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# Adventist Journey

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## My Journey

What brings me joy is being there for other people and knowing that I've impacted them in a positive way. So when I hear people tell me, "Thank you for being there for me," or those types of things, it really brings me joy because it's just a sense of fulfillment that I've done something good for someone.

Visit [nadadventist.org/ajcharismcroy](http://nadadventist.org/ajcharismcroy) for more of McRoy's story.

**CHARIS MCROY,**  
author and Guide columnist

Charis McRoy



Cover photo by Dan Weber

**Dear Reader:** The publication in your hands represents the collaborative efforts of the North American Division and *Adventist World* magazine, which follows *Adventist Journey* (after page 16). Please enjoy both magazines!

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## ADVENTIST JOURNEY

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Notice: This *Adventist Journey* is a combined July/August edition.



Photo by Pieter Damsteegt

# BEWARE OF

# THE

Practical ways  
to avoid  
ministry scams

# WOLVES

**A**dventist World executive editor Bill Knott recently spoke with Karnik Doukmetzian, general counsel of the General Conference and the North American Division, about dubious charities with unverifiable projects that take advantage of church members.

**We've recently heard again of a nonprofit organization that for 20 years—under various names but led by the same individual—has been engaged in a series of deceptive financial appeals to church members. The organization claims to distribute Bibles and evangelistic**

**materials in parts of the world that can't be visited, where no confirming evidence of delivery could ever happen. What's your reaction as someone charged with watching out for the legal and ethical health of the church?**

Knowing that the U.S. and Canadian government regulations make it very difficult for Westerners to visit these countries freely or send funds or assistance there, let alone distribute religious literature or Bibles, I immediately start to question the veracity of these projects. How do I verify that the donation I gave because of the touching story I heard in church is actually going for the purpose described?

There are several countries that limit access for people to visit or do ministry work in. How do I know that the funds that I gave for a wonderful project in North Korea,

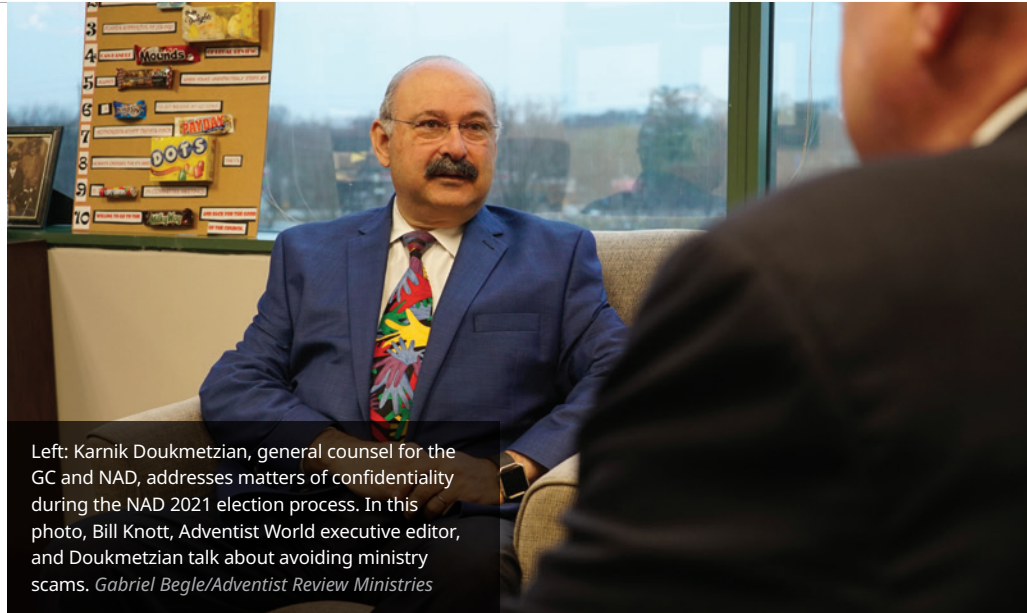


Mauritania, or Brunei—where I know that Adventist work is nonexistent or the church isn't able to officially have a presence—how do I know that my funds will actually end up there or that the project my funds are to support will actually take place? How do I know that the individuals or the organization telling me all these wonderful stories are legitimate and truthful? Their claims can't be independently verified.

