No Man Did This!

Wisam’s story bears evidence to God’s miraculous intervention.

Wisam belonged to a powerful Muslim family. When he converted to Adventism, they tried to stone him to death. Years later, when he returned to his hometown as a pastor, a hostile mob of relatives confronted him. One of his cousins grabbed a butcher knife and lunged at Wisam in a murderous rage. Miraculously, the knife bent, deferring his shirt; twice as the blade entered and exited the garment without touching him. The astounded mob fell in fear and the news of the miracle spread far and wide, but that’s not the end of the story! Watch our video to find out what happened next—and learn how through Adventist World, God is doing things far beyond our imagination! See it here: awr.org/wisam

My Journey

One of my main challenges was when we were applying for high schools. I ended up with health sciences—my fourth choice. I started crying. But it ended up being the right school. God always has a plan; He’s always ahead, and He knows what He’s doing. He always does what’s best. Visit vimeo.com/nadadventist/ajkaylacadogan for more of Cadogan’s story.

KAYLA CADOGAN, freshman at State University of New York at New Paltz
The morning of November 8, 2018, began just like any other day for Allen Plowman and his two children, residents of Paradise, California. At 7:30 they hopped in the car to head to school. The kids commented on how beautiful the sunrise was that morning.

But when Plowman pulled in front of Paradise Adventist Academy, he was told to take his kids home. There was a fire nearby, and though there was no official word, as a precaution there would be no school that day.

Ash was now falling from a darkened sky. Not unusual—sometimes fires from as far away as 100 miles drop ash in town. Unperturbed, Plowman’s kids grabbed two of their favorite toys, and he tossed a box of important papers into the back of their truck. In two and a half hours they hopped in the car to head to school. The kids commented on how beautiful the sunrise was that morning.

One Year Later

In July 2019 Plowman, his kids, and his mom were finally allowed back. It took two months to return, and another six months for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to clear their property. Or what was left of it.

“Less than a block away, a tree was burning,” he says. “We hadn’t been warned that there was imminent danger, but the fire was coming fast.” Plowman’s kids grabbed two of their favorite toys, and he tossed a box of important papers into the back of their truck. It took two and a half hours to get out of town. They passed their regular grocery store and gas station, both in flames, and at one point a truck driving next to them caught fire.

A week and a half later Plowman was watching YouTube videos taken by cleanup crews—the only people allowed into Paradise—and he caught a glimpse of his property. Everything was gone.

Plowman’s daughter’s drum set, covered only with a small blue tarp. His mom has crammed everything into their camper, or tightly packed in a storage shed behind their house. One year later, the family owns into their property. Or what was left of it.

“Don’t overload the storage sheds,” he says. “But we can’t leave it out, or it will get ruined or stolen.” Plowman hesitates to put anything else to put it for her to practice,” he says. “But we can’t leave it out, or it will get ruined or stolen.”

Two days after suggesting the shed build, representatives from Maranatha Volunteers International were standing in the parking lot of what used to be the Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church, planning for 100 sheds.

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One Year Later

In July 2019 Plowman, his kids, and his mom were finally allowed back. It took two months to return, and another six months for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to clear the debris enough for a camper to be moved onto their property.

November 8, 2019, Plowman is back on his property. Or what was left of it.

As fall slips into winter around the residents of Paradise, it’s not the haunting, happy sounds of Canada geese flying south that greets them every morning; it’s the visceral roar of a chain saw. Or three.

The bone-dry, charred-black trees still standing around Paradise leave the area vulnerable to another, more terrifying fire. And though they’ve removed 60,000 of them, more than 600,000 remain. From 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week, Plowman and his neighbors live their lives to a soundtrack of chain saws. And because none of the residence plots have electricity restored, the constant rattling drone of generators fills whatever breaks there are in the chain saw work.

Surrounded by a landscape of fire retardant-covered dirt, felled trees, and piles of garbage and debris waiting to be hauled to the dump, Plowman has crammed everything the family owns into their camper with them, or tightly into the back of their truck. In the middle of what they call “the yard”—a flattened piece of land where their house used to sit, and where one day they hope it will again—sits Plowman’s daughter’s drum set, covered only with a small blue tarp.

“Don’t leave anywhere else to put it for her to practice,” he says. “But we can’t leave it out, or it will get ruined or stolen.”

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Chinnock began giving her time to her church’s outreach ministry, Love Paradise. Three years ago Garrison Chaffee, youth pastor at the church and director of Love Paradise, met with the town manager of Paradise and agreed...
to take on Make a Difference Day, a national movement for community engagement. Since then, Love Paradise, with members of the church and community, have cleaned a bike path, painted park benches, planted daffodils, and more. “Since the fire, the avenues and opportunities for Love Paradise to serve have multiplied exponential-ly,” Chaffee says. “We set up a distribution center at the Chico church and filled and emptied the gym with donations three times.”

