

Adventist

JOURNEY

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# Adventist Journey

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I said to myself, *I'm going to call a couple of people and wish them a happy Sabbath.* I called the whole membership, including officers in the church and the conference. It blew their minds that I would take the time to wish them a happy Sabbath. I'm still doing it today.

—HARRY WALKER,  
retired doctor, and elder at Robbinsville  
Seventh-day Adventist Church, New Jersey



Visit [nadadventist.org/ajharrywalker](https://nadadventist.org/ajharrywalker) for the video, and check out pages 6, 7 for more of Walker's story.

Cover photo by Art Brondo



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# Many Voices, One Accord

**W**hen the day of Pentecost had fully come, the believers gathered together in one place. They were united in purpose and expectation. Acts 2:1 reads, “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” (NKJV).\*

It was not an accident, a coincidence, or a spontaneous spiritual outburst. It unfolded according to God’s precise and purposeful timing.

Pentecost comes from the Greek word *pentēkostē*. It means “fiftieth” and marked the completion of seven weeks plus one day following the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Of all the Jewish festivals, it drew the largest number of pilgrims from across the world. Travel conditions made this season the most accessible, and Jerusalem filled with worshippers from many nations. There was no other moment when an outpouring of the Spirit could have had such immediate and far-reaching impact. What appeared to be a religious celebration was a divine appointment.

Pentecost was both backward-looking and forward-looking. It was a time of gratitude for deliverance from Egypt and, at the same time, a moment pointing toward the liberty found in Christ. When the day had “fully come,” it signaled that God’s plan had reached its appointed time.

The disciples had lived through emotional extremes. They watched Jesus die, rejoiced at His resurrection, and spent 40 unpredictable days encountering the risen Lord. Just as their confidence settled, they saw Him ascend. Before leaving, Jesus told them to wait for the promise.

His ascension was not an ending. It was a signal. As Christ was inaugurated in heaven, the Holy Spirit was poured out on earth. Heaven and earth moved together. Pentecost declared that Christ’s work was complete and that His followers were now empowered to move forward in God’s mission.

What makes this moment remarkable is not only the power but the people who received it. Acts tells us they were “with one accord.” But unity did not mean sameness.

That upper room was filled with difference. Peter, James, and John were there, men who had openly argued over position. Thomas, who struggled to believe, was present. Those with strong faith stood alongside those with questions. Mary and other women were in the room. A former tax collector who had cheated his own people was there. These were not strangers; they were people who had walked with Jesus for years and still did not always understand Him.

Only days earlier they had failed a crucial lesson. When Jesus rose from the table to wash their feet, none of them volunteered. His act of humble



service exposed their pride and redefined leadership. Yet that same group, shaped by failure and grace, gathered again. This time they were with one accord.

Unity is not the absence of difference. It is not uniformity. It is not everyone thinking, speaking, or acting the same way. Biblical unity is a shared commitment to God’s mission that honors diversity rather than erasing it. It recognizes that difference is not a weakness in the body of Christ, but a strength.

Pentecost reminds us that God does not homogenize His people. He unites them. When many voices come together in one accord, the church is prepared to serve God faithfully, not in some distant future, but in this very moment. God has been shaping His people for this season all along.

That truth matters now. God has shaped a church marked by extraordinary diversity in a deeply polarized world. God is calling His people to model something the world struggles to live out, such as unity without uniformity, commitment without conformity, and service grounded in love.

\*Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

*G. Alexander Bryant is president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.*

A photograph of an elderly man with white hair, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a light blue shirt, and a patterned blue tie. He is sitting in a grey upholstered chair, looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle expression. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a dining or meeting room with wooden chairs.

# A Life of Faithful Service

The Adventist Journey of Harry Walker

EDITED BY ART BRONDO AND HEIDI STRAW CAMARGO

**N**inety-eight-year-old Harry Walker's face breaks into a smile as he starts to talk about what led him to a lifetime of service to his church: a life shaped by faith, service, and God's steady guidance beginning long before he was old enough to understand it for himself.

"My Adventist journey began with my mother," said Walker. Her conversion to the Seventh-day Adventist faith in the early 1930s laid the foundation for everything that followed. Because of her faithfulness, Walker grew up attending church school surrounded by prayer, Scripture, and a deep love for the church.

"I can recall being a small child standing on the bank of the waterpower works near our home in Trenton. It was spring, and the ice had recently melted. Somehow someone gave me a shove, and I went over the edge. When I hit the water, God must have been there, because instead of the current taking me out to

the Delaware River, it brought me to the shore. I crawled out onto the dry land, and I said to myself, *God loves me. He must want me to do something.*

After graduating from the Adventist boarding school Shenandoah Valley Academy in Virginia in 1945, Walker enrolled at what is now known as Washington Adventist University, near Washington, D.C.

"I had hopes of preparing for ministry, but unfortunately, after one year, financial hardship made it impossible for me to continue. Leaving school was deeply disappointing, and I struggled with what that meant for my calling. Still, I knew God was not finished with me, and I stayed with the church."

God strengthened Walker's faith further during his Korean War era service in the United States Navy. Walker has many dramatic stories of how God's clear intervention spared him from combat assignments and Sabbath observance problems.

When he returned to civilian life, what followed was a lifetime of hands-on service in his local church. Walker taught Sabbath School, assisted in worship services, and supported church activities in every way possible, including several runs as the interim pastor. Over time, he became known as someone who could be counted on, no matter the task.

"I love Sabbath School," he explained. "In fact, I wear a button that says 'I love Sabbath School,' and I've been a Sabbath School teacher for primary, juniors, seniors, adults, whatever was needed, for years and years. I love Sabbath School!"

Walker added, "I did my best in serving the church, not just in name, but in making visits to the people who were ill, to the shut-ins. And the



Harry Walker is a prayer warrior and church member from New Jersey.  
Art Brondo

"I have only one desire, and that's to hasten the return of God. I'm looking forward to that day when I can look up and say, 'Lo, this is the God I was created for. This is the God I have served.'"

free time, and I just took advantage of it. Everybody loved it, and soon I was calling the whole membership, wishing them a happy Sabbath. It blew their mind that I would take the time to call. I'm still doing it today. There was a time I spent as much as three hours doing it. Now it's less, but I still call."

"It's also a good way to encourage people to go to church. One thing that really bothers me is going to church, walking in at 9:30 a.m., and finding nobody there. The next thing you know, 10:00, there's 50-60 people, but then by a quarter after 11:00, there could be 150. I can't understand why people are not there, because the Sabbath does not begin at 11:00 on Sabbath morning. It begins at sundown Friday evening," shared Walker. "Why not take advantage of all of it? So this was my drive: to get people to realize the importance of the time when the sun sets. That was the time that the Sabbath began. That was the time for us to come and be together as the family of God."

These calls, and the relationships they helped build, are also part of Walker's prayer ministry.

"I pray for their families and their problems. And at church, people would write their prayer requests on a slip during the church service. Afterward the pastor would come and give me that list. I would take it home, and I would pray throughout the week. In fact, in my bedroom I have a folder of all of these prayer requests for years and years of people. Every once in a while I pick them up, leaf through them, and say, 'Lord, You took care of this. You've done it. You've done it well.'"

next thing you know, I was handling funerals and weddings and baby dedications."

### Adapting Ministry

As Walker grew older, he adapted his ministry so that he could continue to serve despite the limitations of age.

"I love baby dedications, but the trouble was, as I got older, I couldn't hold the babies, because of arthritis and old age. I was afraid I'd drop them. So I had the parents come close to me, and then I would cradle all of them and pray that way."

One of the most meaningful ministries began when Walker was in his 80s and was no longer able to get out in person so easily.

"I was sitting at home, and I thought, *I'm going to call a couple of people and wish them a happy Sabbath.* I was an older man. I had

### Through the Seasons

Through every season of his life (childhood dreams, financial struggles, military service, and decades of lay ministry), Walker has trusted God's guidance.

"One of my greatest joys is [serving] God. For many years I was the youth director for the Trenton church. I had Friday night meetings and Sabbath vespers. There were some Friday nights we had 40-50, people, sometimes 20, sometimes 10, sometimes none, but it was all worth it. I loved being able to serve the church. Now I'm in my final years, so to speak, and I just say, 'Lord, whatever You want me to do, I'll do. I'll do it.'"

Walker added, "I have only one desire, and that's to hasten the return of God. I'm looking forward to that day when I can look up and say, 'Lo, this is the God I was created for. This is the God I have served.' And to think that because of His love and my love for Him, I'll be able to spend the Sabbath with Him forever."

Today, "Pastor Harry," as he is known to his congregation, continues to put into practice his belief that every act of service contributes to hastening the day Jesus will return. His life stands as a powerful testimony to what God can accomplish through a willing heart and a steady, faithful ministry.

Art Brondo is media producer for Communication of the North American Division; Heidi Straw Camargo is a writer living in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

# When God Speaks Through Raindrops


The Adventist Journey of Thais Martins

BY KRISTINA P. BUSCH

**D**rip, drip, drip. Thais Martins lay asleep in her hammock, tired from a day full of physical labor. It was the last night of the mission trip; the mission team had built a church and ministered to the local children and adults in a small community in the Amazon Rainforest. As the team slept in their boat hammocks on the river, Thais woke to find that a leak above her was causing water to drip on her foot. She readjusted her position and tried to go back to sleep. *Drip, drip, drip.* She sat up, looked for the source of the leak, and tried to sleep again. Once more, drops of water hit her foot. No matter what she tried, every time she'd start to fall asleep, the drip persisted. Each time she woke, she spoke to God. Thais knew what He was asking, but she wasn't ready to answer.

Thais grew up in a small town outside of São Paulo, Brazil. She was born into a Seventh-day Adventist family who planted the seeds of faith in her as she grew up. In college something clicked for her. "During college I really decided to give everything for Jesus and become active in youth ministry," she said. "That's when I feel that my journey starts." She became more active in the youth Sabbath school as well as the Pathfinder and Adventurer clubs, and she joined her church's worship team.

As she became more active, she felt the urge to do more for her church. "I started to feel that God was calling me to go abroad. But I was scared." She went as far as interviewing for a position with a friend who was serving in Cambodia. When she was invited to go, her fears stopped her, and she



Thais Martins attends the 2025 North American Division Master Guide Camporee in West Virginia. *Art Brondo*

rejected the offer. Instead she reasoned, “I will be more active in my local church and will stop feeling that I need to go abroad.”

But God continued to impress upon her a desire for mission work. Thais, equipped with a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering, was a full-time working young adult. Despite her efforts to stay busy at her local church, she couldn’t ignore the calling on her heart. She began to consider full-time mission work in Brazil. In January 2024 she took time off from work to explore this option, and joined others for a 10-day mission trip in the Amazon Rainforest.

### A Spiritual Call

As she hauled sandbags from the river to the construction site, her heart felt happy. *I don’t feel the same happiness working in my comfortable office in the air-conditioning*, she thought to herself. “God talked to me in many different ways during this trip—about all the doubts that I had about taking the step to become a missionary full-time,” Thais shared.

On the last night of the mission trip, tired and frustrated with the incessant drip on her foot, she argued with God. “God had showed me many times during that trip that He was calling me but that I was not accepting,” she said. Eventually she gave up arguing and resolved to just be still. *I will just stop here, and I will listen to any kind of thought that God is telling me*, she told herself.

The words of Jeremiah 1:5 gently came to mind: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

Thais listened and felt God telling her, “I choose you the way that you are. Just come.” Thais began to cry in the hammock as she surrendered to God and decided to take the monumental step to do missions abroad.

She went back home and began to interview for international mission work. Around that time she was up for a promotion at work, and when the time came, she took a leap of faith and turned it down. Thais had not yet received confirmation of an invitation to serve abroad, but she took the opportunity to turn in a one-month notice and let her employers know she would be moving on.

The invitation came. Thais would teach high school math and science in Ebeye, one of the many small islands that make up the Marshall Islands. She was excited, but faced complications at home. She’d need to break her rental lease, which would be costly, and needed to purchase her flight, also costly. She prayed and trusted God.

*Drip, drip, drip.* Rain in the area caused a leak in Thais’ hallway that required major repairs to fix the damage. Her landlord asked her to leave before her contract was up and waived all of the fees. A week later the school in Ebeye called her. They needed her there soon and had found a sponsor for her flight.

### Call to Mission

When Thais arrived in Ebeye, there were many challenges. She faced each one prayerfully. And God answered faithfully. Rather than teaching high school, a lack of teachers thrust her into the fourth grade classroom. Unsure about how she would do with the younger kids, she learned a lot from that age group and connected with a student who wanted to join

Thais felt God telling her,  
“I choose you  
the way that you  
are. Just come.”

her on her daily jogs. Soon they formed a Bible study group for runners.