When someone says, "We're going to build a school or an orphanage in India with your donations," and the school goes up, that's proof my money went to that project and was used for the intended purpose. But if someone says, "I'm going to send a thousand containers of food or Bibles to Mauritania," how do I verify that those goods or those Bibles actually got to Mauritania?

**You and I were both recently contacted by employees of one such organization that has made amazing claims about delivering Bibles and products to a highly restricted area, North Korea. The employees detailed from an internal investigation that moneys weren't accounted for, and that no confirmation of delivery of goods promised could be obtained. It's an unusual step when the employees of a ministry actually turn around and say, "Someone, please help us."**

It shows that these well-meaning employees still operate by Christian ethics. Unfortunately, organizations that aren't recognized denominational organizations and aren't part of the Seventh-day Adventist structure trade on the church's name and reputation in order to be able to raise funds from church members. They claim they're "supporting ministries" or that they are supporting the mission of the church, when, in fact, on many occasions all they're doing is supporting their own pockets.



Left: Karnik Doukmetzian, general counsel for the GC and NAD, addresses matters of confidentiality during the NAD 2021 election process. In this photo, Bill Knott, Adventist World executive editor, and Doukmetzian talk about avoiding ministry scams. *Gabriel Begle/Adventist Review Ministries*

### **How can I know whether a ministry organization asking for my money is reputable?**

One of the things donors should check is what watchdog organizations say about these charities. There are a number of ways to check this, including on websites such as CharityWatch.org or GuideStar.org that rate charities. How are these organizations using the funds? Do they satisfy the regulations and tax requirements of U.S. or Canadian governments when they file their tax returns? How do they account for the money they've raised and where was it spent?

A key thing that watchdogs such as Charity Navigator or Charity Watch look for is the percentage of funds raised that are actually used for the purpose, programs, or mission of the organization. They also look closely at what percentage is used for overhead, salaries, fundraising, and things like that. The majority of reputable charity or ministry organizations spend between 20 and 35 percent of every dollar donated for overhead-type expenses. Every legitimate organization has legitimate operating expenses. When you see organizations spending upward of 80 or 90

percent or more of the money on their own salaries and overhead, however, you have to ask, "Is my money actually going for a project that I believe in, or is it being used only to perpetuate the organization?" One of the best places for U.S. residents to get that information is from the IRS Form 990 that the IRS requires every nonprofit to file annually. Those reports are available online through such sites as Guidestar, Charity Watch, and Charity Navigator.

### **There would be a comparable entity in Canada, I expect?**

Correct. Canada Revenue Authority has the same requirement, and charities are required to file those forms. In fact, I remember noting an organization in 2020 that raised a little more than \$1 million from church members. Its operational expenses were just under \$1 million. Of the total, about \$200,000 went to the president of the organization as his compensation. If 20 percent of what is raised is going to the president's salary, let alone the salary of other employees, or rent, or advertising expenses, you know that not much is going to the actual ministry that's being advertised.

**Not many Bibles actually get to North Korea then?**

No, and a lot of trusting church members don't realize how they have been misled. All one has to do is listen to the news to know how oppressive the regime in that country is and to realize how improbable such a task really is to accomplish.

**Each church member has a stewardship responsibility before God to use funds wisely. But most of these dubious organizations depend on getting access to believers by preaching at church services or afternoon programs, or offering to supplement what the local church is doing. What are the responsibilities of pastors, elders, and conference leaders before they open their pulpits and give access to what could be scams?**

That's one thing that every church leader needs to monitor constantly. The legitimacy these individuals or organizations get from claiming to be somehow attached to the Adventist Church is their door opener—that's how they get access to the church. A ministry or charity leader may claim that he or she is a pastor or a retired pastor now leading this effort. They may claim that they're affiliated somehow with the church or that their project is approved by the official church, or claim that the work they intend to do in some country fulfills the mission of the church because the church can't officially work there.

