms on Feb. 1, 2025, in Michigan. A card of sympathy or a gift in memoriam can be sent to Angela Kurtz at 13834 48th Ave, Coopersville MI 49404.

LONGSETH, Elaine J. (Urfer), age 94; born June 13, 1930, in Cobb, Wisconsin; died Feb. 21, 2025, in Monona, Wisconsin. She was a member of the Madison East Church in Madison, Wisconsin. She is survived by her husband, Lawrence "LeRoy" Longseth, daughters, Julie (Bob) Olson, Joni (Jim) Harris; seven grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. A memorial service will be held at Madison Community Seventh-day Adventist Church in Madison, Wisconsin, on April 8, 2025.

REEVE, Derral W., age 70; born Dec. 22, 1954, in Brewster, Washington; died Jan. 20, 2025, in Niles, Michigan. He was a member of the Niles

Westside SDA Church in Niles, Michigan. He is survived by his wife, Barbara J. (Hill) Reeve; daughters, Johanna Reeve (Braden) Pewitt, Sanna Reeve (Raul) Ortega; brothers, Harold Reeve, John Reeve; sisters, Joy Fish, Barbara Eno; and six grandchildren. A memorial was conducted by Pastor John Reeve on Feb. 23, 2025, with inurnment in Niles, Michigan. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to: Niles Adventist School at (269)683-5444; OR Niles Four Flags Pathfinder Club at pathfinders@nileswestside.org in memory of Derral Reeve. Cards can be sent to Barbara Reeve, 2755 Weaver Rd, Niles, MI 49120

SHEPPARD, Barbara J. (Seeney), age 90; born Jan. 8, 1935, in Battle Creek, Michigan. Died Feb. 21, 2025, in Gilbert, Arizona. She was a member of the Chandler Seventh-day Adventist Church in Chandler, Arizona, and in prior years, was

a lifelong member of the Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Bend, Indiana. She is survived by her sons, Bradley (Clemen) Sheppard, Gary (Betty) Sheppard; daughters, Nancy Sheppard (Earl) Brown, Jackie Sheppard, Heather Sheppard; sister, Beverly (Seeney) Phipps; seven grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild. A funeral service was conducted by Pastor Edward Anderson Jr. on Feb. 27, 2025, and interment at Fort Custer National Cemetery in Battle Creek, Michigan. A memorial service will be held in Battle Creek, Michigan, later in the Spring. Please send any monetary gifts of memoriam to the Battle Creek Academy Worthy Student Fund, 480 Parkway Dr,

Battle Creek, MI 49037. **SPANGLE, Patricia "Pat" (Ann)**, age 76; born June 8, 1947, in Fort Wayne, Indiana; died Nov. 25, 2024, in Fort Wayne. She was a member of the First SDA Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana. She is survived by her husband, Ray Eugene Spangle; daughters, Diana (Michael) Moore, Christina (Matt) McNew; stepdaughters, Rhonda Rae (Spangle) Finnigan, Melissa Ann (Spangle) Roberts, Bethany Christine (Spangle) Schmitt; sister, Carolyn Bernardi; stepsister, Cheryl (Spangle) Johnson; five grandchildren; and one great-grandchild. Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to C.O. McComb & Sons Funeral Home in Lakeside Park, Fort Wayne, Indiana, with private inurnment.

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.

LAKE UNION CONFERENCE ATTORNEYS FELLOWSHIP ON SABBATH, MAY 17 AT 4P.M.

A TIME TO MEET AND CONNECT WITH
FELLOW ATTORNEYS IN OUR UNION

AT THE LAKE UNION CONFERENCE
8450 M 139, BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN

GUEST SPEAKER: TODD MACFARLAND

General Conference
deputy general counsel

Light supper at 5 p.m.