The group also set up a clean water station at the former Paradise church site, as most of the local water supply is tainted with heavy metals as a result of the fire. They got thousands of brand-new T-shirts donated by various sources. Additionally, they put together what they dubbed “Welcome Home Kits,” large plastic bins packed with items a family might need to get their homes restarted after the fire, such as towels, dishes, pots and pans, toilet paper, garbage cans, and gift cards.

In order to continue to be relevant, Love Paradise browsed Facebook support pages to find areas of greatest need. When Chinnock saw a post about a man building a shed for someone, she thought, We could do that.

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silent, optimistic bunch. “We celebrate every little victory,” he says, “because to us, as we rebuild our entire town, they’re not so little.”

Rebuilding their town is exactly what this group is working on as they move shed after shed off the line and into the parking lot to be painted.

“One year out from the fire, you have a whole community of people who no longer need peanut butter sandwiches; they need long-term support,” Fiess says. “They need people to care about them and to assure them they haven’t been forgotten.”

The reaction of shed recipients has been one of humble and sincere gratitude. A once-wealthy woman who had lost everything broke down in tears when her shed was delivered. “I’ve always been in a position to help others, contributing where I could to those less fortunate,” she sobbed. “I’m so grateful for others who can now do the same for me.”

The crowd closed around the final shed and passed around a Sharpie for everyone to sign the inside of the building. Some wrote Bible verses; others simply signed their names with swoops and swirls and tails.

One man who came to the site to thank the builders commented, “It’s nice to see Christians being Christian.”

During the build Chinnock overheard her son tell the site director, “We’re building for Jesus.”

In the beginning her family was hesitant to get onboard, certain she was in over her head.

“They were right,” Chinnock says with the hint of a smile. “I am in over my head. But my God walks on water.”

The End of the Beginning

On November 21, five days before the scheduled end of the project, approximately 120 volunteers gathered on the build site to be a part of the final shed going through the line. Some had nail guns, others had hammers; still others picked up routers. The frame was nailed; the hole for the door cut on one wall. A call went out for ‘several strong men’ to lift the wall to the floor frame; a group of several strong women ran to raise the next. Laughter and chatter filled the space between poundings and buzzings and bangings.

They had done it.

The crowd closed around the final shed and passed around a Sharpie for everyone to sign the inside of the building. Some wrote Bible verses; others simply signed their names with swoops and swirls and tails. People cheered and clapped. Then a murmur began at one end of the crowd. As the roof was lifted via Bobcat and lowered into place, the word spread throughout the group of volunteers: This wasn’t actually shed number 200. It was shed number 202.

Becky St. Clair is a freelance writer who lives in Angwin, California.
IT IS WRITTEN MINISTRIES OPENS NEW HEADQUARTERS

BY TIERRA HAYES

On Friday, November 22, 2019, more than 500 community members, pastors, church officials, and workers gathered for the grand opening of the new It Is Written headquarters in Collegedale, Tennessee. The event was live-streamed on It Is Written’s Facebook page and featured a dedication, a ribbon-cutting ceremony, and refreshments.

Although the day was rainy, those in attendance pressed together under tents and umbrellas to hear more about the digital-focused ministry that has been around since 1956. After a series of formal addresses from North American Division president Daniel R. Jackson, Collegedale mayor Katie Lamb, and It Is Written speaker/director John Bradshaw, the audience was invited to take a self-guided tour around the facilities. The various stops throughout the building highlighted the new studio space, offices, and meeting rooms, all tailored to produce a variety of television programming and print publications that are distributed worldwide.

“This building, this ministry, is a testimony to God’s goodness,” Jackson said. “We thank God today for John Bradshaw and his team—for the outstanding ministry, for the blessing of people all around the world and throughout North America. As we open this new home we give honor to God.”

Local Context

During her address at the grand opening, Lamb welcomed the organization to the city of Collegedale and expressed her wishes that those who relocated to the area get to enjoy the amenities provided by the surrounding nature and community. “Collegedale takes pride in providing an environment for family-friendly organizations.”

As we work together to this end during this Thanksgiving season, let’s give thanks for the religious freedoms that we enjoy,” she said. “Welcome and may God bless this organization.”

Many community members in attendance came from the surrounding Collegedale area, but some had traveled from farther away, such as Lidia Seda who came from Guntersville, Alabama, to be present for the unveiling.

“We heard about this through a friend, and felt that we should go and support Adventist ministry, so we came,” Seda said. “I like the fact that they have enough space not only to do what they need to do, but to grow. That was wise.”

Bradshaw said that the support and prayers of those who came to witness the event meant the world to him and his team. “Having people here meant the world to us,” he said. “[There were] pastors and physicians and dentists and our neighbors, church administrators, laypeople, people who in some cases drove hours and hours [to attend] because they wanted to be a part of this. It’s just very exciting and encouraging in terms of ministry.”