Thais helped start, at the school, a Pathfinder Club that has 80 students involved. She’s also assisting, on Gugegue, a neighboring island, a couple who has begun ministering to children. The islands are connected by a causeway. “It is literally a road in the middle of the ocean, just a road with ocean on both sides,” she says. Once a month, sometimes twice, Thais rides her bike the eight kilometers (five miles) across to help with the 30 kids in the Adventurer and Pathfinder clubs.

While adjusting to language barriers and cultural differences has been challenging, the warmth of the people reminds her of home. “People are very friendly; they like to celebrate,” she said. “And in Brazil we like to celebrate!”

Thais is now in her second mission year in Ebeye. She has embraced her calling and is grounded in her purpose. “In my journey prayer has been the most important thing to see how God is leading,” she shared. “What gives me joy is serving, knowing that I’m doing what God wants me to do, connecting with people, helping them to know the same Jesus that I know in my life.”

*Kristina P. Busch writes from Arlington, Texas. Thais Martins was featured on the November/December 2025 Adventist Journey cover; visit [nadadventist.org/adventist-journey/november-december-2025/](http://nadadventist.org/adventist-journey/november-december-2025/) to watch her interview.*

# YOUNG ADULT LIFE TOUR CULMINATES IN THE CAROLINAS

BY BECKY CARPENTER, CAROLINA CONFERENCE COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR



Hundreds convene from throughout the Southern Union for the Carolina Young Adult LIFE tour, where Pastor Benjamin Lundquist was among the featured presenters.

**I**n my life, so many distractions had arisen that kept me from a relationship with Jesus, blinding me to what I was missing,” confessed Andrew de Jesus, a third-year neurology medical resident from the University of Tennessee. “At the Young Adult LIFE tour, Jesus spoke to me and helped me to see the hidden motivators in my life that were keeping me from Him and from even noticing that I had drifted away. Through the tour experience, Jesus drew me back into a daily walk with Him.”

On a cool fall weekend in Raleigh, North Carolina, young adult leaders, local pastors, and church members gathered for a transformative experience of worship, conversation, and community. The Young Adult LIFE tour event, hosted by the Southern Union Conference and supported by the Carolina Conference, created space for meaningful dialogue and practical training to grow young adult ministry where it matters most: on the ground in the local church.

Those who gathered on October 24-25, 2025, in the Raleigh ARC recreation center were there for a purpose. From panel discussions and spiritual reflections to informal conversations around a bonfire, attendees were equipped to lead and encouraged to

Left to Right: Chris Pandelos and Emmanuella Goureige participate in an engaging young adult panel discussion for the Carolina Young Adult LIFE Tour. Chris is the Adventist Young Professionals chapter coordinator for Charlotte, North Carolina. Emmanuella is the vice president for the South Atlantic Conference Haitian Adventist Youth Federation. *Photos provided by Young Adult LIFE*



“It was a blessing to see so many young adults gathered for the purpose of learning best practices in young adult ministry,” he said. “My prayer is that they take what they’ve learned and use it in their home churches.”

belong. Participants described the event as uplifting, eye-opening, and long overdue.

“I didn’t even realize how much I needed this,” said Stesha Rampersad, a director of nursing and Sabbath School leader at Pursuit Worship Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. “It taught me a lot about myself as a leader, and also how to empower other young adults to step up and serve.”

That sense of empowerment was echoed by other attendees. Jordan Davis, a student at Union Adventist University and young adult leader at the Calhoun, Georgia, church, said the Young Adult LIFE tour helped him see how God is actively working in young adults’ lives. “It was a blessing to be on the panel, make new friends, and learn more about how God leads us,” he shared.

The gathering brought together a diverse mix of backgrounds and church experiences. For Emmanuella Goureige, an occupational therapy technician and vice president of the South Atlantic Conference Haitian Adventist Youth Federation, seeing other young adult leaders in action was especially meaningful. “It was a joy to be part of something during which I could learn from others and also see God’s work in different communities,” she said.

The tour stop in Raleigh marked one of the final events in a multi-year initiative launched by North American Division (NAD) Youth and Young Adult Ministries. The Young Adult LIFE tour began with a simple but urgent goal: help churches that love their young adults but don’t always know how to start or grow ministry with them. Built on four key priorities—leadership impact, intergenerational relationships, faith development, and everyday compassion—the tour has brought practical tools and encouragement to churches across the NAD.

“The joyful atmosphere of all who were there demonstrated a sincere desire for community and connection to the family of God,” said Leslie Louis, president of the Carolina Conference. “It was a special blessing.”

“In young adult ministry it is super-important that we continue to innovate forward and not just continue doing what we have been doing,” said Tracy Wood, D.Min., NAD Youth and Young Adult Ministries director. “We must keep pushing outward beyond our natural limits to connect with young adults in ways that will speak their language and connect in their world.”

The framework of the Young Adult LIFE tour has done just that.

With a balance of spiritual depth, ministry training, and real-life storytelling, it has shown how young adults are not only capable of leading—they are already doing it. “It was a great time to meet other leaders and share about our ministries,” said panelist Samar Ojha, a data analyst and young adult leader at the Raleigh church, noting he wished there had been even more time for collaboration.

Raleigh pastor Ross Knight shared, “It was a blessing to see so many young adults gathered for the purpose of learning best practices in young adult ministry,” he said. “My prayer is that they take what they’ve learned and use it in their home churches.”

The Young Adult LIFE tour may be wrapping up, but its mission is far from finished. A new chapter began with the first-ever NAD-wide Young Adult LIFE Experience [YALX], set for January 23-25, 2026, in Louisville, Kentucky. The event brought together young adults, ministry teams, and mentors from across the division for a weekend of worship, training, and community. And planning for the future.

Whether just stepping into leadership or already mentoring others, young adults across the Southern Union—and the division—are finding their voice, vision, and purpose. And as the Young Adult LIFE movement continues to grow, one message rings clear: Young adults are not the future of the church; they are the church now.

“Walking hand in hand with Jesus is what we are all called to,” affirmed Andrew. “Through the Young Adult LIFE [tour] experience, Jesus drew me back into a daily walk with Him, and I highly encourage everyone to attend with an open heart.”

# YAL Tour Stops Across the NAD

**Y**oung adults are making incredible impact across the North American Division and the NAD continues to prioritize young adults as evidenced by the Young Adult LIFE Tour that made its way from one side of the division to the other in the past two years. Communities and churches are flourishing because of their involvement! Below is a list of all the stops of the tour, culminating with the Young Adult LIFE Experience (YALX) in Louisville, Kentucky, in January 2026, where more than 300 young adults and leaders planned to gather to celebrate and vision next steps.



Pleasant Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church young adult Pastor Greg Phillips moderates a young adult panel conversation at a Spring 2024 Young Adult LIFE Tour stop, hosted by the Oregon Conference. *Timothy Tsikirai*

## 2023

**March 17-18**  
Arlington, Texas  
*Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church*

**June 23-24**  
Loma Linda, California  
*Loma Linda University Church*

**October 20-21**  
Sanford, Florida  
*Spring Meadows Seventh-day Adventist Church*

## 2024

**January 26-27**  
Lincoln, Nebraska  
*College View Seventh-day Adventist Church*

**April 19-20**  
Happy Valley, Oregon  
*Pleasant Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church*

**October 19**  
Chicago, Illinois  
*Shiloh Seventh-day Adventist Church*

**November 22-23**  
Phoenix, Arizona  
*Camelback Seventh-day Adventist Church*

## 2025

**February 14-15**  
Carmichael (Sacramento area), California  
*Carmichael Seventh-day Adventist Church*

**May 16-17**  
Los Angeles, California  
*Eagle Rock Seventh-day Adventist Church*

**October 24-25**  
Raleigh, North Carolina  
*Raleigh Seventh-day Adventist Church*

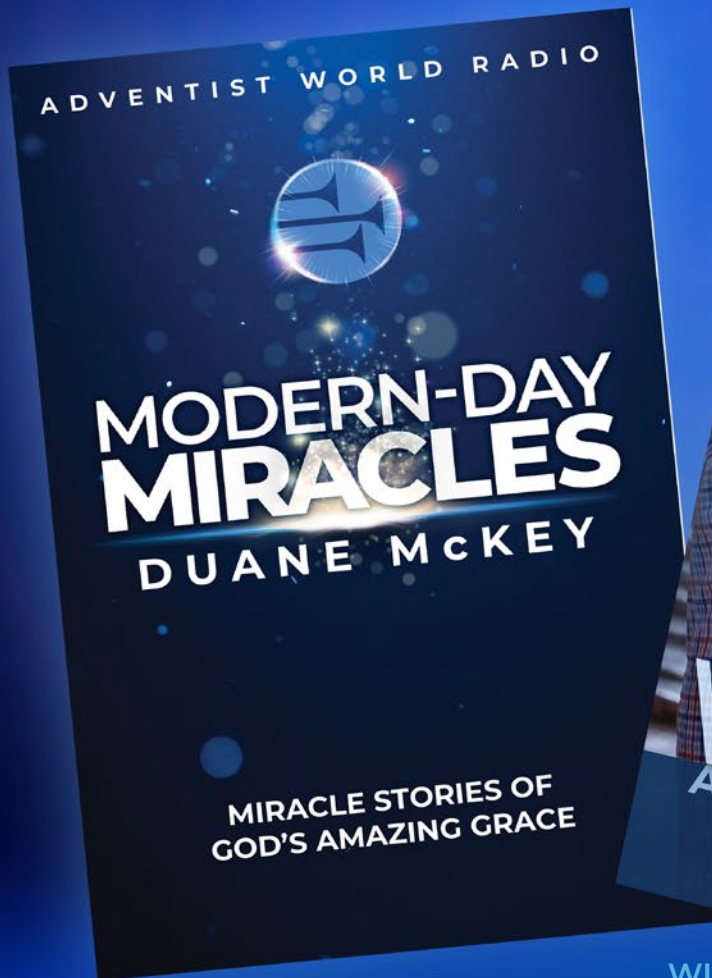
## 2026

**January 23-24** — YALX, Louisville, Kentucky  
*Galt House*



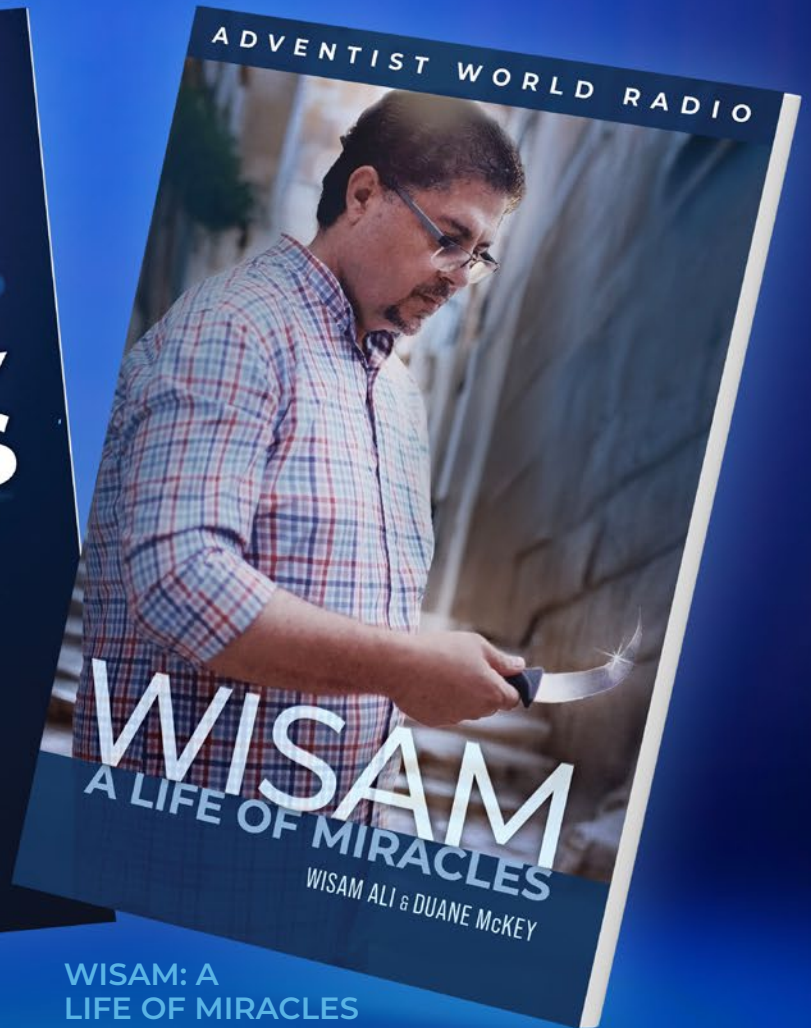
Joi McClellan, a Loma Linda University oral and maxillofacial surgery resident, speaks during a plenary session at the Young Adult LIFE Experience on January 24, 2026. *Pieter Damsteegt*

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# Florida Adventists and AdventHealth Teams Provide Meals, Essential Supplies to Support Hurricane-Affected Families in Jamaica

BY ELIZABETH CAMPS

**O**n October 28, 2025, Hurricane Melissa, a devastating Category 5 storm, made landfall in Jamaica, causing significant damage across the country and in the Caribbean.