RSVP BY MAY 9

Jennifer.Woods@lakeunion.org

CLASSIFIEDS

SERVICES

Wings of Life Missions. Follow the journey of frontline missions in Central America as we plant churches, conduct health outreach and more. Read exciting stories, pray for the work, and consider volunteering on a short-term trip. Follow, engage and partner with us in our mission of Moving People. Visit wingsoflife.net for more info. Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

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Move with an award-winning agency. Apex Moving + Storage partners with the General Conference to provide quality moves for you. Call us for all your relocation needs. Contact Marcy Danté at 800-766-1902 or visit our website: apexmoving.com/adventist.

LifeTalk Radio has many beautiful FREE digital sharing cards for all occasions. Let others know: "God Loves You." Encourage friends and neighbors by sending a hopeful message or Bible promise via

email or text. Just visit: LifeTalk.net/eCards.

Considering Rural Living?

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wisconsin Academy's Alumni Weekend and 75th anniversary will take place April 18-20, 2025. Celebrate with former students, faculty, and friends through special events, including Sabbath services, a sermon by guest speaker John Lomacang, an afternoon anniversary program, and an alumni vs. student basketball game. Enjoy music, awards and reconnecting in a refreshed campus setting. Don't miss this memorable weekend! Full details at www.wisacad.org/alumni/alumni-homecoming-weekend.

"Ye' Olde" Cedar Lake

Academy reunion will be held June 6-8, 2025 for the alumni and schoolmates of 1975 and earlier at Great Lakes Adventist Academy, Cedar Lake, Michigan. The honor classes this year

include: 1955, 1965, 1975. Details will be sent by mail to all alumni. For more information contact either Tracy Morgan, GLAA Alumni office at 989-427-5181, glaa.net or Terry Dodge (tdodge@misda.org).

ATTN: Broadview Academy Graduates. Our 2025 School Reunion is: April 25 & 26, 2025, at the North Aurora SDA Church, 950 Mooseheart Rd, North Aurora, IL. Let your classmates know. Honor classes: '55, '65, '75, '85, '95, '00 and '05. Friday Night Vespers: 7:30 p.m.; Sabbath Services: 9:30 a.m. - till 5 p.m. Bring a dish for lunch to share if you can. All are welcome! drollins0233@gmail.com

EMPLOYMENT

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 qualified candidates for the position of Vice President for Financial Administration (VPFA). The VPFA aligns institutional resources to achieve the university's mission, vision and strategic initiatives. The ideal candidate will have 7+ years of managerial accounting and financial management experience, a degree in accounting, finance or business. CPA or CMA preferred but not required. Excellent benefits package and tuition assistance for dependents included. Please see the full job description and complete the online application at uau.edu/employment.

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

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

1. How often do you typically read the *Herald* magazine?

- Every issue Most issues
 Occasional issues Never read an issue

2. How much of each magazine do you read?

- All of it Most of it Some of it
 None of it

Using either the list below, the Table of Contents (on page 3) or by flipping through the magazine, please answer the questions that follow:

- Feature articles which focus on a particular theme or topic for that issue
- Perspectives (editorial, Lest We Forget, Conversations with God, Conexiones, One Voice)
- Evangelism (Sharing Our Hope, Telling God's Stories, Partnership with God, On the Edge)
- Lifestyle (Family Focus, Alive & Well)
- Current Matters (AdventHealth, Andrews University, other News stories, Calendar of Events, Mileposts, Classifieds)

3. What type of articles would you like more of?

4. What article(s) do you always read?

5. What article(s) do you never read?

In general, the articles should be (check one):

- Shorter Longer Remain same

Welcome to the *Lake Union Herald* readership survey. We are asking for a few moments of your time to make sure we hear your opinions and suggestions so the *Herald* magazine can best serve your interests. Your participation is entirely voluntary. By answering these questions, you're helping us gain a clear understanding of what you expect to see in these pages, as well as how best to engage with you on social media, which helps us produce content that is a true reflection of interests and concerns to our Lake Union members.

6. On a scale of 1–10, how valuable is the content to you?

7. What article topic would you consider to be the most memorable in the last year?

8. What do you like most about the *Herald* magazine?

9. What is it that you like least about the *Herald* magazine?

10. Are there any changes or improvements you would like to suggest?

11. If there were additional content from the *Herald* magazine available online only, how likely are you to go to the website and read it?

