My Journey

I was not prepared for how much I was going to love these students. I wasn’t prepared for just loving every moment of being with them in the classroom, having the opportunity to talk about God for six hours a day with the students. It’s ended up being one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life. Visit vimeo.com/nadadventist/ajalexchang for more of Chang’s story.

ALEXANDER CHANG, senior biochemistry/premedicine major, Pacific Union College, student missionary, Pohnpei.
**Certain Trumpets**

BY BILL KNOTT, with key reporting by Sandra Blackmer

It’s a Warm May Sunday Evening, fragrant with the first apple blossoms on the overgrown trees below the farmhouse. The nesting robins have finished their chorus for the year; even the ovenbirds in the deep woods have ended their celebration of twilight.

A kerosene lamp warms to life in the window of the south parlor. Floorboards creak as family members make their way to accustomed places on the hand-me-down sofas and ancient chairs.

The nesting robins have finished their chorus for the first apple blossoms on the overgrown trees below the farm.

A fanfare of trumpets emerging from the radio still makes the competition of voices of crossing radio signals demand to be tuned. A slight turn of the knob, and then a settling into the chairs, into the near darkness, into a family tradition.

“Lift up the trumpet, and loud let it ring…” Lips around the shadowed room form the youngest daughter flinch—before she smiles. “Lift up the trumpet, and loud let it ring…” The nearest neighbor is a half mile up the hill. Beyond that lie the dark spruce forests of this small patch of the Berkshires. Somewhere, in a place far distant from Berlin and Moscow and London and Washington, D.C., it matters—greatly—to know that though “nations are angry” and “men run to and fro,” “Jesu’s coming again!”

**MY FAMILY’S SPIRITUAL STORY:** Like that of thousands of other Adventist families, begins with a ministry still known as the Voice of Prophecy (VOP), and with the people who launched it 90 years ago. Like so many others, it’s rich with nostalgia-laden memories of a simpler, less-complicated time when a thoughtful, pastoral voice in a weekly radio broadcast could be more important to a family than all the rantings and pronouncements of dictators and presidents.

**THE WORLD HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY** in 90 years, however. Not only is everyone from that farmhouse family now gone, but so is the media environment that once allowed for weekly gatherings beside a glowing radio. A world undreamed of when H.M.S. Richards launched his radio broadcast in a converted chicken coop in 1929 now pulses with hundreds of thousands of choices on radio, television, satellite, the Internet, and social media. And only a small sliver of these myriad options aims to lift up hearts to faith or goodness or trust in God. How can a ministry launched 90 years ago reimagine itself in a media world where virtually all the norms—of truth, of family, of morality, of politics—are vanishing like snowbanks on a hot May afternoon?

“WHEN WE TOOK OVER VOP,” it was $2 million in the red, with little prospect of changing that,” says Voice of Prophecy speakers/director Shawn Boonstra, a 27-year veteran of public evangelism across North America. Raised in British Columbia and baptized an Adventist while in college, Boonstra pastored multiple congregations in his home province before becoming speaker/director of It Is Written Canada in 2001. When evangelist Mark Finley moved from his leadership role at the international It Is Written broadcast to serve at the church’s world headquarters, Boonstra spent seven years as speaker/director of the denomination’s oldest television ministry. He later served a two-and-a-half-year stint as an associate director of the North American Division’s Ministerial Association, focused on promoting evangelism. He freely admits that he didn’t know how depleted the Voice of Prophecy was when he was invited to head it up.

“From its heyday at 70-plus staff, the Voice of Prophecy in 2013 was down to 13—mostly in the Bible school, because it was the only thing still going well. During the wind-down of the media center in Simi Valley, California, many of the assets of the VOP had disappeared. Not a lick of equipment was around, not even one microphone was left.”

“(North American Division president) Dan [Jackson] asked me one day ‘Would you be interested in leading VOP?’ It didn’t look promising. But after sleeping on it, I thought, How could I look H.M.S. Richards in the eye one day? I think God could fix this.”

**IT’S A SIGNATURE STORY** Shawn Boonstra tells—one that challenges assumptions, questions the received wisdom, looks at other alternatives. Walk through the Loveland, Colorado, headquarters with Boonstra and his wife, Jean, associate director of VOP and creator of the popular Discovery Mountain children’s broadcast, and you hear a kindly “push-back” to the premise that public evangelism is dead or dying in the cities of Europe and the Americas.

“That’s a photo of an altar call— in downtown Rome,” he says, a trademark grim creasing his still-boyish face as he points to a photo on the wall of his ministry headquarters. “You know, the Western world says it can’t be done. Too postmodern, too secular. But God didn’t make a mistake with the message He gave this church. He didn’t fail to see the postmodern generation coming. He knew it when He assigned us this message.”

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Jean and Shawn Boonstra produce a segment of Discourse in their headquarters studio.
town? That would be Rome. So we held a campaign. I asked God for 10 or 15 decisions, because that would be a miracle in the heart of Rome.

His words come more slowly as he remembers the obstacles.