The new headquarters, with its 41,000-square-foot building, is only a few miles from the campus of Southern Adventist University (SAU). Many of those employed by It Is Written are either current students or alumni of the institution, making the location ideal not only for the ministry but also for the school.

“Because It Is Written is here, a number of our students and even more of our graduates are now working in this building,” said David Smith, SAU president. “They are engaged with the church, they are using their creative skills, and It Is Written is blessed. But so are we, and I’m glad this is being recognized.”

It Is Written also sponsors the Soulwinning and Leadership Training, better known as SALT, initiative on the university campus. Students are provided with the resources and skills to become more confident and engaged in personal evangelism.

Furthering His Kingdom

Bradshaw believes that all the efforts put forward by It Is Written, whether through training programs such as SALT, television shows, and just day-to-day interactions are working together to further God’s kingdom.

“We know the value of this because we meet the people. The people who say ‘I was searching, I turned on the TV, there was It Is Written, and I said, ‘This is something’’ I kept watching, and I called, and I was baptized. Now I’m in the church today.’ We hear those stories again and again,” Bradshaw said. “God established this ministry 63 years ago to grow His kingdom, and He’s been using this ministry ever since to do just that.”

Visit itiswritten.build for photos of the new headquarters.

More than 500 attend the It Is Written ribbon-cutting ceremony and dedication held at the media ministry’s new headquarters in Collegedale, Tennessee.

Speaker/director John Bradshaw addresses those gathered for the It Is Written grand opening dedication.
Jesus is waiting and longing for the manifestation of Himself in His church.

In Matthew 24:3-14 we find Jesus and His disciples taking a tour of the temple grounds in Jerusalem. Enamored, the disciples wanted to view more of it. Throughout the week people had been piling in to visit the temple, drawn to watching the great debate in progress. There was the lonely Galilean, unlettered, untaught, surrounded by priests and scribes and rulers with all their rich apparel and judiciary badges and earthly trappings. Jesus, calm, poised, and dignified, unflappable, had met with confidence every theological question and challenge.

People were visibly inspired. They were impressed with Jesus. But they were perplexed. They didn’t understand why the scribes would not respond to Jesus’ words. After all, this was the trusted intelligentsia of Jerusalem. The people couldn’t believe that the rulers didn’t believe Jesus when He explained everything so carefully. The Jewish leaders were never going to receive Jesus as the Messiah. And to His disciples, their mission seemed hopeless.

This was the background upon which Jesus warns the Pharisees: “Look, your house is left to you desolate” (Matt. 23:38, NIV). What? the disciples must’ve thought to themselves. How could my Lord say something so foolish? Is He losing it? The stones of the temple were of the purest marble, restored to the luster and grandeur of the first temple. Jesus cautioned that all the buildings would be knocked down, and “not one stone here will be left on another” (Matt. 24:2, NIV). He continued, describing the signs of the end with false messiahs, earthquakes, and more (see verses 4-12). Jesus also declared that “the one who stands firm to the end will be saved” (verse 13). Prophecy is fast being fulfilled. “The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth,” writes Ellen White.1 “The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones.”2

Seventh-day Adventists are indeed a people of destiny. And like the church of Christ’s day, we have a stake in the outcome of the situation. We’ve been teaching and preaching this stuff for years. What is Christ waiting for? He is waiting and longing for the manifestation of Himself in His church.

2Ibid.

We Can’t Quit Now

We are Christ’s witnesses. Preaching will forever remain primary, but we’re not going to get everyone into our evangelistic revivals. With all the preaching that Paul and the other apostles did, the greatest witness was declared by the believers. Imagine a friendship ministry. A hospitality ministry. A sharing ministry. A compassion ministry. Imagine inviting your new friends in Christ to a prayer conference, an evangelism revival, a marriage seminar. Imagine exploring the Bible with them at Panera once a week while you eat dinner. Imagine a discipleship ministry. Imagine a vision complete.

God never, ever leaves undone what He has started. He leaves no stone unturned. God would never ask us to do the impossible.

We have to model to this generation that we are a preaching ministry and a witnessing ministry. Because when this gospel of the kingdom shall have been preached, born witness, we can go home. | 13

BY ALVIN KIBBLE

His Witnesses

W. R. Robinson, one of the forerunners of our missionaries to Africa and editor of Message magazine, one of the oldest gospel periodicals the church has published, used to stand up and say, “When the message goes out, guess what? Souls come in!”

We can’t quit now.

Alvin Kibble, vice president of the North American Division for Leadership Development, Big Data + Social Media, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, and Literature Ministries.
FARM STEW teaches trainers, by partnering with local Seventh-day Adventist Churches, to educate their communities in gardening, healthful cooking, obtaining clean water, better sanitation, and inspiring enterprise. Our local trainers conduct hands-on classes, freely sharing practical skills that equip poor and vulnerable people to help themselves.

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Betty Musiro, Uganda, with Joy Kauffman, MPH
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