

SERVING SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS IN THE LAKE UNION SINCE 1908

HERALD

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SHELTER IN A TIME OF STORM

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE MINISTRIES ISSUE

WHY SHOULD WE BOTHER WORRYING ABOUT MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES WHO END UP ON OUR SHORES?

In a world that often feels fearful of *the other*, it can be easy to look away. But more than a century ago, Ellen White offered a perspective that feels tailor-made for this moment.

Writing in 1914, she said, "God would be pleased to see far more accomplished ... in the presentation of the truth for this time to the foreigners in America." She went even further. If we were paying attention to God's "opening providences," we would recognize that the arrival of people from many nations is not an inconvenience. It is a divine opportunity.

Think about that. Instead of sending missionaries across oceans, God has, in her words, "brought men to our very doors and thrust them, as it were, into our arms," so they can learn the truth and carry it home in a way we never could. That is not a burden. That is providence; mission delivered right to our front porch.

And it is not only about sharing Bible studies or tracts. Ellen White said this work calls for "the pen, the press, the voice, the purse and the sanctified affections of the soul."

Today, millions are displaced. Many arrive in our towns and cities frightened, exhausted and unsure where to turn. But Scripture reminds us that we were once foreigners in Egypt (Deut. 10:18–19). Our story is a migration story, too.

Look around your church, your neighborhood or your school. Who has God already brought to your doorstep? Learn their stories. Invite them to your table. Pray for them by name. People such as those featured in this issue: Abrel Thuc (on the cover), Angel Chourio and his wife Maria, Katia Pierre, Vitalii Hanulich and his family, plus the untold numbers around the Lake Union affected by recent immigration policy changes.

Mission is not somewhere far away anymore. It is here. It is now.

Debbie

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

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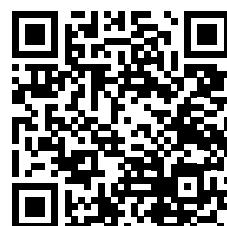
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Immigrants — God's Special Children

In 2 Kings 5, we encounter a striking story that transcends national and cultural boundaries. A young Israelite girl, taken captive by the Syrian army, finds herself serving in the home of Naaman, a powerful commander afflicted with leprosy.



▲ CARMELO MERCADO

Despite her displacement and suffering, this unnamed child becomes the instrument through which God brings healing — not just to Naaman's body but to his heart. She tells Naaman's wife about the prophet Elisha in Samaria, whose God could restore him. Naaman listens, travels across borders, and ultimately experiences both physical healing and spiritual transformation.

Centuries later, Jesus referred to Naaman's healing as an indication of God's favoring the witness of this foreign child. This story reminds us that God often uses the faith of immigrants and exiles to bless the very nations in which they reside. Though she was a foreigner and a captive, the young girl's witness became the channel of divine grace to a leader from a rival nation. In her courage and compassion, we see God's intent that His people — no matter where they live — serve as instruments of healing, reconciliation and blessing.

Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly works through the diaspora — the scattering of peoples — to accomplish His purposes. Joseph, sold into Egypt, became a deliverer who saved countless lives from famine (Genesis 45:7–8). Ruth, the Moabite widow, crossed cultural and religious lines to become the great-grandmother of King David and part of the lineage of Jesus Himself. Daniel, an exile in Babylon, influenced kings through his integrity and wisdom. Esther, a Jewish immigrant in Persia, used her position to save her people from annihilation.

Time and again, Scripture demonstrates that the foreigner, the sojourner, and the refugee are often the very people through whom God moves to bring light to nations. When we recognize this divine pattern, we begin to see that today's global migration is not merely a political or social phenomenon — it may also be a providential movement through which God is working anew.

In the kingdom of God, there are no second-class citizens. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). The barriers that often divide human societies — race, culture, language, legal status — are dissolved in Christ's inclusive love. From the earliest covenant, God called Abraham to be a blessing to "all nations of the earth" (Genesis 12:3). At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out in a way that crossed linguistic barriers, signaling that the gospel was meant for every language, tribe and people.

When we look at immigration through God's eyes, we see opportunity, not threat; blessing, not burden. Each person arriving from another land carries within them stories, gifts and perspectives that can enrich our communities. Diversity, when embraced through the lens of God's love, becomes a source of vitality and renewal.

Our churches and communities have been renewed by the energy and faith of immigrants who bring new life to worship, mission and service. From



Our identity as pilgrims on this earth should remind us that every person seeking safety, opportunity or community reflects the image of God. | *file photo*

Hispanic congregations organizing community food banks and impacting their communities through small group evangelism, to African and Asian believers strengthening Sabbath School programs and youth ministries, the mosaic of cultures within the Seventh-day Adventist Church testifies to the beauty of God's diverse family.

Yet, in our polarized climate, it is easy to absorb narratives that portray immigrants, especially the undocumented, as a threat to economic stability or national identity. As followers of Jesus, we are called to discern truth from fear. Scripture commands us to "love the stranger, for you were strangers in Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:19). Our identity as pilgrims on this earth should remind us that every person seeking safety, opportunity or community reflects the image of God.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we must stand apart from the chorus of suspicion and hostility. Our prophetic calling is not to echo fear, but to embody

hope. We are a global movement, with believers from every continent, united under one Lord. The same Spirit that sent Philip to the Ethiopian traveler and Peter to the Roman centurion compels us today to cross barriers of language, culture and nationality.

The story of the little Israelite servant girl in Naaman's household challenges us to consider how God might use us — and our immigrant neighbors — to bring healing in times of division. Her faith transcended borders. Our calling does the same.

May we, as the people of God, recognize the divine purpose unfolding in the movement of peoples around us. May we welcome the stranger, affirm the refugee, and celebrate the immigrant, knowing that in doing so, we may be as Hebrews 13:2 describes, entertaining angels unawares. ■

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

Between Two Worlds

PARENTING IMMIGRANT CHILDREN WITH WISDOM AND RESILIENCE



▲ AINSWORTH JOSEPH

The Bible admonishes, “If a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him.” (Leviticus 19:33 NKJV)

Notwithstanding, the current climate makes life particularly difficult for immigrant families living in the United States, especially for adolescents and youths who often struggle with culture shock, experiencing anxiety, surprise, disorientation and confusion as they adjust to a vastly diverse cultural and social environment. Yet, research shows that adolescents can embrace these cultural differences through identification, connection and involvement in their traditional culture. Stabilizing ties such as language, food, religion and kinship relationships play a vital role in helping young people maintain a sense of belonging and identity amid change.

Parental involvement is essential to the well-being of immigrant adolescents. Parents can help their adolescent children explore new aspects of cultural identity by discussing values, beliefs and goals, while also connecting them with positive role models who embody success within the new culture. Open communication about personal growth and cultural adaptation is key. Parents should also establish “bi-directional” rules, created jointly by parents and adolescents, to ensure safety while respecting a child’s appropriate developmental autonomy. This collaborative approach strengthens family bonds and empowers adolescents to navigate their unfamiliar environment with confidence.

Furthermore, one of the greatest contributions parents can make is to teach higher-order skills, which involve applying multiple thinking abilities to solve problems, draw conclusions and make sound decisions.

These include critical thinking, which enables adolescents to analyze, evaluate and reason effectively by assessing credibility, identifying bias, and drawing logical conclusions; creative thinking, which encourages innovation and imagination in finding new approaches to challenges; problem solving, which involves identifying issues, gathering data, comparing alternatives, and implementing effective solutions; and decision making, which guides adolescents to prioritize, evaluate consequences and choose the best course of action. Developing these higher-order skills equips young people to thrive in a complex and diverse society.

It is equally important for parents to create a home environment where their children feel safe to think, question and grow. By fostering open communication and encouraging higher-order thinking, parents help their immigrant children develop resilience, independence and self-confidence. As Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson emphasize, children need to feel “safe,” “seen,” “soothed” and “secure” to flourish emotionally and mentally. Most importantly, parents should nurture faith in God. For immigrant families, faith can serve as a profound source of hope, emotional strength and community support. It provides a spiritual framework for interpreting life’s challenges, offering comfort and guidance in times of uncertainty. Faith reminds both parents and children that they are not alone in their journey of adaptation and growth, and it anchors them in purpose, identity and divine assurance. Biblical patriarchs echo the goal of faith: “*For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a better homeland ... Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*” (Hebrews 11:14–16 NKJV) ■

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It's Not Just What You Eat — It's When You Eat

Have you noticed that you tend to gain weight more easily in the winter than in the summer? It is easy to chalk up to being less active, and that does play a part.

But your body's circadian rhythms and metabolism are affected by sunlight. The metabolism starts to increase with the rising of the sun and decreases with the setting of the sun. This means that during the summer months your metabolism is at a higher rate for a longer time.

During the summer months the sun starts to rise about 6 a.m. and sets around 8:30–9 p.m. During the dark hours your waking metabolism is the lowest it will be. Your metabolism peaks between 10 a.m.–3 p.m. During the winter months, the sun rises around 8 a.m. and sets around 5:30 p.m., giving a much shorter time for increased metabolism.

Breakfast kick starts your metabolism. If you skip breakfast, your metabolism will slow down.

If you are trying to lose weight, you can do so without changing what you eat. Only change when you eat it.

To put this in practical terms, take your big meal of the day (for most people that is the evening meal) and trade it for the breakfast meal. Stop eating after 5 p.m. If you need something to eat after 5 p.m., try fruit. This plan gives you all day to “burn off breakfast.” It gives energy when it is needed. It also allows your body to rest at night, which helps your body regenerate.

If you try this, it will help with weight loss — I promise.

Also, an important thing to remember is that watching TV puts your body into a hypnotic state. This lowers your metabolism even more than when you are sleeping. If you must watch TV, don't eat while doing it.

Anecdotal note:

I used to teach at a Career Center in Michigan. My class was mostly girls who asked regularly about diets and weight loss. I finally started to do a class lecture every September about this just to get it out of the way. One year in January, a student approached me and told me that she had done everything I said, and she had lost 20 pounds! When her mom made supper, she made a plate of food and put it in the fridge and heated it for breakfast. She ate her normal lunch, and in the evening, she ate what she normally would eat for breakfast. She stopped eating at 5 p.m. She didn't change what she ate at all; she only changed when she ate it. She lost weight without going through a loss of energy. ■

Susan Allen, who holds a doctorate in nursing practice, retired after more than 40 years in the nursing profession. Her experience includes serving as a nurse practitioner and teaching nursing at Andrews University and Pacific Union College.



▲ SUSAN ALLEN



Trained to Reach Immigrants



▲ DENIS KAISER

In the early 20th century, about 9% of the American population had either been born in Germany or was of German descent. German Americans were the largest ethnic group in the country, making up as much as 25–35% of the population in the Midwest, particularly in Wisconsin. In Missouri, they comprised 10–15%.¹

How could Adventists effectively minister to such a large group without speaking their language? Preaching, evangelizing, giving Bible studies — none of it would reach hearts unless it could be done in a language they understood.

Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, had a German Department for young Adventists of German heritage. However, its training did not fully prepare students for the specific challenges of ministry among German-speaking communities. Recognizing this need, the General Conference voted at the 1909 Annual Council to establish a seminary dedicated to training ministers to serve in German.

In February 1910, a committee met in Kansas City, Missouri, to consider proposals from various towns. The town of Clinton stood out, offering the former Baird College building and 105 acres of land. After reviewing the site, church leaders approved the purchase. Local businesses were contracted to renovate the building and furnish the new school.

By mid-October 1910, Clinton German Seminary opened its doors. That first year, 100 students enrolled, and numbers steadily grew. The seminary quickly became a hub for Adventist youth of German descent. Some faculty members, including the president, were barely older than the students, creating a warm, close-knit family. Students later praised the campus' genuine Christian spirit and mutual care, often describing their time there as life-changing.

Then came World War I. As early as 1914, anti-German sentiment surged across the United

States — even before the country officially joined the war in 1917. One might have thought that such hostility was unlikely, given how large a share of the population was of German descent — but that did not prevent tensions and suspicion from rising. Adventists were watched by the Bureau of Investigation, suspected of being German sympathizers or spies. In response, the seminary changed its name to Clinton Theological Seminary, and instruction largely shifted from German to English. Yet, the town of Clinton — its leaders, citizens and business community — remained supportive and helped to stem the tide of hostility.

After the war, enrollment declined. The seminary struggled to provide sufficient work opportunities for students, and many German Americans began to abandon their native language. More Adventist youth opted for English-speaking colleges.

By 1925, Clinton Theological Seminary had lost its distinct identity and relevance. The Church decided to close its doors. Yet in its 15 years, the seminary conferred 38 degrees — including Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Theology — and issued 262 diplomas. Many others took courses without completing a program but went on to serve faithfully in the mission field, both at home and abroad. ■

¹ For more information, see Marley Soper, "Unser Seminar: The Story of Clinton German Seminary," *Adventist Heritage* 4, no. 1 (1977): 44–54.

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Photos courtesy Clinton Theological Seminary (CAR Photo Database)

La Unión del Lago Afirma los Inmigrantes

El 19 de noviembre, el comité ejecutivo de la Unión del Lago aprobó emitir una declaración en apoyo de los inmigrantes que viven en este país. Aquí les paso el contenido de esa declaración.

Como seguidores de Jesucristo, creemos que todo ser humano ha sido creado a la imagen de Dios (Génesis 1:27), por lo tanto, es digno de respeto, cuidado y consideración. Nuestra preocupación por inmigrantes, refugiados, sus familias y todos los vulnerables se basa tanto en las Escrituras como en nuestro compromiso de reflejar el carácter de Cristo.

