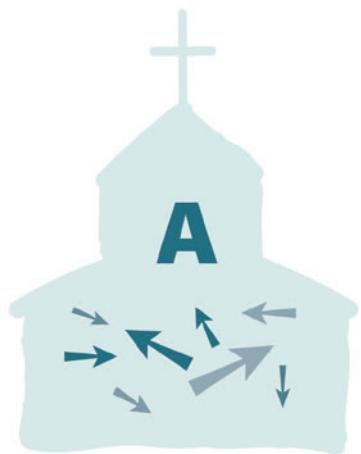


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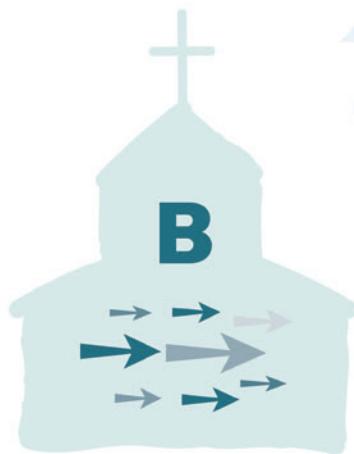
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Adventist Journey

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My Journey

From 12 to 19 years old I was smoking, drinking, breaking into houses—I got caught up in that lifestyle. My house burning down saved the day. By the grace of God I made the decision to give my life to Christ—and that changed everything. I still had issues I needed to sort through; God showed me that I needed a new environment. Visit vimeo.com/nadadventist/ajtaurusmontgomery for more of Montgomery's story.

TAURUS MONTGOMERY,
pastor of Pioneer Memorial church's
Benton Harbor Outreach, Harbor of Hope in Michigan,
and director of the Rise Up youth and young adult initiative



Cover Photo by Christina Rogers

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!

Adventist Journey (ISSN 1557-5519) is the journal of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The Northern Asia-Pacific Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is the publisher. It is printed monthly by the Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Copyright © 2020. Send address changes to your local conference membership clerk. Contact information should be available through your local church.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A. Vol. 3, No. 5. May 2020. *Adventist Journey Publication Board* Daniel R. Jackson (chair), G. Alexander Bryant (vice chair), Kimberly Luste Maran (secretary), Curtis Randolph Robinson, Tony Anobile, Paul Brantley, Alvin M. Kibble, Arne Nielson, Gordon Pifher, Bonita J. Shields, Kenneth Denslow, Daniel Weber, Julio Muñoz, Karnik Doukmetzian, legal advisor **Scripture References** Unless otherwise noted, all Bible references are taken from the *The Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

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ADVENTIST JOURNEY

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BY DANIEL R. JACKSON

God Sees; God Gives

Elisha was hiding in Dothan from his enemies because they had become aware that he knew exactly what they were doing as they tried to thwart the plans of God's people. This is the historical context of the story.

"When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. 'Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?' the servant asked. 'Don't be afraid,' the prophet answered. 'Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' And Elisha prayed, 'Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.' Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kings 6:15-17, NIV).

Today we see a vast army encircling the camp around us. At the time I wrote this article, there were more than 578,000 confirmed coronavirus disease victims in the U.S.; and more than 23,000 people have died. Canada has more than 26,000 cases; and Bermuda (57) and Guam-Micronesia (148) are not exempt.

What will we do in the face of this great, silent, and invisible enemy that has come against us?

Elisha's story can bring us closer to God and help us understand that He is always with us, loves us, and cares about us—even in the moments when we are isolated and alone. Even in those moments when we discover we have the coronavirus, and even in those moments when a loved one or a friend has been taken as a victim of this disease.

Elisha prays, "Open his eyes, Lord, that he may see." Elisha's servant would have given up and resigned himself to death had it not been for the direct and the gracious intervention of God. When he viewed the situation based on his history and experience, based upon his knowledge of what was outside the walls in terms of earthly power, and based upon the apparent ineptness of Israel's armies, the servant concluded all was lost. But God opened his eyes.

Sometimes in our pain and self-focus—and our focus upon others—we fail to see and sense the presence of Jesus, the Creator and the Redeemer of our universe, right here at our side.

God has given us some special gifts. He's given us an intelligent will, the ability to make decisions that are not based on emotions or feelings, but rather based upon data and information. He gives us the ability to perceive, to know, and to understand.

He has also given us bodies with systems that can fight this silent and invisible enemy. The numbers of people who have contracted COVID-19 and those who have died from it are terrible. Without making light of this grim reality, we realize there'd be far more dead if God hadn't blessed us with our immune systems. We have the privilege of being stewards of our bodies and our health.