In Jamaica, communities faced forced hospital evacuations, prolonged power outages, the temporary closure of Kingston Freeport Terminal, and delays across Caribbean shipping channels.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness, a government office overseeing Jamaica's public health system, reported damage to 11 hospitals and 43 health facilities.

Field hospitals and international emergency medical support organizations stepped in to address care needs while hospital operations slowly recovered.

Following the devastation left behind by the storm, AdventHealth team members took immediate action to support those affected, including packing meals, donating supplies, and providing monetary donations to meet the urgent needs of families and care providers across Jamaica.

## Hundreds of Thousands of Meals Prepared

In Winter Garden and Celebration, Florida, 300 team members came together to pack more than 66,000 meals for residents in Jamaica.

"It took a lot to hold back the tears of so many emotions," said Deana Bienvenue, a registered nurse at AdventHealth Celebration. "Joy, grief, and awe of how God can bring His people together to help communities in times of hardship. What an honor to serve the Lord in this way!"

Additionally, AdventHealth partnered with the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to ship even more meals



Approximately 300 AdventHealth team members in central Florida came together to pack more than 66,000 meals for residents in Jamaica.

packaged in food packing events coordinated through No Child Hungry, a feeding program of My Neighbors Children, Inc. At Forest Lake Academy a little more than 100,000 meals were packed and another 100,000 came from Greater Miami Adventist Academy.

## Critical Supplies Delivered

In partnership with its Global Missions team, the AdventHealth Supply Chain and Business Services team helped coordinate the donation of more than 40 pallets of mission-critical supplies from the consolidated service center.

The shipments included bottled water, batteries, personal protective equipment, pillows, first-aid and wound-care supplies, portable pulse oximeters, and glucometers.

All the donated supplies were sent to the Good Samaritan Inn, a nonprofit organization operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Photos provided by AdventHealth.



When Hurricane Melissa shifted toward Jamaica, the Global Missions team mobilized to support the hospital. While the storm ultimately moved away from the hospital, sparing it from damage, Northern Caribbean University sustained significant damage.

Andrews Memorial Hospital has served as a connection point for other hospitals that experienced damage from the storm. Through the partnerships with the hospital and ADRA Jamaica, AdventHealth was able to send further support to those damaged hospitals and their communities as they work to recover from the storm.

“Our mission of Extending the Healing Ministry of Christ is something we live out every day in our facilities and around the world through our partnerships,” said Audrey Gregory, Ph.D., SEVP, and CEO for AdventHealth’s Multidivision Delivery Network and executive sponsor of the partnership between AdventHealth and Andrews Memorial Hospital. “It is an honor to be able to collaborate with our partners to bring support to the communities who need it most, especially following the disastrous aftereffects of a hurricane.”

AdventHealth team members also donated monetary funds to support relief efforts, resulting in a total of nearly \$97,000 to date.

*Elizabeth Camps is stakeholder communications manager, AdventHealth Corporate Communications.*

in Jamaica, which works with the government on community service projects and handled the importation of the supplies into the country.

Distribution of both the donated meals and supplies to the areas with the most need was handled in partnership with ADRA Jamaica. To date, six 40-foot containers of medical supplies and meals have been shipped to Jamaica. In total, more than 500,000 meals have been shipped to Jamaica.

“We’ve been working with My Neighbor’s Children since the earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010, and we have continued working with them to support our communities and to respond to other natural disasters,” said Monty Jacobs, executive director of AdventHealth Global Missions. “Thanks to our ongoing partnership, we were able to quickly work together with them to set up the meal-packing events. What would’ve been just 20,000 meals out of Winter Garden and Celebration has really multiplied, adding up to more than a half million meals that have now been shipped to Jamaica.”

### Extending the AdventHealth Reach Through Partnerships

AdventHealth Global Missions has partnered with Andrews Memorial Hospital in Jamaica for more than 30 years and has supported Northern Caribbean University for several years.



Distribution of supplies and meals was handled in partnership with ADRA Jamaica.

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**ADVENTIST REVIEW**

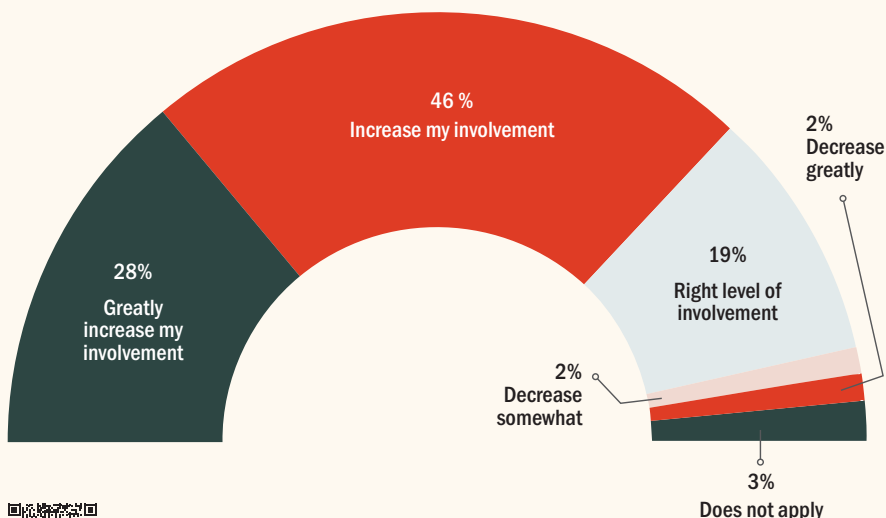
Please enjoy the following pages 17-26, which feature content curated by *Adventist Journey* from the magazine, *Adventist Review*.

“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.

# SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS CHANGE LIVES ALONG THE THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER

This is what churches did when war uprooted families in a war-stricken region.

Khamsay Petchareun and Apolle Creles Bohol, Southern Asia-Pacific Division, and *Adventist Review*

**I**n July 2025 tension between Thailand and Cambodia escalated along the border near the Isan region. The dispute, rooted in long-standing territorial disagreements, suddenly turned violent. Villages near the conflict zone were affected. People fled their homes. The deafening sounds of gunfire and bombing replaced what used to be peaceful days.

## Running for Their Lives

No one was ready for it. In just a short time, families were forced to leave behind everything and escape with their lives. Children cried with fear, not knowing what was happening. Parents hurried to pack valuables and household items that they could carry. Some escaped without shoes; others still had their farm clothes on their backs. Some just drove away without directions, not knowing where to go.

The escape caused havoc on roads leading out from the border in all directions. Roads that were normally near empty on regular days suddenly became gridlocked with lines of cars as far as the eye could see. People were driving in panic, trying to find safety. It was a scene of confusion and desperation everywhere.

As in all wars, many lives have been lost, not only soldiers but also innocent civilians who were just going about their daily routines, shopping and farming. In one tragic incident a rocket fell directly on a convenience store at a gas station.

It instantly killed 13 people and injured several others, some seriously.

## In Search of Protection and Safety

By late summer the war had displaced more than 140,000 people on the Thailand side. On the Cambodia side, Seventh-day Adventist church leaders have also taken care of refugees affected. “In this time of great need, we continue to pray and extend love to those who are suffering, hoping for peace to return soon,” leaders said.

**“YOUR SYMPATHY  
EXPRESSED IN YOUR  
GENEROUS DONATIONS  
HAVE ENABLED US TO DO  
OUR PART IN CARING FOR  
THE NEEDS OF THE  
REFUGEES EFFICIENTLY  
AND IN A TIMELY MANNER.”**

Among those who escaped from the fighting they were many Adventists. Many of these Adventists chose to take refuge in Adventist churches. Some had no other choice than to take refuge with other people in government-organized locations, as Adventist churches were too far for them to reach. As it was for Daniel and his friends in Bible times, life for Adventists

at the government centers posed some challenges, as they were offered unclean foods. At the same time, not only church members went to Adventist churches; relatives and friends of Adventists came along with them. Many were Buddhists who had never heard of Jesus. Yet no one asked what they believed. Adventist volunteers simply showed up, listened, and cared.

## Church Members Step Up to Help

The situation provided opportunities for church members to show love and care to our fellow believers and others. Almost immediately after the evacuation was ordered and refugees arrived at our churches, we received help from donors in Thailand. Then after I reported the incident many of my friends in Australia sent in their donations. Some shared our reports with their friends across the globe. As a result, we were contacted by someone from Mauritius: a church there had taken an offering to help our refugees in Thailand.

“Your sympathy expressed in your generous donations enabled us to do our part in caring for the needs of the refugees efficiently and in a timely manner,” regional church leaders said.

In Det Udom we helped nine people at the church and 20 people at our members’ houses. Among them were small groups from various villages, and we were able to help them all. Each person had their own story. Each of them was searching for peace and safety.

In Sisaket seven people found comfort through our help. Some of them were Filipinos from another faith who were far from home and had nowhere else to turn. They were thankful someone saw them and cared. In Horn Gai nine more lives were touched. And in Fang Thoeng a group of 24 people received help.

### Reaching Out to People From Other Faiths

One of our staff members had family from Buriram and Nam Yuen. When the fighting got worse, their relatives came running to them for safety. These families are Buddhists. They did not expect anything from us. But they received something more than food and shelter. They received genuine love and care. This changed their attitude toward Christians and broke down barriers.

“We didn’t come with big answers. We came with small acts of kindness—a meal, a mat, a mosquito net, a listening ear, and,

of course, a prayer,” leaders reported. “We believe that even such simple things as acts of kindness can be a bridge—a bridge that connects people to hope, a bridge that brings them closer to the heart of God.”

We know that we might not have been able to help all the people affected. There are still many who have been hurt and are still hurting. Many are waiting for help. But we thank God that even in our smallness, He allowed us to reach some. And even if we could not reach every hand, we chose to reach the ones near us. Because every life matters.

### Bridges to Evangelism

Leaders shared that they called the initiative Bridges to Evangelism. “But it wasn’t just a project. It was our calling,” they explained. “It was a way to show that the church is not only for Christians. It is for anyone who is hurting. Anyone who needs help. Anyone searching for light in a dark time.”

They added, “We may not have ended the war. But we believe love speaks louder than fear. Compassion reaches deeper than pain. And when we open our arms to those around us, especially those who don’t yet know Christ, we are building something that lasts—a bridge, a connection, a living testimony of God’s love. Even in broken times His love continues to build bridges through us. And we will keep building.”

Regional church leaders also called church members around the world to keep praying. “Let us pray so that this war ends and peace finally comes. Let us pray for families to be restored. And that one day, even those who are still far from God will see His love through the bridges we have built today.”

Editor’s note: *This story recounts events from 2025. Since then, renewed fighting has displaced more people and claimed additional lives. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Thailand continues its relief and outreach efforts, as needs in the region persist.* ❧



A recent escalation of hostilities between Thailand and Cambodia provided opportunities for church members to show love and care to their fellow believers and others. Photos: Southern Asia-Pacific Division News



# FROM IRAN TO GOD'S ULTIMATE FREEDOM

**She fled from fear to discover the God of love.**



Iranian refugees Raha and her son were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church after providential encounters that led them to get to know the God of the Bible. Photo: Joanna Stonecka-Micyk

## Polish Union Conference, for *Adventist Review*

**H**er escape from Iran was not a carefully planned journey. It was a desperate attempt to survive. For years she had lived under the weight of domestic violence, religious control, and a fear that shapes the daily lives of many women in her homeland. At last she made a decision: to risk everything in search of safety for herself and her son.

She did not know where they were going. One airport after another, hurried layovers, sleepless nights, tickets bought wherever a flight was still possible. Thus began a journey toward freedom that, quite unexpectedly, ended in Poland. Straight from the airport they were taken to a refugee center—exhausted, disoriented, carrying little more than a few belongings and a heart heavy with uncertainty.

One day a pastor visited the center. He carried a Bible and spoke about a God of love—a God who does not control, intimidate, or strip people of dignity, but who seeks them where they are.

For Raha,<sup>\*</sup> it was a revelation. In the religious tradition she had known since childhood, God appeared primarily as a strict judge, and women held lesser value—socially and theologically. Now, for the first time, she heard about a God who sees pain, knows names, and bends toward human stories.

Not long afterward, Raha and her son were transferred to another refugee center. Her first question upon arrival was whether there was anyone there who read the Bible. At that center was a volunteer named

Ania—a Seventh-day Adventist who was working with a local foundation. When she heard that an Iranian refugee was asking to meet someone from the church, she agreed immediately. Their meeting quickly became a conversation that touched them both.

Raha did not ask about doctrines. She asked about God. About who He truly is. After several meetings she asked quietly whether she might attend a worship service.

