

Adventist
Journey
INSPIRATION & INFORMATION
FOR NORTH AMERICA



Adventist Journey

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"I told God I didn't want to be lying on my deathbed grieving over the fact that I didn't use my talents and skills to honor Him."

—BARBARA JEAN MCDAVID,
church volunteer in Las Vegas, Nevada



Visit nadadventist.org/ajbarbarajeandavid for the video, and check out pages 6-7 for more of McDavid's story.

Cover photo by Art Brondo



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Dear Reader: The publication in your hands represents the collaborative efforts of the North American Division and *Adventist Review* magazine (Justin Kim, editor). Please enjoy *Adventist Journey*, plus some of *Adventist Review*!

Adventist Journey (ISSN 1557-5519) is the journal of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is the publisher. It is printed monthly by the Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Copyright © 2026. Send address changes to your local conference membership clerk. Contact information should be available through your local church.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A. Vol. 9, No. 01-02 January/February 2026.
Adventist Journey Publication Board: G. Alexander Bryant (chair), Kimberly Luste Maran (secretary), Kyoshin Ahn, Judy R. Glass, Wendy Eberhardt, Adam Fenner, Ruth Horton, Minner Labrador, Calvin Watkins Sr., Ivan Williams Sr., Rick Remmers, Julio Muñoz, Karnik Doukmetzian, legal advisor
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ADVENTIST JOURNEY

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Visit us online!

Adventist Journey magazine has received an upgrade! We have kept the favorites and added additional features. We are also continuing to publish content from *Adventist Review*, albeit at a reduced capacity. Look for the updated *Adventist Journey* in your mailbox every other month!

On the Journey Together

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

We are on a journey together. Since 2018 *Adventist Journey* magazine has arrived in the mailboxes and inboxes of hundreds of thousands of Adventists across North America. Proverbs 3:5, 6. John 14:6. Matthew 24:14. Matthew 28:19, 20. The words of these Bible texts have been etched in our hearts and minds as we've worked on the pages of *Adventist Journey* throughout the years, learning and growing on the path. Much like a walk of faith, where Christ does not leave us untransformed, our little magazine is transforming. And we are so excited that you are on the journey with us!

In 2026 you will see the growth as we bring you more to enjoy, expanding in some already-popular areas and bringing fresh new content aimed at telling better the story of North American Division (NAD) Adventists. That means more of what you've told

us you appreciate over the years—thoughtful, devotional material; news and perspectives from the division office; stories of members and mission; and articles to nurture, disciple, and inspire. And not to worry, our friends at *Adventist Review* will still partner with us so that you can read some *Review* news, columns, and more right here in *Adventist Journey*.

It also means we get to explore more deeply—with you—the wonderful workings of the Holy Spirit in His Adventist Church in North America through new topics. New categories. New perspectives.

And even though we've kept up our long tradition of starting a new year with news from the NAD year-end meeting (as you'll see in this magazine), we've provided a glimpse into a few of our additions, including the new From the President's Desk, a written cover feature to correspond with our video cover story, and the heritage feature, Footsteps of Faith.

Our magazine is transforming. And we are so excited that you are on the journey with us!

Now, keeping in mind that this is a journey, we've not arrived at the destination. We will provide the standards you've come to appreciate, and release exciting new elements throughout the year. You will see us a little less frequently in your mailbox, as we will publish *Adventist Journey* six times per year. But with 48 pages, it will be truly a situation where less is more!

The journey awaits—and we wouldn't want to be with anyone else but you!

Kimberly Luste Maran is editor of Adventist Journey and Communication director for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Messengers of Hope

BY G. ALEXANDER BRYANT

A new year always beckons a hope of new beginnings, new opportunities, and a new journey. For the North American Division it is our maiden voyage of producing *Adventist Journey* as a stand-alone magazine, with the full *Adventist Review* magazine now available in electronic format. This transition has allowed us to expand *Adventist Journey* and provided greater opportunities to communicate in a more in-depth manner with our members across the division territory. This article marks the first in a new series called From the President's Desk, which will highlight a special emphasis in each issue. This new year also brings fresh opportunities to share Christ with a world growing more hopeless with each passing day. During the 2025 North American Division year-end meeting we praised God for the outpouring of His Spirit on Pentecost 2025. We celebrated the participation of more than 5,200 churches and schools involved in wholistic community outreach and in proclaiming the good news of salvation and Christ's soon return. As we turned our focus on 2026, we voted to continue the Pentecost 2025 theme, branded as "Pentecost and Beyond." Our collective desire is to maintain the flame of Pentecost 2025 burning in our churches and schools until Jesus comes.

It is my prayer that the four fundamental pillars of the Pentecost initiative, which form a wholistic cycle of evangelism, will continue and grow. These include (1) spiritual preparation, including fervently praying for a double portion of God's Spirit; (2) community engagement; (3) proclamation; and (4) discipleship. All four components must be part of the life cycle of every church and every disciple of Christ.

As we keep our focus on Pentecost and Beyond, we also voted to join our global church's 2027 initiative, OneVoice27, centered on media evangelism in September 2027. This time was chosen because the entire Christian world will be commemorating the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus' baptism, which marked the beginning of His public ministry. Our approach will be multifaceted, including a massive literature distribution campaign featuring such books as *The Desire of Ages* and *Steps to Christ*, as well as a major media initiative utilizing every available platform to flood the airwaves and social media with messages about the life of Christ and His soon return. We further voted to empower a team of young adults under age 30 to lead the digital component of this initiative.



As we ponder what is happening in our world and then review the message of hope God has entrusted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we recognize that it is precisely the message needed for this moment. It fits, as the saying goes, like a hand in a glove. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., this message can carve a "stone of hope" out of the "mountain of despair."

The world is starving for hope, and our message is relevant. It's one that is saturated with hope. It will lift people from hopelessness to a place of peace in a chaotic world. Peace isn't the absence of trouble but rather a deep conviction that God is in control and everything will be alright.

My prayer for every member of the North American Division family is that God's favor and peace rest upon you in this new year. I also pray that each of us will commit ourselves to God and be brighter beacons of hope in 2026—to our families, to our communities, and to our world—and together we can spread this message of hope like the leaves of autumn!

G. Alexander Bryant, D.Min., is the president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

A Step-by-step Path to Faith, Purpose, and Ministry

The Adventist Journey of Barbara Jean McDavid

EDITED BY ART BRONDO

My journey into the Seventh-day Adventist faith did not begin with a sermon or a Bible study. It began quietly, almost imperceptibly, 10 years before I ever stepped into an Adventist church. At the time, I did not realize that God was preparing my heart through subtle shifts in lifestyle, circumstance, and conviction. Yet looking back, I can clearly see His hand guiding me long before I knew where I was headed.

The first significant change came through my diet. I had grown up on a farm, and pork had always been part of our home and heritage. But one day a Muslim coworker named Boris approached me with a comment that startled me. “Barbara, did you know that when you eat pork, you’re eating worms?” he asked.

I was shocked. Though his explanation was blunt and exaggerated, something resonated deeply. Almost immediately I stopped eating pork. At the time, it felt like a simple health choice, but now I see it as the first step in a spiritual redirection.

Another shift came while I worked among draftsmen at the Ford Motor Company. Lunchtime drinking was common, and occasionally I participated. But one evening, after a meal and a drink during a retirement celebration, I became violently ill. The experience was so intense that I gave up alcohol altogether. These decisions felt personal and practical, yet unknowingly, they were aligning my life with Adventist health principles long before I encountered Adventist beliefs.

In the years that followed, life moved me across states as I cared for family. I spent time in New York helping my sister, then returned home to Michigan to assist my parents. During

Photography by Art Brondo

one errand, while washing heavy quilts at a laundromat in Berrien Springs, I noticed a religious tract lying unattended. It discussed the mystery of 666—an intriguing topic. I took it home, read it in a quiet corner, and found myself drawn into Scripture study, particularly the subject of the Sabbath. Through those studies I felt a strong impression from God: the Sabbath was not Sunday but Saturday. The Holy Spirit convicted me that I needed to find a church that honored the biblical Sabbath.

Unsure where to begin, I turned to the telephone directory. I found two places: a synagogue and the Highland Avenue Seventh-day Adventist Church. I called the synagogue—no answer. When I called the Adventist church, a kind voice warmly invited me to attend that very day. That simple invitation marked the beginning of a life-changing journey.

I began attending services regularly, always sitting quietly in the back. Over time my conviction to join grew stronger, but with it came a profound personal struggle. My father was a Baptist minister, and we shared a close bond. I typed his sermon notes, supported his ministry, and was cherished as his “special” daughter. The thought of disappointing him by joining another denomination felt unbearable. Yet in the midst of that emotional battle, the Holy Spirit spoke words that settled everything: “Your father cannot save you. Do not let the devil cheat you out of your soul.”

That moment crystallized the importance of my decision. My salvation depended on following God’s call. One Sabbath, after service, I approached an elder and told him I wanted to become a member. He later came to my home for Bible studies, and soon after, I was baptized in 1980 at camp meeting.

Highland Avenue church became my spiritual home. Members who knew my family understood the significance of my choice and embraced me with remarkable warmth. The Woods family, in particular, served as mentors, supporters, and lifelong friends. Even now, decades later, their encouragement continues. Through them God provided the family I needed when my biological family emotionally distanced themselves from me. Though I still feel the sting of that separation, I have learned to accept it with grace, choosing to love them from whatever distance they allow.

As my faith deepened, God opened doors for service. When repeated disruptions occurred in Sabbath services because of missing participants,

I believe deeply that He has a greater plan for my life, and I sense that new doors are just beginning to open.

our pastor realized the need for a worship coordinator—someone to confirm schedules, organize elements, and ensure prayerful preparation. That role became mine, and I committed it to God as an act of service. I also prayed that He would use my talents more fully. With degrees in business and education, I felt called to help rebuild the Adventurer Club. Though I was initially overwhelmed, God surrounded me with supportive leaders who encouraged and guided me. Together we revived it into a thriving ministry for children. One of my greatest joys was watching the young Adventurers eventually run entire programs independently, demonstrating the growth and confidence God had cultivated in them.

I moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, and living here presented new challenges—especially financial ones. For the first time in my life, vacations and comforts were beyond reach. Yet those hardships forged spiritual resilience. God taught me to depend entirely on Him, assuring me that every closed door was preparing me for another opportunity.

I believe deeply that He has a greater plan for my life, and I sense that new doors are just beginning to open.

What brings me the greatest joy is evangelism. The third angel’s message (in Revelation 14) fuels my passion for sharing Christ. Throughout the years I have given numerous Bible studies, participated in prison ministries, and distributed literature in public places. My calling is to help people find Jesus and remain grounded in their faith. I often study with new believers for a year or more, checking on them, visiting them, praying with them, and offering support during their struggles. Nothing brings me more joy than seeing a soul baptized, strengthened, and held securely in God’s hands.

My journey has been shaped by loss, growth, and unwavering divine guidance. Everything—every change, every trial, every calling—has led me closer to God and to a life devoted to His service. And for that, I am profoundly grateful.

Art Brondo, who interviewed Barbara Jean McDavid, is media producer for Communication for the North American Division.



NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER: THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION AT 40

In their reports officers highlight mission, membership, finances, and the Spirit's leading as the NAD marks four decades.

BY CHRISTELLE AGBOKA AND BECKY ST. CLAIR

The 2025 North American Division (NAD) year-end meeting began at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 30, at the NAD headquarters in Columbia, Maryland. Two hundred forty executive committee members (of 304) convened for day one of business meetings during which, until Tuesday, November 4, they received reports, voted on business items, strategized, and fellowshiped with ministry colleagues. The year-end meeting was also live-streamed on the NAD website, Facebook, and YouTube platforms.

DRIVEN BY CREATIVITY, UNITY, AND MISSION

It's always a pleasure to serve, and I was honored this past [General Conference] Session that the church, and you, my colleagues, gave a show of confidence and elected me for another five years," said G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president, as he opened his October 30 report. He also expressed gratitude on behalf of Kyoshin Ahn, executive secretary, and Judy R. Glass, treasurer and chief financial officer, who were reelected for another term as well.

In a nod to the division's fortieth anniversary, Bryant continued, "I recognize that we stand on the shoulders of some giants who have come this way." He subsequently provided a concise history of the division and its enterprising leaders. While the NAD traces its roots to 1912, it functioned as a General Conference (GC) department until 1985, when it became a separate world division under the leadership of Charles E. Bradford (1980s). "One of the things [Bradford] was known for, especially on the evangelistic witness side, was the 'caring church,'" Bryant said. He was succeeded by Al McClure (1990s), who helped launch satellite evangelism through the NET series; Don Schneider (2000s), whose "Year of Evangelism" still holds the NAD record for annual baptisms; and Daniel R. Jackson (2010s), who set and achieved an ambitious goal of planting 1,000 new churches.

Bryant underscored that evangelism has been a common thread in all eras, leading to the NAD's current theme, voted in March 2021: "Together in Mission:

I Will Go." He then divided the theme into the division's strategic focus areas, "the three M's": multiply, media, and mentorship.

Pentecost 2025

Bryant began with multiply, noting that NAD leadership believed the best way to mark this milestone year was to "double down on the mission of the church," anchored in multiply. Thus, Pentecost 2025—the NAD's invitation for church leaders and members to hold at least 3,000 proclamation initiatives—was born. Focusing on prayer and activity rather than baptismal numbers, division leadership particularly wanted to encourage the more than 60 percent of our churches with 100 or fewer members.

Bryant revealed that more than 5,200 churches and schools had registered to participate in Pentecost 2025, significantly exceeding the original goal. Notably, more than 300 schools registered for evangelistic initiatives, many of which were student-led. NAD summer camps also found a way to get involved, with nearly 5,000 Adventurers and Juniors, and more than 5,000 teens using Pentecost 2025 Bible study guide sets for devotionals last summer.

Among the initiatives featured was Reach Baltimore. A partnership of numerous area churches, media ministries It is Written and Hope Channel, the Chesapeake and Allegheny East conferences, the Columbia Union Conference, and the NAD, the multifaceted effort comprised a monthlong series featuring evangelists Bryant and John Bradshaw, It is Written president; a two-weekend Hispanic series with Robert Costa, speaker/director, Escrito Está; an AMEN free health clinic; and an archaeology seminar.

Another noteworthy multiply effort was an Antioch Initiative event in St. Louis, which included a Pathways to Health clinic resulting in nearly 1,000 Bible study requests in advance of a proclamation series by Debleaire Snell, Breath of Life speaker/director and Oakwood University church senior pastor. In his report Bryant also highlighted "a delightful café" operated by the Southwestern Union in Fort Worth, Texas, serving as a center of influence.