Dios llama a Su pueblo a practicar la justicia, amar la misericordia y caminar humildemente con Él (Miqueas 6:8). Recordamos que Jesús mismo experimentó la vida de un refugiado en Sus primeros años (Mateo 2:13-15). Una y otra vez, la Biblia nos recuerda que el corazón de Dios se inclina hacia el extranjero, la viuda y el huérfano (Deuteronomio 10:18-19).

También reconocemos que quienes sirven en funciones que resguardan el orden cívico y la seguridad nacional llevan grandes responsabilidades. Muchas mujeres y hombres en estas posiciones enfrentan decisiones difíciles cada día, navegando situaciones emocionalmente complejas. Como comunidad de fe, los sostenemos en oración, pidiendo que Dios les conceda sabiduría, discernimiento, justicia y compasión.

Muchos inmigrantes en nuestras comunidades han llegado tras enfrentar circunstancias desafiantes, buscando estabilidad, seguridad u oportunidades. Su perseverancia, esperanza y contribuciones enriquecen nuestros vecindarios, iglesias y lugares de trabajo. Aunque sus trayectorias sean distintas, su humanidad y aspiraciones reflejan la imagen de Dios en la cual fueron creados.

AFIRMAMOS LOS SIGUIENTES PRINCIPIOS:

Toda persona lleva la imagen divina (Génesis

1:27), sin importar su nacionalidad, estatus legal o situación económica.

1. Proteger a los vulnerables honra a Dios. “El que opriime al pobre afrenta a su Hacedor, pero el que es bondadoso con el necesitado honra a Dios.” (Proverbios 14:31)
2. Dar la bienvenida al extranjero cumple el mandato de Dios. “Al extranjero que reside entre ustedes, trátalo como a uno nacido en su tierra. Ámalo como a ti mismo.” (Levítico 19:34)
3. La autoridad debe promover lo que es correcto. Romanos 13 enseña que quienes son investidos con responsabilidad han de cumplir sus deberes de manera justa y con integridad moral.

En armonía con el llamado de la División Norteamericana, animamos a nuestras iglesias, comunidades y líderes cívicos a sostener enfoques que respeten tanto la dignidad humana como las responsabilidades sociales que promueven el bienestar de todos. Creemos que es posible cuidar a los vulnerables, apoyar a quienes sirven y honrar el valor de cada ser humano.

A quienes se sienten invisibles o temerosos, les decimos: Ustedes tienen valor. No están solos.

A quienes sirven en funciones de seguridad o cumplimiento de la ley, les decimos: Oramos por ustedes y sus familias, y por fortaleza y compasión al cumplir sus responsabilidades.

A todos los que buscan seguir a Cristo: Que sea mos instrumentos de paz, canales de compasión y testigos de la justicia y misericordia de Dios. ■



▲ Carmelo Mercado



Carmelo Mercado es el vicepresidente de la Unión del Lago.

Trusting with All Her Heart — and a Kidney

BY BEVERLY MATIKO

Turning water to wine. Feeding the multitude. Walking on water. These and other accounts of miracles are familiar to many. But few people can claim to have played a major role in a modern-day miracle. Cindy Stephan humbly yet fervently makes this claim. She also carries the scars to prove it. An unshakeable conviction recently led to a miraculous transformation — new life and vigor for Jodi, the wife of Cindy's brother.

Several years ago, while celebrating Christmas with family members in the home of Cindy's parents, Jodi and Cindy found themselves side-by-side in the kitchen, washing dishes after a meal. Noticeably weary and weakened from Alport syndrome, a genetic disease affecting her kidneys, Jodi confided to Cindy, "I know I'll never get a new kidney."

Jodi's reasons for despair were well-founded. Her kidneys were functioning at only about 3–7%. She was all too familiar with other sobering numbers. According to the National Kidney Foundation, "Of the 123,000 Americans currently on the waiting list for a lifesaving organ transplant, more than 101,000 need a kidney, but only 17,000 people receive one each year. Every day 12 people die waiting for a kidney" (kidney.org/be-organ-donor). While Cindy sympathized with Jodi, the seeds of a miracle began to grow.

Sometime later, while vacationing in Hawaii, Cindy and her husband Brian received the sad news that Cindy's mother had died. They immediately returned to the Midwest. After her mother's memorial service, an incredible feeling washed over Cindy for the second time. She felt the Lord powerfully impressing upon her heart that she should give Jodi one of her kidneys. The thought sparked an overwhelming sense of purpose in Cindy, as she realized the profound impact this gift could have. But

anxiety mounted, and Cindy found herself questioning God. "Why should I sacrifice a part of myself for someone else?" she asked.

"I didn't hear a voice," Cindy explains, "but it was as if Jesus were saying to me, 'Cindy, I sacrificed myself for you. What have you done with the gift I have given you?' I knew right then what I must do. I also knew that if the way were cleared for this kidney donation, God would take care of me. And, as the only Christian in my birth family, I wanted Jesus to use me as a conduit to reveal Himself to my family and to others."

When the time came to tell Jodi about her decision, Cindy wasn't able to speak to her sister-in-law in person. Instead, she contacted her virtually. Overjoyed with Cindy's offer, Jodi agreed to move forward with all her required testing.

Cindy remembers that when she shared her resolve, "So many people were afraid for me. And with good cause. The risks were many. What if the donated kidney didn't function after the transplant? What if, years later, my one remaining kidney became diseased?"

Brian shared these concerns. Before his wife began to consider becoming a living donor, he knew little about the magnitude of kidney issues and the great need. "I wasn't really excited about Cindy doing it," he admits, "but when I realized



▲ Twenty-four hours after Cindy, (right), donated her kidney to Jodi, the pair were giddy with excitement. Finally, Jodi could begin to realistically envision life without dialysis and so many limitations.

the predicament Jodi was in, and when I saw that Cindy felt the Lord was convicting her, I didn't want to stand in the way. I wanted to be supportive."

After numerous appointments and procedures for both women, they finally received the long-awaited news. Cindy was a good candidate for kidney donation, and she was a perfect match. This news was further evidence of an unfolding miracle for Cindy, because she and Jodi were not blood relatives. Along with more counselling and preparation, the surgeries were scheduled to take place at the University of Michigan Transplant Center in Ann Arbor.

On May 7, 2025, the day of the surgeries, all went according to plan. The transplant was a success. Cindy was amazed by how well she felt following surgery. "I didn't have anywhere near the amount of pain I was expecting," she says. "Our medical teams had Jodi and me up and walking so soon." Still ringing in Cindy's ears is Jodi's voice as she marveled, "I feel more energetic right now than I have at any point during my last 30 years! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!"

Cindy remains very grateful for all the prayers and support she and Jodi received before, during and after the successful transplant. "The quilting ministry from my church in Paw Paw made a beautiful blanket for Jodi," Cindy notes fondly. "They even used Jodi's favorite colors — purple and black. Before it was completed, the quilt was placed in the foyer of the church so members could participate in its construction. Individual members did the final tying, and with each tie, a prayer was offered. When she received the quilt in the hospital before her surgery, Jodi could hardly believe that strangers would be so kind."

People from much farther away were also praying for Cindy and Jodi. Through years of earlier employment with *It is Written*, Cindy developed contacts worldwide. Messages poured in from around the globe. "Even my chiropractor said he would be praying for us at the time of surgery," Cindy recalls. "So many people stepped up and helped in practical ways, too. Much of my travel and additional expenses were covered by a charity that helps donors and their designated supporters."

Among Cindy's supporters was Brian's sister, Elise Damron. Elise accompanied Brian and Cindy to Ann Arbor for the surgery. "I was impressed with Cindy's peace, always desiring to show Jodi the love of God by this gift of life," said Elise. "It was so thrilling to witness and be a part of the beautiful miracle of life through organ donation."

A passage of scripture that spoke powerfully to Cindy throughout every stage of this process is *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths."*

Proverbs 3:5–6 (NKJV)

When asked what she would say to anyone considering becoming a living organ donor, Cindy is quick to respond: "Yes, there is a huge need, but I would never tell anyone else what to do. For me, God's leading and miracle-working were clear. He continuously opened doors." ■

Beverly Matiko, associate professor emerita of English and communication, Andrews University, lives in Niles, Michigan.



GOD'S 21ST CENTURY

MISSIONAL VISION

SCATTERING, PERSECUTION
AND THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

by *William Wells*

In the book of Acts, Luke writes about the growth of the mission of the Jesus movement, later called Christian, in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Tucked into the passionate narratives of God's miraculous growth of the early church are a handful of missionary texts that are often missed when telling the story of the church's expansion.

MISSIONAL VISION

Acts 11:19–30 describes persecution in Jerusalem following the stoning of Stephen. The followers of Jesus were scattered from Jerusalem to many places, with some going as far as Phoenicia (Tyre, Sidon and the coastline of modern Lebanon and southern Syria), the island of Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria, the third largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria.

What Luke records is that the followers of Jesus, during their flight, preached the word to Jews only at first. But there was a group of men who preached to the Hellenists of Antioch and began to win a following among the idol-worshiping society of the city. God's hand was upon these efforts. It was the refugees fleeing persecution who took the gospel to the Hellenists, doing intercultural mission in a major urban center. In the providence of God, forced displacement became the means by which the gospel moved from Jerusalem to new places, new peoples and new cultures. This was in addition to the many diasporic migrants living in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost who took seeds of faith back to their communities when they heard Peter preach.

MIGRATION AS A PROVIDENTIAL MOVEMENT

Acts 11:19–30 demonstrates that God's providence is at work in the scattering and migration of peoples. Providentially, He brings or sends people through events that cause migration and displacement and places them in proximity to the gospel. In the world today, as of June 2025, there were 123.2 million forcibly displaced persons.¹ This is only one subsection of the broader umbrella of immigration which includes international study, missionary work, diplomatic travel, economic and environmental movement, and human trafficking. Those counted as forcibly displaced include refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, and stateless people. In the United States, those fleeing persecution, war or violence may receive asylum, Temporary Protected Status or humanitarian parole if not entering as refugees through the well-vetted U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).

Jesus predicted that conflicts and natural disasters would increase (Matthew 24:6–7), and so the growth of migration — forced or voluntary — will continue until His second coming. Humanity, created as image-bearers of the Creator God, is caught between national conflicts, greed and the great controversy. People are often dehumanized by societies and nations even though the causes of their migration

are not of their own doing. Commonly it is the foreign policy of major nation-states, climate-related disasters or tensions within developing nations that precipitate mass migrations.

THE BIBLICAL MANDATE TO CARE FOR THE IMMIGRANT

It is in this space that Seventh-day Adventists are called to care for the vulnerable — the poor, orphan, foreigner/immigrant and widow(er) (Leviticus 19:33–34; Matthew 25:33–40; James 1:27). Built into the Sabbath commandment is a reminder to God's people to have empathy and care for the stranger/immigrant who abides within their gates (Exodus 20:8–11). In the agrarian society in which this was written, this included the home, property and communities where foreigners resided among worshippers of Yahweh. Israel was to treat foreigners well because they themselves were once foreigners in Egypt. God declares that His covenant love binds the foreigner close to His heart (Deuteronomy 10:17–20) and provides the ethical basis for just treatment of others. The prophets add that one of the reasons for judgment upon Israel and Judah was their mistreatment of the foreigner, widow and orphan. They broke their covenant responsibility to care for the vulnerable (Jeremiah 7:6; 22:3; Zechariah 7:9–11; Malachi 3:5).

ADVENTIST MISSION ROOTED IN IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

Seventh-day Adventists have a rich history with immigrants in our 181 years as a movement. Immigrants in America helped the fledgling Advent movement become aware of its missional responsibility. French, German and Norwegian immigrants were the first to be reached in the 1850s.³ Uriah Smith declared as late as 1872 that the movement had no responsibility to the globe and should focus only on immigrants coming to America. This changed through Ellen White's urging because her visions repeatedly saw the Advent message going to all the world.

Immigrant converts — many displaced because of famine, war and persecution — received the Advent message and sent Adventist papers to friends and family in their home countries. These overseas converts in Europe pressed the call to send J.N. Andrews as the first official Adventist missionary. This pattern continued for decades: publications sent from America to kin overseas opened mission fields. Adventist Mission is rooted in the immigrant experiences of our church in North America.⁴

IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN OUR COMMUNITIES ARE PEOPLE WHOM GOD HAS BROUGHT SO THAT WE MAY SHARE THE GOSPEL AND INVITE THEM TO PARTNER IN GOD'S MISSION TO THE WORLD.

GOD BRINGING THE NATIONS TO NORTH AMERICA

Today, this is still the case. Just about a decade ago, the Adventist Church was named one of the fastest-growing denominations in North America because of growth among immigrant populations.⁵ As conflicts intensify around the globe and missionary access becomes limited, God is bringing the nations into North America and into the Lake Union so they may hear the gospel and become missionaries to their own kin and countries. Ellen White wrote about this for 40 years.⁶ To emphasize this call, the General Conference 2025–2030 Strategic Plan encourages mission engagement through outreach to displaced persons.⁷ This is only the second time a strategic plan has placed displaced persons (immigrants) as a global missional focus.