**IT WAS THEN THAT SHE HEARD WORDS THAT WOULD FOREVER CHANGE THE WAY SHE THOUGHT ABOUT GOD. “YOU DO NOT HAVE TO EARN GOD’S FAVOR,” SHE WAS TOLD. “HE IS THE ONE WHO COMES—TO FIND YOU AND INVITE YOU TO HIMSELF.”**

That Sabbath several congregations gathered for a joint service in a rented convention hall. Among hundreds of people, right at the entrance, Raha met Marek Micyk—a pastor she had never met before.

After the service, everyone gathered at Ania’s home to continue the conversation.

Raha spoke some English, but to express her thoughts precisely, she spoke with Micyk through her cell phone, carefully translating sentence by sentence into Farsi. It was then that she heard words that would forever change the way she thought about God. “You do not have to earn God’s favor,” she was told. “He is the one who comes—to find you and invite you to Himself.”

The words moved her deeply. After a moment of silence, she said she wished she had a giant megaphone aimed at all of Iran, so she could tell people what she had just discovered about God.

From that moment on, regular online conversations about God’s plan of salvation began. Eventually a pastor from Germany was found who studied the Bible with Raha and her son in Farsi. For months he prepared them for baptism.

At last, a baptismal date was set. It was a Sabbath, outdoors by a river—beautiful, though the sky was overcast and rain began to fall. And, as many had witnessed before, when the candidates stepped into the water, the clouds parted and the sun appeared.

“Raha’s story is a reminder that God often works quietly—beyond the spotlight, in refugee centers, in conversations mediated by a phone translator, in the hearts of people who fled fear and found hope,” Micyk said. “It is also a story of a church that is present wherever someone begins to ask questions about God—and that answers not with theory, but with love.” ❧

<sup>\*</sup> The name of the individual has been changed for security reasons.

# GOD'S CARE

**G**od with us” is the surety of our deliverance from sin, the assurance of our power to obey the law of heaven.

Christ sought to teach the grand truth so needful for us to learn, that God is always with us, an inmate of every dwelling, that He is acquainted with every action performed on earth. He knows the thoughts that are framed in the mind and endorsed by the soul. He hears every word that falls from the lips of human beings. He is walking and working in the midst of all our transactions in life. He knows every plan, and He measures every method.

## God Sees Me

“Thou God seest me” (Gen. 16:13, KJV).

God is a vigilant observer of the actions of the children of men. Nothing occurs in earth or heaven without the knowledge of the Creator. Nothing can happen without His permission. He on whom the fate of an empire may depend is watched over with a vigilance which knows no relaxation by Him who “giveth salvation unto kings,” to whom belong “the shields of the earth.” And the poor man is as tenderly watched over as the monarch upon his throne.

God is constantly at work for the good of His creatures. . . . Times without number God has interposed to avert death, to keep men, women, and children in safety when Satan purposed a result wholly disastrous. . . .

This world has been signally blessed by God. Human beings are the recipients of countless mercies. Providence watches over and shields them. Upon them are poured the choicest gifts in heaven’s treasury.

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## How sweet it is to be reminded of God’s love and care.

Ellen G. White

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God knows you by name. He knows every action of your life.

God knows every thought, every purpose, every plan, every motive. . . . As the artist transfers to the canvas the features of the face, so the features of each individual character are transferred to the books of heaven. God has a perfect photograph of every man’s character.

## This world has been signally blessed by God. Human beings are the recipients of countless mercies. Providence watches over and shields them.

God wants you to recognize the divine presence. His peace and comfort and grace and joy will change the shadow of death into bright morning and blessed sunshine. . . .

## God Cares for Me

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa. 41:10, KJV).

The Lord is in active communication with every part of His vast dominions. He is represented as bending toward the earth and its inhabitants. He is listening to every word that is uttered. He hears every groan; He listens to every prayer; He observes the movements of every one. . . .

God has always had a care for His people. . . . Christ taught His disciples that the amount of divine attention given to any object is proportionate to the rank assigned to it in the creation of God. He called their attention to the birds of the air. Not a sparrow, He said, falls to the ground without the notice of our heavenly Father. And if the little sparrow is regarded by Him, surely the souls of those for whom Christ has died are precious in His sight. The value of man, the estimate God places upon him, is revealed in the cross of Calvary. . . .

God’s mercy and love for the fallen race have not ceased to accumulate, nor lost their earthward direction. ❧

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Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt was taken from *My Life Today*, pages 290-292.

# RESCUED FROM THE MIRE



## One homeless woman's redemption story

Dick Duerksen

**J**enni's car was everything to her, and now it was gone. Stolen, she knew. Now she was homeless and out on the streets with nothing—everything ripped away. She knew who had done it. In fact, when she saw the thief, that was also the first time she met Connie.

### AN UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP

"She found me chasing the thief around the Salvation Army parking lot. As I yelled at him, Connie ran after me, shouting for me to stop," Jenni tells me. "Finally she caught me, and we had a good talk. She said, 'OK. I get it. I know how you feel. You've got a lot of anger right now, but there are ways we can deal with this.'"

Their relationship began there in the Salvation Army parking lot, Jenni shouting furiously and Connie listening. It continued a week later when Jenni came back, found Connie, shook her hand, introduced herself properly, and poured out her life story—a story that sounded a lot like Connie's own.

Connie listened, threw a blanket of love over Jenni, and prayed.

"I wish she could have plucked me off the streets in that moment, but I still had many years to go," Jenni says, tears gathering. "I didn't know how to separate myself from the people I was out there with. The longer you're with them, the more you bond. Most of the time our stuff is wet, cold, and moldy. We don't have changes of clothes. We don't have blankets. So we work together as a team, keeping each other safe and warm and fed . . . and drugged. It's a network, and I hate to say it, but I was part of it."

Connie kept her eyes open for Jenni, encouraging her and hoping that the moment would come when Jenni was "ready" to change. Jenni became a regular at the supper kitchen, helping serve food and receiving extra food in

return. She swept floors and helped where she could. Time passed, and though hope flickered, recovery was still far away.

### A CRY FOR HELP ON A COLD NIGHT

Jenni describes the winter of 2017 with a shiver. "I was fighting, trying to get clean from the drugs, but I just couldn't. Then one night we were in a foot of snow. I was trying to sleep in a tent that wasn't winterized, and the water was pouring in. I was so very cold! I tied my backpack and my bicycle to myself and slept with my shoes on so they wouldn't get stolen. I was in pain, hopeless, mad at the whole situation! How did I get here? Why am I still here?"

That night Jenni burst out of her tent, determined to check into the hospital's drug detox unit where it would be warm and where they would give her fruit snacks, coffee, and a blanket. She didn't have any plan beyond that, nor did she think about finding someone to help her with the hard conversations once she got sober. She just wanted to be warm and dry.

"I came barreling out of my tent, nothing in my way, and fell to my knees in the snow, screaming at God.

"God, please, all I want is to be warm, to be clean, and I just want my family back!"

Jenni managed to get on her bicycle and ride frantically toward the hospital. But when she reached the restaurant parking lot, her bike chain slipped off. As she knelt to fix it, a police officer pulled up and asked what she was doing there, in deep snow, at 3:00 a.m., in the parking lot.

"I'm going to check in at detox!" Jenni shouted angrily.

"Sure you are," the officer responded.

Jenni looked up—and recognized her. This was the same officer who had cited her for sleeping in the park, and the same one who could arrest her now for missing her court date and not paying the fine.

"I really am." Jenni tried to sound believable. "I'm done. I stink. I'm going!"

“Do you need some help?” the officer asked.

“Yeah.”

The officer got out of her patrol car, used her flashlight to help Jenni fix the chain, and asked, “What are you doing after detox?”

Jenni had no answer.

“How about this?” the officer said. “What if I take you to jail right now? You’ll get five days of hot showers, dry clothes, and blankets. You’ll be in drug court, so they’ll help you really get your life together.”

Fifteen minutes later Jenni was in the loosest set of handcuffs she had ever worn. At the jail the guards noticed immediately that something was different about Jenni this time. Change had begun.

### THE “EMERGENCY CHRISTIAN”

“One day in the jail”—Jenni smiles when she tells this part of her story—“an ‘emergency Christian’ with a pocket Bible came up to me and tried to tell me that my story was in her Bible. I laughed and told her my story wouldn’t be in her book. No way!”

The “emergency Christian” opened to Psalm 69 and read aloud.

“Save me, O God!

For the waters have come up to my neck.

I sink in deep mire,

Where there is no standing;

I have come into deep waters,

Where the floods overflow me.

“I am weary with my crying;

My throat is dry;

My eyes fail while I wait for my God.

“Those who hate me without a cause

Are more than the hairs of my head;

They are mighty who would destroy me. . . .

“But as for me, my prayer is to You,

O Lord, in the acceptable time;

O God, in the multitude of Your mercy,

Hear me in the truth of Your salvation.

“Deliver me out of the mire” (Ps. 69:1-4, 13, 14).

Jenni memorized Psalm 69 during the 21 days she spent in jail. When she was released, she began a rehab program and quickly reconnected with Connie and the supper kitchen.

“I was well known on the streets,” Jenni says. “I was friendly. I wasn’t a thief or anything like that. I was part of the team. But when I got clean, that didn’t mean they wanted me to stay that way. I had to set boundaries so I could live my new life. Connie’s wisdom and support were crucial.”

### SEVENTY-SEVEN DAYS OF HOPE

Then, on the night of her twenty-eighth day clean, she had the dream.

“I dreamed I was standing on a street corner, telling everyone how many clean days I’d had,” Jenni remembers. “So on my thirtieth day of being clean from all drugs, I ran to my old soggy tent, grabbed the cardboard that was still there under my bed, and wrote on it: I HAVE 30 DAYS CLEAN!”

Jenni took her new cardboard sign and ran to a busy street corner in Port Angeles, Washington. She stood there for nine hours that day, waving her sign and shouting hope, just as she had in her dream.

About two hours in, a police officer drove slowly through the intersection, stopped, got out, handed her a black Sharpie, and said, “This is the coolest

thing I’ve seen in my entire life! Let’s make it easier to read.” He even added a police sticker to the sign.

Jenni updated that cardboard sign every day through day 77.

“Something awesome happened every day on that street corner, not only for me but for our entire community,” she says. “People needed to see success. They would drive by, honk, pull over, and give me a hug. Some tried to give me money, but I told them I wasn’t panhandling. I just needed to share my testimony, my special story. I can’t change my past, but God has promised to change my today and my tomorrow. I pray that my testimony will be loud enough to save another person’s life.”

If you visit Port Angeles (PA) today, you can meet Jenni, now an active leader in the outreach ministry of the Port Angeles, Washington, Seventh-day Adventist Church. She and her husband were baptized on June 7, 2025. You would also meet her daughter Kati, the church’s 12-step recovery group, Pastor Jay, and the volunteers who lead PA Hot Meals. Though Connie has passed, her smile continues to glow through Jenni’s life of generous love and acceptance. ❧

**Dick Duerksen** is a pastor and storyteller living in Portland, Oregon, United States.

Top: Jenni (left) and Connie (right) celebrate God’s deliverance. Bottom: Jenni and her friends stand at the corner with their signs of encouragement. Photos: Dick Duerksen





# GORY GOD?

## Addressing the Old Testament wars of extermination

### Why is there so much violence in the Bible?

**T**his question comes up frequently, especially in connection with the wars of extermination in the Old Testament (see, for example, Deut. 20:16-18) and the idea of an eternally burning hell (as some interpret Rev. 14:9-11). To many honest observers, passages like these appear to make God out to be little more than an omnipotent Hitler and a moral monster. Who could worship a god like that?

So how are we to understand hard passages like these? Undeniably, the Bible tells some rather shocking stories, most of which are the tragic consequences of evil in the world. But what we may call “genocidal” passages seem to lay the responsibility directly at God’s feet. How can we reconcile such pictures with the Bible’s claim that “God is love” (1 John 4:8), that “righteousness and justice are the foundation” of His throne (Ps. 89:14)?

Regarding God’s command to exterminate the Canaanites, we need to notice what else the Bible says about that situation. The preceding verses show that the Israelites were to avoid war whenever possible and, should war arise, to spare women and children (Deut. 20:10-15). Also, the nations of Canaan could have been incorporated into Israel had they, like Rahab, repented of their evil. Some of the heinous Canaanite practices included burning children alive as sacrifices to their gods, temple prostitution, incest,

and bestiality. Unfortunately, although they were given 400 years to abandon the worship of their gods of sex and violence and turn to the God of Israel (Gen. 15:16), they refused, and fought against Israel. If they remained in the land, it would have hindered God’s plan for Israel to be a light to the nations. Both history and archaeology reveal how the people that remained in

the Bible indicates that the wicked will be totally destroyed, that the alternative to eternal life is not an eternity in burning torment but “death” as “the wages of sin” (Rom. 6:23)—what it elsewhere calls “the second death” in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). More amazing still, the Bible describes God as willing to lay Himself on the altar of sacrifice, dying on the cross to save us sinners

Read rightly, the Bible indicates that the wicked will be totally destroyed, that the alternative to eternal life is not an eternity in burning torment but death.