These examples, as well as a teaser of NAD Communication's Pentecost 2025 web documentary series, reiterated the value of emulating Christ's method—mingling with people, discerning their needs, then inviting them to follow Him.

Mentoring Leaders Division-wide

Bryant turned to mentorship, sharing that the NAD runs several leadership development programs under Paulo Macena, leadership director. These include leadership summits in English, Spanish, and Portuguese; a multilingual library with more than 600 videos on leadership topics; leadership certification in English and Spanish; and certification in mentorship for pastors and elders. Bryant also announced an exciting new educational initiative: a small schools leadership cohort under Leisa Standish, NAD director of elementary education.

"We're very thankful for what they're doing to help the next generation of leaders," he stated.

Media: From Views to Pews

Bryant spent the most time on the final M—media. He introduced Adventist Connect, formerly Adventist Information Ministry, or AIM, which manages church and school websites, trains local church digital missionaries, and helps churches connect with their community.

Adventist Connect is helping the NAD address the following: 1. How do we harvest the many interests gen-

North American Division president G. Alexander Bryant shares his 2025 report during the division's year-end meeting at the NAD headquarters in Columbia, Maryland. Pieter Damsteegt



erated on digital platforms? 2. How do we work together more synergistically in a world with no geographical or organizational boundaries?

Adam Fenner, vice president of digital media and director of the Adventist Learning Community, then took the stage to discuss our role in a world in which people are more likely to encounter an Adventist online than in person. "It's not about getting views, likes, [or] shares," said Fenner. "It's about finding a way to take people from the digital to the local church."

Fenner introduced a two-year division-wide digital evangelism initiative with Adventist Connect helping conferences empower local churches to reach their communities online. Brent Hardinge, Adventist Connect director, revealed that the three-month cycle will encompass: training local pastors and volunteers, and preparing outreach advertisements; campaign and initial engagement of digital interests by the Adventist Connect team; and handing off interests to local churches, with ongoing coaching by Adventist Connect.

Each conference will be asked to prayerfully select at least one church for this venture, which the NAD will fully fund. Hardinge concluded, "This isn't just a campaign; it's a framework for long-term digital ministry growth. Together we can make digital evangelism an effective continuing ministry in every corner of our division—one church at a time, one community at a time."*

Diverse Methods for Different Audiences

Bryant returned to the podium, sharing a map illustrating the wide variation in Christian presence across different regions of Canada and the United States. "One size cannot fit all, because the fishing holes we're fishing in are different"

He then shared about OneVoice27, a GC evangelism initiative launching in September 2027. As the Christian world celebrates the anniversary of Christ's baptism, Adventists globally will creatively employ media—encompassing television, radio, social media, and publications—to share the story of Jesus, the Messiah.

Bryant cited Ellen G. White's *Evangelism* as a foundational text for this project: "Let every worker . . . study, plan, devise methods, to reach the people where they are. We must do something out of the common course of things. We must arrest the attention. We must be deadly in earnest. We are on the very verge of times of trouble and perplexities that are scarcely dreamed of" (pp. 122, 123).

As he wrapped up his report, Bryant reminded delegates of the church's mission to "depopulate hell." Then, drawing on the promise "Not by might, nor by power," he affirmed. "By the Holy Spirit's power, God will give us the strength and ability to be up to the task."

He closed by calling members and leaders to view the NAD's diversity as a strength in a divisive time. "The devil is throwing everything at us to keep us divided—politics . . . cultural issues. The Bible says he's angry, walking about like a roaring lion. But if we stand together, there's nothing the devil can do to stop us. God says, 'Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world' [see 1 John 4:4]. May God bless us as we stand 'together in mission' for the cause of Jesus Christ."

GOD'S ENDURING PRESENCE IN NORTH AMERICA

Kyoshin Ahn, executive secretary for the North American Division, presented his report on Friday, October 31, 2025, day two of the year-end meeting. He began by thanking those present for electing him to another five-year term as secretary, saying, "I do not take my responsibilities lightly, and I intend to serve this church and its members very well." Ahn also expressed appreciation to each person who serves in secretariat and its associated departments.

His presentation outlined the church's past and present, supported by reports from secretariat departments, including the Office of Volunteer Ministries; Human Relations; eAdventist Membership Services; and Archives, Statistics, and Research. It also included a report from NAD treasurer Judy R. Glass on a historic decision regarding NAD tithe contributions to the GC.

Ahn began by detailing the division's ongoing membership growth. In 1867 the NAD had 4,320 members. In 1985, when the NAD was reestablished as an entity separate from the General Conference, membership had reached 669,587. During the past 40 years that number has nearly doubled, bringing the total to 1,306,533 as of the third quarter of 2025.

"We had 33,168 baptisms in 2024, the highest in our recent history," Ahn shared. "By the end of the third quarter this year [2025], we had 23,358 baptisms." Another 9,241 members joined via profession of faith, the highest number since 2013. "At the end of 2024, we added about 73,000 people to our membership through baptisms, professions of faith, or transfers," he said.

Comparing the NAD's growth in the first 10 months of the year to its growth in November and December each year from 2008 to the present, Ahn noted that the highest November/December numbers were in 2009, during a division-wide evangelism initiative. Anticipating the impact of Pentecost 2025, a similar effort, Ahn projected that growth in the final two months of 2025 would be close to 2009's numbers, if not greater.

As of the third quarter of 2025, the NAD had more than 5,800 churches and nearly 900 companies. "These numbers have remained essentially unchanged since 2024," Ahn commented. "While new churches are being established across North America, this stagnation is primarily the result of the consolidation of smaller churches." Additionally, many of those recently established congregations are still in the group stage, thus not counted in these statistics.

Ahn also reported that from 2014 to 2016, the rate of net growth in the NAD averaged about 17,000. In 2017 this number began to decline, but after reaching an all-time low during the pandemic, there was a significant year-to-year resurgence, and in 2024 the NAD saw a net growth of almost 30,000 (growth rate of 2.37 percent)—the highest in the past decade.

Modern History

At this point Ahn announced they would be moving into the second part of his report, which was focused on the NAD's history over the past 40 years. He then explained the miniature churches each attendee had received when checking in. "This is a model of the Washington church in New Hampshire, where Sabbathkeeping was first practiced among Adventists," he said. "It occupies a significant place in our history."

Michael W. Campbell, director of NAD Archives, Statistics, and Research, explained why the NAD became a division in 1985. "Eighty percent of the resources and two thirds of the church's missionaries came from North America during those decades. Charles Bradford, vice president for North America at the GC at the time, proposed that North America itself be seen as a 'true mission field,'" said Campbell. Other church leaders agreed, and on July 1, 1985, Bradford was elected the first president of an autonomous North American Division.

Demographic reports revealed that since 1985, following the removal of members who have died, are missing, have been removed, or have transferred out, the net growth of the NAD has been consistently between 1,000 and 2,000, with an uptick in 2024.

Brian Ford, director of eAdventist Membership Services, took a closer look at NAD membership: the median age of members is 48; females comprise 54 percent of new members and total membership; and two thirds of members are over 20.

A report by Danielle Toddy, director of human resources, provided perspective on pastoral and educational leadership in the NAD. The number of

pastors has "stayed relatively stable over the decades," averaging 4,000 each year. Also, while the number of elementary school teachers has decreased from more than 4,200 in 1989 to 2,900 today, elementary enrollment has remained steady. Toddy emphasized one constant: "the commitment of pastors and teachers to shape lives, grow faith, and carry forward the vision of Adventism in North America."

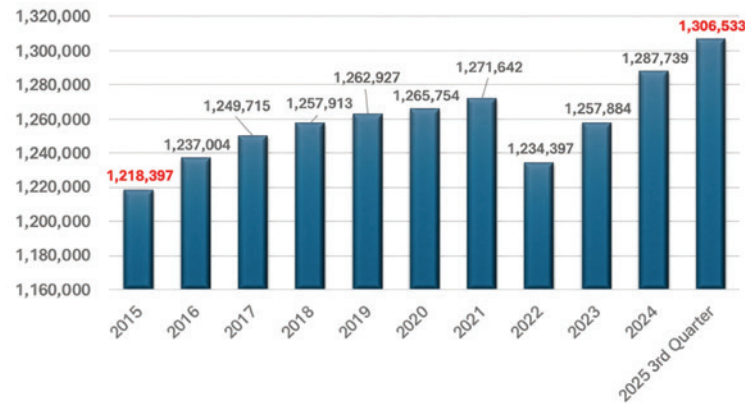
Leaders in human relations, missionary service, and volunteer ministries highlighted North America's rich heritage of sending missionaries worldwide, tracing back to the early 1900s, as well as the continued growth of programs supporting short- and long-term service. Delegates learned that the NAD maintains a strong global mission presence, with 100 families serving in 35 countries and roughly 60,000 individuals engaging in short-term volunteer service annually.

Finally, various presenters reviewed the division's financial history. They noted that the NAD has historically led the world church in tithe and evangelism contributions. For instance, in 1985 annual tithing averaged \$118/

Kyoshin Ahn shares recent membership numbers in his secretary's report at the 2025 NAD year-end meeting. Art Brondo



NAD Membership (2015-2025)



church member globally and \$498/church member in the NAD. In 2024 it was \$137/church member globally and \$1,079/NAD member.

Glass explained that in 2019, when NAD leaders asked GC leaders to reevaluate tithe parity, the NAD

was contributing 6.1 percent of its tithe to the world church while all other divisions were contributing 2 percent. Later that year the GC Annual Council voted to reduce the NAD's percentage, allowing more funds to remain with local churches and conferences. The NAD will reach a 3 percent contribution level on January 1, 2026.

Ahn closed the report by saying, "We have challenges, but we remain optimistic because we know who is in charge. As long as our eyes are fixed on Jesus, we have nothing to fear, because He will lead us home eventually."

Each attendee was then gifted a limited print book, *Faith on the Move*, of the modern history of the church in North America, with more than 80 contributors. The book will eventually be sent to churches across the NAD, and libraries and division offices around the world.

"Our history is not about our accomplishments," Ahn concluded; "it is a testimony of God's providence and enduring presence among His people."

MISSION IN THE NUMBERS

This isn't just a treasurer's report," Judy R. Glass, NAD treasurer and chief financial officer, said on Monday, November 3. "It's a report of how we're using God's money, how He's blessed our church and ministry, and what we can do for ministry and mission."

In light of the NAD's anniversary, Glass shared a photo taken at the GC Session with former treasurers Juan Prestol, Tom Evans, and Randy Robinson, also acknowledging George Crumley, who was absent. "I am humbled to follow in the footsteps of these financial leaders."

She cited a meaningful quote by John W. Gardner, former U.S. secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare: "We are continually faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems."

One such problem was rethinking retirement contributions, which conferences found unsustainable. After a year of prayerful deliberation, delegates voted on November 2 to reduce the contribution rate for local

conferences toward the NAD's defined benefit retirement fund from 8.4 percent to 5.4 percent beginning January 1, 2026. Organizations that contribute based on their payroll are also receiving comparable decreases.

Financial Highlights for 2024

Glass previewed 2026 ministry initiatives, including continued Pentecost 2025 efforts. She then turned to financial highlights for 2024, beginning with audited financial statements from 2024.

By year-end, both operating assets and total net assets increased from 2023, with operating fund gains of \$7.13 million and total gains of \$7.87 million.

Working capital—or assets available for day-to-day operations—reached 9.42 months by year-end, exceeding the six months recommended by the working policy. Days cash on hand was 401 days, sufficient to cover expenses without additional income for more than a year.

Glass and others subsequently presented several reports, including the 2024 investment report and reports from the NAD audit review committee, compensation review committee, and General Conference Auditing Service. Glass also presented a report on how tithe dollars are used, noting that the NAD is "[emphasizing] using tithe for ministry with our pastors, education, and evangelism." The NAD YEM Executive Committee approved each portion of the report.

Pentecost 2025

Glass provided an overview of Pentecost 2025 expenses. The NAD distributed \$7.75 million to unions in 2024 and \$1.27 million in 2025. With ongoing fall evangelistic series, including program expenses, the total is projected to fall between \$16 and \$17 million.

"We feel this has been a great investment. It's been really fun to hear the [ministry] reports. Thank you for partnering with us and making this happen," Glass said.

2025 Year-to-date Unaudited Financial Statements Through August

Transitioning to 2025 year-to-date (YTD) unaudited financial statements through August, Glass reported a division-wide tithe gain of 1.08 percent. Four of nine unions exhibited gains, with the Southern Union leading at 2.3 percent. Year-to-date tithe income of \$81 million exceeded the budget by \$2.8 million.

Total funds available rose to nearly \$93.9 million, roughly \$5 million over budget. However, significant ministry investments—particularly Pentecost 2025—pushed expenses to \$105 million, \$7.9 million over budget. The NAD also reported an \$11 million operating loss and a \$7 million net loss; notably, both figures were roughly \$2 million better than projected.

The year-to-date expense summary revealed that the NAD invested more than budgeted in church ministries, education, and conventions and meetings, including the GC Session. Other areas, such as administration and operations, were trending better than budgeted.

"[This year], we've been focusing on mission and investing in ministry [around the division]," Glass expressed. She then shared that total tithe to date was \$809 million, up from \$803 million last year. "We're thankful for how God is blessing us," she concluded.

2026 Budget Assumptions

NAD undertreasurer Chad Grundy presented the 2026 budget assumptions, noting that the budget is based on 96 percent of the 2024 gross tithe and is balanced. He began by highlighting the decrease in the percentage of tithes going to the GC from the division from 3.85 percent to 3.0 percent in 2026. The budget also includes a 2.7 percent cost of living increase, to be implemented July 1, 2026.

Funding priorities include an up to \$500,000 appropriation to Adventist Risk Management for premium reductions and an additional \$500,000 to the NAD Emerging Immigrant fund for a total of \$1,000,000. The 2026 budget also fully funds all NAD positions for the year.

Grundy underscored that appropriations to unions, conferences, and other organizations within the territory represent the NAD's largest expense, an intentional choice. Thirty-seven percent of appropriations will go to education, and 23 percent of appropriations will go to evangelism. He provided the following breakdown for the budgeted \$1.25 billion gross tithe: the NAD and GC will keep 13.9 percent, and unions and conferences will retain the remaining 86.1 percent.

Vote of Thanks

Interspersed throughout the treasury report were comments and questions from the floor. Several delegates expressed appreciation for the treasury team's work. Robert Folkenberg, Jr., president of the Southern New England Conference, shared that Pentecost 2025 funds had already supported 280 evangelistic meetings in his conference.