Finally, God has given us Himself. Ellen White writes, "The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watch-care, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son."^{*}

Elisha's servant did not understand this. He could see only through his own eyes. It was only when the Holy Spirit was given that he could see and understand the mighty presence of God.

No matter where we are today, whether we're isolated in a sickbed or we have our family with us—no matter where we are, no matter how we feel, physically or spiritually—God sees. He knows and understands our circumstance, and, by His grace, we ask Him to open our eyes.

Sometimes in our pain and self-focus we fail to see and sense the presence of Jesus.

^{*}Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 100.

Daniel R. Jackson is president of the North American Division.

I Do Not Fear for God's Church

North American Division treasurer Randy Robinson shares information on the church's finances, the future, and his appreciation for a faithful church family.

Adventist Journey editor Kimberly Luste Maran recently spoke with Randy Robinson, treasurer for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America (NAD), about his role, and how the division is functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview was conducted entirely online.

Kimberly Luste Maran: I'm thankful that we're able to talk through cyberspace as our office family serves virtually. This is a time of great uncertainty, change, and adaptation. How are you doing?

Randy Robinson: By God's grace, so far my wife, Denise, and I are well. We are communicating regularly with Denise's parents, to make sure they are OK. They live just a few minutes from us. We also touch base with our two sons and their wives, making sure everyone is well where they live. These are very interesting times! I appreciate much more now the ability to move around freely since that privilege has been significantly restricted. I pray that all of our members are well and safe, and I am grateful that so far, my family is safe.

You are the treasurer for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. In a nutshell, how do you analyze the finances of the division; what criteria do you use in figuring out the financial health of this organization?

Before I get into a detailed explanation, I want to say my job sits on two foundational realities. First, I am responsible to God for



how I do my job. And second, I would not be here without the faithfulness of God's people and their investment in the Seventh-day Adventist Church!

Getting current, accurate, and regular financial reports is the critical requirement. The NAD treasury team does an awesome job of providing me with that information. I evaluate the financial health of the NAD on a monthly basis. That includes digesting the monthly interim financial statements, comparing actual performance with the budget, and recommending adjustments as necessary. Without getting into the financial weeds, there is one metric that I pay particular attention to: the number of days of cash we have on hand. That is an indicator that tells us that if all income stopped today, how long we can do business. I recommend that every organization know that indicator, and monitor it on a regular basis. If that is healthy, it



Photography by Dan Weber

The true health of an organization is tested when times are challenging.

will prove invaluable when difficult times come, similar to what we are facing now. By the way, the NAD indicator is currently healthy!

Share with us the division's financial picture as of December 31, 2019.

As I mentioned, our cash reserves are in a good place, and overall we are healthy financially. At the end of 2019 the North American Division is strong financially, thanks to the generosity of its amazing members and God's abundant blessings!

The true health of an organization is tested when times are challenging. Some people ask why we store cash away or plan to have reserves intentionally. They may ask, *Why not spend all the cash and resources for mission rather than save it?*

It's times like these when we find the answer to that question. Someone once said, "There is no mission without margin." I strongly subscribe to that position. Cash on hand and a strong balance sheet, which the NAD has, gives us the chance to operate successfully

through a downturn, and to maintain support of the mission we are called to. We can continue to provide needed appropriations to our organizations that depend on them. We can continue to pay employees. We can find ways to creatively operate outside the office. We may even be able to provide some assistance for struggling organizations.

As the first quarter of 2020 ends, how have you seen the COVID-19 pandemic impact tithes and offerings in the division? Or is it too early to tell? We know that this time of upheaval and unease is affecting our members who have been so faithful.

First and foremost, I know this is God's church. He will absolutely care for His people. It may be uncomfortable and uncertain from our perspective. But I trust in Him to carry us through. On that foundation things are, admittedly, unclear. I anticipate a tithe drop from two points of view. First, our churches are closed, and second, many of our members are losing their employment because of this situation. These factors will undoubtedly have an effect, and we really won't know what that is until the April tithes and offerings are accounted for across the division.

Because of the current financial health of the NAD, we have the opportunity to sustain normal operations as well as continue regular appropriations to our member organizations for up to six months, even if we sustain significant tithe losses.

I think our faithful members will continue to be faithful. They may need just a bit of time to adjust to giving in a way other than placing funds in an offering plate. That is not an option now. But I know they will find a way.