That gives them the opening wedge to get into the church. Pastors and leaders are always looking for a heartwarming story from the mission field to encourage their members. When they're approached under such circumstances, pastors and elders need to be wary about giving up their pulpits without doing the appropriate checks on the organizations claiming to do such

Unless leaders verify the organization's credentials and check on the legitimacy of the individuals and their work they shouldn't give access to the pulpit or allow even one dollar to be raised from their church members, no matter how good the pitch sounds.

good work. The *Church Manual* is very clear about who should get access to the church pulpit. In North America we've had many instances in which individuals with exaggerated, unverifiable claims are allowed to promote their causes during worship services or afternoon youth or mission programs. Unless leaders verify the organization's credentials and check on the legitimacy of the individuals and their work—see if they have been approved by the local conference—they shouldn't give access to the pulpit or allow even one dollar to be raised from their church members, no matter how good the pitch sounds.

One of the behaviors frequently reported is that the ministry leader asks for a special offering on the spot. He will urge, "I know you didn't come here today planning to give to this, but if the Lord touches your heart, this ministry just really needs your support." And money starts moving. A common tactic your office has documented is that people doing these things frequently say, "Don't run the offering through your church books and records. Just give it to me, and I'll take it back to the ministry." What should a pastor or a local elder do when they're confronted with that appeal?

If it's a legitimate ministry, it will have no problems allowing the funds received by the local church to be reported through church channels. For the local congregation as a legitimate charity receiving funds, it's not against the law to pass the funds on to another legitimate, recognized charity. There's no problem if there's nothing to hide. Many times presenters want the money directly so they don't have to account for it properly, especially if it's in cash. They're able to redirect the funds to other purposes, including, sometimes, their own bank accounts. Such organizations shouldn't be given access to the congregation. They need to satisfy church leadership that they are legitimate by demonstrating, for example, that they are a member of Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (ASI). ASI does background checking on organizations before issuing membership. That's an easy question: "Are you a member of ASI?" I'm not at all saying that if they're not members of ASI they are somehow illegitimate or fraudulent. But ASI membership is simply another way to check. All donations should go through official church channels so that they can be traced, monitored, and accounted for.

Transparency and accountability are two words that should always be at the forefront of any verification process. The *Church Manual* gives church leaders counsel in such circumstances. Listen to this: "Pastors and officers shall not grant the privilege of the pulpit to persons for fund-raising who have not been recognized or recommended by the conference. . . . No permission shall be granted to solicit funds either publicly or privately without such recognition. All funds contributed for any cause in response to appeals shall be passed through regular church channels" (p. 139).

**Should a ministry soliciting funds be able to demonstrate accountability to external examiners?**

Some of these organizations struggle with accountability. Do they go through appropriate audits? Will the funds go through the church books? Funds donated through a local church will be audited by the local conference, and the conference records will be audited by the General Conference Auditing Service. But with independent organizations, who audits their books? That's actually part of the role of the boards of these organizations—to verify that what's happening in the ministry or charity is appropriate, and that the goals and mission of the organization are being carried out. Unfortunately, the boards of these small organizations are often made up of friends and family members who don't pay attention to the accountability aspect of their role. The leader—the president or director—really runs it as a personal kingdom. Money comes and money goes based on one person's direction.

**I'm a busy pastor who gets a request to open my pulpit. Is there any central resource I can access to establish the organization's credibility?**

I wish we had a central resource, but at this time we don't. The main starting point for a pastor is the local conference. Again, the *Church Manual* is pretty clear on who should have access to our pulpits:

"Under no circumstances should a pastor, elder, or other officer invite strangers or any unauthorized persons to conduct services. Individuals who have been removed from the ministry or who have been removed from membership in other places, or designing persons who have no authority from the church, should not be given access to

the pulpit. Those worthy of confidence will be able to identify themselves by producing proper credentials" (p. 120).