Canaan constituted a persistent source of temptation and apostasy.

God says, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Eze. 33:11). He is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). “All” means all. That includes not just the Canaanites but every person who has ever lived or will live. In Noah’s day God’s Spirit appealed to earth’s inhabitants for 120 years to repent so as not to perish in the coming Flood. Read rightly,

(John 3:16). It is only to purge evil from the universe forever that God ultimately consents to extinguish in the fires of hell those who continue to cling to sin. There are many voices today trying to tell us what is just and good and right. But despite what critics may allege, only the God of the Bible perfectly reflects these ideals. **✠**

**Clinton Wahlen** is an associate director at the Biblical Research Institute.

# MAGNESIUM FOR SLEEP



## Help or hype?

### My 70-year-old mother struggles with insomnia. Will magnesium supplementation help her sleep better?

**G**ood sleep is vital for health, and while insomnia has many causes and remedies, we will focus on your question about magnesium. Magnesium is a mineral the body needs for more than 300 processes, including nerve signaling, proper muscle control, and production of melatonin, the hormone critical for a good night's sleep. During the past few years scientists have been studying magnesium to see if it can help people sleep better. Some studies show it helps, but taking too much without guidance can be harmful.

Magnesium affects sleep by helping control certain brain chemicals (e.g., GABA), which calm the nervous system and make the body relax. It also helps keep melatonin at healthy levels. People who don't have enough magnesium in their bodies often struggle with poor sleep, waking up in the night, or with conditions such as restless leg syndrome.

Giving extra magnesium helps some people but not others. A study in 2012 tested giving magnesium to older adults who had insomnia. Those who took 500 milligrams of magnesium each day for eight weeks fell asleep faster, slept longer, spent more of their time in bed sleeping rather than being awake, and didn't wake up earlier than they wanted as often as before.<sup>1</sup> A 2021 review of many studies showed that magnesium made a small but

noticeable improvement in sleep quality, especially for older adults and people who had insomnia to begin with.<sup>2</sup> Still, scientists say more studies (and those of longer duration) are needed.

Taking extra magnesium seems most helpful for people who are low in it. This includes older adults, people with stomach or intestinal diseases such as Crohn's or celiac disease, people with type 2 diabetes, and those who don't eat enough magnesium-rich foods, such as leafy greens, nuts, and whole grains. For these people, fixing a deficiency can improve both sleep and overall health. Your mom may fall into one of these groups; her doctor will be able to tell better.

But be aware, taking too much without

nesium can also lower the effect of some medicines or cause side effects when taken with water pills (diuretics), antibiotics, and bone medicines (bisphosphonates).

Anyone considering using magnesium for sleep should consult a doctor first. The best and safest way to get magnesium is still through a God-given, healthy diet full of foods that naturally contain it, such as black beans, kidney beans, spinach, tofu, nuts, oats, brown rice, and quinoa. These foods not only are rich in magnesium but also support overall health. **℞**

<sup>1</sup> Behnood Abbasi, Masud Kimiagar, et al., "The Effect of Magnesium Supplementation on Primary Insomnia in the Elderly: A Double-blind Placebo-controlled Clinical Trial," *Journal of Research in Medical Sciences* 17 (December 2012): 1161-1169.  
<sup>2</sup> J. Mah and T. Pitre, "Oral Magnesium Supplementation for Insomnia in Older Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *BMC Complementary Medicine and Therapies* 21 (2021): 125, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12906-021-03297-z>.

## People who don't have enough magnesium in their bodies often struggle with poor sleep, waking up in the night, or with conditions such as restless leg syndrome.

guidance can cause stomach upset, cramps, nausea, diarrhea, drug problems, or even serious illness. The safe upper limit for adults is 350 milligrams a day from supplements, unless a doctor says otherwise. For people with kidney problems, magnesium can build up to dangerous levels, causing low blood pressure, confusion, weak muscles, and even irregular heartbeats. Mag-

**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 emeritus director of General Conference Adventist Health Ministries, is also a board-certified internist.

# HOW SMALL WE ARE—

## How great the work before us

Erton Köhler

**I**magine compressing the entire world population into a cube. Mathematicians have calculated that all 8 billion people stacked could fit inside a cube measuring about one kilometer on each side.<sup>1</sup> Humanity, with its history and complexity, could be contained within a square block smaller than many neighborhoods. This image is so surprising it prompts reflection. Physically we take up almost no space, yet our impact and legacy extend far beyond measurable volume.

From the beginning, God gave humanity a role bigger than its size. “Let them have dominion” (Gen. 1:26) is about stewardship, not privilege. We are created to shape life, care for creation, and protect the beauty given to us. History demonstrates the seriousness of this duty. What Adam and Eve protected was lost through disobedience. Noah saw a world reshaped by violence (Gen. 6:11). Abraham witnessed the cost of moral decay. Today society faces the cumulative effects of choices that erode the planet, distort values, and diminish hope.

The biblical narrative doesn’t succumb to decline. Scripture lifts us beyond collapse and calls us to purpose: “The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness” (Ps. 24:1). Creation remains His possession, and He calls His people to restore the relationship—not through coercion, but through testimony. Jesus affirmed the dignity of our calling: “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). We are meant to illuminate, not leave the world unchanged.

The Advent movement exists because, in a world one cubic kilometer in size, 8 billion stories long for hope. No achievement or policy can satisfy the hunger of every language and culture. The everlasting gospel addresses this with clarity, relevance, and

grace. It is not optional; it is God’s remedy for a planet that has forgotten its origin and lost sight of its destiny. Ellen White said, “Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died.”<sup>2</sup>

If Christ sees each person with that level of devotion, then the church cannot define its mission by statistics, budgets, or geog-

The world feels overwhelmed by crises, yet remains reachable through love.

raphy. Every life is priceless. A movement that believes this becomes a source of healing in a broken world. Our mission gains strength because it is rooted in Scripture, centered on Christ, and empowered by the Spirit. A church *grounded in the Bible and focused on the mission* serves as a witness of hope where despair has taken hold.

This hour requires more than just observation. It calls for devotion, discernment, and courage. The world feels overwhelmed by crises, yet remains reachable through love. The planet suffers from decisions that diminish life, but it can still be renewed

through lives surrendered to Christ. Our stewardship includes not only the earth beneath our feet but also the people around us. As we deliver the Advent message to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, a new horizon begins to emerge beyond the old one. The call has never been clearer. The time has come for a church that shines, serves, and proclaims.

Maranatha. **✝**

<sup>1</sup> See Phil Plait, “The Human Cube: The Volume of Humanity,” *Syfy Wire*, Oct. 14, 2018, <https://www.syfy.com/syfy-wire/the-human-cube-the-volume-of-humanity>, and Carson Chow, “The Mass of Humanity,” *Scientific Clearing House*, June 26, 2009, <https://sciencehouse.wordpress.com/2009/06/26/the-mass-of-humanity/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 480.

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

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# STAYING DYNAMIC:

## Nick and Phosfe Walters Reflect on 32 Years of Missionary Service



Nick and Phosfe Walters presently serve as missionaries in Thailand, the latest stop in their 32 years of mission service.

**F**or more than 32 years Nick and Phosfe Walters have served the Adventist Church as missionaries, focusing on health care and cross-cultural service. Their work has taken them to several regions of the world, where they have combined medical ministry, family life, and a commitment to God's call to overseas mission.

In this conversation Orna Garnett, the North American Division's associate secretary for Missionary Services, talks with the Walterses about how their mission journey began, how God has guided their work and family through the years, and lessons learned along the way.

**Orna Garnett: Nick, thank you for connecting with us regarding your mission experience. It is always fascinating to learn about mission journeys. My hope is that as you share your story, we can inspire others to find their path to mission. So tell us, how did you receive your first mission call? And where were you at the time of the call?**

**Nick:** I was a student missionary in college, but I had wanted to be a missionary since I was a kid, when the Adventist Book Center used to sell lots of missionary storybooks.

**Were family/friends supportive? Who or what was most helpful [as you prepared for service]?**

It was my feeling that I was called to mission service. My family was not involved in the deci-

sion-making [process], but I was attracted to my wife partly based on her love for Jesus and her desire for mission service.

**If you could turn back the hands of time, what changes (if any) would you have made in your own personal preparation for mission service?**

No changes. I made all my decisions based on my plans for missions.

**What misconceptions about being a missionary did you have to overcome?**

None, really, because I had already served as a student missionary, so I knew what I was getting myself into.

**Is there a specific time in your mission experience during which you saw God's hand leading?**

There were many times, but one example comes from my work here in Thailand. To work as a physician in Thailand, it is necessary to pass the medical board exams in Thailand, [which are conducted] in the Thai language. It is a six-day exam. Days one and two cover basic science; days three and four cover clinical subjects; day five consists of essays; and day six is practical, i.e., examining real patients and telling the professor in the room what the diagnosis is and how to treat it.

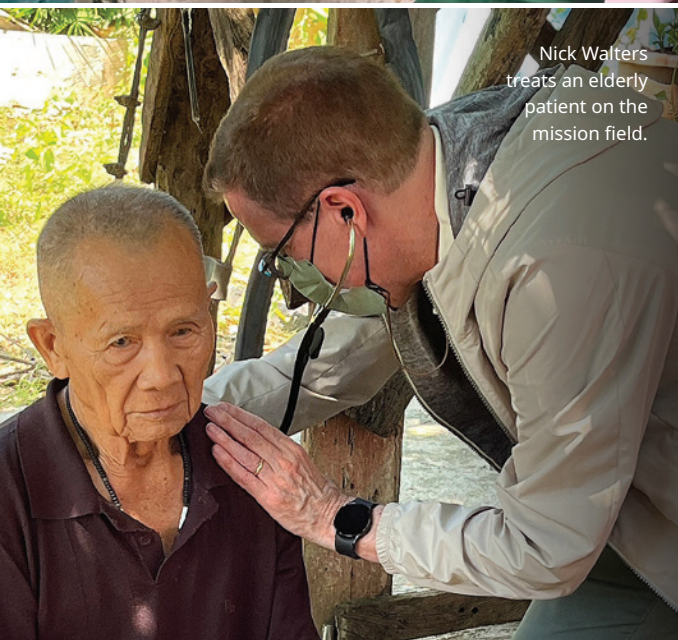
No Adventist missionary physician had ever passed this exam since the exam requirements for foreigners were changed from English to Thai in 1985. I went to Thailand with my wife and two



Nick Walters (left) joins local health-care colleagues during a nursing graduation celebration.



Missionary physician Nick Walters is photographed with a newborn patient.



Nick Walters treats an elderly patient on the mission field.

All photos provided by Nick Walters

sons in 2002, and 18 months later I passed all six days of the exam on the first try. This shows what God can do. It required a huge effort on my part, but it would never have happened without God's direct blessings.

I do not use a translator when seeing patients, which is a blessing of this requirement.

**What part of missionary work do you enjoy most or find the most rewarding?**

Interacting with patients and seeing God bless them, watching them get better, and pointing to God as the source of their healing.

**Phosfe, while Nick is serving as a physician, how would you describe your unique mission experience?**

*Phosfe:* I homeschooled our boys from first through twelfth grade. Today one is a dentist and the other a physician. I now make friends with my husband's patients and support and encourage them. I am also his public relations person, encouraging people to come to our hospital.

**What specific ways has life been richer or different because of cross-cultural service?**

I [have enjoyed] making friends from other cultures.

**What is a most treasured memory?**

It is too difficult to say, but [one is] seeing our sons dedicated and later baptized into the Adventist Church and seeing them continue to keep Jesus in their lives.

**For both of you, what advice would you give prospects headed for cross-cultural mission service? Please share a few tips.**

*Phosfe:* Be adaptable and make local friends by being friendly. Do some nesting in your house. Make it nice, even spending your own money to do it. Making your home nice and comfortable will help *you* be nice and comfortable.

*Nick:* Learn the language in a consistent manner, knowing that if God wants you to be there, He will help you do it. Be flexible and know when to say no. Be friendly and make friends of the local population.

**Ethiopia, Bangkok, Guam, and Singapore are all amazing places to have lived and served. God has truly blessed your service, and I am sure He is still sustaining you. Remember that we are always cheering you on and praying that the Adventist mission is realized each day in your service.**

*Nick:* Thank you, and God bless!



# Making Disciples in Cambodia

A principal in a mission school Cambodia reports on his experiences and solicits prayers for those whom missionaries serve.

BY DEAN EDWARDS

**A**nd why do you want your child in our school?" I asked a young mother waiting for her daughter to finish her school day. Many parents are too shy to speak to the school principal. However, she looked at me for a long moment and softly replied, "If it wasn't for your school, I wouldn't be a Christian, so I want my daughter to learn what I have learned."