One great option is Adventist-Giving, an online mechanism that makes it easy to continue giving

I am absolutely confident in God's leading and protection. God will never leave or forsake us!

through a person's own local church (if the church is one of the many on the www.AdventistGiving.org platform) straight from their bank account, debit card, or credit card.

My church is not meeting on Sabbath right now because of state restrictions, so I cannot give at church. My wife and I went to AdventistGiving and returned our tithes and offerings to our local church in Ellicott City, Maryland. It really is easy. I hope church members try it!

What might the pandemic mean for the NAD's local churches, conferences, unions, and other entities in the next few weeks/months?

We really do not know quite yet. At the division we anticipate a downturn, but right now it's hard to say how we will be affected. We are preparing ourselves financially by reducing our spending, encouraging our members to continue their faithfulness, and praying for the grace of God to guide us through this difficult time.

I am so encouraged by the reports I am getting—and by my own experience in my local church. How creatively we are staying together! The other day our church had a drive-through prayer event. We drove into our church parking lot, the pastoral team and elders placed their hands on our cars, and prayed for us! What a great way to minister! We kept our distance, and still were ministered to. We also receive regular short video clips from our pastor, encouraging us. We partic-

ipate in a virtual worship service every Sabbath. We are so blessed even during a difficult time!

In what ways have you seen technology help in both our service to the field and in giving?

Actually, this has been a bit of a pleasant surprise. The office closings came so fast that we barely had time to figure out what to do. But we were able to transition our employees to their homes and continue to operate the organization. This same thing has happened across the division! Phones are being answered; important meetings are continuing via Zoom; bills and employees are being paid. The mission of the church is going forward. God has provided us with technology to pull this off and amazing information and technology services (ITS) teams to help us through! I did not think the organization could do it so successfully, but by God's grace, ingenuity, great people with great minds, technology, and flexibility on the part of our employees, it happened and continues to be successful.

How do you see technology playing a part in the future of the church, its services, and its finances—both in the local context and at the division?

I think we learned a lesson through this experience. We can do much more business in a virtual environment. There will always be a need for face-to-face meetings and travel. But we have learned that much of that travel can be

curtailed or eliminated. That can be applied to every level of the organization. I have participated in Zoom meetings successfully with nearly 300 people online. Trainings are happening, board meetings are conducted, and classes are being taken successfully online. This is a huge takeaway for me, and I hope we do not lose sight of it once things get back to "normal."

We know that times will continue to be challenging for everyone. How long do you foresee the church in North America being able to function as it currently operates?

Policy states that in most cases an organization should have between three and six months of liquid reserves. The NAD has very close to six months. I hope and pray that we do not have to face the possibility of employee reductions; however, that may be a reality for some of our organizations, depending on how long this situation lasts and what kind of toll it takes on our members' employment.

I want to again thank our members for their faithfulness, even in difficult times! I am amazed at their generosity, and it creates in me an obligation to use those resources in the most efficient way possible. But we do have to face the reality that some of our members may lose their income and thereby lose the ability to return tithe. We do our best to plan for it. We cut back on our expenditures, and as a last resort, organizations may be faced with looking at personnel adjustments. That is evaluated organization by organization and may look different depending on individual circumstances. There are mechanisms in policy that help us do that as carefully as possible. We try our best to create a situation in which the affected personnel land

on their feet. But of course, that possibility is one that is difficult and one that we hope to leave as a last resort.

Small businesses and those people with income instability will be receiving government help. Will the government help defray costs for operating our churches? How about conferences, unions, other entities, and the division—is there government support coming?

The recently passed CARES Act [[link: https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/top-priorities/cares-act](https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/top-priorities/cares-act)] delivers several options for helping U.S.-based businesses, including nonprofit church organizations such as ours, survive this challenging time. There are loan opportunities to help organizations get through the most difficult times. There are also tax credits available to those who keep their employees on payroll. There are several other government assistance options that we are looking at. Our Canadian organizations are also exploring options from their government that may be of assistance. Our legal teams look over these types of benefits to make sure there are not unwanted strings attached that, as Christians, we would object to. It appears, in this case, that there may be some opportunities for us to accept some help if it becomes necessary.

Does the church in North America have anything along these lines to help local church workers such as teachers and pastors?

The financial structure of the church has anticipated these kinds of situations—to a degree.