Is this individual recognized by the church? Do they have credentials as a denominational employee? Have they been recognized approved or recommended by the conference? If not, it's best to check with the conference and get conference approval before you grant access to your pulpit or your membership. Don't allow them to do fundraising in your church without verification.

If a legitimate denominational entity such as *It Is Written* or *Voice of Prophecy* or *Hope Channel* or *Breath of Life*, is fundraising, that's fine, because of the interrelationship with those organizations. If Shawn Boonstra requests an opportunity to preach on Sabbath morning and talk with members about the ministry he leads—that's wonderful. But if an individual says, "Look, I have a project or a supporting ministry, and I'd like to raise money," tell them, "Don't come to my church and pass out your brochures and tell your stories and try to collect money unless you are already approved or authorized by the conference."

Websites now allow us to check many such things quickly. Visit the organization's website. What do they have on their website? You'll start to see patterns. Check their newsletters: if those newsletters are identical every month with the same pictures, and the pictures look questionable, you should move carefully, if at all. If the stories they tell are dramatic or unverifiable, you should find another charity to give your funds to. On their website you'll be able to tell what independent oversight exists for their organization. Check the board membership. You may recognize some names on their board, and you can question those individuals. If it looks like the board is very small, with perhaps only three or four people, and if the individuals all appear to be somehow related or are all employees of the organization, that ought to raise flags. There's no independence there. What press reports are there regarding this organization? Do your research if you're going to donate.

**From what you've shared, church leaders and individual donors have many resources to establish whether a charity or ministry is credible. If you could leave one line in the minds of church leaders and members, what would it be?**

Trust, but verify. At its heart the church is built on trusting relationships. We want—we need—to build and retain confidence in the people who lead us, with whom we worship, and who direct mission. Asking good questions is part of good stewardship. If independent ministry organizations can't supply good answers, put your trust and your money elsewhere.

Photo by Pieter Damsteegt



# The Sun STILL RISES

**Marissa's condition was a mystery, but God's mercies never failed. Today she's healed.**

**BY INGRID HERNÁNDEZ**

**M**arissa Channer doesn't know the exact moment her disease started, but she remembers a significant turning point with her health. It was in February 2016, around the same time she started her role as a financial services accountant at AdventHealth University (AHU) in Florida.

Channer had been working for three years in the cash reconciliation department at AdventHealth's corporate office. She was comfortable. She had no intentions of switching jobs—but she started to feel a stirring from God.

"I felt God was speaking to me, but I kept arguing with Him about it," she said. "One day I just prayed that if He wanted me to go somewhere else, He would need to bring the job to me. At that same moment I got a phone call from who would be my future boss at the university. He told me they were creating a new position, and he wanted to offer it to me first. I don't know why we ever doubt God, because He's always looking out for our best interest. In hindsight I see so many reasons He led me to AHU."

In the month that Channer began her new job, her health started to decline. She struggled with her weight beforehand, but at this point her physiology started drastically changing. She didn't know it then, but transitioning to AHU would eventually set her on her path to discovery and healing. It was also after she transitioned to AHU that she began designing her own prayer journal planner.

"Prayer is very important to me. I consult God about everything," Channer said. "But I started coming to our quiet time with too many materials—my prayer journals, planners, notes. No journal I found was quite right or fully comprehensive for what I needed, so I decided to create my own."

## **Mystery Solved**

Channer's most frequent prayers during this time were for answers. She had gone to a few doctors and specialists, but they didn't know what was wrong. She remembers talking to one of her colleagues at AHU about how she was "done seeing doctors." But her colleague insisted she give one specific physician a chance: George Guthrie, M.D., M.P.H, of the AdventHealth Medical Group.

"Dr. Guthrie was a godsend," Channer said. "I knew him from my church, so I was a little more comfortable giving him a shot.

And if I hadn't gone to him, I'm sure I would've never received a true diagnosis."