Usually when I ask this question, parents talk about how our teachers treat their students respectfully or how we have high moral standards and values, so her answer caught me off guard. Moreover, in Cambodia, Christians form a mere 3 percent of its 18 million citizens, as it is a predominantly Buddhist country. The local saying is: "To be Cambodian is to be Buddhist;

to be anything else is to be a traitor." Although many do not strictly practice Buddhism, they still identify with its beliefs and values, making them suspicious of other belief systems.

This young mother proceeded to tell me how, during a difficult time in her life, she was helping her second-grade daughter study for her memory-verse test. "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). As she repeated the words over and over to help her daughter learn the promise, she started questioning, "Can this be true? Does God really mean what this verse says?"

She paused for a moment, then concluded, "I made the decision that I was going to find out more, so I started talking to someone in my office. [They] studied the Bible with me, and now I am worshipping each week and have joined a church."

← Photo of Buddhist temple Wat Ounalom in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Cambodia Adventist International School is making inroads in a mostly Buddhist population. *Getty Images*

### Every Conversation Is an Opportunity

Our school, Cambodia Adventist International School, is in Phnom Penh, the capital of the Kingdom of Cambodia. In a city with a population of more than 2 million, our student body of 530 students may seem small, yet what our students learn—and how they learn to behave—impact more than 3,000 people daily through their extended families. This happens through the sense of mission and the sacrificial Christian living modeled by our teachers and staff, who are 100 percent Adventist.

As students tend to stay at our school for 14 years, from pre-K to grade 12, teachers have multiple opportunities to share the love of Jesus. Every conversation on campus is an opportunity to tell others what Jesus has done for them. Only eternity will show the true impact that attending our school has on our students.

Not all our teachers' hard work has a happy ending, however. Recently a teacher told us of a young woman in one of his Bible classes who said she would have to change schools. She was well known for sleeping in class but also for getting the highest grades. After asking her some questions, he discovered that her mother had become concerned about the changes she had seen in the young woman's behavior during the past eight years of attending our school. Positive changes, yes, but as she was fearful that the young woman would become a Christian, she took her out of our school. Please pray for students whose parents force them to make such choices. Pray that the influence of our teachers has been enough. Jesus has been planted in this student's heart, and now the Holy Spirit will need to do the nurturing.

### Making Disciples

In a city with more than 60 international schools, there is intense competition for students. Annual tuition at our school is less than \$2,000, which attracts many students, as most other schools charge that much monthly. Church members pay less than half that amount, but only 80 of our students are church members, and the other 450 are non-Adventists.

As of this fall, 25 young people started Bible studies with our pastor, which is the highest number we have had in recent years. Each month the high school classes spend one Sabbath visiting local churches to enrich their services with their talents, and both Adventist and non-Adventist students participate. These experiences are central to the discipleship program we are implementing on our campus this year.

Another element of making disciples is the monthly campus worship service, which brings in more than 200 visitors who come to watch our students give special music and devotionals while developing their leadership skills. Often those attending would never set foot in a Christian church because of the stigma of being seen there, but want their children in a Christian school because the rules and standards they hold dear are no longer taught in "more popular" schools.



A student at Cambodia Adventist International School makes a decision for Christ.  
*Photo provided by Dean Edwards*

### Prayer to Encircle the World

My gratitude goes out to those who established this school and built its foundation on strong biblical principles more than 30 years ago. I cannot say thank you enough to those in North America who gave sacrificially so our school and others like it could be established around the world for the training of future leaders and for leading students to Christ.

Our reputation for treating our students with respect, showing integrity in all aspects of our lives, and delivering instructional excellence is all the advertising we need. God is blessing the efforts of our teachers' hard work on behalf of their students.

While our school is not perfect, God is working through it to share His love for the people of this country, just as He longs to do for everyone. Pray for all our schools around the world, particularly that the hearts and minds of our students and their families will be touched by God's forgiveness and love, just as the young mother was touched. Pray too for the students who are taken out of school because of the positive influence of Christianity in their lives. Finally, pray that the teachers and administrators will be faithful in answering God's call when they say, "I will go!"

*Dean Edwards is principal of Cambodia Adventist International School.*

# “ADVENTIST EDUCATION FORMS FAITHFUL DISCIPLES”

**New Study Highlights the Church-Strengthening Impact of Adventist Colleges**

**BY KEN SHAW, PRESIDENT OF AACU AND SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY**

**A** new study comparing Adventist alumni from Adventist colleges and universities in North America with Adventist alumni who attended non-Adventist institutions reveals a clear and powerful truth: Adventist higher education significantly strengthens the faith and spiritual commitment of Adventist young adults. Adventist education helps form faithful disciples.

At our Adventist colleges and universities we see this every day. We witness students' lives changing as they experience Christ-centered learning, nurturing friendships, engaged faculty, and a campus community committed to faith and service. This research confirms that the environment offered by Adventist universities is not merely educational—it is transformational.

For our churches and parents, these findings matter deeply. They show that Adventist colleges are not just places of learning—they are communities of discipleship. The alumni study, done cooperatively in early 2025 (January-April) between the Association of Adventist Colleges and Universities (AACU) and North American Division Archives, Statistics, and Research—using Strategic Resource Partners, LLC, as the research firm to conduct this study—identified 31 core benefits, grouped into five major themes (shown below) in which Adventist college alumni consistently reported stronger outcomes than those who attended non-Adventist institutions.



**Theme 1.****Adventist Education Deepens Faith and Strengthens Belief**

The spiritual differences between Adventist college alumni and Adventists who attended non-Adventist schools were striking:

- More worship engagement: 1.4 times greater
- On-campus worship opportunities: nearly 2 times greater
- Deepened spirituality: more than 2 times greater
- Opportunities for spiritual development: more than 2 times greater
- Deeper understanding of Adventist beliefs: more than 2.5 times greater
- Shared faith values: more than 4 times greater
- Christ-centered learning: 8 times greater

These numbers show the powerful spiritual environment created on Adventist campuses.

**Theme 2.****Adventist Campuses Produce Stronger Christian Friendships**

Adventist college alumni reported friendships that continue to anchor their spiritual lives long after graduation:

- Friends who strengthened their walk with Christ: more than 1.6 times greater
- Friends who attended worship together: nearly 2 times greater

These peer relationships provide a support system that promotes faithfulness and ministry involvement.

**Theme 3.****Faculty Serve as Spiritual Mentors and Role Models**

- Values and ethics integrated in class: more than 1.6 times greater
  - Personal interaction with professors: more than 1.6 times greater
  - Engaged faculty interested in student success: more than 1.7 times greater
  - Professors who knew students personally: nearly 2 times greater, with alumni from Seventh-day Adventist institutions stating that 92 percent of their professors knew their names
  - Faculty who shaped their spiritual lives: nearly 4.5 times greater
- Adventist professors serve not only as academic guides but as Christian mentors and role models.

**Theme 4.****Development of the Whole Person**

Adventist colleges offer an environment where the development of the whole person is a priority. The study found stronger outcomes among Adventist college alumni in such areas as:

- Development of the whole person: nearly 1.5 times greater
- Helped students integrate their faith with other aspects of their lives: more than 2 times greater

**Theme 5.****Purpose, Calling, and Commitment**

Perhaps most important for our congregations, Adventist college alumni graduate with:

- Sense of purpose: more than 1.2 times greater
- Strong moral principles: nearly 1.3 times greater
- Sense of God's calling: nearly 2 times greater



*Photography by Getty Images*

These are the future Sabbath School teachers, youth leaders, elders, deacons, musicians, pastors, missionaries, and servant-leaders in our churches.

**A Message for Churches and Parents**

This study demonstrates what many of us have witnessed for decades: Adventist education is one of the most effective ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for forming lifelong disciples of Jesus. Our colleges and universities strengthen the future of Adventist congregations—one student at a time.

For parents seeking an education rooted in Scripture, strengthened by community, and aligned with God's calling, the message of this study is unmistakable: Our colleges and universities provide a transformative educational experience—one that shapes students today and for eternity. The investment is an eternal one.

# NAD NEWS BRIEFS



← Photo of Union Adventist University campus Photo provided by Union Adventist University Marketing and Communication

## SALT: It Is Written School of Evangelism Coming to Union Adventist University

Starting fall 2026 the It Is Written Soul-winning and Leadership Training (SALT) program will be held on the campus of Union Adventist University (Union) in Lincoln, Nebraska. This new SALT initiative will be in addition to the existing SALT program held at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee. Alex Rodriguez joins the new program as director, with Felicia Sanders filling the role of outreach coordinator.

Founded in 2011, SALT—the It Is Written school of evangelism—is designed for individuals willing to dedicate one semester to intensive Bible worker training. Participants study and grow with other committed students as they attend practi-

cal, Bible-based classes and apply what they learn through hands-on outreach. Classes are taught by university professors as well as It Is Written speakers, and university credits are available and apply toward a religion minor.

“SALT is high-impact, faith-building evangelism training. For almost 15 years SALT has been a successful partnership between It Is Written and Southern Adventist University,” said John Bradshaw, It Is Written president. “There are lots of people whose ministry is being transformed because of their experience at SALT, people in all different walks of life who are really serious about sharing their faith. And we are thrilled to be expanding that impact to Union. We

believe that more lives and more places are going to be transformed because SALT is now going to be based in Lincoln, Nebraska, as well as Collegedale, Tennessee.”

SALT students have come from many conferences in the United States, and even other countries, such as New Zealand and Nepal. In addition to Southern students who attend SALT, people of all ages and backgrounds have completed SALT over the years with the intention of reaching their home conference for Christ. Bradshaw noted that for some time it has been clear that the SALT program was needed, as evidenced by the largest class to date of 46 students this semester. So he was enthusiastic when approached by Jeff Scoggins, Minnesota Conference president and Union board member, a couple of years ago with the idea of expanding the program to Union.

Union leadership looks forward to the impact SALT will have on campus and the Mid-America Union. “I am excited to support and grow a new kind of faith learner and practitioner at Union Adventist University,” said Yami Bazan, Union Adventist University president. “Long known as the College of the Golden Cords, Union has always focused on developing professionals committed to sharing the gospel of Jesus as a way of living out their faith. The SALT program aligns beautifully with our mission and our love for Jesus.”

—Cassie Matchim Hernandez,  
It Is Written

## WALLA WALLA UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES NEW STACKABLE M.ED. FORMAT

Walla Walla University is excited to announce a new Stackable Graduate Certificates Program designed to offer flexible, asynchronous pathways to a Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree for less than \$14,000.

The stackable program allows educators to earn professional certificates in specializations that include leadership, special education, and teaching and learning (with special focus on STEM)—at their own pace, paying as they go.

Each specialization features three certificates:

Basic certificates provide a strong foundation for a master’s degree, and they are designed to lead toward North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists specialized endorsements.

Advanced certificates feature training ideal for educators seeking

advanced professional opportunities.

A professional certificate includes an interest-driven capstone project and will complete all requirements for an M.Ed. degree.

The stackable program is enhanced by Walla Walla University’s commitment to experiential learning, meaning graduate students can apply many course assignments to their work.

“We recognize that today’s teachers already balance a big list of professional demands,” says Maria Bastien Valenca, dean of the Walla Walla University School of Education and Psychology. “Last summer we were excited to announce a ‘no more summers’ program where teachers can move toward NAD certification without sacrificing their summer break. And now we’re pleased to make advanced learning



Photo provided by Walla Walla University

even more accessible by offering an on-your-own-time stackable approach toward professional certificates and an M.Ed. degree.”

The Stackable Graduate Certificates Program is regionally accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Courses are a collaborative blend of theory and practice, taught by seasoned experts who bring a faith-based approach to learning. Students can start courses anytime.

—Caeden Rogers,  
Walla Walla University



## Oakwood University Chief Information Security Officer Named Among Top Global CISOs

Oakwood University continues to demonstrate its commitment to excellence through many avenues—not the least of which is the expertise of its professionals. One such example is the recent recognition of Hugh Percy, Oakwood’s chief information security officer (CISO). Percy is a recipient of the 2025 Top Global CISO Award, a prestigious honor presented by *Cyber Defense Magazine* and *Cyber Defense Conferences*. As an alum with more than 20 years of experience and having returned to serve Oakwood in October 2025, he brings significant expertise to the university.

The award distinguishes outstanding leadership and achievement in cybersecurity on a large scale and is granted exclusively through peer nominations by executive CISOs. The honorees included CISOs from major organizations worldwide, including the National Football League (NFL), placing Percy among the top professionals in the field. *Cyber Defense Magazine* notes that they select innovative CISOs with proven success in executive communication, breach prevention, regulatory compliance, and risk reduction. Percy’s recognition underscores Oakwood’s continued investment in strengthening its cybersecurity posture and highlights the caliber of dedicated professionals working behind the scenes to protect and advance Oakwood’s infrastructure.