THE CHALLENGE OF A NON-BIBLICAL IMMIGRATION LENS

Given this inclusion in missional priority, a 2022 World Relief poll showed that only 20% of Evangelical Christians in America say the Bible informs their views on immigration.⁸ This indicates that for most Christians, the Bible is not the primary source informing their views. Any rhetoric that dehumanizes immigrant and refugee communities and seeks their removal undermines God's providential purposes, summarized in Ellen White's vision of God bringing them to our communities so they may be reached, equipped and mobilized to preach the Three Angels' Messages.ⁱⁱ

This lack of biblical grounding becomes more troubling when 80% of undocumented immigrants and those on humanitarian parole or Temporary Protected Status are Christian. Deportation orders will impact 1 in 12 Christians in the United States, including 1 in 18 evangelicals and 1 in 5 Catholics.⁹ Many who are at risk of deportation have been or are likely to be forcibly repatriated into conflict zones or places where they will be persecuted for their faith. If money motivates concern for church sustainability, then the loss of tithe income from these members should also be a warning, since immigrant Adventists generally return tithe and offering at higher rates than the average American Adventist.

AN ETHICAL AND MISSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Immigrants and refugees in our communities are people whom God has brought so that we may share the gospel and invite them to partner in God's mission to the world. As the body of Christ, we have an ethical responsibility because the love of God compels us to care for, serve and protect our immigrant communities for the accomplishment of God's desire to reach the world with the gospel.

Acts 11 is unfolding all around the globe today. Migration occurs for many reasons, and we are challenged to have eyes anointed with eye salve (Revelation 3:18) to see as God sees or risk hardening our hearts like Israel of old and incur God's judgment in the final separation scene (Matthew 25:31–46).

PRACTICAL RESPONSES

There are practical ways to respond with compassion. One is raising awareness of needs in our churches and communities. This can be done by holding a World Refugee Sabbath event on the third Sabbath of June, preceding or following World Refugee Day. In 2001, the United Nations voted this observance in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, affirming the protection of those fleeing persecution.^{10 11 12} World Refugee Sabbath allows congregations to listen to stories, build awareness and celebrate the miracles of God's care for immigrant neighbors.

Another response is to locate immigrant and diasporic communities near you and include them in prayer, community service and evangelism ministry so they may be reached with the Three Angels' Messages. More ways to engage can be explored with your conference's multilingual ministries director.

May we each take time to reflect, listen, study and take steps toward serving and reaching our refugee and immigrant communities. This is God's providence and work — done by His own hand even now in the 21st century. ■

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William Wells is a doctoral candidate in intercultural studies at Andrews University. He volunteers with the Refugee Highway Partnership of North America where he facilitates networking among refugee serving organizations. He is married to Rahel Wells, PhD, and loves to adventure together with her.

4 IMMIGRANTS ESCAPE CRISIS

THEY NOW GRAPPLE
WITH IMMIGRATION
POLICY CHANGES.

When Angel Chourio's mother told him about a Biden-era program known as "humanitarian parole" that could potentially allow him to emigrate with his wife, he was ready to seize the opportunity.



Stanton Witherspoon

Angel Chourio and his wife Maria arrived in Indiana from Venezuela, and are waiting for approval for a religious visa.

But first, he and his wife Maria prayed about it.

Angel, then a pastor at a Seventh-day Adventist Church in Venezuela, had already been praying to be reunited with his mother, whom he had not seen after she had migrated to the United States six years earlier. It was a bittersweet moment. Angel would be closer to his family, but his wife would be leaving her family behind.

They needed to discern God's will, looking for signs that this was His plan for them, given that they did not have the financial resources to make the move. "But nothing is impossible for God. It wasn't long before God performed multiple miracles, provided the financial resources, and opened doors for both of us to have valid passports," Angel said.

But their path to the United States was neither straight nor easy. Along the way, Angel hit a bump in the road: their application for the humanitarian parole program was denied. The couple was told that it was only open to Venezuelans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Cubans — a puzzling response given that they were Venezuelans.

"We informed the family of this incident and they located lawyers," he said. "No one gave a reason for this. Multiple calls were made, but none were successful."

For the time being, it seemed like they'd reached a dead end. Angel moved on with his life in Venezuela.

Seven months later, he received an urgent call from his mother. Angel thought something was wrong. She had received an

UNDER THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S SWEEPING CRACKDOWN ON IMMIGRATION, BOTH LEGAL AND ILLEGAL, THE ABILITY OF MANY IMMIGRANTS LIKE ANGEL TO REMAIN IN THE UNITED STATES LEGALLY IS AT RISK.

KATIA, WHO NOW RESIDES IN INDIANA, HAS REACHED THE END OF HER TWO-YEAR REPRIEVE FROM THE PAROLE PROGRAM.

email which she said resolved the issue. A yellow highlighted “error” message on his application was gone. Angel had his green light to come to the United States, arriving in September 2023.

The Biden administration launched the parole program in early 2023 to permit individuals outside the U.S. to enter based on “urgent humanitarian reasons or a significant public benefit.” Applicants needed background checks and a U.S. sponsor. About 530,000 immigrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela were permitted to stay for two years.

Under the Trump administration’s sweeping crackdown on immigration, both legal and illegal, the ability of many immigrants like Angel to remain in the United States legally is at risk. The legal landscape for how immigrants can come to the United States, already winding and torturous for so many, has become even more complicated. The Biden-era humanitarian parole program, for instance, has been revoked. Meanwhile, other provisions have been rescinded for some countries, but not eliminated for others.

“GOD BROUGHT ME THROUGH”

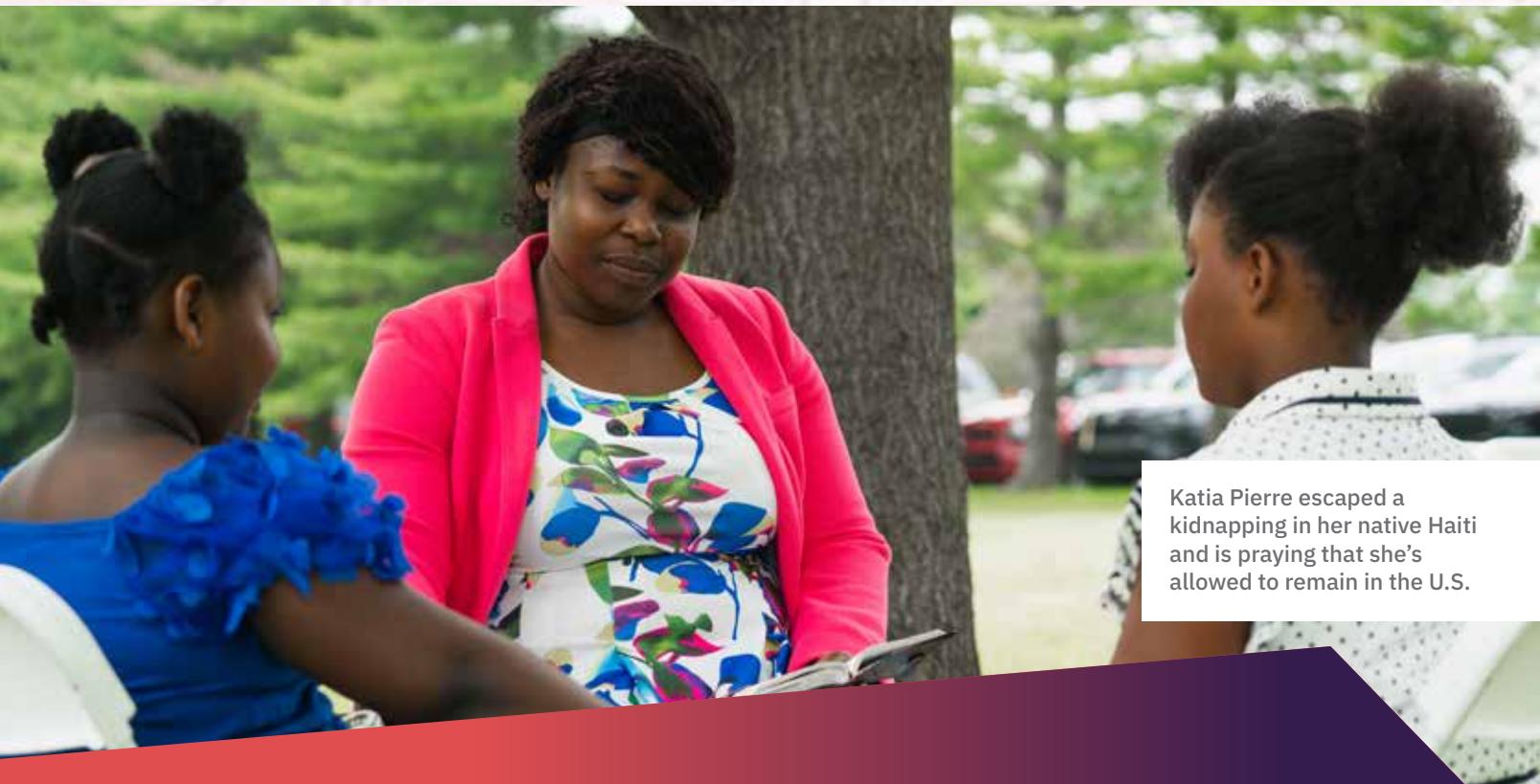
Like the Chourios, Katia Pierre came to the United States from Haiti through the humanitarian parole program.

Katia immigrated after enduring a kidnapping experience where she was held hostage for eight days while her assailants demanded ransom money from her family. Her memory of the incident is understandably hazy, but she recalls focusing on the Bible verses that counsel against fear and encourage trust in God.

Katia, who now resides in Indiana, has reached the end of her two-year reprieve from the parole program. She is afraid to return to Haiti, saying that nothing has changed in the country. With her immigration status now in limbo, Katia is unable to work at the Amazon warehouse where she had found employment. “So, she’s at home, not knowing what the future holds for her and her family,” said her sister Paula, who translated for Katia in an interview.

Amid the uncertainty, Katia’s relationship with God has only deepened. “I got so close to God that I feel like I can be safe to talk to

Stanton Witherspoon



Katia Pierre escaped a kidnapping in her native Haiti and is praying that she’s allowed to remain in the U.S.

him, and I feel so close to Him, and I have hope somehow God's going to say something for my case, or somebody's going to help me out," Katia said.

She is now hoping to apply for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), a program established by Congress in 1990 that allows people from unsafe countries to temporarily live and work in the United States without being permanent residents. While the program was meant to be temporary, many immigrants who have benefited from the program have spent decades living in the country.

THE DREAM, INTERRUPTED

For Abriel Thuc, a South Sudanese native, the notice came without warning. A few weeks shy of graduation, Abriel was getting ready to wrap up his final semester at Andrews University when the news landed: his immigration status was being revoked. Both safety and the dream of receiving an education drew him to America.

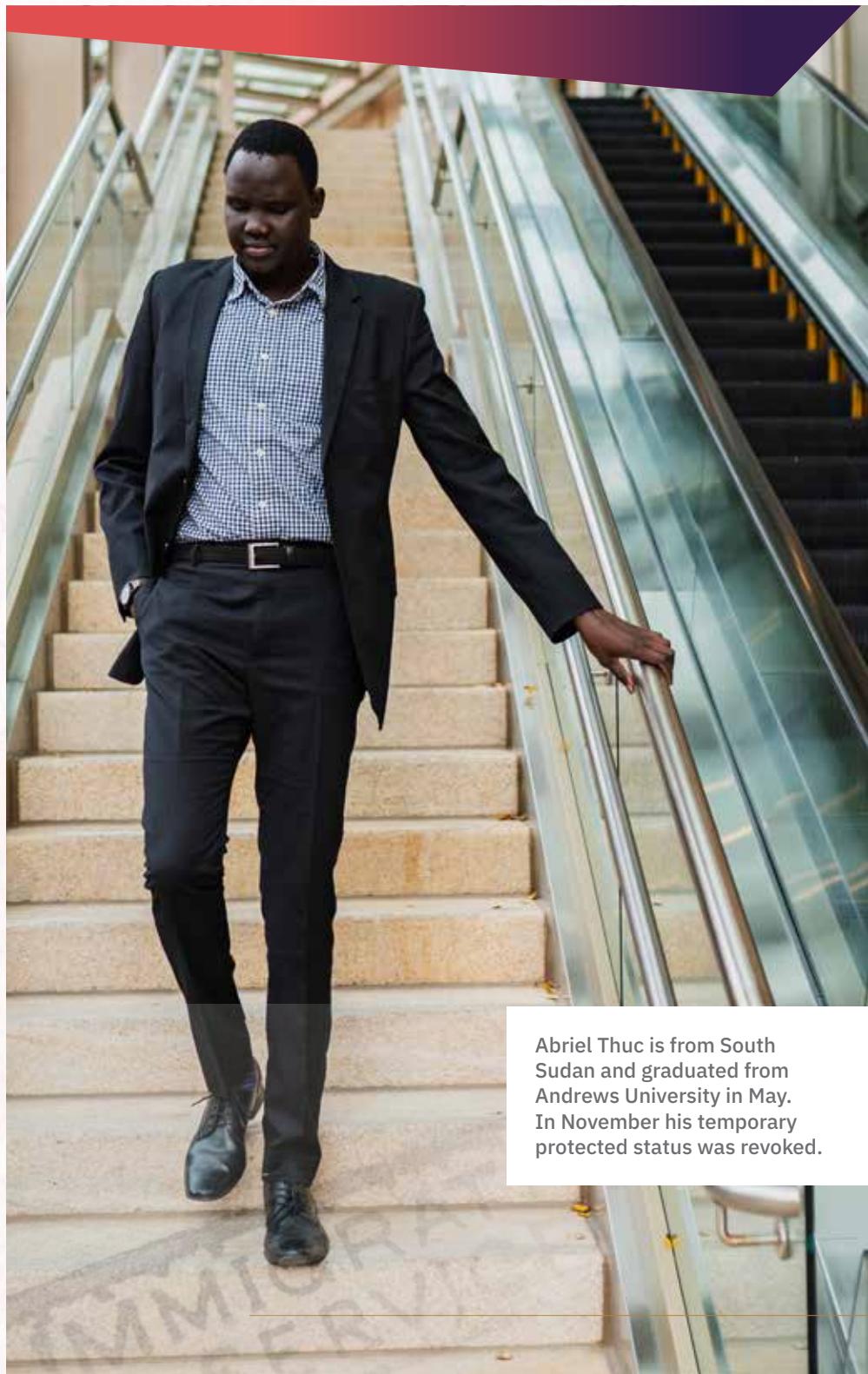
Born in South Sudan and protected under Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Abriel had made the most of his years in the United States — earning a degree in international business, serving his campus and helping others. Now, he was being asked to leave because of a deportation dispute between the U.S. and Sudanese governments.