A key reason Channer's underlying health condition had been so hard to diagnose was that it was causing a range of seemingly unrelated issues and secondary conditions. She was diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), metabolic syndrome, anemia, sleep apnea, and osteoporosis, experiencing mysterious bruising and bleeding, gaining weight and losing muscle mass, and even getting into multiple car accidents because her judgment behind the steering wheel was off. But Guthrie did not give up on her.

"Some individuals have health problems that are not easily solved. In my opinion, the caring physician, especially the primary-care physician, has the responsibility to support and encourage the patient while guiding the patient through the maze of tests and/or specialist visits until the answer is found," Guthrie said. "We caregivers must keep asking the question 'Why?' until we get the answer. I find it helpful to see myself as the junior physician under the Great Healer and often ask God for assistance. I am certain that He commonly taps me on the shoulder of my heart and provides help."

After a few months and many tests, Guthrie discovered Channer's



Photos provided by AdventHealth



← Marissa Channer in July 2015 before her health took a turn for the worse.

↓ Channer 15 weeks after her surgery in 2020.



body was overproducing cortisol—the body’s main stress hormone—and referred her to an endocrinologist. One year and a second endocrinologist later she was diagnosed with Cushing’s disease, when the pituitary gland overproduces ACTH (adrenocorticotropic hormone), which in turn becomes cortisol. Cushing’s disease is not only rare, but fatal without treatment.

Knowing the disease was an important first step, but the condition is so uncommon that even the specialist did not know what was causing Channer’s condition. Channer went back to Guthrie for help, and he assured her that he saw a light at the end of the tunnel. One more test, an MRI of her pituitary gland, finally revealed the cause: a noncancerous tumor. That’s when Guthrie referred her to a neurosurgeon who had pioneered a procedure for pituitary surgeries in collaboration with ENT (ear, nose and throat) specialists.

“The neurosurgeon told me the operation had a 70 percent success rate for curing the disease,” Channer said. “I knew I needed to do it, but I was a bit nervous, so I called a former AHU coworker who’d also had brain surgery. When I talked to her, I found out her surgery was for the same disease! She said, ‘It’s a good thing you’re getting the surgery right away. I was so nervous that I waited, and by the time I went in, I had become nearly blind from the disease.’”

Channer’s successful brain surgery took place in November 2020. It took her two months to recover from the physical aspects of the procedure. It will take a full year for her to recover from the hormonal changes, but she said she is seeing a remission from the secondary conditions.

“I can walk again, drive, and sleep through the night,” she said. “I’ve already lost 30 of the 60 pounds I had gained from the disease.”

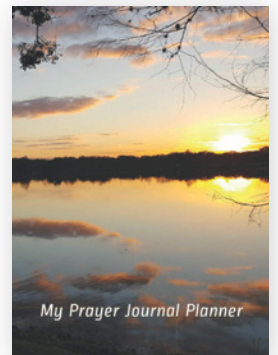
### Prayer Journal

Channer put her prayer journal project on hold at the height of her health problems, but as soon as she felt recovered enough from the surgery, she picked it back up. When it was done, she self-published the journal on Amazon—realizing if it had helped her, it could potentially help others.

The cover photo of “My Prayer Journal Planner” was taken by Channer herself on one of her morning walks around the lake on the campus of AdventHealth University. It’s a photo of a sunrise reflected over the water. She said sunrises are deeply meaningful to her, as they remind her of God’s promises—promises she’s seen fulfilled in her own life’s journey.

“A sunrise is like God painting a special blessing for us,” she said. “They’re never the same, and only He can do that. It’s like He’s showing us that no matter what happens, the sun still rises the next day.”

The sun has risen once again for Channer. She said she feels better every day—and better than she has in years.



↑ Channer’s self-published prayer journal.