Osvaldo Rigacci, retiring vice president for multilingual ministries at the Southwestern Union, thanked the division for allocating an additional \$500,000 to immigrant groups. "We were praying for that for four years," he said, adding with a smile, "I can retire happy now."

As she concluded her official report, Glass thanked her treasury team and several other NAD departments for their contributions. She anchored her report in Psalm 46:1, NKJV: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

When the full day of financial reporting ended, delegate Keith Goodman, a local church pastor, offered prayer. "Father, we're so grateful to see how You are blessing Your church. It is not by might, nor by power; it's by Your Spirit. We thank You for their leadership and their steady hand and seeking Your heart for what to do. We pray for the areas that need to be addressed. We pray You'll give us courage to do what we can. In Christ's name we pray, amen."

* See page 32 for the full story on this initiative.

Christelle Agboka is news writer/news producer for the North American Division; Becky St. Clair is a freelance writer.



Judy R. Glass, North American Division treasurer, shares her treasurer's report with the delegates and guests gathered at the 2025 NAD year-end meeting on November 3. Art Brondo

In Depth on Year-end Meeting

To read these reports in full, and access links to other news reports, videos, and photos of each YEM session, visit <https://www.nadadventist.org/news/2025-nad-year-end-meeting-video-and-news-coverage>.

North American Division vice presidents elected on October 31, 2025, at the NAD Year-end Meeting include (left to right) Minervino Labrador, Jr., Adam Fenner, Wendy Eberhardt, Calvin Watkins, Ruth Horton, and Ivan L. Williams, Sr. They are pictured standing behind NAD officers Judy R. Glass, treasurer; G. Alexander Bryant, president; and Kyoshin Ahn, executive secretary. *Pieter Damsteegt*



NAD LEADERSHIP ELECTED FOR THE QUINQUENNIAL AT YEAR-END MEETING

BY CHRISTELLE AGBOKA, HEIDI STRAW CAMARGO, AND BECKY ST. CLAIR

On October 31, 2025, the North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists elected one new vice president and elected five incumbent vice presidents on the second day of the year-end meeting. Ruth Horton, Ed.D., who most recently served as union education director in Lake Union, is the new vice president for education.

Returning to their positions are Minervino Labrador, Jr., as vice president for Multilingual Ministries; Adam Fenner as vice president for digital media; Wendy Everhart as vice president for ministry; Ivan Williams, Sr., as vice president for strategy and leadership; and Calvin Watkins as vice president, evangelism, and regional liaison.

Horton assumes the role previously held by Dennis Plubell. Plubell had been serving as interim vice president for education following the passing of Arne P. Nielsen in June 2024. Plubell came out of retirement to fill the unexpected vacancy and will now be returning to his family in the Pacific Northwest.

On November 2 the nominating committee brought forward recommendations for leaders in secretariat and treasury. These included electing Jorge Ramirez as undersecretary, and Bonita Joyner Shields and Orna Garnett as associate secretaries. In treasury, Chad Grundy was elected as undertreasurer and C. Michael Park and Sharon Mabena as associate treasurers. These leaders are all incumbents.

For department directors, the executive committee elected one new department director and 14 current department directors on the third day of the year-end meeting. Willie Hucks II, D.Min., is the incoming director of the Ministerial

Association, which supports pastors and church leaders across the division. Ivan L. Williams had been carrying the dual responsibilities of the strategy and leadership vice president as well as Ministerial Association director since being elected to the VP role after the retirement of Paul Brantley. NAD president G. Alexander Bryant expressed his deep appreciation to Williams—and Plubell—for filling these gaps.

Hucks most recently served as the assistant to the president for mission and culture at Andrews University, and he was also an associate professor of pastoral theology and homiletics at Andrews. He fills a position that was held on an interim basis by Williams. Williams had moved from Ministerial Association director to the NAD vice president of strategy and leadership when elected on October 27, 2023, filling the vacancy created when Brantley retired in 2021. The complete list of department director elections is:

Adult Sabbath School/ Personal Ministries:
Andre Bill Watson-Payne

Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries:
Washington Johnson

Children’s Ministries:
Sherri Uhrig

Communication:
Kimberly Luste Maran

Adventist Community Services: W. Derrick Lea

Family Ministries:
Cesar De Leon

Health Ministries:
Angeline David Brauer

Human Relations:
Carolyn Forrest

Literature Ministries:
Carl McRoy

Ministerial Association:
Willie Hucks II

Office of Volunteer Ministries: Ernest Hernandez

Public Affairs and Religious Liberty: Orlan M. Johnson

Stewardship: Michael Harpe

Women’s Ministries:
DeeAnn Bragaw

Youth and Young Adult Ministries: Tracy Wood

On November 3 the nominating committee brought several associate director names to be voted in; the entire list was voted together and passed. Kyoshin Ahn noted that there were four additional positions to fill, which would be brought to and voted on at the North American Division committee in December. These included associate directors for chaplaincy, education, treasury, and communication. Those who are to serve in leadership roles in

service departments were appointed by the NAD committee, as per standard practice, in a meeting after year-end meeting.

The Process

The selection of vice presidents, and other division leadership positions, happens through a nomination process. The NAD’s nominating committee is a standing committee and was appointed by the NAD Executive Committee in 2020. This year-end meeting is the last session during which they will serve, and a new nominating committee will be established at the end of this session that will then serve for the next five-year term.

The names proposed by the nominating committee are brought to the floor and then voted on by the executive committee, which is the majority of the attendees. This process helps ensure that a qualified, representative executive team that can address the diverse needs of the division’s membership and expand the reach of the Adventist message in an increasingly complex ministry landscape is put in place.

Guam-Micronesia Mission

The Guam-Micronesia Mission (GMM) is the newest territory in the North American Division, having been transferred to it in 2011. The mission encompasses eight to nine major islands, of which several are United States territories, and thus it was decided that it made sense for the administration to come under the same division that includes the United States of America. Because the GMM operates as a division-attached mission, the year-end meeting constituency serves as the electing body for its officers. Following recommendations from the NAD President’s Council, on November 4, the body elected three officers to serve for

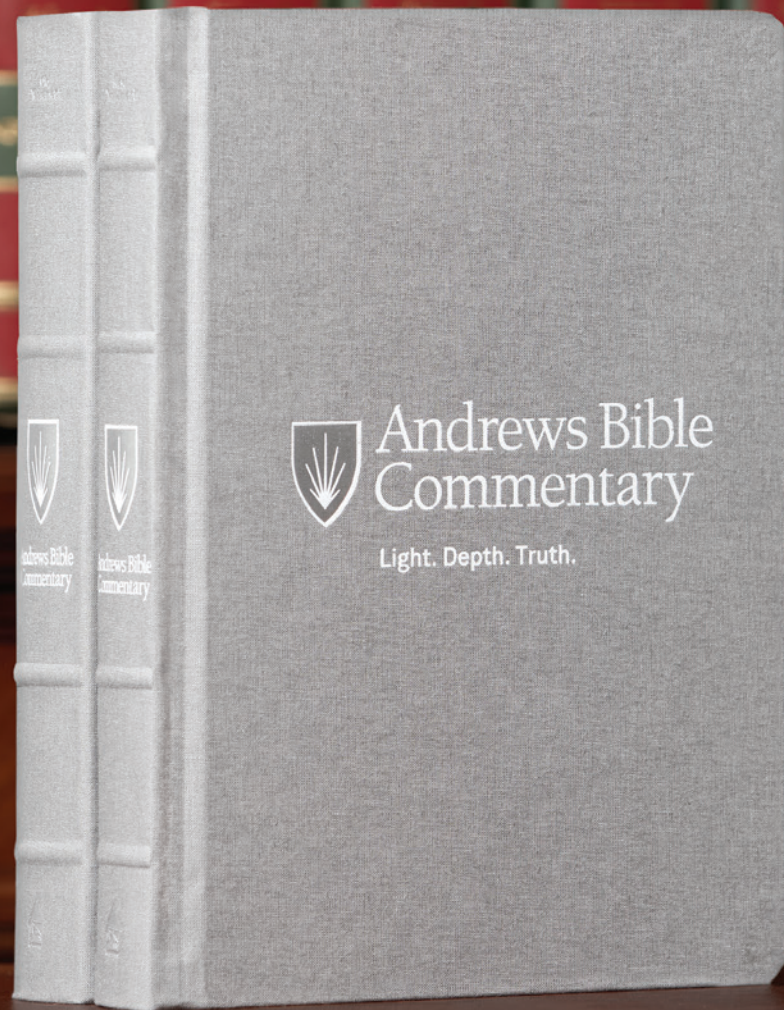
the quinquennial (five-year) term: Matthew Kirk will continue as president, Pablo Gaitan was elected as executive secretary (filling a position that had been open for a couple of years), and Marcey LaChance will continue serving as treasurer/CFO. Gaitan is currently a senior pastor in the Potomac Conference. The recommendation was approved unanimously by the assembled delegates.

Kirk reported that the GMM is navigating significant organizational restructuring while experiencing encouraging growth. Because many of its entities were formed when it was part of the General Conference Corporation and it exists across three countries, there has been a lot to untangle. The mission is completing major legal restructuring, including merging its unincorporated association with the North American Division corporation and transitioning clinic ownership as well. Both changes will take effect January 1, 2026.

“On the evangelism front, God has been doing miracles and blessings through the Pentecost 2025 initiative,” reported Kirk. Looking ahead to the mission’s upcoming quinquennial session, Kirk emphasized the dual focus of “foundations and frontiers”—strengthening organizational infrastructure while reaching unentered territory.






North American Division Executive Committee members vote NAD leadership through during a block voting process at the 2025 year-end meeting. *Pieter Damsteegt*



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**ADVENTIST
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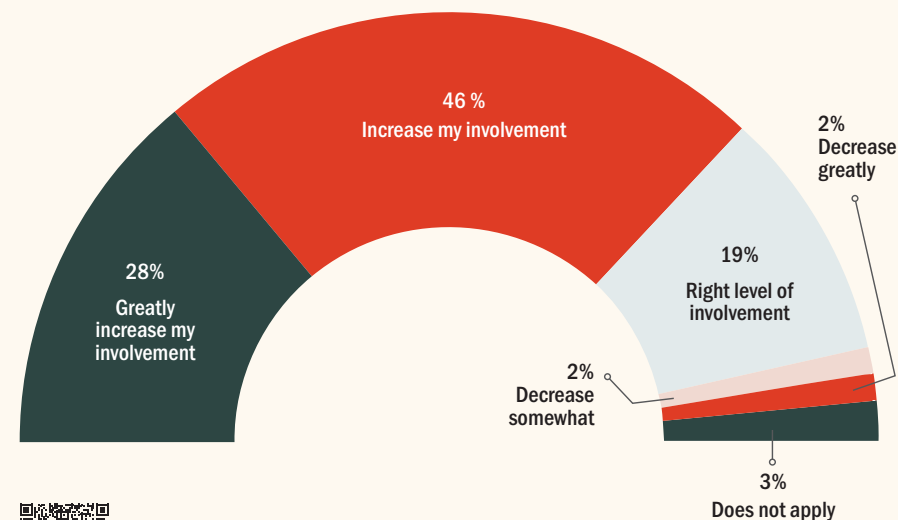
Please enjoy the following pages 17-26, which feature content curated by *Adventist Journey* from the magazine, *Adventist Review*.

“We have about 35 clinics in the Solomon Islands and roughly 55 in Papua New Guinea. Because of the weather and conditions out there, mold has entered the buildings, the cyclonic weather has taken roofing iron off, and plumbing is no longer working. We’re going to be fixing them up to make them a standard that I’d be happy to have my baby at.”

—10,000 Toes campaign director Pamela Townend, in describing the efforts to improve infrastructure across the Pacific islands. The campaign seeks to create awareness about how to prevent and fight diabetes and other noncommunicable diseases across the region.

SHOULD I PARTICIPATE MORE IN EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH?

Global church members were asked whether they thought they should increase their involvement in evangelistic outreach to the local community.



N = 146,340
Source: 2022-2023 Global Church Member Survey
Data provided by the General Conference
Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research

“I am deeply moved by the commitment of the volunteers. It is something truly worth highlighting, as Adventist volunteers serve with genuine dedication and a Christlike spirit.”

—Ruben Ponce, emergency response coordinator for ADRA International, during the “Yes With ADRA” training in Mandeville, Jamaica, on November 4, after the destruction provoked by Hurricane Melissa. The training focused on policies to prevent abuse and sexual exploitation, field safety protocols, conducting needs assessments, and the use of a data collection tool for reporting and monitoring relief efforts.

CHURCH LEADER AT THE WELL

How a brief visit connected an Adventist officer with his memories, hopes, and dreams.

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist Review*

On October 24 the Toyota pickup trucks arrive unexpectedly, sending dust billows through the grassless soccer field where a group of teenagers are enjoying a late-afternoon game. The heart-and-soul players see the vehicles approaching and decide to take a break. They walk toward the trucks, which have stopped by the dirt path, as other village residents also come closer to find out what is going on.

A delegation of Maranatha Volunteers International, a supporting ministry that builds churches and schools and drills water wells around the world, has made a stop near Chipata, in eastern Zambia, to check on one of the Seventh-day Adventist one-day church structures and a water well they gifted the community some time before. The trucks carry Maranatha leaders, supporters, and a special guest: Harrington Akombwa, a pastor who is currently president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID) of the Adventist Church.

Tears by the Well

As the guests descend from their vehicles, dozens of children and a few adults are already walking to meet them. Not even the ubiquitous reddish dust can hide their wide smiles. “Let’s check to see how your water well is doing,” one of the visitors tells them after exchanging customary greetings. “And let’s also see how your church building is progressing.”

Locals lead the visitors to the well, around which a dozen smiling children, mostly barefoot, are buzzing.

A Maranatha worker soon starts pumping out water, and Akombwa bends down to check the spurting liquid himself.

“EDUCATION CHANGES PEOPLE,” HE SAYS. “WHAT WOULD I BE WITHOUT THE OPPORTUNITY OF GETTING AN EDUCATION?”

“This is good, good water,” he says after taking a few sips. “Sweet, sweet water.”

Then, as he turns around, Akombwa sees the dust-blanketed, barefoot children looking expectantly at him.

“When I see these kids, I see myself reflected in them,” Akombwa says, suddenly fighting back tears. “You know, I used to be one of them.”

Bible Truth and Education

Harrington Simui Akombwa, a native Zambian, was elected for a second term to his current position at the 2025 General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, United States in July. An experienced leader, he has served in church administration positions for more than 30 years, including as secretary and then president

of the Zambia Union Conference (and the Southern Zambia Union Conference after the territory was divided in two in 2015).