Abriel grew up in a traditional agricultural lifestyle focused on raising cows and other livestock. His family did not have an education. When he shared his educational aspirations, he had to convince his father and older brother to let him go. Eventually, Abriel enrolled at an elementary school run by missionaries.

"I just started there, little by little," he said.

As he pursued an education, Abriel also began the journey that would bring him across the ocean to the United States. When the simmering civil war boiled over in 2017, he decided to relocate to a refugee camp in Kenya to continue his studies — a transition he again had to make over the misgivings of family members.

4 IMMIGRANTS ESCAPE CRISIS



Mario Alvarado

Abriel Thuc is from South Sudan and graduated from Andrews University in May. In November his temporary protected status was revoked.

As he made the harrowing trip from war-torn South Sudan to Kenya, Abriel remembers praying, "God, please, let me go to Kenya and get me out of this."

His prayer was answered, but Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya came with its own challenges. The camp's population was swelling due to an influx of refugees, not only from South Sudan but also from Ethiopia and Congo. Although Abriel could attend school, he said it was "not even good," and the food available in the camp was substandard. At one point, he had to go for two days without eating, and the water in the camp was not clean.

Abriel graduated from Andrews University in May, but returning to Sudan isn't a viable

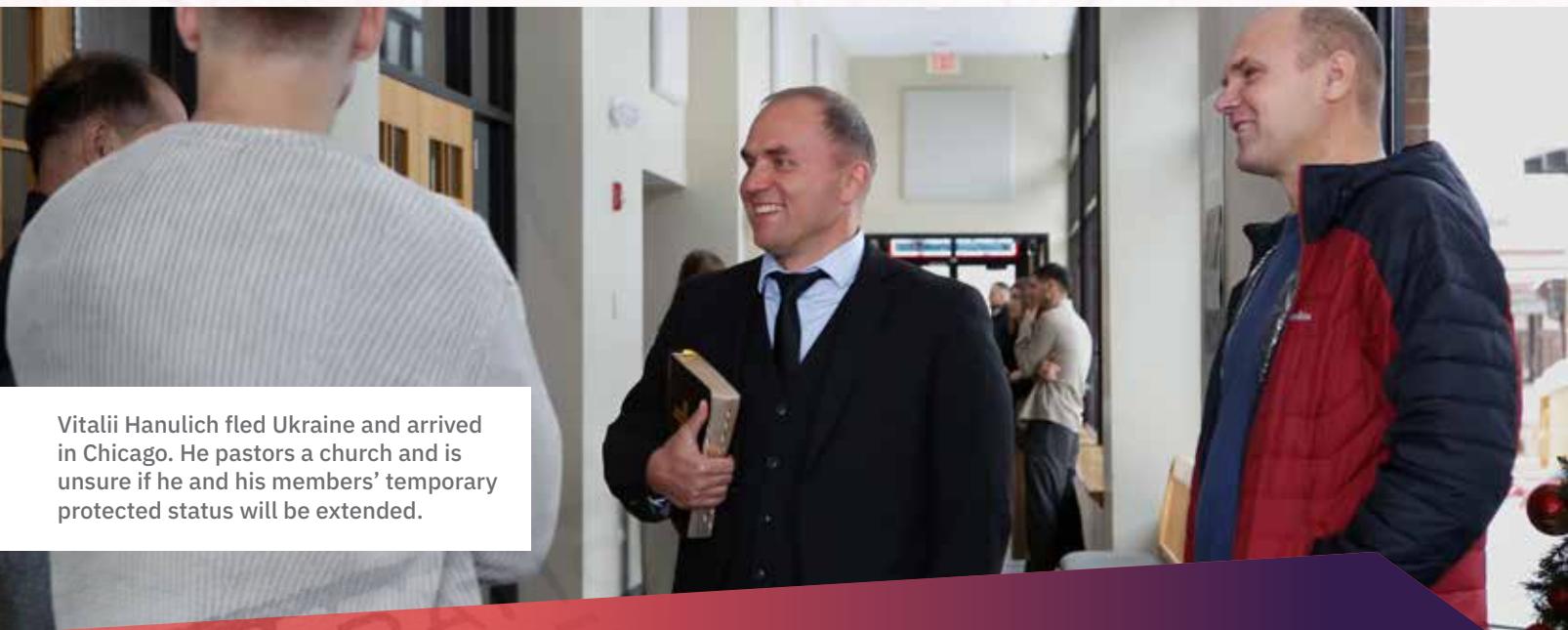
option. Already a war-torn country, Abriel's village was attacked and decimated on May 29. This has displaced hundreds of civilians, many of whom are now without shelter or other necessities.

Abriel's departure from South Sudan and immigration to the United States have also been a spiritual journey. As a child, Abriel said his family had a firm faith in God but lacked specific knowledge of the Bible or Jesus. As he learned more about his faith at the Catholic-run missionary school, he converted to Catholicism. In Kenya, he attended a Mormon church.

Through his many transitions, Abriel's one constant has been his faith and trust — first

that God would help him escape South Sudan, and then that God would give him the resources he needed to live out his dream of education in the United States. He credits the prayers of the Lake Union community during an Easter Sunday "Resurrecting Hope" prayer vigil with enabling him to stay in the country, given the turmoil in the U.S. immigration system.

"Now I believe in those prayers. So, for me now, I feel like I'm okay. I'm relieved from all of that stress and worry," Abriel said. "I still have hope that change is going to happen here and there, but God will keep those things in place for those who came here for a better life."



Sandra Mendez

4 IMMIGRANTS ESCAPE CRISIS

WAR AT THE DOORSTEP

Like Abriel, Vitalii Hanulich's decision to come to the United States was forged in war — Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Vitalii, who was a pastor in Ukraine for 20 years, saw the brutalities of Russia's war firsthand as a resident in Bucha, a small suburb of Kyiv where human rights investigators later uncovered evidence of war crimes against civilians.

The war came home for Vitalii in a very literal sense when soldiers entered his family's apartment and trashed it.

"We are very lucky that we moved from Bucha on the first day," he said.

Eventually, Vitalii and his family, including a three-month-old and a teenager, found their way to the United States through the last administration's humanitarian parole program, settling in Chicago where relatives from Ukraine were already living.

Vitalii says the Protestant culture of the area was a refreshing change from Ukraine.

"It's a huge value that I feel here," he said. "Because we have, in Ukraine, an Orthodox culture. We have corruption, bureaucrats, so many, many difficult issues."

"It's a very big difference," Vitalii added. "It just probably feels a little more free here."

Although he felt guilt over leaving Ukraine, when he arrived Vitalii was told not to think of himself as a refugee. He was encouraged to start a new life with his family. He did just that, starting a church that grew to a congregation of about one hundred in a year, with 25 people in a special Sabbath School class. Eight people from this class have already been baptized. Through the growth of their church, Vitalii can see how God has blessed him and his family.

"During this period, we see how God made us," he said.

For immigrants like Vitalii, being a pastor is a way to serve and give back to communities that have prayed for them and supported them in coming to the United States.

PRESSING ON IN FAITH

Angel Chourio recalls searching for that sense of higher purpose.

After settling in Indiana, Angel found work as a DoorDash delivery driver, and his wife became a preschool assistant. They were also involved in churches in Lawrence and Carmel.

"Everything was going very well. But we still had a question in our hearts, especially mine: *Why did God bring us here?* A part of me never lost the desire to serve as a pastor,

but at the same time, I felt it was highly unlikely I would ever have that opportunity," Angel said.

With some encouragement from his wife, he began praying for God to open the door to a pastor position — if that was the reason he had been brought to the country. When an opportunity opened up, Angel "accepted without hesitation," believing that he had found the ultimate purpose God had in mind for him in the United States.

In June 2024, Angel began serving at the Hammond Hispanic Church, in addition to three other Hispanic churches, in Logansport, Merrillville and Marion.

Angel's two-year limit for the humanitarian parole program has ended, putting into question his ability to stay in the country. The couple applied for TPS and were denied. He also applied for an RI visa and is awaiting its processing so he can return to employment as a pastor.

"It's important for us to abide by the laws of a country that has opened its doors to us, and we are also grateful. The Bible teaches us to give to God what is God's and to Caesar what is Caesar's. We're still waiting for a response from the process, but we trust in God that everything will turn out well," Angel said.

Meanwhile, Abriel Thuc's immigration status was once again thrown into limbo. On Nov. 5, the U.S. government revoked TPS benefits for all South Sudanese, giving them 60 days to leave the U.S. It's an uneasy time, he said, "We didn't come here just to start over in fear."

But like him, others are learning how to keep moving forward even when the ground underneath them shifts. They may not know what's next, but they know Who walks with them.

None of them expected the process to be easy. And it hasn't been. But somewhere between the letters, the hearings, the prayers, and the waiting; they've kept going. Not just because they believe in a better outcome, but because they believe in a faithful God. ■

Danni Thaw is a freelance writer.

WE'RE STILL
WAITING FOR A
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EVERYTHING WILL
TURN OUT WELL.

A WAVE OF IMMIGRATION BUOYED MULTICULTURAL CHURCHES. NOW ATTENDANCE IS DROPPING.

On any given Sabbath morning in the Lake Union, worship might be heard in Spanish, Ukrainian, Haitian Creole, Burmese or English, voices lifted in praise from families who now call the Midwest home. But in recent months, another sound has filled the pews: quiet, persistent uncertainty.

AT THE CENTER OF THAT UNSETTLEDNESS IS A PATCHWORK of changing immigration policies affecting hundreds of thousands of people across the United States, many of them Adventist church members. Some wait for the government to decide the fate of humanitarian programs that once allowed them to work. Others wonder how long they can stay employed, or whether a missed appointment might cause a knock on the door. A few have already begun packing bags.

Across Indiana, Illinois, Lake Region, Michigan and Wisconsin conferences, pastors and multicultural coordinators say the impact on congregational life is real.

“Every day our people wake up with the same question,” said Vitalii Hanulich, an Illinois Conference pastor of the Ukrainian Church in Chicago. “Should I wait? Should I leave? No one knows what will happen next.” Nearly all of his members hold a blend of parole and Temporary Protected Status, uncertain arrangements that have expired for some and for others such as Hanulich a reprieve until late 2026.

They are not alone. TPS, an immigration program granted to individuals who cannot safely return to their home countries, currently shields more than one million people. Five nations represent the largest groups: Venezuela, Haiti, El Salvador, Ukraine and Honduras. For many people in the pews, this protection is temporary and fragile.

The Lake Union’s more than 90,000 members include thousands who fall into these categories, or who live alongside relatives who do. Their experiences vary widely. Most communities report intense disruption, especially if their members are undocumented or their temporary protected status has expired. Yet regardless of status, churches must now navigate ministry in a climate where legal uncertainty quietly shapes daily life.

What follows is a portrait of the moment, drawn from extended interviews with the five Lake Union Hispanic multicultural directors, three pastors and a church member.

MINISTRY DISRUPTED ACROSS THE UNION

In western Michigan, Pastor Richar Perez watched a thriving Bible study group collapse almost overnight. Ten farmworkers had been preparing for baptism. Perez said a group of farmworkers would arrive Sabbath morning and, instead of attending Sabbath School, gather in the chapel for Bible studies. “They were inviting other people to church, too,” he said.

Then rumors spread that Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers had visited a nearby orchard. One family had missed an



Christa McConnell

▲ Haitian churches filled up with immigrants fleeing economic hardship and political violence.

immigration appointment. Agents arrived at their workplace. Others feared they were next.

“In a single week, the entire group disappeared,” Perez said. “Some moved to other states. Some went into hiding. Some stopped answering their phones. We lost half our people.”

Pastor Daniele Spinosa in southeastern Michigan has seen similar patterns. Families who once filled pews now worship from home. Others, fearing traffic stops or workplace checks, have returned to their home countries. Several were preparing for baptism before they vanished. “It is discouraging to the church,” Spinosa said.

A CHURCH PLANT LOSES ITS LEADER

In Wisconsin, the disruption is acute. Hispanic Coordinator Evelio Miranda recounted the story of the leader of a growing church plant in a rural northwestern part of the state. The congregation began as home Bible studies and had grown into a vibrant small group that met every week.



▲ Hispanic coordinators from Illinois, Indiana, Lake Region, Michigan and Wisconsin conferences meet with Lake Union Vice President of Multicultural Ministries Carmelo Mercado (right) during the Lake Union Year-end Meeting.