*Ingrid Hernández is manager of stakeholder/corporate communications for AdventHealth.*



← G. Alexander Bryant, division president, addresses members of the NAD executive committee during a special meeting held on April 29, 2021. *Pieter Damsteegt*

## 2021 ELECTIONS BRING LEADERSHIP CHANGES FOR NAD ADMINISTRATION, DEPARTMENTS, AND GUAM-MICRONESIA MISSION

BY MYLON MEDLEY

**T**hree vice presidents, two directors, an associate director, *Liberty* magazine editor, and the president of the Guam-Micronesia Mission have been newly elected to serve the North American Division (NAD) until 2025. The election on April 29, 2021, took place during a meeting of the NAD executive committee; the date was chosen by the same governing body through a vote on February 25, 2021, following the postponement of the 2021 General Conference Session.

A total of 42 names were presented for election or reelection from the division's nominating committee. Executive committee members could vote for or against the names, or refer the name(s) back to the nominating committee. Most positions voted were for incumbents; however, seven new leaders accepted the call to serve.

Right before executive committee members voted, Randy Robinson, NAD treasurer, offered prayer. "Father, this is a solemn moment in which we are acting . . . as we consider these individuals for these positions, we pray for Your Spirit's movement in our hearts. And we pray for the will of God to be done. We thank You," Robinson prayed.

Wendy Eberhardt was elected to serve as the NAD vice president for ministries, replacing Bonita J. Shields, who announced this spring that she would not seek reelection. Eberhardt is the director of young adult minis-

tries and camp ministries for the Arizona Conference. She has also served in the Upper Columbia, Kentucky-Tennessee, and Pennsylvania conferences, primarily in the roles of camping leadership and youth ministries.

"She has a strong passion for mentoring, is highly spiritual, and has tremendous people skills. She has the desire to see people be the best they can be," said G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president, when presenting her name to the executive committee.

Calvin Watkins, Sr., was elected to become the NAD vice president for evangelism and regional liaison. Alvin Kibble, who retired in 2020, served in this position as liaison to the regional conferences, in leadership development, and public affairs and religious liberty (PARL). Watkins is currently the president of the Southwest Regional Conference. He had previously served the South Atlantic Conference as ministerial director and director of the conference's Adventist Community Services.

"Calvin has baptized more than 6,000 people in his time as an evangelist," said Bryant. "He is passionate about doing what he can to finish the work of the Lord."

Maurice Valentine was elected as the vice president for media liaison, replacing the retiring Gordon Pifher, who was vice president of media ministries. Valentine previously served the Lake Union as its executive secretary and is currently its president. Prior to the Lake Union, he had served as president of the Central States Conference and vice president for administration of the Mid-America Union. He

has also organized a citywide radio broadcasting network, and has served on the Breath of Life Ministries executive committee.

“He’s a facilitator and disciple-builder. He brings administrative strength to the role for collaboration,” said Bryant.

Current NAD vice presidents Arne Nielsen, vice president for education, and Tony Anobile, vice president for multilingual ministries, were both reelected.

All incumbents for secretariat and treasury positions were reelected: Elden Ramirez, undersecretary; Carolyn Forrest, associate secretary; Judy Glass, undertreasurer; C. Michael Park, associate treasurer; Sharon Mabena, associate treasurer; and Edwin Romero, associate treasurer. Romero also currently serves as Adventist Retirement administrator/CEO, a separately appointed position.

### Ministries’ Leadership Elections

Bettina Krause was elected as the new editor of *Liberty* magazine, the division’s publication on religious liberty. Krause comes to the division from the General Conference as associate director of its PARL department, through which she represented the denomination on Capitol Hill. With a law degree (LL.B.) from Australia, Krause has significant experience in denominational work as director of Adventist News Network, and director of media relations for the General Conference. Krause also served as special assistant to the former president of the General Conference, Jan Paulsen, for protocol, media, and communication.

“She has a strong love of religious liberty and is very qualified to serve in this role,” said Bryant.