- Not at all likely A little
 Moderately Very likely

12. Which social media platforms do you use most to engage with faith-based content?

- Facebook Instagram X (Twitter)
 TikTok Snapchat other

13. What type of digital content do you find most engaging? (Select up to two)

- Short devotional videos Sermon clips
 Testimonies and personal faith stories
 Bible study resources Podcasts
 Infographics/Bible verses
 Live Q&As or discussions

How can The *Herald* improve its digital and social media presence?

Please rate the quality of the current *Herald* magazine on the following:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	No opinion
Content						
Cover						
Ease of read						
Layout & Des						
Photography						
Writing						

Of what conference are you a member?

- Indiana Illinois Michigan
 Lake Region Wisconsin None Other

What is your age? under 25 25–34
 35–49 50–64 65–79 80+

What is your gender? Male Female

Please cut out the page and mail complete survey by August 31, 2025, to: *Lake Union Herald*, PO Box 287, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Or, go online to fill out the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z98ZTHY>

Do you subscribe to the weekly e-newsletter?
 Yes No

Please sign me up (provide info. below)

Email address

Name



Union Adventist University is seeking qualified applicants for office coordinator for the Physician Assistant Program. This is a full-time, non-exempt position with excellent benefits including tuition assistance for dependents. This role supports the program director and clinical coordinator, serves as a liaison between students and faculty, assists with event and meeting planning, and other duties. Please see the job description and apply at uau.edu/employment or contact Megan Heidtbrink at megan.heidtbrink@uau.edu for more information.

Union Adventist University is seeking applicants for University chaplain. This is a full-time, exempt position. The chaplain for Campus Ministries is viewed as the key person to promote students' faith development by their engagement in worship, discipleship and service, and to build a vibrant faith community for the University. Please see full job description and instructions for application at uau.edu/employment.

Union Adventist University is seeking qualified applicants for director, Recreational Facilities. This is a full-time, salaried position with excellent benefits including tuition assistance. The director administers all aspects of the newly built Reiner Wellness Center and other sports complexes on campus including a pool, providing quality customer service to employees, students and community customers. Bachelor's degree

required, Master's preferred and required certifications as listed on the job description. Please see the 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.

Fletcher Academy, Inc., an organization that truly lets God lead, is seeking a mission-oriented Seventh-day Adventist Christian with extensive leadership experience to serve as its next president and chief executive officer. For info and consideration, submit cover letter and resume/CV to: Jonathan Kendrick, Chairman, Board of Directors: boardchair@fletcher-academy.org

Fletcher Academy, Inc. is a 115-year-old independent ministry supporting the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, operating schools, businesses and ministries in harmony to support two fully accredited schools.

CALENDAR OF OFFERINGS

APRIL

- 5 Local Church Budget
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- 19 Local Church Budget
- 26 Local Conference Advance

Seventh-day Adventist Church
LAKE UNION HEADQUARTERS

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A Division of the American Society of Church Administrators

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Spring Fellowship
April 25-26

SACRED ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
JEFFREY ROSARIO, PH.D.
Assistant Professor of
Theology Studies
LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY

SEMINAR PRESENTER:
ESTHER KNOTT
Associate Director
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For more program details and to register, go to:
www.asilakeunion.org | 269-473-8247



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PENTECOS 2025



APRIL 4–5, 2025

FEATURED SPEAKER MARK FINLEY

Pioneer Memorial Church, 8655 University Blvd, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

APRIL

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

GENERAL EVENTS

- April 6, 12–7 p.m.:** International Food Fair, Johnson Gym
- April 11–13:** Gymnics Homeshow Weekend, Andreasen Center for Wellness
- April 11–14:** Standout/April Preview Weekend Experience
- April 18, 1:30–5:30 p.m.:** Honors Thesis Symposium, Buller Hall

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.