The church planter had lived in the United States for 11 years, working as a carpenter building sheds. He supported his family and local congregation faithfully. When police contacted him about an old traffic citation, he went to the station willingly, believing it would be routine.

"When he arrived, instead of asking him about the citation, they detained him," Miranda said.

The member now awaits deportation. His wife and children are heartbroken. He is undocumented but two of their children are United States citizens. The family is preparing for the likelihood of returning to Mexico together so they wouldn't be separated.

The church plant lost not only its leader but its spiritual center. Members are grieving. Attendance has shrunk. The future of the group is uncertain.

FEAR KEEPS FAMILIES INDOORS

In Chicago, a city targeted for immigration raids, the disruption is steady. Eva Cruz, a lifelong member of the South Hispanic Church and a member of the Lake Union Executive Committee, sees fear reshaping daily routines. Her church sits at the crossroads of several immigrant neighborhoods, drawing members from Pilsen, Cicero, Little Village and the Hispanic corridor of Chicago.

One family she knows no longer leaves their house. "There's an elderly couple who have decided to actually bunker down in their apartment. They're not going out. Their children are bringing them food because they're too frightened to go out on their own."

HAITIAN CONGREGATIONS RATTLED

In Indiana, uncertainty has shaken entire congregations. Haitian Adventists have been deeply unsettled by the government's announcement that TPS for Haitians will end on Feb. 3, 2026.

Lake Region Multicultural Director Eddie Allen, who supports Haitian churches in Indiana, said one company had planned an organizational service. It was meant to be a celebration. Instead, leaders postponed it.

When the event was finally held months later, he described what he witnessed. "The fear in their eyes and faces. They even had lookout,

▲ At the Hispanic congress July 2024, attendance wasn't as strong as in years prior, and organizers attribute this to a decision by many to limit their exposure to traffic stops.



little children looking through the door, someone sitting out in a car looking. That was sad,” he said wistfully.

Indiana Multicultural Ministries Director Noel Ojeda hears similar stories. “Members are evaluating whether to move to Canada or other countries,” he said. “They do not want to be caught in a situation where they cannot stay and cannot return safely.”

The United States currently has a “Do Not Travel” advisory for Haiti because of kidnapping, civil unrest, violence and limited healthcare. These same dangers are what drove many families to flee in the first place.

BEYOND HISPANIC COMMUNITIES

The disruption is not limited to Spanish or Franco-speaking congregations. Ukrainian churches, Burmese groups and Caribbean congregations also feel the strain.

Pastor Vitalii Hanulich said his Ukrainian attendance has dropped by 10%. Giving has dipped as some members lose jobs, because employers hesitate to keep staff whose work permits might expire. Four families have already returned to Europe. Many others are considering their options.

“We have children who were beginning to thrive here,” Hanulich said. “Families who were rebuilding their lives. Now everything feels uncertain again.”

A DIFFICULT SEASON

Across the Lake Union, multicultural coordinators describe this season as one of the most difficult they have ever faced. They spend their days counseling families, fielding urgent calls, connecting members with attorneys, praying with congregations, and trying to steady pastors who feel overwhelmed.

Allen has served in ministry for four decades. “This is the most challenging time I have ever seen,” he said. “The stress, the anxiety, the uncertainty – it is real,” Allen said. “People feel vulnerable.”

Nilton Garcia, Michigan Conference Hispanic ministries coordinator, shares similar sentiments. These aren’t distant media stories of people rounded up for deportation, he explained. “These are people from our own churches.”

A CALL TO ACTION

Eva Cruz says the harsh rhetoric has fueled inhumane treatment of immigrants and driving many Hispanics into hiding. “With the rhetoric now, it makes it seem that you are a criminal and therefore you deserve to be treated as less than or you’re not worthy.”

She believes the church must reclaim its moral clarity. “There’s no crime for being here undocumented,” she said. “We have to stand for what is right and call out when people are treated inhumanely.” For Cruz, the issue is not political, but spiritual. “We are called to be the hands and the feet of Jesus,” she said emphatically.



Katie Fellows
▲ Illinois Conference and Lake Union executive committee member Eva Cruz voices her appreciation for the Lake Union statement on immigration, at the Nov. 19 Lake Union meeting.

Ojeda echoed that concern. He said immigration pressures should not divide the church or be filtered through political lenses. Instead, “the church must respond with compassion and not fear.”

On Nov. 19, the Lake Union Conference released a statement urging the humane treatment of immigrants and affirming the dignity of all people. Multicultural coordinators say the statement matters, but they believe local congregations must also take concrete steps to support affected families. They hope congregations will create safe spaces for those who are grieving or fearful. They hope members will advocate for those who lack a voice, and for churches to serve as a web of interlocking hands that carry each other forward.

Allen believes prayer must be paired with action. “Praying is important,” he said. “But we must move beyond prayers.”

HOLDING TO MISSION IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Even in crisis, the mission has not stopped.

Ruben Bullón, Illinois Conference multicultural ministries leader, reminds pastors that ministry cannot be placed on hold. “The immigration situation will change, just as the other crises like the pandemic or economic downturns and political cycles,” he said. “The constant is to reach people for Jesus. We preach Christ, not crisis.”

As churches try to press forward even while huge swaths of their congregation are hurting, Michigan Pastor Perez and others are trying to instill hope. “God is in control,” he reminds his members. “This life is temporary. Our citizenship is in heaven.”

And while not downplaying the crisis in the pews, Pastor Spinosa said he encourages members to see forced relocation through a missionary lens. Spinosa teaches his members to see deportation not as the end of mission. If families must leave, he tells them the gospel travels with them. “The mission continues,” he counsels.

Hanulich continues to baptize new believers. “People are still answering God’s call,” he said. “Despite the worry, there is hope.”

While the disruption is real, the gospel continues to move, carried by congregations who know what it means to trust God in uncertain places.

So, on any Sabbath morning, among the voices raised in Spanish, Ukrainian, Haitian Creole, Burmese and English, there remains a steady whisper of faith: God is still with us. God is still leading. God is still calling His people forward. ■

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



Precise Look Photography

▲ More than 100 UChicago Medicine AdventHealth team members volunteered at a free medical clinic in Chicago's western suburbs. Plans are already underway for the next clinic in 2026.

Free Medical Clinic Brings Hope and Healing

In fall 2025, the Lyons Township High School South Campus in the Chicago suburb of Western Springs transformed into a place of healing and hope as more than 100 community members received free medical care through the UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Free Health Clinic. The event offered an array of essential health services completely free of charge to individuals and families who might otherwise go without care.

From dental exams and cleanings to foot exams, flu shots, vision screenings, orthopedic evaluations and pediatric school and sports physicals, the clinic provided compassionate, whole-person care for patients of all ages. Those attending also had access to physical therapy, laboratory screenings, free basic medications, nutritional counseling and social service evaluations. Community partners offered additional resources, including access to affordable medications and specialty referrals.

Chaplain services were available to ensure that care extended beyond the physical realm. Every visitor also received a free bag

of food from the food pantry, a reminder that health and healing begin when body, mind and spirit are cared for together.

This event marked the second free clinic of 2025 hosted by UChicago Medicine AdventHealth. The first took place earlier in the year in Glendale Heights. Together, these two annual clinics serve hundreds of individuals in need across the community, fulfilling the organization's mission of Extending the Healing Ministry of Christ through service and compassion.

"As an organization, whole-person care is clearly very important," said Dave Tkachuck, president and CEO of UChicago Medicine

AdventHealth La Grange. "But there are limitations to what can be done within the four walls of a hospital. That's why it's critically important to step outside and come where it's easier for people to access the care they need. We are ready to serve."

The clinic was staffed by a dedicated team of 100 volunteers, including 15 providers representing multiple disciplines. Volunteers took time from their weekend to care for their neighbors. "What I love most about our free mission clinics is how they bring people from all across our Great Lakes Region together to serve," said Heather Hoffman, regional director of Mission Integration for UChicago Medicine AdventHealth. "God always shows up in a big way, and those moments are unforgettable."

Many attendees were able to find connections for lasting health and stability through local social service partners, learning about programs that could support them long after the clinic ended. Whether it was linking someone to a medical home, assisting with medication costs or offering counseling and spiritual support, every interaction was an opportunity to uplift someone in need.

Events like the Free Health Clinic demonstrate how faith in action can transform lives. By providing care where people live, work and worship, these clinics remind the community that healing is not limited to a hospital setting — it is a shared mission of compassion, service and love. ■

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



Major Grant Received for Online School Psychology Program

A \$350,000 grant has been awarded to the Andrews University School of Graduate Psychology & Counseling by Michigan's Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO). According to Renette Portecop-Prentice, assistant professor and School Psychology Program coordinator at Andrews, these funds will be primarily used to establish an online version of the University's school psychology programming. A statement released by LEO shares that this investment will "increase the school psychologist workforce in Michigan, support students who are facing mental health challenges and help schools navigate available resources." Portecop-Prentice adds, "Students will benefit significantly from increased faculty support and resources."

Portecop-Prentice submitted the grant application in March 2025 with assistance from Carlisle Sutton, sponsored research officer. Portecop-Prentice and Carole Woolford-Hunt, chair of the School of Graduate Psychology & Counseling, express that they were pleasantly surprised when LEO officially announced in July that Andrews University was one of the grant winners. "We were up against big universities," says Woolford-Hunt. "I don't know if there were any smaller schools who applied. We were literally the 'David' in this whole situation, and when the grants were announced, we were one of only two programs who were awarded."

The second grant award went to Western Michigan University, which will be launching its school psychologist training program for the first time. Andrews will use the funds to build on its preexisting, in-person program. The \$350,000 will be spent on supplies, faculty, staff, recruiting and marketing within the guidelines that LEO set for the grant.

The program will begin taking applications for online students in spring 2026 and will conduct its first semester of online classes the following fall. Although all students are invited to be a part of the online program, Michigan residents are encouraged to apply,

with the goal of growing the state's school psychologist workforce.

Portecop-Prentice shares that the National Association of School Psychologists recommends that schools have a ratio of about 500 students to one school psychologist. "Michigan is at approximately 1,350 to one," she says. "So, we've definitely had a shortage. It's been improving in recent years, but there are just not enough of us to go around." Grant programs and initiatives, like the one Andrews University and Western Michigan are a part of, are working



to increase the number of qualified school psychologists available within the state.

The School of Graduate Psychology & Counseling offers quality education and training for its students. Portecop-Prentice notes that evaluations from surveys sent to the employers of recent graduates "have consistently been strong and above average." She adds that another factor in the grant award may have been Andrews' ongoing contributions to neighboring school districts in Michigan, including the work of many alumni.

Ultimately, Portecop-Prentice and Woolford-Hunt share the sentiment that God is continuing to bless the work of the School of Graduate Psychology & Counseling. "We know it's nothing but God," says Woolford-Hunt.

To learn more, please visit the program's webpage. ■

Andrew Francis is a student writer for the Office of University Communication.



▲ The School of Graduate Psychology & Counseling is located in Bell Hall on the Andrews University.



▲ On Nov. 14 and 15, the sanctuary of the South Bend First Adventist Church was transformed in the beauty of God, which included stations representing Old Testament sanctuary symbols.

“Beauty of God” Conference Brings Theology, Worship and Awe to South Bend

When the idea first surfaced, it sounded ... different. Strange, even. Church members are used to the predictable rhythm of conference names: **Revelation Seminar, Religious Liberty Conference, Mission Congress, Men’s Summit, Women’s Retreat.** But **The Beauty of God Conference?** It landed in my ears like an unexpected melody: familiar yet unfamiliar, gentle yet arresting. **Beauty? God’s beauty? It felt odd at first, almost out of place in a world overflowing with noise, conflict and endless activity.**

But what blossomed from that odd seed would become one of the most unforgettable experiences in the life of an Indiana church.

On November 14 and 15, the sanctuary of the South Bend First Adventist Church was transformed, not with decorations, but with presence. With expectation. With awe. With beauty.

And God met participants there.

The vision, South Bend First Associate Pastor Omwocha Nyaribo said, was simply “to present Christ to the members and the members to Christ.”

A JOURNEY INTO BEAUTY

The lineup featured Danielle Bae; Mark Eaton, executive secretary/treasurer of

the Indiana Conference; and Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary professors JoAnn Davidson, Ante Jerončić, Hyveth Williams and David Williams. Local pastors Throstur Thordarson and Omwocha Nyaribo helped host the event.

Presentations focused on themes of divine beauty, God’s faithfulness and the intersection of art, creation and redemption. Williams’ sermon, “The Beauty of God,” drew from her own story of recovery from addiction and brokenness. Bae’s message on “The Great Controversy Over God’s Beauty” addressed how culture distorts God’s character through false portrayals of beauty.

The conference climaxed during a communion service designed by David Williams that

guided the congregation through stations representing Old Testament sanctuary symbols. Members began at the Altar of Burnt Offering, where members wrote their sins, fears and burdens on slips of paper and cast them into the fire. It was holy. It was freeing.

At the Laver, they washed their feet, symbolizing cleansing, humility and new beginnings.

At the Menorah, they lit each other’s candles, passing light from person to person, testifying that divine beauty is never meant to be kept, but shared.

At the Altar of Incense, the congregation was invited to come forward and lift their petitions before God. There, the elders gently prayed over them and anointed them, filling the sanctuary with the fragrance of intercession and grace.

At the Table of Shewbread, they received the bread and the wine, symbols of Christ’s body and blood, reminding participants that His sacrifice alone cleanses us from all unrighteousness and invites us into a life made new.