Some people think tithe is given to the conference, then it goes on to the union, division, and General Conference—never to be seen again. But that's not true. Yes, some resources stay in those parts of the organization. But the largest portion by far is “repurposed” and sent back toward the grass roots to assist education, evangelistic efforts, and conferences that have fewer resources. There are signifi-



cant sums of money that flow back through the organization and target areas that may have less financial lifting power.

One significant evidence of funds flowing back is that overall, we pay ministers the same base wage. Unlike the congregational model, where a large church with wealthy members can pay its ministers a large sum, our ministers are paid on the same scale regardless of the church size. That means we can have churches in large urban areas as well as smaller rural areas and still have pastoral support. Our teachers are paid on a similar basis.

That's just one example. There are several other ways funds are returned to local areas where they would otherwise be unavailable. Again, I have to thank our members for faithfully investing their tithe dollars in the church. Without their partnership, we would not be able to direct funds in ways where every part of the field receives benefit.

Thanks for taking the time to talk with me. I have one last question: What do you take comfort from during these times fraught with uncertainty?

I am trained to be financially conservative. I do my best to place God's church on a sound financial footing. As important as that is to me, it is secondary to my belief that this is God's church. I take great comfort in the statement by Ellen White that it will seem as though the church will fall. But it will not fall (see *Selected Messages* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980], book 2, p. 380). God will see it through!

While we now experience one of those times when things seem shaky, I am absolutely confident in God's leading and protection. God will never leave or forsake us!

I pray daily for wisdom, discernment, and strength to lead according to God's plan, not just for myself, but for His leaders and members all around the world. We are a family—God's family. No matter what happens, that is solid and absolute. I do not fear for the church, because it's God's church, and He will see it through!

How to Use AdventistGiving

As most churches have gone virtual during the current restrictions the North American Division wants to continue to give congregations and church members the opportunity to participate in the worship through giving. The AdventistGiving App is a wonderful solution for virtual church services. The apps are available in both iOS Appstore and Android's Google Play store. Just search using keyword "AdventistGiving" to download the app to your phone or tablet.

AdventistGiving is a ministry of the NAD Information Technology Services department and provides a way for individuals to return tithe and give offerings from any computer and/or any mobile device. There are more than 3,900 churches (and growing) enrolled in this service, and approx-

imately 20 percent of all tithe given in the U.S. and Canada is received through AdventistGiving.

What Church Members Do

Individuals will be able to create/access their accounts in three ways:

1. Go to the church website where you want to give, and click on the "Online Giving" link to log in.
2. Go to AdventistGiving.org to log in, and then search for a church.
3. Use one of our mobile Apps to log in.

How to Contact

Email: Help@AdventistGiving.org—Our help desk is available to assist treasurers and members.

Fax: 1-866-424-0956—treasurers sometimes prefer to fax documents rather than email them.

Details, Details, Details



How Churches Sign Up

Churches that wish to receive donations through the AdventistGiving App or the website need to enroll first. Complete an enrollment form (virtual signatures accepted), easily obtainable by emailing help@AdventistGiving.org, or by creating a treasurer's account at www.AdventistGiving.org. (Click on "Treasurer portal" in the bottom, right corner of the screen.)



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Only tax-deductible donations may be received through this service. Churches may not set up payment categories to receive payments of any kind through AdventistGiving.



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Web Browser

For those using a PC or Mac, it is better to use Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome web browsers when accessing AdventistGiving. Some features do not work well with Internet Explorer and Safari browsers.