—Oakwood University

← Hugh Percy is a recipient of the 2025 Top Global CISO Award, a prestigious honor presented by *Cyber Defense Magazine*. Photo provided by Oakwood University



← Joe Wheeler at a book signing, circa 2015 Photo provided by Pacific Press

## Joe Wheeler, Author of More Than 100 Books, Passes to His Rest

Joseph L. Wheeler, best known for his *Christmas in My Heart* series, died Tuesday morning, December 16, 2025, in Annapolis, Maryland. An author and

editor/compiler of more than 100 books, Wheeler was widely regarded as one of America's leading short-story anthologists.

Born May 30, 1936, at St. Helena Sanitarium in California's Napa Valley, Wheeler came from a deep Adventist heritage. His great, great, great, great-grandfather was Frederick Wheeler, known to Adventist historians as the first Sabbathkeeping Adventist minister. His mother, Barbara Leininger Wheeler, was a stage-performing elocutionist who homeschooled her son for the first 16 years of his life and instilled in him a lifelong love of stories and poetry.

While a student at Pacific Union College, Wheeler was mentored by Walter Utt, who helped further his interest and skill as a storyteller. Following graduation, Wheeler spent 34 years teaching at the junior high, high school, junior college, college, and university levels, sharing his passion for storytelling with generations of students.

Wheeler served as professor emeritus of English at Washington Adventist University, general editor at Focus on the Family, and cofounder and executive director of the international Zane Grey's West Society.

In addition to the best-selling *Christmas in My Heart* series—the longest-running series of story collections in America—Wheeler edited several other storybook series, including: *Great Stories Remembered*; *Heart to Heart*, *Forged in the Fire*; *The Good Lord Made Them All*; and *My Favorite . . .*

In 1992 Wheeler often said, "God booted me out of the classroom into a full-time ministry of stories." That calling resulted in more than 100 books published by 16 publishing houses in multiple languages. Wheeler focused on stories "that move the reader so deeply they prove all but impossible to forget—stories that incorporate values worth living by."

Wheeler's *Great Stories Remembered* series received Family Television's highest honor, the Seal of Quality, and *Christmas in My Heart* was a finalist for the Christian Booksellers Association Gold Medallion Award. Combined, his books have sold more than 1.5 million copies. "It's all a God thing," Wheeler once said. "I'm just humbled that He stoops down to partner with the least of His children."

Mark Thomas, former president of the Review and Herald Publishing Association, worked closely with Wheeler and recalled his impact: "Our employees loved it when [Joe] would come for our special Christmas in My Heart chapel and read a chapter from his newest release. They would line up to have him sign stacks of his books to give as gifts."

Dale Galusha, president of Pacific Press Publishing Association, added, "Joe was a friend to everyone he met. Working on projects with him was always enjoyable and fun. He took time to visit and make each person feel loved and appreciated. His books and stories will continue his legacy and be treasured by generations to come."

Wheeler leaves behind his wife, Connie; son, Greg; daughter, Michelle Wheeler Culmore; son-in-law, Duane Culmore; grandson, Taylor Culmore; grandson, Seth Culmore and wife, Katelynn Culmore; brother, Romaine; sister, Marjorie Raymond; and brother-in-law, Elmer Raymond.

—Pacific Press Publishing Association

## La Sierra University Fall Enrollment Jumps, Ending Multiyear Declines

As of fall quarter, La Sierra University experienced a 26 percent surge in new freshmen for the 2025-2026 school year, a 38 percent increase in new graduate students, and a 24 percent increase in total new students, ending several years of enrollment losses.

The university's enrollment totaled 1,602 as of October 1, its official census date, representing an overall enrollment increase of 5

percent. The higher figure includes a drop this fall in transfer students of 14 percent. The enrollment surge put the university on track to meet its budgetary expectations.

"We are thrilled by the highly encouraging increase in our enrollment numbers," said La Sierra University president Christon Arthur. "Our dedicated university team answered the call and worked hard to move the needle. New processes were adopted toward increasing enrollment, and strategic investments were made in key areas, in particular enrollment services and marketing.

"The positive results support these investments as vital to our turnaround and continued growth. With these foundational improvements in place and our team committed to our unified cause, we look forward

with excitement to additional gains and opportunities to help even larger numbers of students achieve their God-given potential."

The university beat the statistical odds over the past school year, as it implemented new processes, added resources, and launched initiatives tightly focused on boosting enrollment. According to Karina Kowarsch, La Sierra's director of institutional research, the prospects of achieving more than 1,523 students enrolled this fall held a probability of only 5 percent, based on an annual statistical model the department generates.

The university has set a preliminary long-term target of 3,000 total enrollment by 2035.

—Darla Martin Tucker, La Sierra University Public Relations



La Sierra University freshmen gather for a photo during IGNITE orientation week. *Emily Penor*

## Ken Norton Elected as Voice of Prophecy Speaker/Director

Ken Norton, Voice of Prophecy Bible School director, has accepted the invitation of the North American Division to become the speaker/director of the ministry. Norton began his new role in January 2026.

Norton joined the Voice of Prophecy in March 2025 as director of the Discover Bible School. He brings more than 25 years of leadership in pastoral ministry, evangelism, education, and administration to the job. Prior to joining VOP, he most recently served as president of the Montana Conference (2021-2025) and as president of the Guam-Micronesia Mission (2016-2021).

Norton replaces Shawn Boonstra, who left VOP in May 2025 to become an associate editor at the *Adventist Review*.

In evaluating Norton for this position, division leadership was especially drawn to his experience in using media for evangelism.

"Ken brings a deep commitment to Christ-centered evangelism, a passion for communicating biblical truth, and a strong sense of mission to this historic ministry," says Rick Remmers, Voice of Prophecy board chair and North American Division assistant to the president. "With experience in pastoral leadership, media ministry, and holding public evangelistic meetings, he is well prepared to guide the Voice of Prophecy as it continues to share the everlasting gospel through broadcast, digital, and personal outreach."

Norton holds a Doctor of Ministry in missional church and a Master of Divinity from Andrews University, along with a B.A. in theology from Southern Adventist University. His broad ministry background, including cross-cultural mission service, evangelism leadership, teaching, and administrative oversight, positions Norton to guide VOP's expanding media, Bible school, and outreach initiatives across its broadcast and digital platforms.

"Ken's commitment to Christ-centered evangelism and his passion for communicating biblical truth will support the ministry's ongoing mission to reach new audiences with the gospel," said G. Alexander Bryant, president of the North American Division. "Ken deeply values the distinctive Seventh-day Adventist message, and I believe his leadership will be a blessing to all who engage with Voice of Prophecy."

"I'm extremely honored to be asked to lead a ministry that has made such an impact for God's kingdom for so many years," said Norton. "I want to do all I can to equip churches and lay members with quality and relevant resources that they can share with their neighbors and friends."

—Voice of Prophecy, NAD Office of Communication



Ken Norton, Voice of Prophecy speaker/director *Photo provided by Voice of Prophecy*



← Nathanael Griesert, associate professor in the School of Engineering and Physics at Southern Adventist University, speaks with a student in his office on campus. *Photo provided by Southern Adventist University*

## SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY AWARDED \$1.36 MILLION GRANT FOR STUDENT SUPPORT

**S**outhern Adventist University has been awarded a \$1.36 million federal TRIO Student Support Services grant to enhance support for students who are first-generation college students, meet federal low-income guidelines, or have a documented disability.

In response to receiving the grant, Southern established a new student support initiative called THRIVE, which stands for Tools for Higher-Ed Readiness, Involvement, Vision, and Excellence. The initiative will implement the funding and goals of the grant, expanding support to help participants thrive academically and personally during their college experience, with the ultimate aim of leading them to successful graduation.

THRIVE will provide participating students with a wide range of services, including individualized tutoring, dedicated peer mentors, counseling and coaching, skill-building workshops, career exploration, assistance with course selection, and guidance in identifying

and securing scholarships. Since student success is shaped by more than classroom performance alone, THRIVE is intentionally designed to help students navigate the nonacademic aspects of college life, such as personal and financial challenges, in addition to their academic pursuits.

Southern applied for the grant in 2024. In the fall of 2025 the university learned it had received a perfect score on the application and was awarded \$272,000 annually for five years, which will yield \$1.36 million in total. The THRIVE initiative was implemented in January 2026.

“We’re very grateful to have received this funding, which represents an important investment in our students and their futures,” says Kimberly Crider, THRIVE initiative director. “THRIVE allows us to come alongside student participants who may be facing additional challenges and provide consistent encouragement, practical resources, and individualized support as they work toward graduation.”

The initiative will serve up to 140 students each year and includes the opportunity for a \$500 scholarship per semester for students who successfully complete the initiative requirements, encouraging students to progress toward graduation.

—*Isabella Dixon, Southern Adventist University student writer, and Becky Brooks, SAU editorial manager*

BY ORNA K. GARNETT

# Blink, Adjust, and Move Forward

I have always been fascinated by the ocean. How could I not be when I was blessed to grow up on an island in the eastern Caribbean? Swimming, fishing, boating, beachcombing, and all that is unique to coastal life were second nature to me. While fierce storms would sometimes come, I never truly feared the sea; rather, I developed a deep appreciation—and even reverence—for its many moods.

Today I have the privilege of supporting the Adventist missionaries who call the North American Division their home. As they serve around the world, they face many unique challenges, but the lessons one can take from the sea can benefit all of us seeking to contribute to the gospel mission.

When the ocean is like glass—quiet, calm, and serene at sunrise and sunset—it invites reflection. In such moments you can hear your own heartbeat, and enter a meditative stillness that quiets the spirit and draws you toward surrender. What a contrast to the relentless midday surf, whose loud crashing breakers mirror the demands we face during our day. Protecting the quiet times of our lives, whether in morning prayer time or during our weekly Sabbath rest, helps us establish a sacred rhythm of stillness amid chaos, an invitation to breathe deeply and simply be.

Throughout Scripture the Lord often uses large bodies of water to capture attention and advance His mission. There is the parting of the Red Sea, revealing a safe path where none existed. There is the calming of furious waves on the Sea of Galilee, reminding frightened disciples they were never sailing alone. There is also the miraculous movement of fish into a single boat's nets, reassuring discouraged fishermen that their God transcends impossibility.

When the oceans and seas in your own journey become question marks in your mission or ministry, what do you see? Roaring waves? A looming shipwreck? Sharks circling beneath? A Red Sea with no way to cross?

Or do you blink and see something entirely different? Blinking allows us to briefly close and reopen our eyes, often to refocus or clear away distractions. Spiritually, blinking allows us to wipe away fear, refocus our vision, and see what God is revealing rather than what anxiety projects. This lesson was brought home for me

recently on a long road trip that required driving after dusk.

Although I wear prescription lenses, I had postponed my scheduled eye exam, which would have revealed that my vision had changed. While on the trip I suddenly found myself in an unfamiliar city, unable to navigate well, as I could not see directions clearly. In that moment I realized the consequence of neglecting that necessary adjustment.

A clear spiritual lens requires intentional effort. Whether you're in the tempest of the waves or the stillness of a peaceful sea, it means learning to see and hear God's voice personally, allowing Scripture and trusted advisors to help refine our vision. Could this be the challenge many of us face—attempting to navigate deep waters with uncalibrated vision?

Mission can be its own ocean of discomfiting challenges: travel, surrender, confusion, and frustration. But there are infinitely more positive and redemptive outcomes for those who choose to face their ocean with God as navigator. Prayer is our powerful connection throughout.

To paraphrase Jonah 1:2: Arise, go to your Nineveh—that frightening city—and speak truth, for its actions have come before the Lord.

The shoreline feels safe and stable. It is easy to remain there, dreaming of possibilities while avoiding risk. Staying on the shore shields us from the chaos of the waves—but it also keeps us from obedience. As you seek to fulfill your call to mission, blink. Adjust your lens. Resist fear. And move forward into the ocean, trusting God to lead the way.

*Orna K. Garnett is director of Missionary Services for the North American Division.*

A clear spiritual lens requires intentional effort.



1 Leslie Louis, Carolina Conference president, presents the Live With Hope seminar at the Gastonia church in North Carolina.

2 Gastonia, North Carolina, church members distribute goods to the community, inviting them to stay for the meetings.

3 Left to right: Leslie Louis, Carolina Conference president, and his wife, Carole, director of Ministerial Spouses Association; and Thorn Hean, pastor of the Gastonia church, and his wife, Phalla Hean.

Photos provided by Phalla Hean



## In the Southern Union the Spirit Leads at Gastonia Church's Evangelistic Series

After years of planning and prayer, the Gastonia Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gastonia, North Carolina, experienced a revival during an evangelistic series held in March 2025. Leslie Louis, Carolina Conference president, presented the Live With Hope seminars, originally scheduled years earlier but providentially aligned with the North American Division's Pentecost 2025 initiative. The Carolina Conference embraced the initiative under the theme "Let It Rain."