And then participants stood before the Most Holy Place. The congregation lifted their voices in unison, singing “Holy, Holy, Holy,” praising the Lord for the splendor of His beauty. It was a sacred moment, an experience beyond words.

Many wept. Many prayed longer than usual. Many lingered even after the benediction, unwilling to leave the glow of what had just happened.

TESTIMONIES

Jerončić praised the congregation for daring to hold a theology conference at the local level, calling it “an exemplary joining of academy and church.” In a social media post, he wrote, “We need more events like this, where scholars, pastors, church members and visitors can gather to explore the depth and beauty of the Christian faith within the context of worship and discipleship ... and to do so in ways that rise above culture-war postures. Splendid!”

Davidson told attendees she had “never seen anything like this conference anywhere in the Adventist world,” describing her participation as a delight rather than an assignment.

“It was more than a ritual. More than a service. It was a holy encounter,” one participant said, as many lingered afterward in prayer or silence.

Member Fellie Ogachi said she saw “the beauty of God in the conference itself,” adding that the sanctuary walk was the most meaningful part. “Walking through Old Testament symbols — burning our written sins, cleansing at the laver, pausing at the

candlestick to share the light of Jesus — was deeply moving. It reminded me of God’s holiness, grace and overwhelming beauty.”

Nyaribo said the idea came from a simple conviction: “We will spend eternity discovering God’s beauty. Why not start the class early?”

As the final prayer ended and the lights softened, attendees didn’t rush out. They stayed — some in quiet reflection; others praying together. Many described the weekend as a glimpse of eternity.■

Omwocha Nyaribo, with Herald staff



donated a portion of the bags needed for the project.

The Pathfinders set an ambitious outreach goal: reach 1,000 homes in the Hinsdale community. With care and intentionality, they filled each bag with instructions for the can collection and included invitations to two upcoming church events.

In a single doorstep visit, these young people offered their neighbors the chance to join in a meaningful act of compassion while also extending invitations to fellowship with their church family. “Evangelism comes in all different forms and from people of all ages,” leaders shared. “Sometimes it looks like a sermon — but sometimes it looks like a child placing a bag on a neighbor’s doorstep.”

The results were extraordinary. The Hinsdale community responded with overwhelming generosity, donating 6,000 pounds of food, which translates into approximately 5,000 meals (using USDA guidelines of 1.2 pounds per meal). The impact was immediate:

The Hinsdale Food Pantry received the majority of the donation.

Additional food supported a Chicago Public School food bank serving students and families.

The remainder was used to help keep the micro pantry located outside the Hinsdale Seventh-day Adventist Church, available 24/7 for anyone in need.



▲ The Hinsdale community responded to the Pathfinders food drive by donating 6,000 pounds of food, which translates into approximately 5,000 meals. Here, Pathfinders fill each bag with instructions for the can collection and invitations to church events.

Hinsdale Pathfinders Turn Faith into Action

On Nov. 1, 2025, the Hinsdale “Trailblazers” Pathfinder Club once again demonstrated what it means to serve Christ through action, completing their annual community can collection project — now a tradition for more than four decades. With prayerful preparation, willing hands, and the support of generous neighbors, the youth gathered 6,000 pounds of food to help feed individuals and families facing food insecurity.

In the weeks leading up to the event, club members collected brown paper shopping bags from church families, friends

and supporters. A special blessing came through Kramer Foods, a beloved family-owned grocery store in Hinsdale, which

This longstanding outreach, now more than 40 years strong, reflects the Pathfinder Club's commitment to living out Christ's call to serve "the least of these." What began decades ago with a small group of youth has grown into a powerful expression of community compassion and faithful service. As

the Hinsdale Trailblazers celebrate another successful year, their message is simple and deeply rooted in Scripture: When young people serve with willing hearts, God multiplies their efforts. ■

Angie Grozdic is communicator director for Hinsdale Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Andrews University Students Call on Lake Union Churches to Support New Missions Initiative

After their mission trips as a part of Andrews University's Student Missions in the Center for Faith Engagement (CFE), students Evan Keyes (junior, religion) and Seth McKelvey (junior, theology) returned to campus inspired. The duo, with the support of CFE and University Chaplain Jonathan Fetrick, created Project Launch, an initiative that seeks to help finance upcoming student mission trips and encourage more people to contribute in spiritually fulfilling ways to charitable work and the spread of the gospel both domestically and internationally. With support from Andrews leaders and budding partnerships with the Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and their churches, Evan and Seth seek to change the world in 2026 and beyond.

Evan shared that his mission trip as a teacher on the island of Pohnpei in Micronesia was an opportunity for him to benefit spiritually, in addition to offering his own services and care. When asked what initially inspired him to join Student Missions, Evan shared that a "lack of purpose" and loss of religious identity led him to eventually pursue going on a mission trip. "After starting college, I had less of a spiritual structure around me, and I was feeling that a lot," said Evan. Leaving the stricter arrangements of daily chapel programs at Great Lakes Adventist Academy

(GLAA), where he attended high school, left him looking to reaffirm his faith at Andrews. "I found that [being a student missionary] carried a lot of purpose, and it really changed my life, because even though I was the same person, I found that God was still using me, and I was identifying myself publicly with Him in a new way."

Seth, who worked as a domestic student missionary at GLAA as a chaplain, shared that he had been interested in being a student missionary for years, and was excited to get the opportunity to do so after arriving

at Andrews. "The beauty of student missions is it helps you understand that there's more to your four years in college than yourself," he said. "When you take that pause and you take that break it helps you really clarify in [your] mind your relationship with God, your relationship with people [and] your place on the Earth."

Project Launch was formally announced to the Andrews University community on Nov. 15 at Pioneer Memorial Church, where Seth preached for both the morning and mid-day services during a Student Missions-themed

Sabbath. Project Launch's main goal is to get 26 churches to partner with 26 student missionaries during 2026. These partnerships can be prayer partners, churches who intercede prayerfully for a specific student missionary; mission partners, churches who commit to sending care packages, letters, videos and other forms of tangible support to a designated missionary; and launch partners, who financially sponsor a student missionary's journey.

During his sermon, Seth asserted that "we are in the final moments of Earth's history," making it the most critical time for God's people to do effective ministry widely. "God is calling His team, His church, His people to get in the 'game,'" he said. "In the final days of Earth's history, God has a mission for His remnant church."

Both Evan and Seth expressed that they were fortunate to have full support from their respective families when they decided to join Student Missions. Evan's grandmother was "thrilled" with his decision, having also served as a missionary in the Eastern Hemisphere. However, they both recognized that neither familial support nor financial resources are guaranteed for every student who desires to serve as a missionary. With it costing approximately \$3,500 per student mission trip, according to Seth, Project Launch and the Launch Fund hope to offset most if not all the costs for 26 missionaries. By removing the financial burden, Seth and Evan hope more students will become interested in joining Student Missions.

Having received the support of the Lake Union executive committee, Evan and Seth plan to continue to make special presentations and appeals to churches and academies across the Lake Union to continue gathering support for Project Launch. Seth shared that over 28 students have already shared interest in being a student missionary, doubling the total of missionaries sent out by Student Missions the previous year. Dozens of high school students have also expressed interest in learning more about Student Missions or committing to become a student missionary.

Katie Fellows



in the next few years, helping to not only further the efforts of Project Launch, but also serving as a way to recruit students interested in the mission of world changing to enroll at Andrews.

Both Evan and Seth hope that their initiative will increase awareness of Student Missions and improve its effectiveness in gathering resources and recruiting new student missionaries. For Lake Union churches, they believe that supporting Project Launch will benefit their congregations directly. "When you invest in Student Missions, it is actually investing in the future of Adventism here in the Lake Union Conference," Seth said. Evan added, "Student Missions produces people who are engaged, who want to be a part of our church. Something we've seen even in the few years that we've been here, is that student missionaries who come back are active on this campus and they'll be active in the church going forward."

Any current or incoming Andrews University student who is interested in becoming a student missionary, and any church or individual who would like to support Project Launch, visit projectlaunchau.com or email Student Missions at sm@andrews.edu. ■

Andrew Francis is an undergraduate senior at Andrews University studying communication, public relations and behavioral science. He currently works in various communication positions within and outside of the Seventh-day Adventist church, predominantly as a freelance journalist.



▲ **Top:** Two Andrews University students, Evan Keyes (with mic) and Seth McKelvey, have started an initiative to recruit new student missionaries and garner prayerful and financial support from Lake Union churches for 2026. Here they speak to the Lake Union executive committee in November 2025.

Below: Evan Keyes spoke to the Cedar Lake church about Project Launch plans.

Lake Union Youth Congress Shapes Local Ministry

What happens when young adults are given the support to turn their ministry ideas into reality? In 2024 alone, the Lake Union awarded more than 200k to youth led evangelism projects, and across the region the impact can be seen in the stories of students and young professionals who are leading initiatives that are reshaping their churches and communities.

guided participants through understanding why to build a computer, how to choose the parts, and then assembling the machine through two hands-on sessions. Participants received either the computers they built, or refurbished units Russell upgraded with equipment he received from Andrews. One family who attended later visited their church evangelistic series and even had the opportunity to meet the evangelist. Russell called the connection “a demonstration of the friendship bridge,” showing how practical learning can open the door to deeper relationships.

These stories reflect the purpose of the Lake Union Youth Evangelism Congress, which empowers senior youth and young adults to create ministries that respond to local needs. Every two years, the Congress convenes participants and their pastors or mentors for a weekend of training and guided planning.

In 2024, the Lake Union awarded \$212,200 to youth-led evangelism initiatives. Since the congress began in 2013, more than half a million dollars have been distributed to over 100 projects. Organizers note that the Lake Union remains the only Union in the North American Division, and possibly worldwide, that invests in youth evangelism at this level.

The next Youth Evangelism Congress will take place February 13–15, 2026, in Northbrook, Illinois, under the theme “Limitless.” Churches and youth leaders who would like information about how their youth and young adults can participate are encouraged to visit youth.lakeunion.org for details and conference-level contact information. ■

Felicia Tonga is a freelance writer.

▼ *Left to right: Nicholas Agyekum, Jeno Leavitt and Mariana (Luna) Leavitt manning Indiana University Bloomington Adventist Christian Fellowship booth during the students' Welcome Week.*



▲ The Bloomington church Friday night care group brings young adults and community members together for Bible study and food.

At the Bloomington Seventh-day Adventist Church in Indiana, several ministry ideas from their young adult group were funded, receiving a total of \$13,000 through the Youth Evangelism Congress. Many of these initiatives were led by Nicholas Agyekum, who has become one of the primary leaders guiding evangelism in his congregation.

One of the funded efforts, Lunch Buddies, sends volunteers out every Sabbath with prepared meals and prayer for individuals experiencing homelessness. In colder seasons, the outreach shifts to the community kitchen, where volunteers pray with guests, sing and offer encouragement. Some individuals have later visited the Bloomington church, including one who is now preparing for baptism.

Another funded ministry, the church's Friday night care group, brings young adults and community members together for Bible

study and food. “By God’s grace, we had two baptisms this year,” Nicholas said. “Our church has been impacted. Fifty percent of our members are students, and now they are involved in leadership, evangelism and outreach. Even I am now an elder of my church.”

Nicholas emphasized the role of the congress in helping these ministries take shape. “If it wasn’t for the congress, these ideas probably would’ve never developed,” he said. “But it has a ripple effect. We come with an idea, the church sees the commitment of the conference and Union, and in return it snowballs into a supportive effort to see these ideas through.”

Another project funded through the congress, titled “Build Computers Build Relationships,” was led by Russell Murnighan, an Andrews University’s IT department employee. Over two summers, he hosted a four-session workshop at his church that



Lake Union Issues Statement of Support for Immigrants

On Nov. 19, 2025, during the year-end meeting of the Lake Union executive committee, members approved a special statement regarding the evolving circumstances affecting immigrants in our cities. The full text of the statement is below:

A Pastoral Reflection from the Lake Union Conference Affirming the Dignity and Humanity of the Vulnerable Among Us

The Lake Union Conference affirms the North American Division's statement "An Appeal for Human Dignity and Decency," released on Jan. 30, 2025. We support the values expressed in that message, recognizing its call for every person to be treated with the respect and compassion that come from being created in the image of God.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we believe that every human being is created in God's image (Genesis 1:27) and is therefore worthy of dignity, care and respect. Our concern for immigrants, refugees, their families and all who are vulnerable arises from Scripture and from our commitment to reflect the character of Christ.

God calls His people to uphold justice, extend mercy, and walk humbly with Him (Micah 6:8). We remember that Jesus Himself experienced life as a refugee in His early years (Matthew 2:13–15). Scripture repeatedly reminds us that God's heart is turned toward the stranger, the widow, and the orphan (Deuteronomy 10:18–19).

We also recognize that those who serve in roles that uphold civic order and national safety carry significant responsibilities. Many men and women in these positions face difficult decisions each day, often navigating emotionally complex situations. As a faith community, we hold them in prayer, asking that God grant them wisdom, discernment, fairness, and compassion.

Many immigrants within our communities have come from challenging circumstances,

seeking stability, safety, or opportunity. Their perseverance, hope, and contributions enrich our neighborhoods, churches, and workplaces. While their journeys may differ, their humanity and aspirations reflect the image of God in which they were created.