But it was not always so. Akombwa grew up in Zambia’s western region, in a village very similar to the one he is now visiting on the other side of the country. He knows firsthand some of the major challenges the locals feel: extreme poverty, a subsistence-based economy, and often a lack of long-term vision and opportunities.

At the same time, Akombwa knows by experience how much power there is in the message of the gospel and in education. He’s also a believer in the strong bond between the Adventist Church’s steady growth and Adventist education. “Studies consistently show that those who get to know the Adventist message in an Adventist school are very likely to stay as church members for the rest of their lives,” he emphasizes.

Once more, Akombwa’s comments are based on his personal experience.

Growing up amid major family challenges, Akombwa didn’t know about the Adventist message. After he found God and Bible truth, however, his life experienced a marked turnaround, he says. Akombwa completed undergraduate and graduate studies at Solusi College (later Solusi University) in Zimbabwe, and in 2010 a Doctor of Ministry in Leadership at Andrews University in the United States.

Now as a father of five adult sons and as a grandfather, Akombwa says Bible-based

education is more than ever the way to go. “Education changes people,” he says. “What would I be without the opportunity of getting an education?”

A Game Changer

In extremely challenging social and economic contexts, supporting ministries such as Maranatha are essential to providing opportunities for growth, Akombwa says. In Zambia, he explains, education—even private education—is paid by the government, which also trains and provides as many teachers as possible, so tuition is not an issue. Still, school buildings can’t keep up with the growth of the general population and of the Adventist Church across the nation (Zambia has an estimated 1.5 million baptized Adventist members, second only to Brazil).

It is against this backdrop that the work of Maranatha, which is fully funded by private donors, comes into focus, Akombwa says. In a region with an extremely long dry season, a free water well for the community is usually the first entry and meeting point that locals value and cherish. Then,

as much as possible, Maranatha provides church buildings, usually a one-day church, which is a simple but reinforced steel frame and a roof under which church members and their families can meet.

To serve and benefit as many people and villages as possible, Maranatha often uses volunteers to raise the basic steel structure produced by local crews and then leaves members with the task of building up the church walls, providing seats or pews, and finding ways to purchase doors and windows. “It is something that encourages ownership of the building,” Maranatha leaders explain. “It fosters self-sufficiency and a sense of belonging.”

Singing of God’s Miraculous Love

During the October 24 visit Akombwa and the rest of the visiting crew saw firsthand the progress on the members’ one-day church. Residents proudly showed visitors how much progress they had made on the building since the leaders’ last visit. Block walls have now joined the base of the roof, and stone logs now double as pews. “We still need to raise funds to purchase

windows and doors,” a local church member shares. “We would like to finish our building as soon as possible.”

Akombwa, Maranatha team members, and church members in charge of the building remove wooden branches on a side door and walk into the bare sanctuary. Once inside, Akombwa walks to the stage and starts leading in an impromptu rendition of the well-known Christian song “Jesus Loves Me.” For just a couple of seconds his words bounce back from the walls of the cavernous sanctuary before guests and members rush to join him. “Yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so,” they sing.

When the singing fades, a local member politely presses on what they are still missing. “What about those doors and windows?” she asks.

“Having a church here is a miracle,” a Maranatha team member answers. “So keep praying that the miracle may keep unfolding!”

Akombwa agrees. “Certainly, this is just the beginning,” he says. “We haven’t seen the end of the story.” ❧



Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division president Harrington Akombwa tries the water at a well by a Seventh-day Adventist church near Chipata, Zambia. Photo: Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist Review*

“NO MORE DELAY— THE MISSION MUST MOVE FORWARD,” GC PRESIDENT SAYS

In the Philippines, Erton Köhler calls for bold faith and mission engagement.



In the Philippines, General Conference president Erton Köhler highlighted the Adventist movement’s prophetic identity and mission-driven calling. Photo: SSD Communication Department

Edward Rodriguez, Southern Asia-Pacific Division News

A spirit of unity and renewed commitment to mission filled the Philippine International church at the Adventist University of the Philippines (AUP) as global Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders joined members for a special Sabbath worship on November 8. The gathering was held in conjunction with the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) annual council, where leaders meet to assess progress, strengthen mission initiatives, and plan the church’s strategic direction for the next five years.

The worship service brought together the three executive officers of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC)—president Erton Köhler, secretary Richard McEdward, and treasurer Paul Douglas. Joining them were Magdiel Pérez Schulz, assistant to the GC president, and Robbie Berghan, the newly elected vice president for global media and engagement at Hope Channel International.

A Call to Bold Faith and Urgent Mission

In his Sabbath message Köhler drew lessons from Revelation 10, highlighting the Adventist movement’s prophetic identity and mission-driven calling. Referring to Revelation 10:2, he explained that the “little book open in his hand” symbolizes the book of Daniel—once sealed but now revealed—signifying that God’s truth continues to unfold for His people.

“The Adventist movement was born with an open Bible in its hand,” he said. “We are a people of the Book—a movement that from the beginning is grounded in the Bible.”

“BOLD IN COURAGE, BOLD IN FAITH, BOLD IN OUR INVESTMENTS—BECAUSE MONEY FOLLOWS MISSION—BOLD IN PREACHING WITH A LOUD VOICE, AND BOLD IN PLANNING BEYOND THE ORDINARY. IF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS LEADING, NO ONE CAN BE AGAINST US.”

Referring to Revelation 10:6, Köhler reminded listeners that there should be “no more delay any longer.” He called for renewed urgency in fulfilling the church’s gospel commission. “We are born with a sense of urgency. The time is short—no more delay. We must move forward now to accomplish the task God has given us. We cannot be afraid.”

The Remedy for Disappointment

Köhler reflected on Revelation 10:8-10, describing the experience of the Great Disappointment—sweet in the mouth but

bitter in the stomach. “That day was filled with expectation,” he said, “but it was also a day of hope.”

He emphasized that God provided a remedy for the church’s early disappointment, found in Revelation 10:11: “You must prophesy again.” “Mission is the remedy,” he said. “God’s response to disappointment is the call to go—to preach again, to witness again, to share hope again. We are a movement born for mission.”

Bold in Faith, Bold in Mission

Drawing parallels between Revelation 10 and Revelation 14, Köhler underscored that both chapters proclaim their message “with a loud voice.” He urged the church to be bold in every aspect of its mission.

“Our church, from its beginning to its end, is called to be bold in faith,” he said. “Bold in courage, bold in faith, bold in our investments—because money follows mission—bold in preaching with a loud voice, and bold in planning beyond the ordinary. If the Holy Spirit is leading, no one can be against us.”

One Voice for a Global Message

Concluding his message, Köhler called the world church to united action. “We are part of a movement. We are called to be God’s voice, not the echo of the culture,” he said. “We are calling our church worldwide to speak with one voice—using all forms of media—in one global movement to share that Jesus is coming soon.” ❧

LOOK HEAVENWARD

They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.” Hebrews 11:16.

I wish you a happy new year. The old year with its burden of record has passed into eternity. Now let every thought, every feeling be that of remembrance of God’s love. Let us gather up one token after another. . . .

Hope for a Better Home

The evidence we have of God’s care and love for us is expressed in the lessons Christ gave to His disciples upon the things in nature. . . . The eye is not to be fastened upon deformity, upon the curse, but upon the riches of the grace of Christ that has been provided so abundantly, that we may live in this world, and act our part in the great web of humanity, and yet not be of the world. As pilgrims, as strangers looking for the bright things of God, the joy that is set before us, seeking a city whose builder and maker is God, and by beholding the provisions made for us, the mansions Jesus has gone to prepare for us, talking of the blessed home, we forget the annoyances and the fretting cares of this life. We seem to breathe in the very atmosphere of that better, even the heavenly country. We are soothed, we are comforted; we are more than this, we are joyful in God.

We could not know that gracious purposes of God toward us, but for the promises, for it is from them alone we learn what He has prepared for those who love

Words of encouragement for the new year

Ellen G. White

We draw from God’s promises all that peace, that comfort, that hope that will develop in us the fruits of peace, joy, and faith. And by bringing these promises into our own life we bring them always into the lives of others.

Him. As the flowers in God’s wise economy are constantly drawing the properties from earth and air to develop into the pure and beautiful buds and flowers and give forth their fragrance to delight the senses, so shall it be with us.

Catching a Glimpse

We draw from God’s promises all that peace, that comfort, that hope that will develop in us the fruits of peace, joy, and faith. And by bringing these promises into our own life we bring them always into the

lives of others. Then let us appropriate these promises to ourselves. . . . They are like the precious flowers in the garden of God. They are to awaken our hope and expectation, and lead us to a firm faith and reliance upon God. They are to strengthen us in trouble and teach us precious lessons of trust in God. He in these precious promises draws back from eternity and gives us a glimpse of the far more exceeding and eternal weight

of glory. Let us then be quiet in God. Let us calmly trust in Him and praise Him that He has shown us such revelations of His will and purposes that we shall not build our hopes in this life but keep the eye upward to the inheritance of light and see and sense the amazing love of Jesus. ❧

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the spiritual gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt was taken from *The Upward Look*, p. 15.

HOW GOD MEASURES SUCCESS

God's Word
does not come
back void.

Ken Denslow

A few times in life I have had individuals tell me that some small thing that I shared long ago had a life-altering impact on them. Usually when that has happened, I have not been able to remember the moment, or it seemed like a small thing to me at the time. Sometimes what may look to the human eye to have been insignificant or maybe even an utter failure was, in God's view, a success.

Let me tell you a story.

Years ago, while serving as president of the Illinois Conference in the United States, I passed through a town in the southern part of the state where I knew there were evangelistic meetings being held by the local church. I had some time and decided to stop by unannounced at the hotel where the meetings were being held.

When I arrived, the meeting was already in progress. I bypassed the registration table and went straight into the hall. It was all set up with a screen, projector, and sound system. The stage was nicely arranged, including plants and floral arrangements along the edge. The musicians had just concluded their part in the program; it was time for the pastor to preach. But as I looked around the room, I saw that there were very few people in attendance. In fact, I knew everyone in the room. Not a good sign!

The preacher stood up and launched into his sermon with gusto. He preached his heart out. You would have thought that he was preaching to thousands instead of the handful that were actually there. As I sat and listened, I wondered how he was able to throw himself so completely into a situation that others might have deemed a failure.

Later that evening, as I continued my drive toward home, I reflected on what I had experienced. Frankly, I was discouraged for the pastor and his congregation. They clearly had worked hard and spent significant dollars to make this meeting a success, but what I had just seen did not look like a win to me.

And then I remembered a Bible passage that seemed to speak directly to this situation:

“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isa. 55:10, 11).

Could it be that this preacher's efforts had *not* been in vain—that he had *not* failed? He had faithfully preached the Word of God and left the results to Him. Could it be that in the cosmic and invisible struggle between good and evil, ground was actually gained by the forces of good just because God's Word had been spoken in that place?

SOMETHING HAPPENED

I don't remember if there were any conversions or baptisms at the end of those meetings, but I can tell you that for a few weeks God's Word was preached in that town, and He has promised that His Word will not come back to Him void. Something happened even if I didn't see it with my eyes.

I heard another preacher some time ago proclaim on YouTube: “God didn't call me to fill the pews; He called me to preach the Word.” Preachers are often called (inspired?) to preach difficult and unpopular messages. The YouTube preacher understood that just because he isn't preaching to large crowds, that doesn't mean he isn't preaching “God's Word.”

God's Word is powerful. Through His Word the earth was created. At His Word the Red Sea was split. Hebrews 4:12 describes God's Word as alive, active, and sharper than a two-edged sword.

While we don't know the size of the crowd to which he preached, we do know that Noah's preaching resulted in no converts except his seven family members. What we *do* know is that Noah preached faithfully for 120 years. Did he make an impact? Despite his seeming failure as a preacher, his adherence to and trust in the Word of God led to the saving of the human race and earned him a place in the list of faithful heroes in Hebrews 11.

One day in Capernaum Jesus spoke difficult words to His followers. He revealed Himself as having come from the Father. He spoke about His flesh and blood being the food and drink of eternal life. These were hard words for the crowd to understand, and the Bible says in John 6: “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” (verse 66). It was a difficult sermon. The message was not popular with the crowd,

and soon they drifted away. Jesus, left only with His 12 disciples, His inner circle, asked: “And what about you? Will you leave Me too?”

Peter, as he did so often, answered for the group: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (verse 68).

Some might have looked at Jesus' teaching and its results that day as a failure. The crowd dwindled because He faithfully taught the Word of God. Yet through His teaching and His actions He changed the course of humanity.

Could it be that this
preacher's efforts had
not been in vain—
that he had *not* failed?

In 2000 Malcolm Gladwell popularized the phrase “tipping point” through his book of the same title. He maintains that major societal changes (tipping points) come about when a grouping of circumstances converge to make a major societal shift. No one action by itself causes the seismic shift. Gladwell's work is not without challenges from sociologists, but one thing is certain: tipping points never come except through actions. If we do nothing, nothing will happen.

When I was young, I nearly wore out an album of music by T. Marshall Kelly. My favorite song on that album is “Little Is Much When God Is in It.” One verse goes like this:

“Does the place you're called to labor
Seem so small and little known?
Well, it is great if God is in it
And He will not forsake His own.”

Reframing our definitions of success and failure is not a call to complacency in the preaching and teaching of God's Word. The world doesn't need more half-baked preaching. But it *is* a call to *faithfulness* in proclaiming the Word of God regardless of the size of the audience—whether it be through preaching or teaching. It is a call to recognize that God does not measure success the way that we do. It's a call to understand that the faithful words we speak have power in both the visible and invisible realms. And when you are tempted to feel discouraged, to harbor thoughts of failure, remember that your simple actions may have an eternal impact in the struggle for good. **✠**

Ken Denslow, former Lake Union president, is now retired and living near Andrews University in Michigan, United States.

DIVINE SADNESS AND THE FLOOD

How can we justify God’s total destruction of the antediluvian world by a flood?

There is no need for us to justify God’s decision to destroy the earth through a universal flood, because He was careful enough to justify this most dramatic decision in the biblical text itself. We should look at the human condition and at God’s reaction to it.

Increasing Corruption

After the Fall, the biblical text informs us about the damaging effect of sin in the human heart. The relationship between God and humans was permanently damaged, and humans themselves existed in a state of alienation from each other. Perhaps worse, a brother took the life of his brother, and the human race entered a process of radical spiritual differentiation. Humanity split up into those who served the Lord (the descendants of Seth) and those who abandoned God (the descendants of Cain). At the beginning of the Flood narrative (Gen. 6:1-4) the sons of God, the descendants of Seth, have been marrying the descendants of Cain, plunging the two groups into an unimaginable depth of moral, spiritual, and social corruption.