- April 5, 8:30 p.m.:** Andrews University Choirs Spring Concert
- April 6, 7 p.m.:** Howard Center Presents: Phil Keaggy
- April 12, 8:30 p.m.:** Andrews University Wind Symphony Spring Concert
- April 13, 4 p.m.:** Andrews University Department of Music Singer/Actor Studio Opera
- April 19, 8:30 p.m.:** Andrews University Symphony Orchestra: WAUS Thank You Concert
- April 20, 7 p.m.:** Howard Center Presents: Carla Trynchuk & Elena Braslavsky
- April 27, 3 p.m.:** Lake Michigan Youth Orchestra Concert

ILLINOIS

- April 11–13:** Spring Camporee, Camp Akita
- April 27:** Master Guide Training, TBD

INDIANA

- April 3–5:** Music Festival, Indiana Academy
- April 5:** Music Festival Concert, Cicero Church, 11 a.m.
- April 11–13:** Teen Leaders Training Campout, Timber Ridge Camp

LAKE REGION

- April 4–5:** Chicagoland/FEHJA Youth Federation
- April 11–13:** Adventurer Escape Weekend
- April 12–19:** Evangelismo de Pascua
- April 19:** Vigilia Juvenil, Iglesia Camino a Cristor
- April 26–May 3:** Evangelismo del Ministerio de las Mujeres

MICHIGAN

- April 4–6:** Hispanic Marriage Retreat, Camp Au Sable
- April 11–13:** Women's Retreat, Camp Au Sable
- April 12:** MiTribe Rally, Great Lakes Adventist Academy
- April 18–20:** Women's Retreat, Camp Au Sable
- April 25–27:** Church Leaders Workshop, Camp Au Sable

WISCONSIN

- April 3–6:** Music Fest, Wisconsin Academy
- April 12–13:** Adventurer Fun Day—North
- April 17–18:** Science Experience, Wisconsin Academy
- April 18–21:** Wisconsin Academy Alumni Weekend
- April 19–20:** Hispanic Adventurers Day
- April 25–27:** Hispanic Men's Retreat, Milwaukee

LAKE UNION

- April 25–26:** NAD Pathfinder Bible Experience Finals, Battle Creek, Michigan
- April 25–26:** Lake Union ASI Spring Fellowship, South Bend First Church
- April 26:** Lake Union Education Sabbath

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

Still. Know.

Oh my ... the hurried life never seems to end. Phone call here. Email there. Incoming text begging for me to respond. All important. All good things because we are interacting with people — rejoicing for God’s activity amidst our fallen mess. Hurry out the door, take the trash, empty the dishwasher, do laundry, fix a meal and finally, hit the pillow. But the adrenaline doesn’t stop. The heart beats fast. The blood moves quickly. Is there a stop?



▲ JOHN GRYS

And then, in a cloud break of sanity, the word flashes through, “Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46.10) What a counter-cultural assertion amidst our adrenaline overdosed lives! And yet, if I let those words sit; if I let them be still in the noise of my soul, something occurs.

Two possibilities exist that actually reject hurry, reject busyness. Two words leap and grab: “still” and “know.” I’m not sure I am ready to hear this, really. After all, I am a servant of God: things to do, a whole Bible to read, prophecies to study, meetings at the church to attend, homeless to feed. You get the picture! I am about my Father’s business.

And yet, in the midst of this maze-chasing, I can make the Father’s business about being busy for the Father. And no time to be still. No time to know. Just, well, just do it.

Further still, the audacity of the Author and writer to assert: hold on, there is another way of knowing. It isn’t about expanding territories or growing a church or pursuing mission. Oh man, this is hard. The Author and writer assert in these two words something so radical to my Western sensibilities that it may take me eternity to enter its power: there is a knowing in being still! The pursuit of learning. The quest for knowledge. The journey to developing as a follower of Jesus will at times require me to drop and stop. And be. Still. And in that stillness a knowing occurs that cannot occur from social media, small groups, sermons or helping the outcast. There is a power in stillness that provides

the perfect environment for a different kind of knowing. A knowing found only in stillness. It may not require a physical desert. It may not require being alone, even. It is a stillness that can come in a crowd and just opening up the heart to Jesus as if He were (hold on, He is) a friend.