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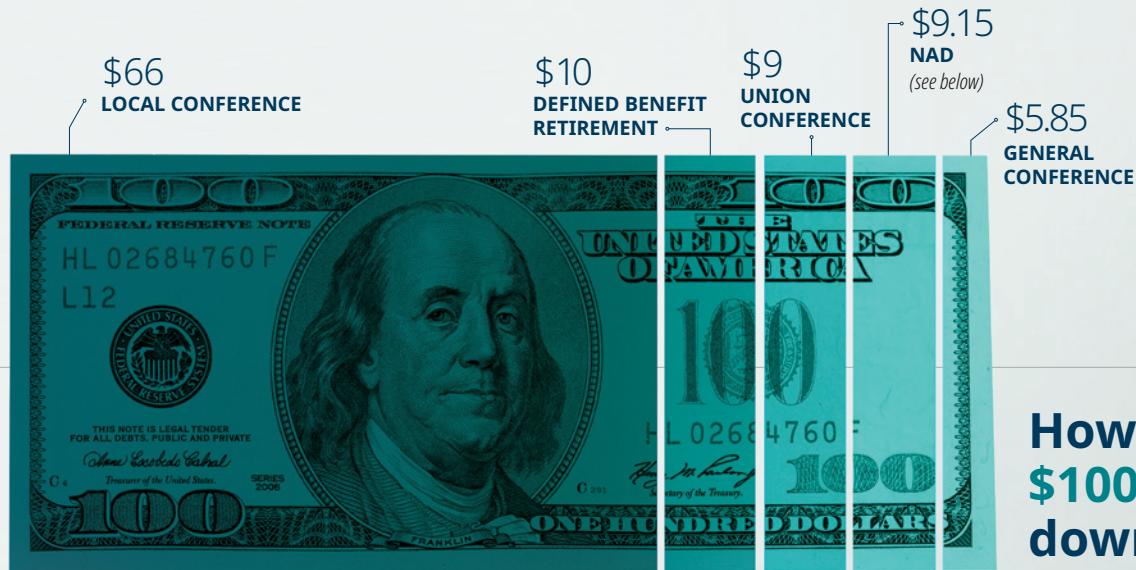
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— Judy Beers serves as program manager for AdventistGiving.

Follow the Funds

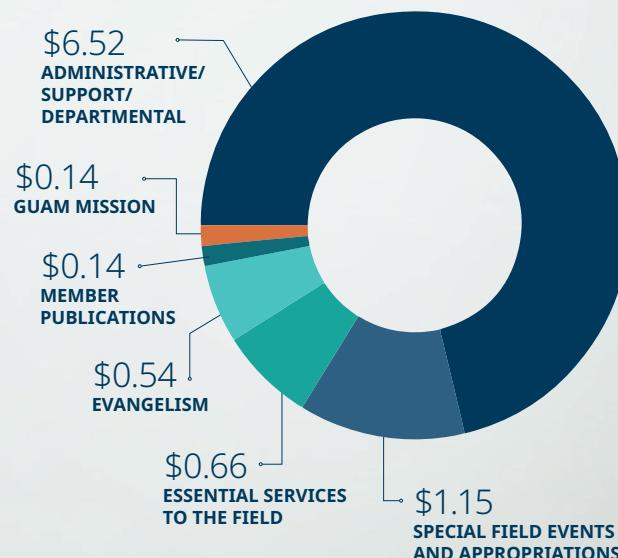
While the entire church structure benefits in varying degrees, by far the largest portion of tithes in the North American Division stay locally for the benefit of the local conferences and their functions. To keep things simple, let's follow a \$100 portion of tithes to see where the funds go; and then, as an example, how NAD distributes its money. (This breakdown is based on 2018 figures.)

NOTE: For graphic purposes, the NAD breakdown is very simplified to show generalized groupings, a more indepth breakdown with percentages can be seen at <http://ow.ly/VVDV50zfKNT>.



**How does
\$100 break
down?**

How does the NAD's \$9.15 break down?



Running for Mental Health

The journey that led Luis Allen on a race across the globe

BY INGRID HERNÁNDEZ

Luis Allen, a psychiatrist and medical director of AdventHealth's Center for Behavioral Health, participated in the World Marathon Challenge February 6-13, 2020. Allen ran seven marathons on seven continents in seven days under the banner of one important cause: mental health awareness.

This was Allen's first time participating in the global event, though he's run a total of 40 marathons in the past. The challenge was monumental, but certainly not the first—or worst—challenge he's ever faced.

Survivor

Allen is a survivor of the 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai, India, in which more than 150 people died. For two days he and his family of four hid under a bed in their hotel room as gunmen inside the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower Hotel pulled guests from their rooms and shot them.

When the Allen family was rescued by local authorities, they emerged from their room to find that every door in their hallway had been knocked down with the exception of the two doors that led to them.

In the wake of that experience, Allen reexamined his life and, among other changes, took up running to improve his mental and physical health. He gradually became a marathoner and started to compete around the world. He signed up for the World Marathon Challenge—an international event that would blend his love for running and traveling—and used his participation as an opportunity to raise awareness around the importance of mental health. He also raised funds for the Mental Health Association of Central Florida, where he serves on the board.

"As a psychiatrist, I've learned that we need to start in our communities when it comes to access to mental health resources," he said. "That's the reason I work with the Mental Health Association: to help build awareness and, therefore, improve access." Allen is board-certified in general and geriatric psychiatry and holds academic appointments at Florida State University, Nova Southeastern University, and St. Matthew's University.