Corruptions of Humans and the Earth

The text shares with us God’s perception of the problem: He saw that “the wickedness of mankind was great on the earth” (Gen. 6:5, NASB). The evil nested in the human heart was unquantifiable. There was something evil and deeply wrong with humans. “Wickedness” (*ra’ah*) does not refer to specific sins but to a state or condition that has totally invaded the

inner being of humans to the point that every dimension of human rationality—as well as of the will (the heart)—was “continually” (literally, “every day”) inclined or striving toward evil. This is describing total corruption. Human wickedness had an impact on the land, and consequently it “was corrupt [*shakhat*, be ruined] . . . and filled with violence” (verse 11). The cause of this awful condition is not the land itself, but the corruption and violence of humans and animals (verses 13, 17). They are characterized by a corrupt way of life (verse 12).

While in the human heart there was wickedness and violence, the heart of God is filled with sadness.

God’s Reaction to Human Wickedness

God sees that humans have chosen their own course of action and not the one He intended for them. He “was sorry that He had made man on the earth” (verse 6). This debated phrase simply means that God experienced pain when looking at what happened to His creation, as it is immediately indicated: “He was grieved [*atsab*, to be sad] in His heart.” While in the human heart there was wickedness

and violence, the heart of God is filled with sadness. Observing humans and beasts violently destroying each other, the loving heart of God grieved. Love could not be indifferent to such savagery, so it intervenes. God will bring it to an end through a global flood. The self-destruction that humans are inflicting on themselves through wickedness and violence is finally implemented by God (verses 11-13; the verb *shakhat* means both “to become corrupt” and “to destroy”). Surprisingly, this decision is explicitly assigned in the text, not to God’s loving wrath, but to God’s suffering love.

Out of love God makes two additional decisions. First, His Spirit will “not strive” or “be close” (*yadon*), pleading with humans forever, but He will remain close to them for an additional 120 years (verse 3). Grace lingers. Second, life on the planet will not be annihilated. God’s grace found Noah (verses 9, 18), who would become His instrument in the preservation of a remnant through whom God will bring into fruition His intention to save humanity, as recorded in Genesis 3:15. God committed Himself to preserve within the ark, not only humans beings, but also a remnant of “every living thing” (Gen. 6:19). A new beginning of grace will be dawning on our planet, pointing to the future arrival of the Sun of Righteousness, the Seed of the woman. ❧

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, Th.D., is retired after a career serving as pastor, professor, and theologian.



AI MENTAL HEALTH “THERAPISTS”

What is their proper place?

I am one of a handful of trained mental health counselors in my country. I am very concerned about the lack of affordable and available mental health services, especially for young adults and adolescents. Is artificial intelligence (AI) hype or help?

Thank you for asking such a thoughtful question. Around the world young people are struggling with loneliness, anxiety, and fear, and suicide has become a growing statistic. The need for mental health services exceeds the supply since the number of affected individuals is growing and the number of trained counselors is very small. Your community’s situation is not unique. In this space of deep need, people are asking whether artificial intelligence—the new “chatbot companions” that can talk with us anytime—might be part of the answer.

Our reply is both hopeful and cautious: AI can be of help, but we should understand what it is and what it is not and employ it for its benefits while avoiding its pitfalls.

Unlike a counselor with a crowded schedule, an AI app is available at any hour of the day or night. For a teenager who wakes in the night with anxious thoughts, having something immediately responsive can feel like a lifeline. These programs also cost far less than professional therapy. And for those who feel judged or silenced when they speak to adults, a chatbot can feel like a safe place to pour out their hearts without fear of criticism. So long as there is electricity, internet, and cell service, these tools are often accessible even in resource-limited communities.

But there is more to the story. The potential for problems with AI chatbot

counseling is real. An AI chatbot is not a true friend. It may say “I care about you” or even “I love you,” but those are only words written into or generated by its programming. Furthermore, an AI mental health “therapist” cannot respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Their words, however soothing they may be, do not come from someone who knows the young person’s heart. Worse still, AI has no responsibility when life is on the line. Unlike trained counselors, these tools may not recognize a cry for help. Added to this is the fact that most AI platforms are built by companies whose goal may be to keep people using their product, not to heal them. That can mean endless soothing talk that avoids the harder work of growth, change, and accountability.

It is also important to remember that AI does not always give reliable and culturally sensitive answers. Because it generates responses by predicting patterns in language, it can sometimes produce biased or even completely wrong information. Experts call these mistakes “hallucinations.” In everyday matters this might cause only confusion, but in critical or emotional situations the results can be harmful or misleading. And finally, we must admit: the scientific evidence is still thin. One strong study shows promise, but that is far from enough to entrust our children’s well-being to machines.

So is AI hype or help? We would say it can be a help, but only as a bridge—something to hold a young person steady until a real human being can step in with presence, love, and responsibility. It can never replace the counselor, the parent, mentor, pastor, teacher, or friend. In reality, no matter how many institutions or remedies we create, true healing is grounded in caring relationships. It is the work that we do with our hearts, in sympathy with the hearts of those we seek to benefit, that is most successful.

We must not forget or overlook the biblical fact that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1). He is the original and genuine ever-available counselor and comforter, and it is He who gives His children the ability to help while He heals. Real comfort and hope flow through living relationships—with God and with each other.

Our counsel, then, is to keep AI in its proper place. Be clear with the youth that it is a tool, not a friend. Encourage them to use it alongside—not instead of—real conversations with caring people. And as communities of faith, let us not allow technology to excuse us from our calling. The church must continue to train, support, and send out more human counselors, mentors, and compassionate leaders who will walk beside our young (and not-so-young) people in love and truth. ❧

Zeno L. Charles-Marcel, a board-certified internist, is the director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference. **Peter N. Landless**, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist and General Conference Adventist Health Ministries director emeritus, is also a board-certified internist.



NEW YEAR, NEW HEAVEN

Nothing to fear

Erton Köhler

The calendar has turned, but the world's cries have not fallen silent. While colorful fireworks flashed for some, multitudes crossed into a new year under the roar of artillery, sirens, and bombs. Wars persist across continents, humanitarian catastrophes are worsening, some nations are in civil upheaval, and places once peaceful now face violence on an unprecedented scale. All these dynamics confirm the most current diagnosis: we are living during a historic level of armed conflict. If things don't improve, what then?

Scripture prophesied this scenario. "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled" (Matt. 24:6). This command of Jesus is not naïveté; it is sovereignty. He does not deny conflict, but He calls His people to a purposeful life, free from panic. Therefore, as we usher in 2026, may our reference point rest not on the euphoria of the new but on the certainty of the eternal. Will it get better? Absolutely, and eternally. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness

Will it get better?
Certainly
and eternally.

dwells" (2 Peter 3:13). For the Adventist, hope does not ignore the alarms; it listens for a much louder trumpet, "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

The biblical, prophetic voice summons the church to respond with mission, not fear. A swift angel announces the everlasting gospel to the whole world; he does not wait for stability to preach it (Rev. 14:6). Where uncertainty grows, identity rises. When violence expands, compassion enlarges. And if geopolitics tremble, faithfulness stands tall. "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:28).

Our pioneers have already taught us how to endure times like these. "A storm is coming, relentless in its fury. Are we prepared to meet it?" Those who prepare for heaven do not stockpile fear on this earth; they direct their lives, schedules, and resources to mission. They strengthen their knees in prayer, their hands in service, and their voices in proclamation. "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."²

As we enter 2026, may our feet stand in reality, and our eyes fix on eternity. May every home start the year in fellowship, may every worshiper renew their trust, and may every church reaffirm its calling. As the world's noise increases, let us increase the boldness of our witness. As the world grows unstable, let us steady our steps in the Word. Let us press on, grounded in the Bible, focused on the mission, without retreat until the precious day when "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. 21:4).

Maranatha. 

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 8, p. 315.

² Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 196.

Erton C. Köhler is the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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“ONENESS IN CHRIST”

During his year-end meeting Sabbath sermon, North American Division president G. Alexander Bryant calls church leaders to embrace unity of purpose through the Holy Spirit.

BY JULIO C. MUÑOZ

On November 1, in a message both profound and practical, G. Alexander Bryant, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America (NAD), delivered a stirring call for unity during the Sabbath worship service at the 2025 NAD year-end meeting (YEM). His sermon, “Oneness in Christ,” challenged church leaders to embrace the biblical model of oneness: a unity rooted in the Holy Spirit, enriched by diversity, and centered on mission.

Preaching from Acts 2, Bryant drew his audience into the scene of Pentecost. The disciples, once divided and uncertain, “were all with one accord in one place” (verse 1, NKJV) when they received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost, he explained, was no accident of history, but a demonstration of divine timing and purpose. “God’s timing is impeccable,” Bryant said. “In the plan of God, there are no accidents, no coincidences.”

Unity Amid Diversity

Bryant explored the difference between unity and uniformity, cautioning that sameness is not the goal of Christian harmony. “Some believe that unity in Christ means we all think the same, look the same, or sing the same,” he said. “But that’s not unity—that’s uniformity.” True unity, he reminded the congregation, celebrates the distinctiveness of every believer as part of God’s intentional design.

With humor and warmth Bryant illustrated his point by highlighting the cultural and culinary diversity among NAD officers, mentioning “soul food, *lefse*, and *kimchi*” as symbols of the church’s richness. “Does God expect Judy to give up her *lefse*, or Kyoshin to give up his *kimchi*?” he asked with a smile. “No. God made us different, and there’s strength in our diversity.”

He compared the church to a salad rather than a blender—a community where individuality is preserved but purpose is shared. “God doesn’t ask us to lose our flavor,” he said. “He calls us to mix together in love.”

A Call to Humility and Service

Turning from diversity to discipleship, Bryant reminded the congregation that unity begins with humility. Drawing from Jesus washing the disciples’ feet, he recounted how Christ performed the task no one else was willing to do. “Somebody has to be like Jesus,” Bryant urged. “Somebody has to be willing to humble themselves for the sake of unity.”

He punctuated the message with an anecdote from his early marriage, a “peanut butter issue” with his wife over whether the jar belonged in the refrigerator or the pantry. The story drew laughter, but its meaning was clear. “We have too many peanut butter issues in our church,” he said. “At some point somebody’s got to be like Jesus and say, ‘I’ll be the one to make peace.’”

Unity in Diversity

Bryant then centered the congregation on the mission of the church: proclaiming the everlasting gospel and the soon return of Christ. “Our mission unites us,” he declared. “We are all one in Christ, one purpose, one calling, one message.”

He noted that the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s diversity was not a challenge to overcome, but a testimony to God’s purpose. “Perhaps God made this church the most diverse denomination on this continent because, in a world divided by politics and culture, He wants a people who can show what true unity looks like.”

Quoting from Philippians 2, Bryant explained that the Greek word used in Acts 2:1 for “one accord,” *homothymadon*, refers not just to agreement but to “unity of passion and purpose.” “That’s the kind of unity God wants,” he said, “not sameness, but a shared mission that drives us forward.”

One Accord, One Purpose

Bryant acknowledged that minor disagreements are inevitable at times, but stressed that these conflicts must not eclipse the church’s shared calling. “Maybe God needs to send some storms our way,” he reflected, “so that all these artificial things we fight about lose their value.”

“When the time of trouble comes,” he continued, “we won’t care about music styles, politics, or food. We’ll care that someone can pray, someone can sing, and someone can remind us of God’s promises.”

Photography by Art Brondo



NAD secretary Kyoshin Ahn listening to the Sabbath sermon as a member of the audience who came together to worship at the division headquarters in Columbia, Maryland, on November 1, 2025.

“Our mission unites us. We are all one in Christ, one purpose, one calling, one message.”

He urged leaders to set aside distractions that divide the body of Christ. “We intersect at mission,” Bryant said. “Different, distinct, but standing together for one purpose, to tell the world that God loves them with an everlasting love.”

Make Us One

As the song of appeal filled the sanctuary, Bryant invited the congregation to lay aside their personal “peanut butter issues” and recommit to oneness in Christ. Those in attendance stood together as he prayed for a renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

“The Holy Spirit fell on those who were in one place and of one accord,” he said. “Not all the same, but all together, focused on one purpose.”

In his closing appeal Bryant’s message was both simple and profound: “Unity isn’t about being the same. It’s about being together in Christ.”

Julio C. Muñoz is an associate director of Communication for the North American Division.



G. Alexander Bryant, North American Division president, gives the sermon during the Sabbath program at the 2025 NAD year-end meeting on November 1.



The Chitans, a sibling group, shared inspiring music during both Sabbath morning services at the 2025 NAD year-end meeting.

“WHY ARE YOU WAITING?”

The North American Division Year-End Meeting Attends Reach Baltimore “Vespers” With John Bradshaw.

BY BECKY ST. CLAIR, EVAN KNOTT, V. MICHELLE BERNARD, AND CHRISTELLE AGBOKA

Attendees of the 2025 North American Division year-end meeting were bussed to Goucher College in nearby Towson, Maryland, for “Hope for Humanity,” a Bible prophecy seminar hosted by It Is Written. This evening meeting, part of the Reach Baltimore initiative, served as vespers for the group.

To open the service, John Bradshaw, president of It Is Written and one of the speakers for the series, answered a few questions that had been sent in by viewers. These included, “Do I really need to be part of a church to be right with God?” and “What does it mean that ‘Sabbath was made for man?’” among others.

Bradshaw opened his sermon talking about superheroes, and how fascinated people are with them. He pointed out that the Bible is full of people who did remarkable things for God, and that it doesn’t stop with the Bible. “When God places His Spirit within you, you can do things you never thought you’d be able to do,” he commented.

With a continued focus on the Holy Spirit, Bradshaw walked listeners through John and Revelation, exploring scriptures that describe who, what, and how the Holy Spirit is—and that the presence of the Holy Spirit in one’s life makes a notable difference in a person.

“Sometimes we think if we can just adopt a set of rules or standards, then we’re on our way to glory,” Bradshaw stated. Though it is, he continued, right to follow the guidelines God has given us, actions alone don’t mean we’re filled with the Spirit. “The volume of a hallelujah doesn’t matter to me,” he said. “Firmness of a handshake doesn’t prove anything. We may know what to say and how to say it, but if we don’t have the Holy Spirit,” those actions are meaningless.