I heard of a town on the eastern seaboard that had lost its cable TV access. It was going to take a while to repair it. One day, by accident, a camera from the local station (the only station available) had been left on and it had been directed at a fish tank in the building. Soon, word got out and people by the score began turning on their sets to watch a fish tank.

Eventually, when the repairs were completed and the cable was reactivated, the townfolks noticed that that station was no longer available. Complaints flew in swifter than a swallow. And to their great joy, the cable company restored that station with a camera and a fish tank. They had found in that stillness a whole different kind of knowing — one that liberated them from the maze-chasing. One that opened them up to a learning they could not imagine — but one they could experience. Friends, this week, be still and know. ■



John Gry is president of the Illinois Conference

What You Need to Know About Right-to-Work Laws



▲ JENNIFER GRAY WOODS

I live in Michigan and I see that Michigan is no longer a right-to-work state. What does this mean and what can I do if I don't want to join the union at work?

Seventh-day Adventist employees are called to follow the dictates of their conscience when it comes to the issue of whether to join a labor union. We recognize that labor unions have served an important function of ensuring that workers are provided with proper wages, proper hours, and proper working conditions. These are in line with biblical principles regarding the just and fair treatment of workers.

However, there have been cases of labor unions using coercive methods to reach their goals and Ellen White has cautioned against joining labor unions for a number of reasons, including that it can infringe on freedom of conscience. The General Conference Employer Employee Guidelines also counsels that “Christians should refrain from violence, coercion, or any method incompatible with Christian ideals as instruments in the attainment of social or economic goals. Nor should Christians lend their support to organizations or employers that resort to such actions.” For these reasons our church has historically discouraged members from joining labor unions.

Up until March of 2023 Michigan was one of 27 right-to-work states. A right-to-work state is one where an employee has the right to work without being required to join a union or pay union dues (although there are some exceptions for certain federal jobs). In the Lake Union, Indiana and Wisconsin are both right-to-work states.

Even in non-right-to-work states, like Michigan and Illinois, labor union membership is not

mandatory. Instead, the issue is about whether an employee is required to financially support the union through the payment of agency fees. Usually, employees are required to pay dues as a condition of employment, whether or not they decide to join the union.

Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 offers protection, though, for individuals who have a religious objection to financially supporting labor unions. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission states that when an employee has a religious conviction that does not allow them to join a union or pay union dues “the labor organization should accommodate the employee by not requiring the employee to join the organization and by permitting him or her to donate a sum equivalent to dues to a charitable organization.” 29 CFR §1605.2(e)(2). Employers are obligated to accommodate workers with religious objections to labor union membership, and payment of union dues. ■

PARL can assist those who seek to opt out of membership in labor unions. More information on the Seventh-day Adventist position on labor unions is available at:

<https://gc.adventist.org/guidelines/employer>

[-and-employee-relationships/](#)

<https://www.pastortedwilson.org/>

[what-is-the-adventist-churchs-stance-on-trade-unions/](#)

Jennifer Gray-Woods is the Lake Union legal counsel, as well as its Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director.



From Setback to a Setup

I remember staring at my tuition balance, feeling the weight of impossibility settle on my shoulders. No matter how I crunched the numbers, it wasn't enough. Scholarships, grants, savings, odd jobs — it didn't add up. I was on the verge of giving up when, unexpectedly, things began to shift.

During my senior year at Andrews Academy, Andrews University helped us register for college, regardless of where we planned to attend. That was when I seriously considered where to continue my education. I preferred a Christian institution, but it came with a steep price — especially compared to community college, which was free.

By graduation, I was enrolled at Andrews University — essentially on hopes and dreams — while also technically enrolled at Lake Michigan College. I crunched the numbers and quickly realized I needed another job. That summer, I applied everywhere but kept getting turned down, often because I couldn't work on Sabbaths or lacked experience.