We affirm the following principles:

- Every person bears the divine image (Genesis 1:27), regardless of nationality, legal status, or economic circumstance.
- Protecting the vulnerable honors God. "Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God." (Proverbs 14:31)
- Welcoming the stranger fulfills God's command. "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native born. Love them as yourself." (Leviticus 19:34)
- Authority is intended to promote what is right. Romans 13 teaches that those entrusted with responsibility are to carry out their duties in ways that reflect fairness and moral integrity.

In harmony with the North American Division's appeal, we encourage our churches, communities and civic leaders to uphold approaches that respect both human dignity and the responsibilities entrusted to society for the well-being of all. We believe it is possible to care for the vulnerable, support those who serve, and honor the value of every person.

To those who feel unseen or afraid, we say: You are valued. You are not alone.

To those who serve in enforcement or public safety, we say: We pray for you and your families, and for strength and compassion as you carry out your responsibilities.

To all who seek to follow Christ: May we be instruments of peace, channels of compassion, and witnesses of God's justice and mercy in our communities.

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40 ■

MILEPOSTS

OBITUARIES

CLOUSE, Germaine, age 73; born Sept. 19, 1952, in Marinette, Wisconsin; died Nov. 1, 2025, in Traverse City, Michigan. She was a member of the Petoskey Seventh-day Adventist Church in Petoskey, Michigan. She is survived by her husband, Michael; sisters, Kathryn Mayberry, Darlene Pethers and Virginia Porter; brother, Darryl (Tammy) Grosse; sisters-in-law, Vickie (Don) Heinz and Leslie (Pat) Fowler; and many nieces and nephews. A memorial service was held Nov. 23, 2025, at the Petoskey Seventh-day Adventist Church.

COPELAND, Wilbur "Copie" L., age 80; born Nov. 27, 1944, in Terre Haute, Indiana; died Oct. 6, 2025, in Terre Haute, Indiana. He was a member of the Lewis Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lewis, Indiana. He is survived by his son, Mark (Kipper Farrand Copeland); daughter, Tammy Copeland (Frank) Null; father, Delbert Copeland; mother, Mary McKee Copeland; brother, Thomas Copeland; sisters, Helen Budd, Mary Fry, Debbie Cottom, Terri Kaho; six grandchildren; and seven

great-grandchildren. Funeral services were conducted by Pastor Ken Olin on Oct. 13, 2025, and interment at Prairie Creek West Lawn Cemetery in Prairie Creek, Indiana.

DOUGLASS, Richard, age 74; born December 23, 1950, in Detroit, Michigan; died August 26, 2025. He was a member of the Bauer SDA Church in Bauer, Michigan. He is survived by his wife, Linda (Jergovich) Douglass; son, Scott (Annie) Douglass; daughters, Amy Tripp and Laura (Nick) Seretis; mother, Janet Douglass; brother Jim (Pauline) Douglass; sister, Mary Lear; eight grandchildren, Brandon, Ethan, & Carson Tripp; Michael, Sophia & Abigail Douglass; Charlotte & Theo Seretis. A memorial service was conducted by Pastor Darrel le Roux on September 12, 2025, at Lowell Riverside Fellowship.

EDWARDS, Rex D., age 90; born Nov. 14, 1934, in Christchurch, New Zealand; died Jan. 29, 2025, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He was a member of the Gobles SDA Church in Gobles, Michigan. He is survived by his sons, Paul (Linda) Edwards, Shane (Lisa)

Edwards; daughter, Janelle (Ron) Boothby; brothers, Robin, Paul and Glen; sister, Mary; three grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren. Funeral services were conducted by Pastor Alex Rybachek on Feb. 10, 2025, and graveside service at Mt. Ever Rest in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

KELLUM, Lloyd A., age 89; born July 4, 1936, in Battle Creek, Michigan; died Aug. 10, 2025, in Battle Creek, Michigan. He was a member of the Battle Creek Tabernacle in Battle Creek, Michigan. He is survived by his wife, Rosalee (Ahlberg) Kellum; son, Michael Micky Jones; daughter, Lori Suhonen; and five grandchildren. Services were conducted by Pastor Bayani Pastrana on Aug. 18, 2025, and a graveside service at Forst Custer National Cemetery in Augusta, Michigan.

PERLBERG, Mary J. (Schwenck), age 86; born Feb. 9, 1939, in Hinsdale, Illinois; died Oct. 15, 2025, in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. She was a member of the Rhinelander SDA Church in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. She is survived by her husband, David C. Perlberg; son, Jon Perlberg; daughters, Kris (Annette) Perlberg, Dawn (Rob) Miller; sister, Elizabeth Davis; three grandchildren; and one great-grandchild. Memorial services were conducted by Pastor Bill Ochs on Nov. 2, 2025.

TIMM, Marth, age 100; born Feb. 14, 1924, in Ionia, Michigan; died Sept. 19, 2024, in Niles, Michigan. She was a member of Hastings SDA Church in Hastings,

Michigan. She is survived by her sons, Boyd (Linda), Dennis (Pasty), Tom (Linda); daughter, Diane (Jo); eight grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren. Memorial services were conducted by Pastor Jeff Dowell on Oct. 26, 2024, and inurnment in Michigan.

WERY, Sharon R. (DeGrave), age 78; born March 13, 1947, in Bark River, Michigan; died Oct. 4, 2025, in Green Bay, Wisconsin. She was a member of the Wilson SDA Church in Wilson, Michigan. She is survived by her husband, Norbert E. Wery; sons, Norbert Wery Jr (fiancé Khone Khun), Melvin Wery; daughters, Deborah (Kevin) Boerschinger, Barbra (Scott) Sterling; brother, Marvin (Donna) DeGrave; and nine grandchildren. Funeral services were conducted by Pastor Tony Ludwig on Oct. 9, 2025, and interment at the Wilson SDA Church cemetery in Wilson, Michigan.

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:16–18

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.

Experience Life at Andrews. Grow Your Faith.

STANDOUT

A free weekend event designed for Adventist high school students from public or homeschool backgrounds to experience campus life at Andrews University.

Ready to see what college life can look like in a faith-filled community? **Standout** is your chance to spend a weekend at Andrews University meeting students, joining in worship, exploring campus life, and discovering how faith and purpose come together here. Come for inspiration, connection and a first-hand look at what makes Andrews special.

STANDOUT 2026

FEBRUARY 20–22, 2026

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY | BERRIEN SPRINGS, MI

- Dynamic worship with inspiring speakers and student musicians
- Campus tours & dorm visits to experience real Andrews life
- Interactive sessions on calling, purpose and leadership
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REGISTER TODAY AT

andrews.edu/go/standout

Free for Adventist high school students in public or homeschool settings. Space is limited, don't miss your chance to Standout!

Andrews  University



CLASSIFIEDS

EMPLOYMENT

Andrews University Seeks Qualified Applicants:

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

Southern Adventist University continuously seeks qualified candidates to fill various positions around campus, including faculty, salaried staff, and hourly staff positions. If you are interested in working at Southern, we encourage you to view the positions that are currently open at [sau.catsone.com/careers](http://catsone.com/careers) and apply as God leads. To view current open educational positions Pre-K through college across the North American Division, please visit jobs.adventisteducation.org.

Union Adventist University is seeking qualified applicants for a research and instruction librarian. This position develops and provides reference and library instruction to diverse groups of students, faculty, staff and community visitors, using modalities suited to the individual, classroom or online environments. ALA-accredited Master of Library and Information Science or equivalent required. See job description and apply at uau.edu/employment.

Union Adventist University is searching for applicants for a special events director. This position is responsible for planning, organizing, and executing a wide range of alumni and university promotion events to enhance stakeholder engagement, foster community spirit, and promote the university's mission and values. This role involves collaborating with various departments, managing logistics, overseeing event budgets, and ensuring successful delivery of events that meet the university's standards. Please apply at uau.edu/employment.

Union Adventist University seeks applicants for executive assistant to the president. This is a full-time, non-exempt position. The executive assistant functions as an administrative assistant and a project manager for the president in a caring, fast-paced environment working with multiple projects and assignments designed to maximize progress toward strategic outcomes. See the full job description and apply at uau.edu/employment.

Union Adventist University is searching for candidates for two new positions for a grant-funded TRIO student support services program: director and life coach. The director will lead and administer the program and oversee services, grant compliance, and student success for low-income, first-generation and disabled

students. The life coach will utilize coaching best practices to mentor and provide specialized services as needed. Please see job descriptions and apply at uau.edu/employment.

Union Adventist University seeks a Controller to direct and coordinate Union Adventist University accounting operations to include disbursements, accounting data, accounting records, payroll, general accounting services, and accounting operations system and to develop and administer accounting business policies and regulations. Please see full job description and apply at uau.edu/employment.

Union Adventist University seeks a Plant Service General Maintenance employee to be responsible for performing a variety of maintenance tasks to ensure the safety, functionality, and aesthetic quality of university facilities. This position involves routine inspections, repairs and preventive maintenance across

campus buildings and grounds. Please see full job description and apply at uau.edu/employment.

Poplar Creek Spa in Collegedale seeks massage therapists to join our professional and supportive team. Adventist-owned and operated by a practicing massage therapist, we offer hourly W2 pay, mentorship and Sabbaths off. Build a lasting career in an Adventist community surrounded by Tennessee's outdoor beauty: poplarcreekspa.com/careers

IT IS WRITTEN is seeking qualified Seventh-day Adventist professionals who desire to serve the Lord through media evangelism. Our current full-time positions include director of media production, trust officer in planned giving and trust services, and graphic designer-web. For more information and to apply online for these and other available positions, visit itiswritten.com/employment.

CALENDAR OF OFFERINGS

JANUARY

- 3 Local Church Budget
- 10 Religious Liberty (NAD)
- 17 Local Church Budget
- 24 Local Conference Advance
- 31 Local Church Budget

FEBRUARY

- 7 Local Church Budget
- 14 Adventist Television Ministries Evangelism (NAD)
- 21 Local Church Budget
- 28 Local Conference Advance

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Kids need never be bored! Just point them to LifeTalkKids.net and let them listen to great adventures, faith-building Bible stories, captivating science and awesome nature programs, and more 24/7. Kids grow better with radio. Download our free app at: LifeTalk.net

Adventist Singles Wanted! Looking for meaningful, faith-centered connections? Join AdventistDating.com — where single Seventh-day Adventists

meet for friendship, companionship and love grounded in shared beliefs. Safe, sincere, and free to join. Start your journey today at AdventistDating.com — *where faith meets love!*

Gospel Outreach is seeking qualified Adventist volunteers to support its mission of sharing the gospel with unreached people in the 10/40 Window. If you are interested in a volunteer position, please check out our job openings at goaim.org/jobs.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TABERNACLE SACRED CONCERT SERIES 2026. Save the dates for these outstanding concerts! January 17, musician Steve Martin; February 14, singer and songwriter Buddy Houghtaling; March 14, singer and violinist Margie Salcedo Rice; April 4, contemporary Christian singer Steve Green. Battle Creek Tabernacle, 264 West Michigan Ave, Battle Creek, Michigan, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit bctab.com.

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

MEETING OF THE MEMBERS: Please take notice that a quinquennial meeting of the members of the Andrews University Corporation (commonly known as a "constituency meeting") will take place on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, beginning at 3 p.m., in the Garber Auditorium of Chan Shun

Don't Miss Your Funding!

Complete your Pentecost 2025 event report today.

Report link → Check your local church Pentecost coordinator's email.

Deadline:
January 31, 2026

For more information contact Kent Sharpe
Kentsharpe@nadadventist.org



North American Division
of Seventh-day Adventists



Hall on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. At the meeting, the members will receive reports from Andrews University administration, elect a portion of the Andrews University Board of Trustees, and consider minor amendments to the bylaws.

SAVE THE DATE

ASI Lake Union Spring Fellowship April 24-26, 2026.

Keynote speaker John Bradshaw, Speaker-Director for *It Is Written*. Visit the ASI Lake Union website for more information:
<https://asilakeunion.org/>

CORRECTION

The Andrews University enrollment story on p.25 of the November/December 2025 issue was corrected to revise the decrease in international students. The percentage decrease is not 43% but 6%, since the overall group including returning international students held stronger.

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>.

Falling in Love with God Through Prayer



▲ PAULETTE TAYLOR

“Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 3:5 (NKJV)

It is believed that love is the strongest power of all. We love our spouse and children. And of course, seeing that grandchild for the first time your heart just melts with love. All are different kinds of love. Then I asked myself, how do I begin to describe God's love? I thought of the depth of His sacrifice. To give His only son to die for the sins of the human race. Knowing the anguish and pain He would go through to save mankind. There just are no words I can think of to describe the real extent of that kind of love.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

Have you ever prayed expressing your love for God? Making note of His hand of protection — though there were car accidents on the road all around you, due to bad weather, thankfully you weren't one of them. Or how He met a need, whether medical or financial. It does not take long to fathom just how much God loves. Our prayers deepen when we pray from a posture of heartfelt gratitude. There will always be something or someone to pray for, but when we pray with hearts and minds consumed by our overwhelming thankfulness to Him — well, it just changes everything; our attitude, our mindset and our relationship with a loving, caring, patient and merciful God.

“We talk of our friends because we love them; our joys and our sorrows are bound up with them. Yet we have infinitely greater reason to love God than to love our earthly friends; it should be the most natural thing in the world ... to talk of His goodness and tell of His power.” (Ellen G. White, “The Privilege of Prayer,” pp. 61 & 63)

2026 is now here. How will you spend his precious gift of time? Certainly *not* like you did in prior years. Every single day/year God grants us is truly a blessing. Make this the year your prayers reflect how deeply in love you are with Him. Tell Him. Show Him.