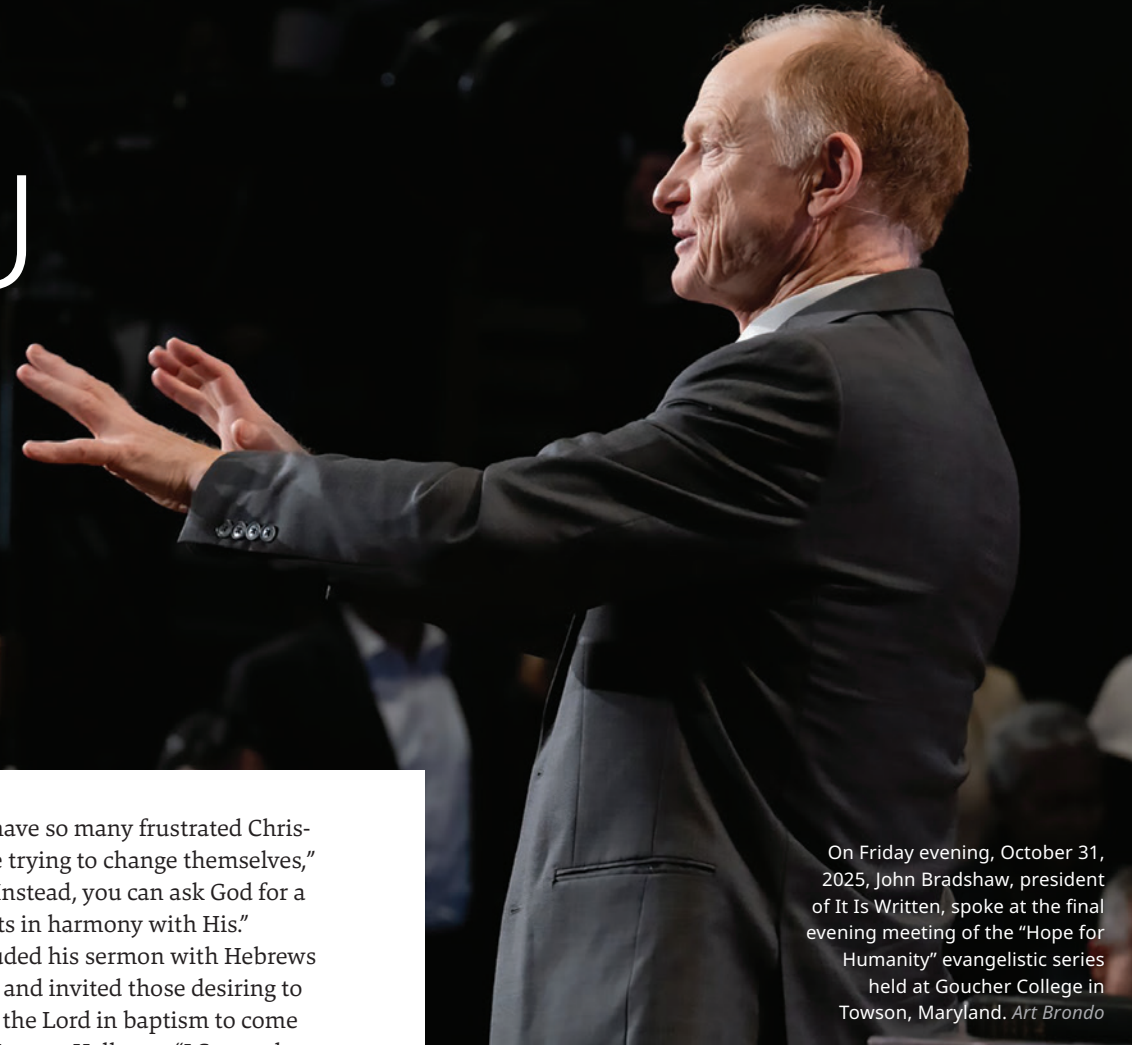
“The reason we have so many frustrated Christians is that they’re trying to change themselves,” Bradshaw stated. “Instead, you can ask God for a new heart that beats in harmony with His.”

Bradshaw concluded his sermon with Hebrews 2:3 and Acts 22:16, and invited those desiring to give their hearts to the Lord in baptism to come down to the front, Jeremy Hall sang “I Surrender All.” Baptism and Bible study request cards were given to everyone who had come forward, and Bradshaw closed with a prayer of blessing:

“Those who have come forward tonight we commit to You, Lord, knowing Your arms are around them, Your heart is toward them, Your blessing is over them,” he prayed. “Keep them and bless them, Lord, and let them be happy, holy Christians. Thank You and amen and praise the Lord.”

Reaching Baltimore

For three days at the end of September, more than 500 volunteers from across the Columbia Union Conference and beyond provided 1,048 individual health services at a free three-day medical, vision, and dental clinic hosted by Allegheny East Conference’s Miracle City Church in Baltimore. Although doors did not open until 8 a.m., attendees lined up as early as 5:30 a.m. to receive dental cleanings, extractions, and fillings; vision testing and free glasses; basic medical screenings; mental health and lifestyle guidance; and on-site



On Friday evening, October 31, 2025, John Bradshaw, president of It Is Written, spoke at the final evening meeting of the “Hope for Humanity” evangelistic series held at Goucher College in Towson, Maryland. Art Brondo



pharmacy support. Pastors and volunteers offered prayer and encouragement throughout the event. Unity Day, held on Sabbath, September 27, was a worship day between the days of the clinic.

The AMEN-supported clinic was a joint effort between the Chesapeake and Allegheny East conferences, with support from the Columbia Union Conference, the North American Division (NAD), and It Is Written. Volunteers included Seventh-day Adventist members, pastors, staff, and students from around the country.

As part of the ongoing Reach Baltimore 2025 initiative, a special three-night seminar on biblical archaeology was held September 26–28 at Goucher College. “Astonishing Discoveries and Prophecies in the Land of the Bible,” presented by Michael Hasel, professor of Near Eastern studies and archaeology at Southern Adventist University, guided attendees through recent archaeological findings from ancient Egypt, Israel, and Babylon that affirm the reliability of Scripture. Guests learned of the event through social media promotions and direct mailings, and were invited to return for the coming evangelistic series.

Evangelistic Series

The “Revelation Today: Hope for Humanity” evangelistic series launched October 3 at Goucher College. Sponsored by the Chesapeake and Allegheny East conferences in partnership with It Is Written and the NAD, the series featured guest speakers G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president, and Bradshaw. Over the course of eight messages, the presenters explored themes of prophecy and hope in Christ, including Daniel 2, signs of Christ’s return, law and grace, judgment and salvation, and the 2,300-day prophecy.

The series concluded on November 1 with a special baptismal service celebrating 14 new members joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Additional baptisms took place in local churches in the remaining days of 2025.

On September 25, 2025, day one of the AMEN Free Health Clinic at Miracle City Seventh-day Adventist Church in Baltimore, volunteers provided free dental care to community members. The clinic’s three days of free dental, vision, and medical care was part of the Reach Baltimore initiative. Ronald Pollard

New Digital Evangelism Initiative Announced During North American Division President's Report at Year-end Meeting

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN



José Cortes, Jr., a Ministerial Association associate director, encourages conference leaders to prayerfully identify congregations willing and able to participate in the digital evangelism initiative. *Pieter Damsteegt*

During the North American Division (NAD) president's year-end meeting report on October 30, 2025, division leaders announced a new two-year digital evangelism initiative designed to help local congregations reach their communities online through social media. The initiative was presented through a video report, and a series of remarks from Adam Fenner, Adventist Learning Community director and NAD vice president of digital media; Brent Hardinge, Adventist Connect director and assistant to the NAD vice president of digital media; José Cortes, Jr., associate director of the

NAD Ministerial Association; and Rohann Wellington, NAD Professional Services director and assistant to the NAD vice president of digital media. The presentation emphasized that digital outreach must lead to real-world spiritual impact.

The segment opened with comments from Adam Fenner, who challenged attendees to rethink traditional metrics of online success.

"I used to think that getting 100,000 views on a video was awesome, that we hit it out of the park," Fenner said. "Now I look at that and I think, *OK, how many baptisms does it have? How many people are in our faith communities as a result?*"

In the video Fenner highlighted the need for churches to balance traditional outreach with digital engagement. "We need to equip local churches in such a way that they can help do that hybrid evangelism," he said, explaining that the initiative includes tools to help churches build online connections that lead back to local congregations.

Next, Brent Hardinge outlined the initiative, a two-year effort to "help every conference empower one local church to reach its community online."

Hardinge explained that the local church digital evangelism initiative is structured to help churches develop sustainable digital ministries. The program aims to train pastors, communication directors, and volunteer teams in digital content creation, analytics, and community engagement.

"This isn't just another campaign," Hardinge said. "It's a framework for long-term digital ministry growth that conferences can replicate as they see fit. It's not about technology. It's about using every tool available to bring freedom, hope, and wholeness in Jesus to a broken world."

How the Three-Month Cycle Works

Hardinge described the initiative's structured, three-phase training cycle that begins once conferences select their participating church.

"In the first phase we will meet with the church and begin training the church, the pastor, and the local member volunteers," he said. This early stage introduces what digital ministry looks like and includes hands-on instruction in digital outreach, content creation, and community engagement. During this phase churches also begin developing their digital ads in

partnership with the North American Division and the Adventist Connect team.

Each participating church enters a guided three-month training and campaign cycle. It begins with workshops during which pastors, communication directors, and local volunteers receive practical training, mentorship, and support. With guidance from trained mentors, each church then designs and launches its own digital evangelism campaign tailored to its local community.

In the second phase the social media ads start running. "We'll respond initially, and then meet with the local church to show them how these conversations are progressing," Hardinge said. Throughout the campaign Adventist Connect will provide weekly check-ins, analytics reports, and coaching to help churches understand what's working and how to improve.

As online conversations deepen, Hardinge explained, the third phase focuses on transitioning digital interactions to local, personal engagement. Adventist Connect begins "handing off those connections to the local members," helping churches move seekers from online dialogue into "in-person, face-to-face interactions."

By the end of the three-month cycle, each church will have reached new people online and developed the confidence, systems, and long-term skills needed to continue digital ministry long after the initial campaign ends.

Hardinge also shared that the North American Division will "provide the financial support and coordination for this effort. This way each participating church will receive financial support to cover advertising, digital tools, and training costs, thus removing the barriers and ensuring that the church, regardless of its budget, can move forward."

Prayerful Selection Needed

Fenner explained that this initiative is intentionally not for every congregation. "We already know how to generate digital interests. In fact, we can reach more people in a community than most churches can handle," he said. "The real challenge and the real opportunity is to find churches in which the pastor and members are united in prayer, open to the Holy Spirit's leading, and ready to engage personally with those God brings to them."

He continued: "It takes discernment and balance between generating interest, qualifying leads, and ensuring the local church can follow through with care, discipleship, and authentic connection."

After the video Cortes emphasized the point that not every church is ready to participate—and that readiness is spiritual, not technical. "This is not an endeavor in which one size fits all," Cortes said. Some churches, he noted, "may not be positioned or ready to engage at this moment, and that is OK."

His challenge to conference leaders was to prayerfully identify congregations "that best reflect the Spirit of Christ, the beauty of Christianity, and the hope of Adventism—churches that have a drive for growth, for discipleship, for loving people, for compassion, and for multiplication."

Coordinated Digital Mission

Wellington underscored the need for a dedicated person at each church to manage online interest and nurture individuals into local engagement.

"People are searching for hope, and the missing link . . . is establishing a person who will be responsible for moving that online engagement," explained Wellington, a digital mission coordinator who would help move individuals "from the online experience . . . to the pool and into the membership"

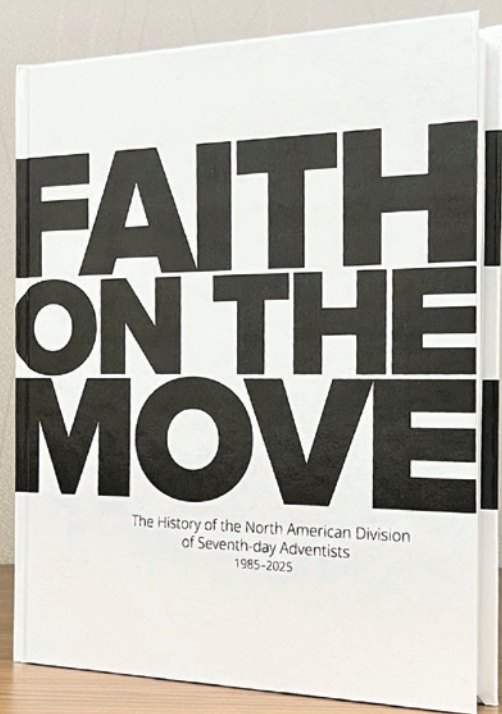
He stressed that success depends on collaboration, saying, "It will not be successful unless the church leadership and the membership are working in collaboration to accomplish the mission."

"Remember, technology does not drive mission. Mission drives technology," Wellington added.

The goal is long-term replicability. "This is an ongoing initiative in which we can hopefully train more churches to replicate success and bring more people to Jesus," Fenner concluded, encouraging those gathered to scan the QR code on the screen to start the process.



Brent Hardinge, Adventist Connect director, shares details about how the local church digital evangelism initiative cycle and partnerships will work. *Pieter Damsteegt*



Faith on the Move

The Story of the North American Division's First 40 Years

BY BONITA JOYNER SHIELDS
AND MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL

A history book for a Christian church or institution is more than a record of events—it is a testimony of God's providence, grace, and enduring presence among His people.

The North American Division (NAD) officially began in 1985. However, its story reaches back to the beginning of the church's existence.

Before 1985

After the denomination organized in 1863, it would take almost four decades to work out a denominational structure, which began to take shape in 1901 with a General Conference (GC), unions, and conferences. Recognizing continued organizational needs, two GC vice presidents were designated to be responsible for the work in Europe and North America, respectively. The creation of divisions, administrative units of the GC that extended the decision-making process of the world church by overseeing groups of unions, began in 1913 and was more broadly implemented in 1918, and again in 1922.

From 1913 to 1918 an "experimental" attempt was made to create a North American Division. The new division was led by veteran church administrator and missionary Irwin H. Evans. Conflicts arose over church resources, however, and were resolved by merging the NAD back into the GC and reverting to the previous governance model.

By the 1940s, a separate administrative committee for North America was formed, but it did not have the autonomy necessary to expand the work in North America. By the late 1970s and early 1980s global membership rapidly expanded, necessitating a reassessment of the relationship between the GC and the NAD.

Why 1985?