Running the Course

In the World Marathon Challenge participants run 183 miles and spend 68 hours flying in a charter plane throughout the course of the challenge, which includes the destinations Novo (Antarctica), Cape Town (Africa), Perth



Luis Allen celebrates completing seven marathons on seven continents in seven days as part of the World Marathon Challenge.
World Marathon Challenge

(Australia), Dubai (Asia), Madrid (Europe), Fortaleza (South America), and Miami (North America).

The races take place at different hours of the day in varying climates. The first one in Cape Town had winds so intense that Allen's son, who was running a few miles with him, ended up with debris in his eyes and had to see a doctor. In Antarctica Allen braved freezing temperatures, snow, and ice. He slipped twice.

Allen trained for the World Marathon Challenge for a full year, completing six marathons in 2019. But his preparation went beyond the physical aspect.

"Yes, we prepare physically, but this is more of a mental challenge than a physical one," he said. "It's the goals you set in your mind, what you're trying to get accomplished, the cause you're doing this for—all these things come together and push you through the difficult spots."



One of Allen's preferred methods for preparing mentally is to start his morning with a devotion. He uses different books, most often the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*.

Close Connections

The people surrounding Allen also help push him to each of his finish lines. First are his running mates. Over the years Allen's marathoning has connected him with a network of runners who motivate and cheer each other on.

For an event such as the World Marathon Challenge, the network is even tighter, as only 40 to 50 competitors share in the experience, unlike the massive singular racing events such as the Boston or New York City marathons, in which tens of thousands of runners participate.

Because the World Marathon Challenge is a global event, Allen

also had the opportunity to connect with other Seventh-day Adventists around the world. At many of the locations he was met by Adventist media professionals who filmed and photographed his participation for showing at the General Conference session in Indianapolis.

"Anywhere in the world I went I could find an Adventist I knew; that was such a unique experience," he said. "Even the other runners were saying, 'Who else does this person know? We understand one person, one place, but everywhere we go?' My family and I have traveled to more than 25 countries, and we've always gone to church on Sabbath no matter where we were."

Allen completed the World Marathon Challenge with an average time of 6:37:32 per race.

"I've felt that [this challenge] was like hitting a restart button," he

said. "I don't know exactly where it's going to go, but I know there's going to be new meaning in my life. I hope that it'll help me serve my patients better."

Ingrid Hernández is senior communications specialist for AdventHealth.



AdventHealth team members cheer for colleague Luis Allen as he completes his seventh and final marathon in Miami, Florida. *AdventHealth*

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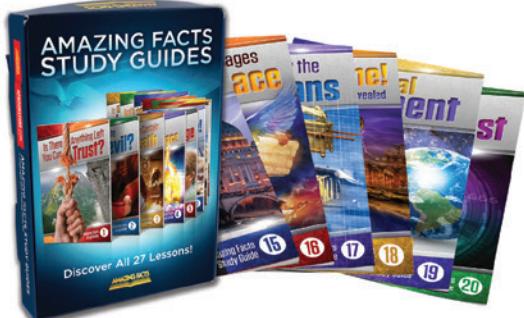


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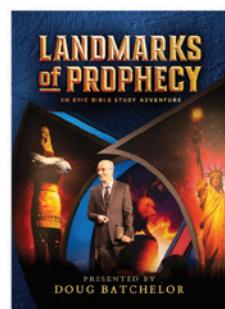
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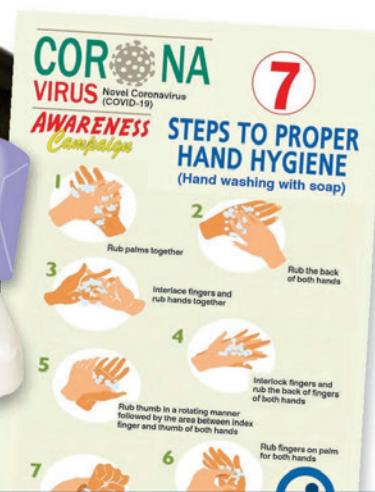
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ADRA remains committed to serving all humanity affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, as a humanitarian organization, we can't serve without you.

Help us provide continued support to help those most in need.

This crisis isn't affecting just some, but all.

Let's help each other, together.

Donate today at
ADRA.org/Covid19Response.