Discouragement set in as summer slipped away. Then, my financial aid officer dropped a bombshell — Michigan was pulling its grants due to a new method they were implementing. There was no guarantee I'd receive the same amount — or anything at all. At this point, I nearly gave up.

Then, a classmate texted me about an internship opportunity at the Lake Union Conference. I had no idea what that was, but I figured I'd give it one last shot before canceling my classes at AU and attending LMC instead.

That's when everything changed.

I walked into Lake Union and discovered it was a paid internship — and they needed someone soon. Around the same time, I received an email saying that the Michigan grant had not only been reinstated but increased. What had

felt like a devastating loss turned out to be an unexpected blessing.

With my internship, savings, scholarships and the grant, I was starting to believe I could actually afford Andrews University. Then, as if to confirm that everything was falling into place, Lake Union pulled me aside and offered to cover a portion of my education. Without even knowing my exact financial gap, they provided precisely what I needed.

Looking back, I see how every setback was really a setup for something greater. What felt like closed doors were actually moments of redirection, guiding me exactly where I needed to be. I had spent so much time worrying, trying to figure things out on my own, when in reality, God had already worked it out.

Over the summer, when everything seemed to be falling apart, He was putting the pieces together perfectly — turning obstacles into blessings that made my education possible.

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28 ■

Edward Cervantes is an Andrews University accounting major and business intern at the Lake Union Conference. If you're interested in learning more about our business internships, email treasury@lakeunion.org.



Beyond a Shadow of Doubt

After spending three years in public school, I returned to North Shore Adventist Academy for my 8th-grade year. Coming back was challenging. I struggled with my mental health and constantly doubted myself. Those doubts weighed me down, pushing me into a depressive state that made it difficult to put effort into school. I just didn't believe I was capable of success.

What helped me push through was a simple but powerful piece of advice from my mom: "Andrianna, do not downplay yourself." Her words stuck with me, giving me the encouragement I needed to try my best. When I took my second MAP test, I was shocked by my results — I had done exceptionally well. It was an eye-opening moment. I remember thinking, *Finally! I did something right.* Even when I was at my lowest or made poor choices, my mom always chose to see the best in me. Her unwavering support helped me start seeing it too, giving me the motivation to overcome my self-doubt.

Life has not been without its hardships. A month before I was born, my father's life was taken. That loss shaped my journey in ways I could never have imagined. There were days when the sadness felt unbearable, when I wished I could disappear just to escape the weight of my struggles. No matter how much I tried to hide it, my teacher Mr. Turner always saw through my facade. He consistently checked in on me, making sure I was okay. I'll always be grateful to my teachers for taking the time to truly understand me. Their kindness and support made my 8th-grade year easier,

reminding me that I wasn't alone and that they wouldn't let me fail.

One of the biggest differences between public school and North Shore Adventist Academy is the lack of distractions. In public school, fights broke out regularly, and by 6th grade, I found myself getting caught up in all the drama. Transferring to North Shore was one of the best decisions I've ever made. It was a fresh start — a place where I could grow, not just academically, but emotionally and spiritually. More than just passing 8th grade, I made real progress in every area of my life. I'm incredibly grateful that God led me here, to a place where I could build meaningful connections with people who uplifted and encouraged me.

Through it all, I've come to trust in God's plan for my life. Jeremiah 29:11 reminds me of this truth: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This verse reflects my journey — through doubt, struggle and growth, God has been guiding me toward a future filled with hope. ■

Andrianna Blair is a 9th grader at North Shore Adventist Academy in Chicago. She became a baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church while attending North Shore in the 4th grade. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with both her biological and church families.



Finding New Friends, New Faith, and Freedom from Fear

Growing up in a Christian home, most weeks I attended Protestant church services with my family. I remember one service in particular — a Christmas program in Noblesville, Indiana.

At one point, the pastor paused and asked, “Would anyone here like me to pray for them?” I raised my hand, and a church spotlight found and illuminated me. As the pastor prayed for me, I felt touched by the Holy Spirit. Before leaving, I was given a copy of Rick Warren’s “The Purpose Driven Life.” I knew I wanted to get closer to God and find a new sense of direction and purpose. I also knew I faced obstacles.