Remember, when your life gets too hard to stand, kneel! ■

Paulette Taylor is the prayer ministry coordinator for the Indiana Conference.



January & February

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

GENERAL EVENTS

Jan. 22–24: Newmyer Classic Basketball Tournament
Feb. 12–14: Music & Worship Conference
Feb. 10, 10:30 a.m.: Health Professions Job Fair
Feb. 20–22: StandOut Spiritual Event

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.

Jan. 25, 4 p.m.: Sunday Music Series:
 Aleksandra Kemble
Jan. 31, 7 p.m.: Wind Symphony & SMC Brass Band Winter Concert
Feb. 7, 7:30 p.m.: Symphony Orchestra Young Artist Concert
Feb. 21, 7:30 p.m.: University Choirs: Chasing Away the Blues
Feb. 22, 4 p.m.: Sunday Music Series: Carla Trynchuk & Elena Braslavsky

ILLINOIS

Jan. 7–17: 10 Days of Prayer, Virtual (Zoom)
Jan. 16–19: Youth & Young Adult Winter Retreat, Camp Wakonda
Jan. 30–Feb. 1: PF-AC Retreat, Camp Akita
Feb. 7: Area Level Pathfinder Bible Experience, Hinsdale Adventist Academy
Feb. 7: Hispanic Elders Retreat, Illinois Conference

INDIANA

Jan. 9–11: Hispanic Elders' Retreat, Timber Ridge Camp
Jan. 16–18: Pathfinder Winter Campout, Timber Ridge Camp
Jan. 17: Indiana Conference Virtual Prayer Summit
Jan. 31: Area Level Pathfinder Bible Experience, Virtual
Feb. 13–15: Hispanic Marriage Retreat, Timber Ridge Camp
Feb. 20–21: Youth Rally, Indiana Academy
Feb. 28: State Level Pathfinder Bible Experience, Cicero Adventist Church

LAKE REGION

Jan. 7–17: 10 Days of Prayer, Local Churches
Feb. 14–21: Christian Home & Marriage Week

MICHIGAN

Jan. 9–11: Pathfinder Teen Snow Outing, Camp Au Sable
Jan. 16–18: Women's Ministries Retreat, Great Lakes Adventist Academy
Jan. 23–25: Man Camp, Camp Au Sable
Feb. 7: Area Level Pathfinder Bible Experience, Virtual
Feb. 13–15: CAMPUS Retreat, Camp Au Sable
Feb. 20–22: Teen Impact, Camp Au Sable

WISCONSIN

Jan. 9–10: Hispanic Elders' Retreat
Jan. 17: Youth Rally
Jan. 23–25: Men's Retreat, Camp Wakonda
Feb. 7: Area Level Pathfinder Bible Experience, Virtual
Feb. 20–22: Pathfinder Winter Retreat, Camp Wakonda

LAKE UNION

Jan. 1: Office Closed – New Year's
Jan. 19: Office Closed – Martin Luther King Jr.
Feb. 13–15: Lake Union Youth Evangelism Congress, Chicago, Illinois
Feb. 16: Office Closed – President's Day

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

Sabbath Sunset Calendar

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

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Why the Church Still Advocates for Liberty



▲ JENNIFER GRAY WOODS

*Why does the church focus so much on religious liberty?
Isn't religious liberty already protected by our constitution?*

Religious liberty has been recognized as a right since the very beginnings of this country and we are blessed to have several laws on the books protecting this freedom, including:

- The first amendment of the U.S. Constitution — granting the free exercise of religion and protecting against the government establishment of religion.
- The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) — ensuring that laws that could infringe upon an individual's religious liberty are narrowly tailored to meet a compelling government interest.
- The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) — applying the same protections found in RFRA to cases dealing with land use and institutionalized persons, such as inmates or others who are housed in government-funded facilities.
- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 — protecting employees against religious discrimination in the workplace.

There are also state and local laws protecting religious liberty. These laws allow people to live out their faith without fear of government retaliation. They prohibit the government from enforcing, promoting, or endorsing a particular religion. Employees are protected from discriminatory actions based on their religious beliefs and are able to request accommodations allowing them to practice their beliefs without automatically losing their jobs.

These laws have been in place because there is a recognition that freedom of religion is a fundamental right that everyone should enjoy.

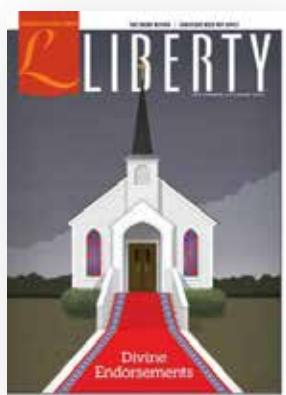
Protecting and promoting religious liberty has also been part of our Seventh-day Adventist message since the beginning of our church. Our understanding of freedom of religion stems from our biblical understanding that God gives us free will and never forces or coerces our worship.

We sometimes forget just how extraordinary our church's legacy of religious liberty advocacy is, and how much Adventists have contributed to the national conversation about these issues. Our church advocates for the religious liberty of all people, not just Adventists. We understand that violations of religious freedom anywhere impact us all.

One tool the church has used to promote and advocate for religious liberty is Liberty magazine. This magazine has gained national prominence as a unique voice on issues of church and state. Today it is sent to and read by judges, attorneys, lawmakers, city officials and leaders of other faith groups.

This year, as we celebrate the 120th anniversary of Liberty magazine, please join me in continuing our legacy of advocating on behalf of religious liberty by supporting our Liberty campaign taking place right now. You can view Liberty magazine articles online at: <https://www.libertymagazine.org>. If you would like to make a donation to this cause or subscribe to Liberty yourself or for someone in your community, contact your local church, conference or union religious liberty leader.■

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



EUROPE

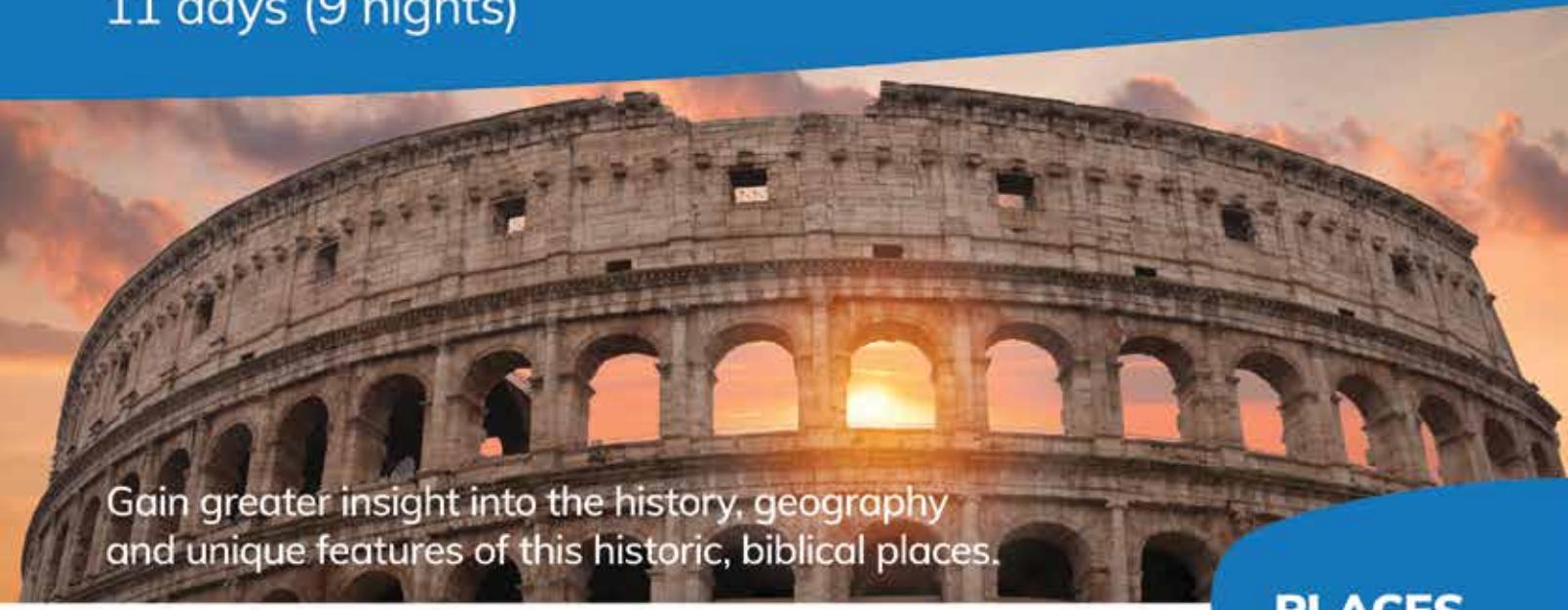
Reformation Tour

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PAN DE VIDA
Travel

From Rwanda to Montreal to Cedar Lake

Together with my brother, my mother emigrated from Rwanda to Montreal. I consider myself an immigrant too, because my mother was pregnant with me at that time.

She had to work very hard in health care to support herself and her two children in a new country. We lived with my aunt and my cousin, a combined family of five. In addition to growing up speaking French in one of North America's most cosmopolitan cities, I have been fortunate to travel and explore other beautiful places as well. I have relatives in Switzerland and have been there several times.

I have also made long trips back to Rwanda to spend time with family and become acquainted with my heritage.

Now, as a 16-year-old, I find myself in my third year at Great Lakes Adventist Academy in Cedar Lake, Michigan. It's not a place I ever imagined I would call my home away from home. But here I am, thanks to the encouragement of family members who heard good reports about GLAA from friends. My mother and I were told that I would get a good education at

GLAA, that I would be well-prepared for university when I graduated, and that the school would help me to grow in my Christian faith. The reports have all been proven true. Classes are going well, and I was baptized here during my freshman year.

At GLAA I'm not the only one who is far from home. I've met students here from Cambodia and Morocco. We all struggle with homesickness at times, but I have learned that keeping busy and involved helps. When homesickness does break through, however, I have learned to take it to

God. The chapter "Gethsemane" in *Desire of Ages* is very instructive and inspirational to me. It talks about how Christ suffered, feeling separated from his Heavenly Parent, yet was ultimately victorious. Christ persevered and was finally reunited with God and the angels. Christ endured and made it possible for me to one day join Him in my heavenly home. Until then, He gives me strength to meet whatever challenges come my way here.

At GLAA, I have made Christ-centered friends. I am free to discuss my faith. If I have questions, I am surrounded by Christian faculty and staff who share Bible-based advice. Activities such as choir, Bible Camp, and Weeks of Prayer help me to grow in my faith. One friend in particular, Naomi Uwineza, a 2025 graduate, helped me in so many ways. I miss her, but I still carry her advice and insights with me. Vice-Principal Matt Hill continues to be a source of strength and encouragement. Whenever he sees me, he always asks how I am doing. I appreciate how he takes the time to listen.

I believe God led my Rwandan mother and her young family to Montreal and then led me to GLAA. He has shown me that He works in people's lives in so many different ways. He has shown me the importance of a positive attitude and of striving to do my best with His help. As I look forward to university, I am considering several options. I like working with children. A future in child psychology or pediatric dentistry appeals to me. I also enjoy animals and so am considering veterinary medicine as well. Whatever I choose, I know God will lead me in paths of service as I remember the words of Romans 12:12: "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (NIV). ■

Shane Niyonzima as told to Beverly Matiko



A Heart for the Community

On a warm summer afternoon in Chicago, Habimana Gasigwa sat with quiet conviction as he spoke about faith that acts. At 25, he has come to believe that following Jesus means stepping outside the familiar walls of the church and into the messy, uncertain spaces of human need.

Born in Gweru, Zimbabwe, to Rwandese parents who survived the 1994 genocide, Habimana's story is one of resilience shaped by tragedy and hope. His family immigrated to the United States in 2007, settling in Mishawaka, Indiana. After earning a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of Illinois, he began a career in the financial sector, where he now works as an administrative coordinator at an investment firm. But numbers are only part of his story. His deeper passion lies in storytelling, using media and production to give voice to the stories that often go unheard.

Habimana grew up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, surrounded by family devotions and Pathfinder camps that nurtured his early faith. Yet it wasn't until late last year that he says his spiritual life took on new meaning. In May, he was rebaptized, a public declaration of his faith that had moved from tradition to conviction. "It keeps me grounded," he said, reflecting on the spiritual community that helped him rediscover his purpose.

That purpose has found expression in a ministry called the Pop-Up Church, a Chicago-based outreach led by John T. Boston II. The initiative takes worship and compassion into public spaces — places where people rarely encounter organized religion but often crave connections. In May 2025, the group hosted its first "Welcome Table" event, transforming a homeless encampment into a makeshift banquet hall. Volunteers set up a long table, served hot meals to about 75 people, and distributed clothing, hygiene kits and small cash

gifts. The goal, Habimana said, was simple: to offer dignity and warmth in a world that too often denies both.

"When Jesus was on this earth, he wasn't hanging out in church," Habimana said. "He was outside hanging out with prostitutes, healing people, and meeting people where they are."

That belief guides his work today. Whether in his professional life or through his ministry, Habimana strives to live out a faith that reaches beyond sermons and pews. His story is a quiet reminder that there are many young Adventists reimagining what it means to live like Christ. ■

Wambui Karanja is an alumnus of Andrews University, currently working as a registered nurse in the progressive care setting.



L / M / T L E S S

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