Why in 1985 would the world church once again create a North American Division? To strengthen Adventism in its place of origin, to sustain its missionary program (approximately 80 percent of the world church's title and two thirds of its missionaries still came from North America), and to address other issues unique to North America.

In the words of church leaders: "It was the right time." The NAD would have the autonomy to keep the mission focus of the church paramount in North America, so that the work begun so many years earlier would remain vibrant and thriving.

Celebrating 40 Years

In Scripture, the number 40 is deeply symbolic, often associated with new life, new growth, transformation, preparation, renewal, and change. (The Flood lasted 40 days and nights. The Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years. Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights in the wilderness.)

During the past 40 years the NAD has experienced new life, operating with full division status for the first time in the church's history. In those years the NAD has experienced new growth, not only numerically but missionally, having the autonomy to develop new ways to reach out to those in North America who may not have embraced the gospel. During the past 40 years the NAD has experienced transformation and renewal, which come with added responsibilities and great op-

portunities. They also come with anticipation and preparation as we continue to grow in our understanding of who God is, who we are, and who God wants us to be as the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.

About *Faith on the Move*

The cover of *Faith on the Move* is not your typical "history book" cover.

This cover is BOLD—like the NAD.

This cover reflects MOVEMENT—like the NAD.

This cover is FOCUSED—like the NAD.

This cover is a visual representation of the North American Division, whose members are boldly focusing on mission, moving forward in mission, and working together in mission.

Faith on the Move includes:

Part I: The NAD Story (the development of the NAD pre- and post-1985)

Part II: Mission to the World (the NAD's missionary program)

Part III: Membership and Growth (pastors and churches, educators and schools)

Part IV: Financial Resources and Growth (tithe, offerings, remuneration)

Part V: Ministries and Services (the development of the NAD departments)

Part VI: Affiliated Organizations (entities with NAD oversight)

Part VII: Missional Endeavors (God's work throughout the nine NAD unions)

Part VIII: Periodicals (making an impact in the lives of members and communities)

Together in Mission

Faith on the Move is a history of the NAD for the past 40 years, but it is so much more:



On October 31, 2025, Union Adventist University president Yami Bazan holds up her copy of the new NAD history book *Faith on the Move*, distributed that day at the division's year-end meeting.
Art Brondo

Faith on the Move is the story of God's work in North America, Canada, Bermuda, and the Guam-Micronesia Mission.

Faith on the Move is where you go to find statistics on tithe; the number of missionaries sent out; and the number of pastors, teachers, churches, schools, and church members.

Faith on the Move is where you find NAD statements that address societal issues of our day.

Faith on the Move is exactly that—a chronicle of God's people moving by faith in the NAD.

As Kyoshin Ahn, NAD executive secretary, quoted in the book's preface:

"In reviewing our past history" "I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history" (Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, p. 196).

Our greatest desire is that this book encourages God's people to review our history and become even more confident of God's work in the North American Division and the lives of its members—now and in the future.

Bonita Joyner Shields is NAD associate secretary, and Michael W. Campbell is director of NAD Archives, Statistics, and Research. To purchase copies of *Faith on the Move*, go to adventistbookcenter.com.

More About the Book Release

The North American Division released *Faith on the Move: The History of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists 1985-2025* on October 31, 2025, during the NAD year-end meeting. The vision for the book originated with Kyoshin Ahn, executive secretary, who commissioned the project in recognition of the division's 40-year milestone.

Completed in an accelerated nine-month timeline, the book drew contributions from more than 80 authors, including department and ministry leaders, union representatives, and commissioned historians. Editors Bonita Joyner Shields and Michael W. Campbell coordinated the collaborative effort with support from freelance editor Tim Lale.

Featuring photos and graphics from Adventist archives, authors, and families of former NAD leaders, the book offers the most comprehensive overview of the NAD's history to date, including the division's mission, ministries, growth, and identity during the past four decades.

In addition to YEM distribution, copies will be provided to every NAD union and conference office, local churches, university and college libraries, research centers, and church leadership in all world divisions. A limited quantity will also be available for purchase from Pacific Press Publishing Association at adventistbookcenter.com.



Pieter Damsteegt

The steamboat *Morning Star*

Breaking Down Barriers With the *Morning Star*

BY MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL

“A Pen of Fire”

On March 21, 1891, Ellen White addressed church leaders about the “perplexing questions” of race. The speech was later published as a pamphlet. Unlike other Protestant figures who equivocated, especially Lyman Beecher or Dwight L. Moody, White was unambiguous about the ungodly nature of racism. A year earlier she knelt for prayer in St. Louis, Missouri, when she had a profound moment. She later recounted that “these words were presented to me as if written with a pen of fire: ‘All ye are brethren.’”¹ At the essence of White’s prophetic guidance for the church was that “birth, station, nationality, or color cannot elevate or degrade men.”

This egalitarian message was deeply personal for White and later impacted her own son. James Edson White, who went through his own existential crisis after a series of personal setbacks, eventually

experienced a dramatic conversion. He was looking for a second chance when he stumbled upon a copy of his mother’s moving missive. The appeal struck his heart. He decided to engage personally through educational and evangelistic work among the Black people across the American South. With some experience navigating steamboats, he saw potential through this mobile evangelistic ship.⁴

Because of his earlier financial mishaps, church leaders were reticent to invest in his project. Consequently, he had to raise his own funds, including developing an educational textbook, titled *The Gospel Primer*, that helped generate funds for this creative “missionary enterprise.”⁴

The “Gospel Ship”

Edson, as his family knew him, called the new missionary steamboat the *Morning Star*. He was

assisted by his friend W. T. Palmer. The vessel was 84 feet long, with a 17-foot beam, and had a series of “large and commodious” cabins. The 20-horsepower engine powered the paddle wheel with a sprocket chain. On top of the cabins was a meeting room that held 200 people. The boat cost \$3,700 and served as a residence for the two families, with staterooms for other workers, as well as a chapel, library, printshop, photographic darkroom, kitchen, and storerooms.

The work began along the Yazoo River in Mississippi. Meetings were held in the ship’s cabin followed by schoolwork offered to both children and adults, with Emma (Edson’s wife) teaching the older women to read. As the work developed, inexpensive church and school structures were erected in towns where the boat moored. Within just a few years there were some 50 such schools in operation. Many Black

Adventist ministers and teachers trace their first contact with Adventism to this missionary vessel.

From Australia Ellen White wrote frequent letters of support to encourage her son and daughter-in-law, and their crew. Eventually they founded the Southern Missionary Society in 1900 with a small printing office in Nashville, Tennessee, which later became the Southern Publishing Association. Later, when the Southern Union was organized the following year, as the church grew and organized, the “gospel ship” was a catalyst that contributed significantly to the growth of Adventism, breaking down racial barriers as it paddled the rivers.

Vicksburg and Yazoo City

On January 10, 1895, the *Morning Star* first arrived in Vicksburg, Mississippi.⁵ Soon they built a school on a leased lot at the corner of Walnut and East at a cost of \$150. It was 20 by 40 feet, and as winter set in, soon there were 150 students crowded within its walls. Later a 26-by-30-foot chapel and 12-by-16-foot library were added. The library contained 1,000 donated volumes donated by church members back at church headquarters in Battle Creek, Michigan. With \$20 he bought three large bells, one for the Vicksburg church, one for the *Morning Star*, and another for a nearby movable chapel in Yazoo City. On March 16-17, 1901, Ellen White preached at the dedication of the Vicksburg Church. Her Sabbath sermon was titled “Trust in God.” She believed this was just a beginning.⁶

“I spoke to the people on Sabbath morning,” shared White, “and as I saw the congregation, mostly composed of black people, bright and sharp of intellect, I felt that if I had dared, I should have wept aloud. As

The “gospel ship” was a catalyst that contributed significantly to the growth of Adventism, breaking down racial barriers as it paddled the rivers.

the people sat before me, I never felt more pleased to break the bread of life, and to speak comforting words to a people. My soul longed after them.”⁷

In nearby Yazoo City Edson purchased two lots of land with another plot purchased just outside the city in Lintonia. “At both Yazoo City and Lintonia,” wrote Edson, “house to house work in Bible and educational lines was begun three years ago, which was one year before the *Morning Star* came to that place. Many grown people were learning to read, and were becoming familiar with Bible truths.”⁸ A school opened in a home, and a “movable chapel” was built. The attendance soon grew from 15 to 200 pupils.

Legacy

Several years ago, as I stood in the Yazoo City Seventh-day Adventist Church, I recalled the legacy of Edson and Emma, and their crew, who followed through on the prophetic guidance by venturing out in faith. Such creative efforts weren’t without pitfalls and challenges, but God blessed their efforts. Some local members recalled that, according to oral tradition, some groups, trying to thwart their efforts, tried to burn the buildings down, but after several attempts credited some kind of supernatural protection to their work.

One of my favorite historical artifacts is the original bell from the *Morning Star* that resides in the history museum at the Eva B. Dykes Library at Oakwood University. As I looked at the bell, I remembered the story of the *Morning Star* and its crew, who, thanks to the pen of inspiration, created a mobile mission station to break down racial barriers and share the Adventist message along the Mississippi waterways.

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Southern Work* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1966), p. 11.

² *Ibid.*

³ For more background, see “White, James Edson,” in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, ed. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2013), pp. 554-556.

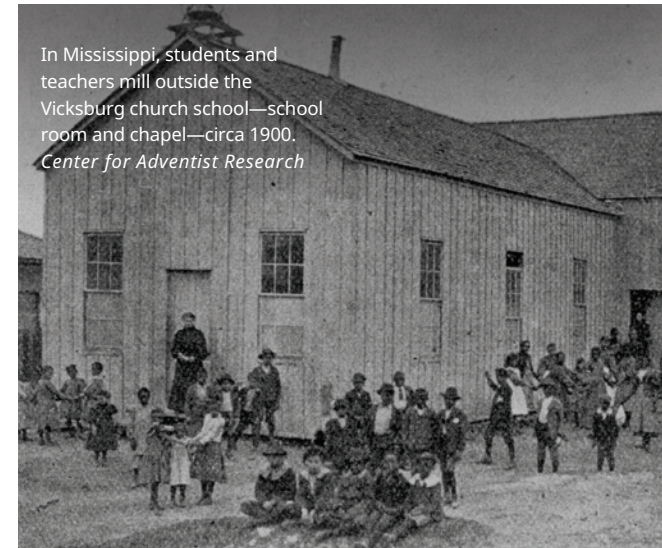
⁴ “A New Missionary Enterprise,” *Signs of the Times*, Aug. 27, 1894, p. 668.

⁵ See J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise and Progress* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1905), pp. 435.

⁶ For an overview, see R. Steven Norman III, “Edson White’s Southern Work Remembered,” *Southern Tidings*, February 2001, pp. 8-10.

⁷ Ellen G. White, “In the Regions Beyond,” *General Conference Bulletin*, Apr. 5, 1901, p. 85.

⁸ [James Edson White], “Beginning Work,” *Gospel Herald*, June 1900, pp. 40, 41.



In Mississippi, students and teachers mill outside the Vicksburg church school—school room and chapel—circa 1900. Center for Adventist Research

Michael W. Campbell is director of Archives, Statistics, and Research for the North American Division.

NAD NEWS BRIEFS



Former North American Division Health Ministries Director DeWitt S. Williams Passes to His Rest

DeWitt S. Williams, former director of the North American Division (NAD Health Ministries), passed to his rest on November 17, 2025, about one month after being diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia. He was 86.

“Dr. Williams was the epitome of a Christian gentleman. He truly lived his faith. His impact on our church and world through excellent and exceptional service will last for generations,” said G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president. “His heart and soul were fully devoted to encouraging people to have healthier and spiritually fulfilling lives in this life. He will be greatly missed.”

Until recently Williams continued to practice what he preached, including vegetarianism and walking two miles each day.

Williams worked for almost 50 years in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, serving as a pastor, missionary, and health director. Born into an Adventist family in 1939 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he devoted his life to ministry, education, and health advocacy within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. During the course of his career he traveled to more than 100 countries and all 50 states, lecturing about the importance of good health and adopting healthful habits. Williams wrote or coauthored nine

← DeWitt S. Williams in 2011
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books, including *She Fulfilled the Impossible Dream: The Story of Eva B. Dykes* and *Energized!*

He retired from full-time work in 2010, after serving from 1990 to 2010 as NAD Health Ministries (then Health and Temperance Department) director. While there, Williams led initiatives that promoted vegetarianism, tobacco-free living, and community wellness across North America. Throughout his life he also wrote many articles on these topics, encouraging people toward Adventism and spiritually and physically healthful lives. During his NAD tenure Williams combined his passion for health and service as an advocate for public wellness in Philadelphia, advising civic leaders and witnessing President Barack Obama’s 2009 signing, at the White House, of the Food and Drug Administration’s tobacco regulation.

Earlier, from 1983 to 1990, he was associate director of the General Conference Health Ministries (then GC Health and Temperance Department), traveling extensively to share health principles around the world. Williams previously served as president of the Central Africa Union in Burundi (1979-1982), associate director of the General Conference Communication Department (1974-1979), and president of the West Congo Field in Kinshasa, where he became the first Black leader to hold that position.

Williams began his ministry as a pastor in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, after graduating from Oakwood University (then Oakwood College)

in 1962 with a bachelor’s degree in theology. He followed with a master’s degree in systematic theology from Andrews University. Williams was awarded a fellowship in African linguistics and completed a doctorate in education and linguistics at Indiana University in 1975. Later he received a Master of Public Health from Loma Linda

University, expanding his influence in the field of health education.

In 1962 he married Margaret Norman, and together they raised two daughters. Williams, an avid exerciser and marathon runner, significantly reduced his consumption of sugary, processed foods later in his life and maintained excellent health until his recent diagnosis.

Williams was preceded in death by Margaret (Nov. 7, 2015), to whom he was married for 54 years. He is survived by daughters Deitrice Chapman and Darnella Williams; son-in-law Cedric Chapman; and grandson Neil Chapman.

—Kimberly Luste Maran, director, NAD Communication

“The Funny Thing About Sadness”—Turning Pain Into Purpose on ABC

The Funny Thing About Sadness” is a one-hour television documentary that shares real stories of deep pain and how faith can transform that pain into purpose. It premiered on November 16, 2025, on ABC.

Faith For Today speaker/director Roy Ice hosts the special feature, joined by an unexpected mix of voices: actor Nikki DeLoach, comedian Drew Lynch, and actor and author Danny Trejo. Together they open up about their most difficult experiences and how they discovered joy on the other side. Through laughter and honesty, each of them reveals that pain doesn’t have to define us . . . it can refine us.