DeeAnn Bragaw was elected to become the women’s ministries director of the NAD, replacing Carla Baker, who retired in 2019. Bragaw works for the Rocky Mountain

Conference, where she serves as its women’s ministries director and prayer ministries coordinator. She has a master’s degree in pastoral ministries and received a bachelor’s degree in education.

“DeeAnn comes highly recommended from many women’s ministries directors,” said Bryant. “She has coordinated many special events and retreats, and collaborates with the youth department to engage and empower teenagers.”

W. Derrick Lea was voted as new NAD Adventist Community Services (ACS) director. Lea was previously its associate director, serving as disaster response director since 2015. He was a fire chief before coming to the division.

“He has a rich history in disaster work, and a passion for serving the community,” said Bryant.

Rudy Salazar will be the new stewardship ministries associate director. Salazar comes from the Central California Conference as its director of gift planning ministries and stewardship.

“Rudy also has many years of experience in stewardship and trust work from times in Texas, Oregon, and California. He’s conducted camp meeting services in English and Spanish,” said Bryant.

Incumbents for the following ministries were reelected: Adventist chaplaincy ministries, Paul Anderson, director; children’s ministries, Sherri Uhrig, director, and Gerry Lopez, associate director; communication, Dan Weber, director, Kimberly Luste Maran, associate director, and Julio C. Muñoz, associate director; health ministries, Angeline David Brauer, director; office of volunteer ministries, Ernest Hernandez, director; education, Leisa Morton-Standish, associate director, Stephen Bralley, associate director, Evelyn Sullivan, associate director, and Martha Ban, associate director; family ministries, Claudio Consuegra, director, and Pamela Consuegra, associate director; literature ministries, Carl McRoy, director; public affairs and religious liberty, Melissa Reid, associate director; Ministerial Association, Ivan Williams, director, Dave Gemmell, associate director, Jose Cortes, Jr., associate director, and Esther Knott, associate director; stewardship ministries, Michael Harpe, director; and youth and young adult ministries, Tracy Wood, director, Vandeon Griffin, associate director, and Armando Miranda, Jr., associate director.

Three positions have been referred to the NAD administrative committee (NADCOM), which meets throughout the year. These include the position of vice president of strategy and assessment, recently vacated by the retiring Paul Brantley; director for Sabbath School and personal ministries; and NAD ACS associate director.

### Ministry Moves

The final position filled on April 29 was president of the Guam-Micronesia Mission (GMM). Its previous president, Ken Norton, recently became the president of the Montana Conference. The NAD executive committee elected Matthew Kirk, the current secretary/treasurer of the Montana Conference, to become the mission’s newest president. Remenster Jano, GMM secretary, and Donald Lloyd, treasurer, were both reelected.

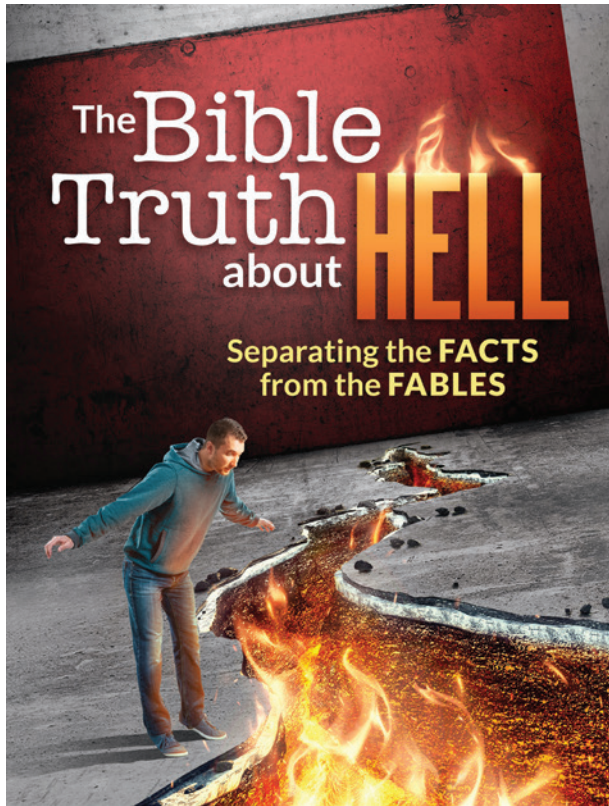
The executive committee also voted two additional actions to give special recognition to leaders who have retired and/or have accepted different roles.