“Everything that could go wrong in that meeting went wrong. We lost our auditorium three days before opening night because the Vatican pressured those who had rented us the hall. We had tires slashed on our vehicles. But at month’s end it was standing room only—people still standing at the back of the auditorium.”

He points to the mass of people in the photo who have crowded to the front of the hall, and grins again. “At this point I think we had about 140 decisions already in that meeting.”

The photos on the wall—and the stories—continue.

“This one is another altar call—in Portland, Oregon. Another difficult city. Another postmodern environment. The percentage of churchgoing people in the Pacific Northwest is lower than almost anywhere in North America.”

“In Portland the first night we had heavy rain,” Jean remembers with a grin. “A bus hit a train. Everything that could go wrong did go wrong... There was a basketball game in the arena next door, so the parking was gone. But people literally walked a mile in the rain to get to this meeting—in a place where the experts said you couldn’t draw a crowd.”

Shawn’s eyes narrow with a friendly intensity. “There were 2,200 people there on opening night without public transit, and in pouring rain.”

The stories and the photos lead to a conclusion that’s at the heart of the evangelistic ministry the couple has helped to rebirth. Shawn delivers the line with a mix of wistfulness and correction.

“We still have a nail-biter every month, because we’re self-funded. We have to raise it every month. Is it going to come in? We live from miracle to miracle around here. Some months we wonder, Are we going to survive? Then the next month there’s a miracle.”

REBUILDING A MINISTRY AS VENERABLE as the Voice of Prophecy has required a mix of diplomacy and negotiating skill from Shawn and Jean, both of whom were political science students in college. After agreeing to lead the financially troubled ministry in 2013, they began reaching out to longtime VOP supporters who had grown anxious about the future of the ministry and were beginning to consider investing in other causes.

Funding began to slowly return to the oldest of the church’s broadcast ministries. Sponsorship and talent newbies are more than lecture notes about what works and what doesn’t; it’s an entire suite of ready-to-use tools that cover the full cycle of evangelism. Included is the minimis of a student population to help staff the ministry’s still-robust Bible school, helped the VOP team make the decision.

The small team identified an empty bank building in downtown Loveland that could serve as the new headquarters, and in April 2015 set about slowly rehabilitating it. A small closet was where Boonstra recorded the first 60 radio broadcasts, before the team assembled a humbold studio.

Working out of a former bank building didn’t do anything for the ministry’s financial equation, however. There was no money left behind in the vaults when Chase Bank vacated the facility.

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that the acclaimed *Discovery Mountain* podcast for children, now in its sixth season, and the depth chart of resources from the new VOP offers pastors and lay leaders a remarkable ability to tailor content to the specific needs of their communities.

Long known for its world-circling Discover Bible schools, the ministry has now revised the Discover Bible course to bring it into the twenty-first century. It coordinates the Bible lesson program for more than 2,000 congregations already, as well as operating Bibleinfo.com, the online Bible-study site attracting more than 1 million unique visitors each month.

After a multiday “Revelation Speaks Peace” campaign at the North Carolina Fairgrounds in Raleigh, North Carolina, in mid-March, Boonstra will turn his attention to a large-scale training event May 5-8 for hundreds of pastors scheduled at the North American Division headquarters in Columbia, Maryland. (See more details at discoverycenters.com.) This rollout of the “franchise” concept will give pastors access to the entire resource collection of the Voice of Prophecy’s evangelistic tools, all for a fraction of what even a local congregation would normally invest as its share in engaging in public outreach.

Across the NAD pastors and congregations will begin preparing for a simultaneous launch of “Discovering Revelation,” a multipart full-message series slated for March 2020 that utilizes the marketing “lift” and brand awareness being generated by the Voice of Prophecy.

**THE MONTHS AHEAD WILL TEST THE VISION**

Boonstra has cast for the future of the renovated Voice of Prophecy. With a goal of opening 1,000 evangelistic “franchises” in local churches, the VOP team is working hard to produce a broad array of resources that can be used by hundreds of pastors.

Boonstra has pioneered a radio talk show “just for men” (Shawn calls it *The Bullpen*), as well as *Disclosure*, a one-hour weekend talk-radio format with in-studio guests on current—and even controversial—topics and issues listeners are concerned about. Still to come is *Believov*, a 15-minute weekly show hosted by Jean that will offer inspirational biographies of famous Christians through the ages. Add to it the acclaimed *Discovery Mountain* podcast for children, now in its sixth season, and the depth chart of resources from the new VOP offers pastors and lay leaders a remarkable ability to tailor content to the specific needs of their communities.

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Boonstra knows his audience well—in this case many dispirited Adventist congregations ready to give up on outreach in their communities.

“Your church can grow,” he says slowly, emphasizing each word. “I’ve watched this work in every imaginable context, in the hardest communities on the planet. And if it works for a guy like me who’s terrified of public speaking, who doesn’t like the spotlight—if I can do this, this team can do this, there’s no reason this can’t happen in your church. And to make it as easy as possible, we’ll do all the heavy lifting. We’ll create all the tools. We’ll brand it nationwide. We’ll show you where to find the people to bring to your church. We’ll show you why they’re interested. We’ll show you how to get them to the point of decision—and watch them become a part of your church"

“We’ll show you that it works: your church doesn’t need to die. It is not over. Our message isn’t over. Its best days are ahead. We’re supposed to be headed for the biggest moment in the history of the world, and it is entirely possible for your church to be a part of that.”
Pastors and church leaders meet in San Diego for learning, discussion

For two and a half days, on February 18-20, 2019, evangelism directors of conferences and union conferences, church administrators, pastors, innovators, and other leaders gathered at eHuddle in San Diego to share, learn, and dialogue about how the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America can more effectively reach people in an increasingly secular culture.