In this documentary Lynch reminds viewers that comedy isn’t about being perfect—it’s about being open and vulnerable. DeLoach and Trejo show that what once broke them is now the very thing God uses to help others heal. That’s the “funny thing” about sadness: without it, they might never have found their true purpose.

“We’re deeply grateful to partner with the Interfaith Broadcasting Commission (IBC) to bring ‘The Funny Thing About Sadness’ to ABC stations nationwide,” shared a Faith For Today spokesperson. “This isn’t just a broadcast deal . . . it’s yet another sign that God is guiding the course of Faith For Today and using this ministry for His purpose.”

“The Funny Thing About Sadness” began airing November 16 on ABC and its affiliates.

From the beginning, Faith For Today had a mission to bring Christ into the mainstream, to meet people where they are and build bridges of connection and understanding. With “The Funny Thing About Sadness” that mission continues. This isn’t just entertainment—it’s a call to action. A reminder to a hurting world that there is still power in love, in hope, and in choosing faith.

—Faith For Today



Provided by Faith For Today

Hispanic Leaders Unite for Pentecost 2025 Convention

Hispanic leaders and coordinators from across the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (NAD) convened September 9-11, 2025, at the Marriott Fort Collins in Colorado for the annual Hispanic Ministry Convention, focusing on strategic planning and spiritual development for the growing Hispanic church community.

The convention, titled “Pentecost 2025,” brought together pastors, coordinators, and ministry leaders from all nine unions spanning the United States and Canada for three intensive days of workshops, worship, and collaborative planning.

Statistical presentations revealed the remarkable scope of Hispanic ministry within the NAD. This ministry now encompasses 1,157 congregations, 458 companies, and 287 organized groups, serving a total membership of 263,495, with 38,060 baptisms recorded in recent data for year-end 2024.

The nine union coordinators leading the convention represent the full geographic reach of Hispanic ministry across North America: Henry Beras (Atlantic Union), Gardner Bermúdez (Canadian Union), Rubén Ramos (Columbia Union), Carmelo Mercado (Lake Union), Roberto Correa (Mid-America Union), Alberto Ingleton (Pacific Union), Peter Simpson (North Pacific Union), Julio Chazarreta (Southern Union), and Osvaldo Rigacci (Southwestern Union). These coordinators presented workshops and led strategic discussions throughout the convention, sharing insights from their respective regions and collaborating on division-wide initiatives.

Media presentations featured updates from Esperanza TV, highlighting new programming initiatives and digital outreach strategies for Hispanic communities. Representatives from Pacific Press and La Voz de la Esperanza shared resources and upcoming publications designed to support local ministry efforts.

The convention was a spiritual retreat and practical planning session for the next phase of Hispanic ministry expansion across North America. Workshop discussions centered on sustainable growth strategies, leadership development, and innovative approaches to community engagement in diverse cultural contexts.

—Minervino Labrador, vice president, NAD Multilingual Ministries



Hispanic leaders and coordinators from across the NAD pose for a picture at the conclusion of the annual Hispanic Ministry Convention. Photo provided by Minner Labrador

Christian Record Services Announces Dexter Thomas as New President

Christian Record Services (CRS) is pleased to announce the appointment of Dexter Thomas, D.Min., as its new president. With a distinguished career in ministry, advocacy, and leadership, Thomas brings a deep passion for serving the blind and low-vision community, as well as a proven track record of innovative outreach and organizational growth.

“It’s with profound gratitude that I accept this call from God through the North American Division and the board of Christian Record Services to serve as president,” said Thomas. “It is my hope to come alongside churches and organizations in partnership with Christian Record Services so that every person who is blind or has low vision would know their inherent worth and value in Christ.”

Thomas has served as the senior pastor at Fairfield Community Seventh-day Adventist Church in California, where he led a diverse congregation, launched new ministries, and fostered significant growth. His experience includes founding PhoneFaith—a national ministry for the blind and low-vision community, which is now

an outreach ministry of Christian Record Services—serving as disability coordinator for the Florida Conference, and teaching at Starr King School of Ministry. He has conducted evangelism campaigns worldwide, authored several books, and served on Christian Record Services’ board of directors since 2017, regularly contributing to the ministry’s publications.

G. Alexander Bryant, CRS board chair and North American Division president, said, “We are very excited to welcome our new president of Christian Record Services, Pastor Dexter Thomas, to his new assignment. He comes with a wide range of experience in ministry, business, and specific outreach to the visually impaired. We have great confidence that his collective experience will lift this organization to its next level of service and ministry.”

—Christian Record Services



Dexter Thomas is the new president of Christian Record Services. Photo provided by Christian Record Services

BY WASHINGTON JOHNSON II

The Great Reset: The Jubilee Year!

The jubilee year, a cornerstone of the Old Testament faith, as described in Leviticus 25, represented a divinely mandated period of release and restoration for the Israelites. This significant observance served as a powerful reminder of God’s just, merciful, and compassionate nature.

The word “jubilee” derives from the Hebrew word *yobel*, referring to a ram’s horn or trumpet. The blowing of the ram’s horn, a symbolic instrument, announced the commencement of this momentous year, heralding a time of renewal and hope for the future, according to Leviticus 25:9. The jubilee was observed every fiftieth year, and was designated as a time of celebration and rejoicing for the Israelites.

The biblical concept of jubilee encompassed several key aspects: the emancipation of slaves (Lev. 25:10); land rest (lying fallow) (verse 11); and land reversion (verse 13).

In the New Testament (Luke 4:18, 19) Jesus referenced a spiritual jubilee, quoting Isaiah 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.” This spiritual jubilee provides restoration, forgiveness, and freedom from the bondage of sin. Jesus’ death on the cross atoned for sin, offering a path to restoration with God the Father. The jubilee year highlighted God’s sovereignty, love for humanity, and desire for the well-being of all, acknowledging that everything belongs to Him.

The anticipation of a future jubilee year offered enslaved Blacks in America not only a vision of release from bondage but also a deep well of resilience and spiritual hope. Within the brutal realities of slavery, the biblical promise of jubilee, during which captives would be set free, debts forgiven, and the land allowed to rest, became a powerful symbol of God’s justice and ultimate deliverance. Enslaved men and women often wove the language of jubilee into their songs, prayers, and sermons, finding strength in the assurance that God had not forgotten them.

The hope of jubilee was not merely theological but profoundly practical. It was a vision of freedom that could transform their present suffering into anticipation of divine justice. This hope was captured vividly by Ellen White when she wrote: “Then commenced the jubilee, when the land should rest. I saw the pious

slave rise in victory and triumph, and shake off the chains that bound him” (*Early Writings*, p. 286).

For enslaved Blacks, the jubilee was more than a dream; it was a sacred promise that affirmed their dignity, strengthened their faith, and inspired future generations in the struggle for liberation. That same spirit carried into history through the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. The language of jubilee also echoed throughout the civil rights movement, where leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., drew upon biblical visions of release and restoration to call for justice and equality. Today the jubilee continues to resonate as both a spiritual and historical symbol: a reminder that God’s justice breaks chains, renews communities, and calls all people to live as agents of freedom and reconciliation.

The second coming of Jesus is the ultimate year of jubilee, marked by the full and final restoration of all things (see Isa. 40:4). White further visualized this great reset: “There, immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. . . . There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 677). Heaven and earth and the redeemed from the dawning of time await this great reset, when time gives way to eternity.

Washington Johnson II is the director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

The jubilee continues to resonate as both a spiritual and historical symbol: a reminder that God’s justice breaks chains.



← Mayume Ribeiro is baptized by Ministerio Hermandad leaders during the group's Spanish-language Pentecost 2025 series in Bermuda. *Provided by Bermuda Conference*

In Atlantic Union, Ministerio Hermandad Ignites Hope for Bermuda's Latino Community

Tucked inside the Warwick church is a small, spirited congregation doing big things for the kingdom of God. Ministerio Hermandad, the only Spanish-language Adventist group in Bermuda, may be small in number, but it is mighty in mission—and its most recent initiative was nothing short of miraculous.

This group of believers from Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries across the Caribbean and South America has created a spiritual home in Bermuda. United by faith and language, this close-knit church family has found strength in one another as they live, work, and witness in a foreign land. In spring 2025 they stepped out in faith and launched their most ambitious effort yet: a Spanish-language evangelistic series as part of the North American Division's Pentecost 2025 initiative. Under the leadership of Pastor Hector Quiñones, the congregation dared to believe they could bring the gospel to Bermuda's Latino community in a personal, powerful way. They hosted a four-day series designed to uplift, inspire, and welcome their fellow countrymen into the family of God.

Henry Beras, Atlantic Union Conference vice president for Hispanic and Portuguese ministries, was at the heart of the series alongside his wife, Angela Beras, Atlantic Union Conference Prayer Ministries and Women's Ministries director. She led the congregation in heartfelt prayer each night while Beras delivered messages with humor, empathy, and unforgettable storytelling. His ability to weave the gospel into real-life experiences made every sermon resonate, especially with those who know the challenge of leaving home and starting over in a foreign land.

One night, while recounting Saul's transformation into Paul, Beras reminded the audience that before Saul was baptized, he was already called "brother." That simple truth echoed through the hearts of all gathered: *You are no longer guests. You are brothers and sisters.* The message was clear—Ministerio Hermandad isn't just a church; it's a family.

Though the planning committee worked with a modest budget of \$9,000, they multiplied their resources through generosity and creativity. Two thirds of the funds supported community services, staying true to the wholistic mission of Christ. Guests received a warm community dinner and tangible support through groceries, gas vouchers, and utility assistance each night. The love of God was served on plates, through prayer, and in practical help, nourishing both body and soul. As a joyful surprise, Ministerio Hermandad also raised funds to bless six attendees who came to all four meetings with tech giveaways: five iPads and an Apple Watch.

But perhaps the most powerful moment came with the baptism of Mayume Ribeiro, the firstfruit of this ministry. In a community often marked by transience, Mayume's decision to commit her life to Christ stood as a beacon of hope and a testament to the Spirit moving among Bermuda's Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking population. Quiñones and Beras believe this may be the start of something greater, planting seeds in hearts hungry for belonging, truth, and love. And while challenges remain, there is no doubt: God is at work.

Carmen Patterson, writer; the original version of this article was published on the Atlantic Union Gleaner news site.

In Lake Union, It's Not About Being Perfect

The Body of Christ church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, held its Pentecost 2025 summer evangelistic series, and 42 people declared their desire to follow Jesus, several of whom were baptized by the conclusion on August 9. Here's one new believer's testimony.

Michael Huff didn't come for the sermon.

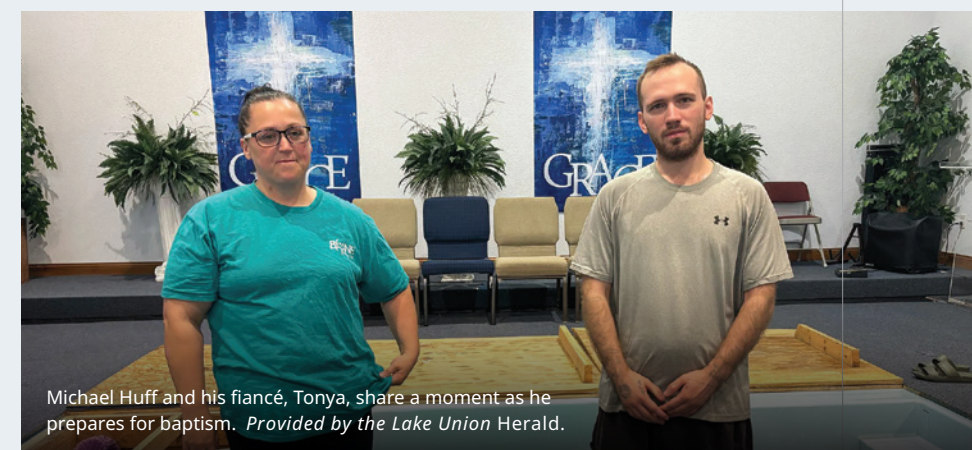
He had just moved to the Fort Wayne area fresh from a work-release program. Friends told him about a back-to-school giveaway at a red brick church in a hard-scrabble neighborhood. There was one condition. To get the supplies, you had to sit through the hour-long service.

Huff was fine with that. His girlfriend, Tonya, was not so sure. She had been to churches before—the kind where the preacher's voice boomed and women were told to obey their husbands—and she had left feeling demeaned.

Inside the brimming sanctuary on a sweltering late July evening, things changed. Lake Region Conference evangelist Cody Miller, clad in jeans and sneakers, told stories about real people and real struggles. He read Bible verses straight from the text, pointing each one out so listeners could check for themselves. There was no talking down to others. There was no pretending to be perfect.

Huff could relate. For years he had not imagined himself in a church at all. His childhood was a blur of 26 schools, nights in homeless shelters, a father who ran from the law, and a mother who could not keep a home. By his teens he was stealing and selling guns. At 18 he was arrested on burglary and firearm charges. The possible sentence was 150 years.

In jail he wandered into a service led by a former criminal with a hook for a



Michael Huff and his fiancé, Tonya, share a moment as he prepares for baptism. *Provided by the Lake Union Herald.*

hand. This pastor knew the life. He had lived it. "I went back to my cell crying and praying," Huff recalled, remembering that unforgettable day in September 2015. "That was the day I decided to follow God."

After nearly a decade behind bars, he met Tonya. She was fighting her own way out of addiction and a custody battle for her two daughters.

When they showed up at the Body of Christ church along with 200 other visitors for the back-to-school giveaways, they didn't expect the outpouring of love. Members gladly welcomed them both, remembering the girls' names and sending texts in the days following to see how they were doing.

Then came the sermon that changed everything.

The topic was death. Most churches, Cody told them, tell grieving families their loved ones are already in heaven. But he continued: "I'm sorry if you think that, you know, Big Mama is up in heaven right now looking down on you—but that's not the case."

The Bible, the evangelist explained, describes death as a sleep. The dead wait for Christ's return. He moved from verse to verse in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, showing the promise of resurrection. Cody walked them through verses showing that when you die, you're waiting until Jesus comes back.

For Huff, the message rang true. "That has always bothered me," he said. "I have read it myself. When you die, you wait. *They can't be up in heaven already, cause Jesus hasn't finished.* Hearing him go through it, showing every verse, I thought to myself, *Yeah, that is the truth.*"

On Friday, August 8, 2025, Huff stepped into the baptismal waters, grateful for the Bible knowledge and friendships gained. "It is not about being perfect," he said. "It is about being real, and God can work with that."

Debbie Michel, Lake Union Herald editor; the original version of this article was published on the Lake Union Herald website.



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