*Mylon Medley is an assistant director of communication for the NAD; Kimberly Luste Maran contributed to this report.*



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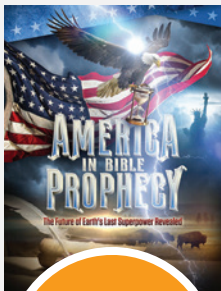
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BY RANDY ROBINSON

# Widen My Lens

A few years ago I bought a telescope. It was quite powerful—for an amateur, home-use telescope. I was able to see a high level of detail on the moon; the rings of Saturn; and the large moving storm cloud on Jupiter. But to use it I had to close one eye and sort of squint with the other as I peered through the lens. I had a great experience, but the lens through which I viewed was limited.

My lens was widened when I went from my telescope to an IMAX theater to watch the documentary *Hubble3D*. On a screen three stories tall and at least as wide, I witnessed astronauts rocketed beyond earth's atmosphere to repair the Hubble space telescope. And then to see into deep space through its repaired lens! All I could say was "Wow!" I saw amazing wonders with both eyes wide open. To say that my lens was widened is an astronomical understatement! (Sorry, I couldn't resist.)

Both experiences were awesome, but my experience was greatly enhanced when I looked through the wider lens.

I thought about that wider-lens experience as I read the story of Lazarus. The Bible says Lazarus was sick and his sisters, Mary and Martha, called for Jesus to come. Jesus delayed His journey long enough that Lazarus died before He arrived. When He did arrive, Martha ran out to Him and sobbed that Lazarus would not have died had He been there sooner. Her obvious implication was that Jesus would have healed Lazarus and prevented his death. That seems like a wide lens of faith, but from Jesus' perspective it was a lens Martha looked through with only one squinty eye.

In an attempt to widen her lens to IMAX proportions, Jesus replied, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). The implications of that statement were not fully felt until Jesus called the four-day-dead, smelly corpse of Lazarus out of the tomb, and he walked out! Flabbergasted is not adequate to describe Martha's emotion when Lazarus walked up to her—talk about a wide-lens experience!

## Following When We Cannot See

One time at the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport a little old couple, unfamiliar with the airport, asked me for directions. I asked them to follow me. At six feet nine inches tall, I could see over the crowd and all the way to the couple's destination. They could not. They had to stick with me and trust I would get them to their destination regardless of the rather chaotic path they had to travel. They had to trust that I could see and follow me, even though they could not see.

We are going through a pandemic, and dealing with things we have never seen before. During these times, do we really believe the "all" in "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13, NKJV)?\* Can we really have faith in the fact that Jesus says "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5)? Is our faith lens wide enough to imagine a God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills?

I ask myself these questions: Can I trust God to lead my life, knowing He can see the exact path to the destination He wants me to go, and I can't? Am I willing to widen my faith lens to follow Him through thick and thin, with the confidence that He has my best interest at heart, regardless of the circumstances I find myself in?

My prayer is that I will allow God to widen my faith lens so that I trust Him walking in green pastures, the valley of the shadow of death, and everywhere in between.

Dear Jesus, widen my lens!

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Can I trust God to lead my life?

Randy Robinson is treasurer of the North American Division.

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## Tens of thousands of children are trafficked each year

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Operation Child Rescue funds a rescue home for children who are trafficked, giving them a future. The Operation Child Rescue teams are also involved in the rescue of children from child labor factories where they are exploited for low wages and poor conditions.

### Orphan Rescue

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### Baby Rescue

It is estimated that over 31 million children are orphaned in India. Operation Child Rescue directly helps fund the Ashram Trust who for 20 years has operated a baby rescue center.

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