More than 200 people attended the eHuddle event, sponsored by the North American Division (NAD) Adventist Church in North America, the eHuddle event, sponsored by the NAD Adventist Church in North America, the eHuddle event, sponsored by the NAD Adventist Church in North America, the eHuddle event, sponsored by the NAD Adventist Church in North America, the eHuddle event, sponsored by the NAD Adventist Church in North America, the eHuddle event, sponsored by the NAD Adventist Church in North America, the eHuddle event, sponsored by the NAD Adventist Church in North America, the eHuddle event, sponsored by the NAD Adventist Church in North America, the eHuddle event, sponsored by the NAD Adventist Church in North America, the eHuddle event, sponsored by the NAD Adventist Church in North America, the eHuddle event, sponsored by the NAD Adventist Church in North America, the eHuddle event, sponsored by the NAD Adventist Church in North America, the eHuddle event, sponsored by the NAD 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Inspired and Invigorated

The meeting encouraged attendees to try new things and also served as a reminder that evangelism is not the same in every community.

For this year’s meeting we wanted to address two needs that we see in our churches: First, we focused on how churches can grow young and ensure retention of young people. Presentations were shared about how to disciple children and to help them make serious decisions for Jesus,” said Jose Cortes, Jr., event organizer and associate director of the NAD Ministerial Association. “Second, we engaged with the epidemic of dying and plateauing churches in our division. We are concerned about the health of our churches in our current time.”

The presentations and ideas shared at eHuddle were “incredibly helpful and informative,” according to David Dennis, president of Southern New England Conference. “This event can be best described as a café of ideas,” Dennis said. “I see what ideas are being tried and it inspires me with new ideas and helps my team to reflect on our own evangelistic efforts. What I learn here influences the training of our pastors and churches.”

Like Dennis, Tom Evans, president of North New South Wales Conference in Australia, sees value in this event. “Bringing my team to eHuddle gives them exposure to the world’s best practices. Each of them comes from a different context, so each of them is blessed, moved, and motivated in their own way by listening to various presentations,” said Evans. “We need to consistently search for new and relevant avenues and methods in ministry. I like how eHuddle creates space where projects can be refined and developed.”

In the Local Context

Various presenters spoke on these two themes, sharing practical solutions and ideas on how they were addressing them in their local context. In one presentation Tim Gillespie, lead pastor of the Crosswalk Seventh-day Adventist Church in Redlands, California, spoke about how his church helps remote churches connect to Crosswalk. The satellite congregations reap the benefits from the programming at the main church.

During his presentation Gillespie challenged the audience: “We live in a time in which Uber is the largest taxi company in the world, yet it doesn’t own a car. Airbnb is the largest hotel chain, but it doesn’t own a room. Perhaps we need to rethink the model of church in our current time.”

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URGENT BUILDING NEED! BANGLADESH MISSION SCHOOL

A key mission school in Bangladesh has an urgent need for a multi-purpose building. The current building is over 20 years old and poorly constructed. It is in an extremely dangerous condition. Child Impact International CEO, Jim Renne, recently visited the school and confirmed the critical state of the building and the danger it poses to everyone.

The school Kellogg Missionary Seminary, has over 450 students including many sponsored by Child Impact. This school is a key missionary outreach and serves a very poor community, however the building is long past its time to be replaced.

The new three story building will house:
- Over eight classrooms
- School library
- New English medium school
- Science lab
- School administration offices
- English training school

At the front, adjoining the road, will be a multi-level English training school. This will attract five paying day students and will provide urgently needed revenue for the school.

The total cost including the fit-out of the school, library, science lab and English training school is US$220,000. To date Child Impact has raised $250,000.

DONATE TO CHILD IMPACT

Please help! Make your donation “Bangladesh building fund” and post to Child Impact International, PO Box 785, Doylestown, PA 18903

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When we stand up for Jesus Christ, when we give in for Jesus Christ, when we give in for the body, we don’t lose anything. We gain. And we reflect Jesus more in what we give up than what we hold onto.

Jesus gave up everything. He said, “I have total equality with my Father, but I’m going to give it up. I’m going to take it off so that I can be one with humankind” (see Phil. 2:7,8).

When Jesus decided to give it up, Paul writes: “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (verses 9-11).

We don’t lose anything when we give it up for Jesus Christ. We gain everything. The body that Jesus gave His life for, the body that He died for, and hung on the cross for—He’s entrusted that body to you and to me. Let’s handle the body of Christ as carefully as He did.

*Bible texts in this article are from the New International Version.

G. Alexander Bryant is executive secretary for the North American Division.
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