Anxiety and fear have long weighed me down. I feared the future. I feared trusting others. Most of all, I feared not being enough and falling short of my own and others’ expectations. While in treatment for these fears and anxieties, I met JJ, a health care worker. We both enjoyed sports and joking around. We also shared a similar history with challenges and insecurities. As I watched JJ at work helping others, I began to glimpse the possibility of healing and wholeness. “If JJ can live a useful, productive life, maybe there’s hope for me too,” I thought.

Later, while working at my current job at Kroger, I met Mariana, a fellow cashier. We chatted and discovered that we both enjoyed contemporary Christian music. She invited me to a Bible Study and Care Group that met weekly in her apartment. “Why not?” I thought. “It can’t hurt to step in and test the waters.”

In that first meeting in Mariana’s apartment, I was introduced to about seven college-age young people. The topic for that evening was the afterlife. I immediately felt welcomed, accepted and at ease. Everyone was so kind, open and non-judgmental. I

learned that this group attended the Bloomington Seventh-day Adventist Church. I continued attending these weekly meetings and began It Is Written Bible studies with Pastor Sam Ngala. I loved all 25 lessons and powered through them in just six weeks! I was especially motivated because I had decided I wanted to be baptized along with my friend Jen0, and the date for his baptism had already been set.

Following my baptism, I continued attending the small group meetings. Our group is especially interested in reaching out to other young people. We have outgrown Mariana’s apartment and now meet in the home of Pastor Nicholas Agyekum. Daily Bible study and prayer, support from this group, regular church attendance, listening to Christian music on the radio, and attending Christian concerts all sustain me and help me to grow spiritually. I find reassurance, comfort and daily spiritual nourishment in Scripture. Isaiah 41:10 especially speaks to me:

Fear not, for I *am* with you;

Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God.

I will strengthen you,

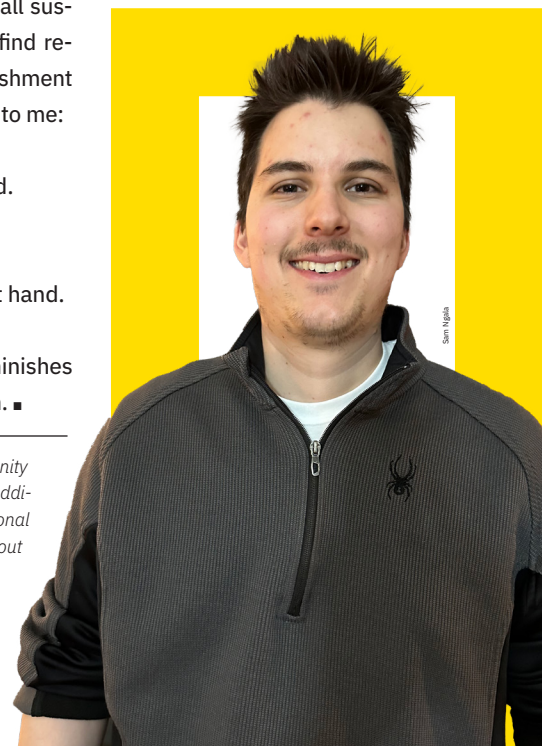
Yes, I will help you,

I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

(NKJV, italics added)

Knowing I am in the Almighty’s hand diminishes my fears and renews my hope and strength. ■

Kevin Penley graduated in 2020 from Ivy Tech Community College with an associate degree in general studies. In addition to playing sports and following college and professional baseball, basketball and football, Kevin enjoys hanging out with friends, reading and working out in the gym.



Empowering Leaders Inspiring Change Transforming Lives

The Lake Union Conference Office of Education values experiential learning, especially when it is connected to serving others. Service learning is an educational approach that combines academic learning with faith-filled community service to address real needs in our communities.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

Mahatma Gandhi