Preparation began nearly 18 months prior. Roughly 10 months before the series, Louis met with the church leadership to align strategies and encourage spiritual engagement. Members united in prayer daily at 6:00 a.m., claiming the promise of Luke 11:13 for the Holy Spirit's outpouring. Weekly fasting and prayer deepened the spiritual preparation. "We took God at His word," shared one member, "and He honored our commitment."

In collaboration with Daniel Hall, Carolina Conference director of Compassion Ministries, the church focused on community outreach. Members were trained to meet practical needs while sharing Christ. "Jesus said to become fishers of men," said Hall. "This church followed faithfully."

The church also partnered with its Spanish-speaking congregation to connect with the local Hispanic community. The community responded — more than 100 guests registered on opening night through Facebook outreach alone. Throughout the 24-meeting series, attendance remained high. Guests received spiritual messages alongside practical support, including free groceries, toiletries, diapers, and children's toys.

The Holy Spirit moved powerfully. As of this writing, eight individuals have been baptized, and four more are preparing for baptism. A coordinated retention, calling, and transportation ministry continues to nurture new members through Bible studies and church fellowship.

The Gastonia church expressed gratitude for the support of Glen Altermatt, Carolina Ministerial director, and Haskell Williams, Carolina vice president for administration. Above all, members gave glory to God for the harvest and look forward with faith to future outreach.

*Phalla T. Hean, writer; the original version of this article was published on the Southern Tidings website. Video on the series, produced by the Carolina Conference, is available at [youtube.com/watch?v=hzX11gUY1qk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=hzX11gUY1qk).*

# In Southwestern Union, Hope-Filled Caravan Visits Texas Spanish Churches

**F**rom June 7 to 14, just weeks before being elected General Conference (GC) president, Erton Köhler joined a caravan of two dozen individuals visiting Spanish-speaking churches within the Texas Conference. The evangelistic outreach, referred to as the Caravan of Hope, featured Köhler, then-GC executive secretary, as the main speaker. The theme for the week was “Cuando Jesús Llega” (“When Jesus Arrives”). Nearly 200 people were baptized, with an additional 50 preparing for baptism. Many others also committed or recommitted their lives to Jesus.

The Caravan of Hope began its evangelistic outreach at the Garland Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church and continued that day at the Dallas Spanish Oak Cliff Seventh-day Adventist Church. From Sunday to Friday evenings the team led worship services at six Seventh-day Adventist churches: Keene Spanish, Austin Spanish First, San Antonio Spanish Los Tres Ángeles, McAllen Spanish Valley Central, Brownsville Spanish, and Houston Spanish Northwest. The week concluded with two final services held at the Houston Spanish Spring Branch Seventh-day Adventist Church.

“Each service featured inspiring music from renowned artists Laura Morena, Heraldos de Esperanza, and Japhet Ruiz, creating an atmosphere of worship and celebration,” shared Ismael Castillo, vice president for Hispanic ministries and Spanish evangelism at the Texas Conference. “Thousands gathered either in person or through livestreaming to witness powerful sermons, uplifting music, and, most important, lives transformed by the gospel.”

“God’s blessings were unmistakable,” said Elton DeMoraes, Texas Conference

president. “What began as a casual conversation evolved into a powerful week of hope, touching many hearts with the message of salvation. Elder Köhler’s messages were both timely and impactful. We are grateful that he was able to be here to inspire our church members and those who watched online.”

The Texas Conference media team and volunteers captured the entire event. Under the direction of Andy Esqueche, associate director for Communication and public relations, the services were livestreamed.\*

“‘Cuando Jesús Llega’ was more than just an event,” Castillo said. “It was a movement that reminded us that when Jesus truly arrives in hearts, miracles happen. I appreciate Pastor DeMoraes’ visionary leadership and his passion for evangelism, which set the stage for this caravan.”

“Elder Castillo, his team, and the Spanish church pastors faithfully hold evangelistic series at least twice a year,” DeMoraes added. “It was a privilege to collaborate with them on this initiative. The Texas Conference theme is ‘Together as One,’ and this weeklong event showcased that unity in action. Local church pastors and members embraced visitors, focusing on bringing Jesus to their communities. Incredible music from our professional musicians and powerful messages from Elder Köhler enriched the experience. Everyone was blessed by the Holy Spirit. The dedication and commitment during this week resulted in baptisms and renewed commitments to faith. Surely heaven rejoiced as people around the world witnessed and learned about a peace that only Jesus can provide.”

Köhler reflected, “The involvement of the churches, pastors, and Texas Conference leadership was amazing. During my time in Texas we visited seven cities and 10 different churches. Participating in this movement, which is part of the North American Division initiative, Pentecost 2025, was truly a blessing.”

Grateful for what God accomplished during that exhilarating yet exhausting week, participants now look forward to what He has in store. Their mission remains clear: to finish the work here on earth so that all may one day live forever with their Best Friend, Jesus.

\* Recordings can be viewed at [TexasAdventist.org/cuando-jesus-llega](https://TexasAdventist.org/cuando-jesus-llega). In addition, photos from the event, taken by Teymi Townsend, assistant director for Communication and public relations at the Texas Conference, can be viewed at [Flickr.com/TexasAdventist](https://Flickr.com/TexasAdventist).

*Tamara Michalenko Terry, writer; the original version of this article was published in the Southwestern Union Record.*

The Cabrera family, neighbors of Pastor José Luis Cabrera, after studying the Bible with Cabrera and attending church, are baptized at the church during the June 2025 Caravan of Hope. *Provided by the Southwestern Union.*



# THE REACHES OF A RUSHING WIND: A Look at Pentecost 2025 and Its Ongoing Impact

**I**n early 2024 North American Division leadership considered the early church's experience with Pentecost and asked: "What if we were to do something like that at the NAD? What is we could get all our churches involved? What if we focused on prayer, outreach, and proclaiming the gospel message?"

Inspired by the Holy Spirit's moving in Acts 2, Pentecost 2025 was conceived as a modern-day call for every congregation to engage in mission and evangelism locally—a call to meet people where they are and share the everlasting gospel. Commissioned as ambassadors of hope, compassion, and truth, members in North America were

challenged to pray earnestly and humbly for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to participate actively in proclaiming the distinctive truths we've been entrusted with, and to embody the love of Christ in a world hungering for hope and wholeness.

Pentecost 2025 focus areas included prayer, community engagement, proclamation, and discipleship. The North American Division made intentional efforts through Pentecost2025.com to equip members and leaders with the tools, knowledge, and resources necessary to participate in effective evangelism. Special funding was available for congregations and schools to carry out this vision. The goal was set, and the Holy Spirit moved tremendously through members in North America. Below is some of the impact of Pentecost 2025 to date. A strong wind moved in 2025, and the effects are still being felt into 2026 and beyond.



## Pentecost 2025 Snapshots

**1** Erika and her daughter, Avery, respond to the Revelation of Hope seminar at the Chapel Oaks Seventh-day Adventist Church in Shawnee, Kansas, in September 2025.

**2** Witnessed by children and adults alike, this youth declares his faith through baptism during the Pentecost series at the Woodbridge Route 1 Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church in Virginia.

**3** Ephesus Seventh-day Adventist Church attendees come together at the Family, Faith, Forward Pentecost 2025 Reaping Series in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

**4** The Hope for End-time series held in November 2025 at Toronto Pilipino Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ontario, Canada, drew roughly 175 attendees every night.

**5** Sequoia group campers study Momentum Youth Bible Series at Laurel Lake Summer Camp in Rossiter, Pennsylvania, in the summer of 2025.

**6** After Pentecost 2025 meetings at Washington Adventist University, Chaplain Jiwan Moon prays for student-athlete Asante Mzuthi Khamula moments before her baptism.

**7** A powerful turnout marked the Cambodian Adventist Company's Pentecost 2025 series, Hope for the Hopeless (April 3-26), in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada.

**8** Up to 65 kids attended nightly at Bucks County Seventh-day Adventist Church's October Blast in Warminster, Pennsylvania, during the Revelation Today Hope for Humanity Pentecost 2025 series.

**9** During Blue Mountain Academy's Pentecost 2025 health evangelistic series (April 1-30) students served healthy, delicious snacks to help hearts and minds be "transformed and renewed" in Hamburg, Pennsylvania.

# Breakdown of participation by union

**24,619**  
souls impacted

**19,737**  
baptisms

**4,882**  
professions of faith\*

\*Numbers as of January 2026

North Pacific Union: 275

Pacific Union: 590

Guam-Micronesia Mission: 27

Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada: 371

Mid-America Union: 356

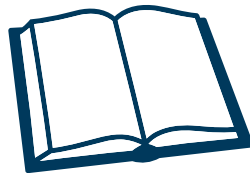
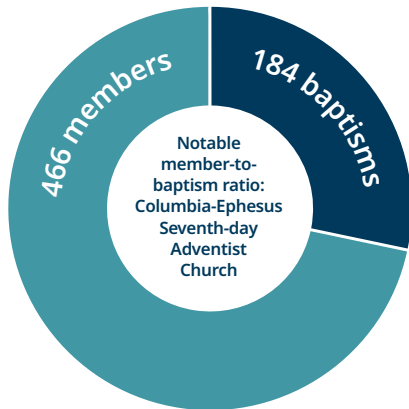
Lake Union: 472

Atlantic Union: 654

Columbia Union: 814

Southwestern Union: 526

Southern Union: 1,103



**10,060**

Bible study guides for youth requested

Goal: 3,000 proclamation initiatives  
Actual proclamation initiative sign ups:

**5,216**

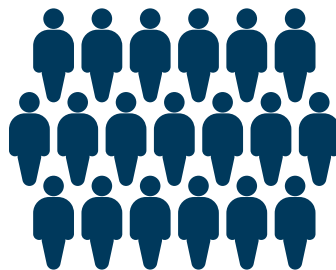


**\$3,000**

available to every congregation or school

**\$15,588,700**

disbursed by the North American Division



Largest participating congregation: Loma Linda University Church, 6,684 members

Smallest participating congregation: Lexington Hispanic Seventh-day Adventist Company, 4 members



**4,876**

congregations reported participation



**323**

schools reported participation



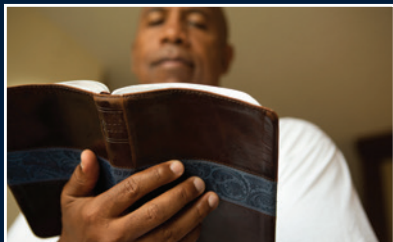
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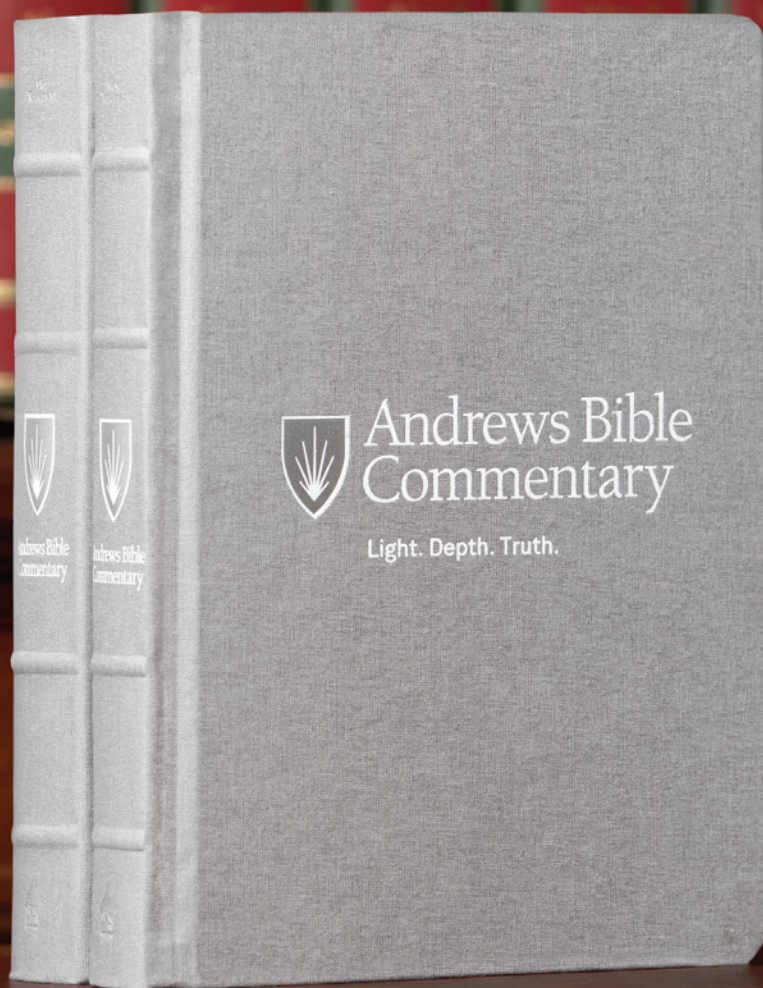
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