



Adventist Journey

Contents

04 Feature

More Than One Approach

to Filling a Need

12 NAD News Briefs

08 Commentary
I'm an Adventist,
Not a Conspiracy Theorist

13 Perspective Goodbye, Mr. Scrooge

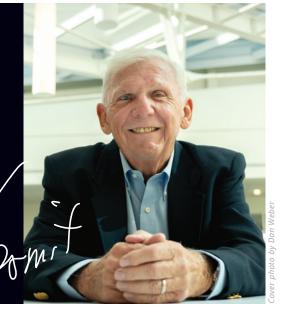
My Journey

When I became a pastor, I looked back and was amazed how each job played into what I did as pastor. I am so thankful God did not unleash me on some church when I was 25 years old! It was years of service and loads of growing on an Adventist journey that made me the pastor who could help a church get involved in its community.

Visit vimeo.com/nadadventist/ajkermitnetteburg for more of Netteburg's story

KERMIT NETTEBURG,

retired pastor, professor, and communication professional living in Hamburg, Pennsylvania



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 JOHN 03

More Than One Approach

During the COVID-19 pandemic, local churches help fill differing needs in their communities.

This is a tiny sample (out of thousands of Adventist congregations) highlighting the efforts local churches have made during recent months to bring help and healing to their communities. Let's remember to pray for one another, and support our local churches as they minister to members and neighbors alike.—Editors.

West Philadelphia Becomes Coronavirus Testing Site

n the midst of the pandemic the West Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church L became a host site for COVID-19 testing, serving more than 200 people from its community. Ala Stanford, a pediatrician in Philadelphia who observed the lack of testing being done in low-income communities of color, organized the effort. She shared her desire with her pastor, Marshall Mitchell, of the Salem Baptist Church in Pennsylvania. He reached out to various clergy who had churches located in the zones identified as having the most infections.

That's when Mitchell reached out to Nick Taliaferro, pastor of West Philadelphia. Taliaferro immediately agreed to help.

Testing started at 10 a.m., but by 8:15 p.m. cars were already lined up down the block and around the corner. Even though the rain posed a challenge for medical professionals

to administer the free tests in a drivethrough fashion without compromising the testing process, they stayed dry under the shelter of the church's roof overhang. For the many individuals who arrived on foot, members set up a canopy for testing in the middle of the parking lot.

The call for testing was particularly for those exhibiting such symptoms as coughing, sneezing, sore throat, shortness of breath, fever, weakness, and loss of smell and taste. Others who were tested included anyone exposed to someone with the virus.

"It warmed my heart to see all these people who knew that our church would be serving them that day," says Taliaferro. "Nothing is more rewarding than to know that people trust the spirit of your service."

—LaTasha Hewitt, Allegheny East Conference communication director; story published originally by the Columbia Union Visitor













Our goal is to love people as Christ does and to serve their needs.

Two Hours. 4,302 People.

his was not part of anyone's 2020 vision. The line of cars snaking through the academy's parking lot backed up almost a mile down the street. More than 100 volunteers from eight local churches working together for the sake of one goal: to serve our community.

"I loved seeing the unity of our churches coming together for the common good of the community. I wish it could be this way in all things," shared volunteer Jerma Palafox.

On this particular day in May we loaded more than 1,000 cars, 4,302 people, with more than 30,000 pounds of groceries and 2,000 GLOW tracts and prayer cards, all in an effort to minister to our community and try to make a difference during this time when unemployment and despair is skyrocketing.

"U Matter to God" was the name of the event, and judging from the tears and comments from our guests, they felt that they mattered to Someone today.

"I have been watching you guys since I pulled up, and you all are truly amazing. God is so still good through all of this craziness," one woman said after waiting in line two hours before we opened.

Our guests showed up after seeing the event advertised in the newspaper and a few local news stations. Most of them had never been to Fresno Adventist Academy, or had much interaction with Adventists.

"It feels great to be able to help those in need, especially through this pandemic," said volunteer Manuel Arriola. "It was great to see everyone staying safe while helping as well. [Everyone did] a great job. . . . God bless you all."

Some of the people in our communities may never hear a sermon or receive a Bible study, but they can meet us. How can we love our neighbors during these times when we aren't even able to shake their hand? Jesus told us, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35, NIV).

Groundbreaking approaches to soul winning have to be applied during this pandemic; it has always been the same. Christ's love for others displayed itself in so many ways, but it was always directed at a need that individuals had.

This year wasn't what anyone expected. While COVID-19 upends the economy, and many lives with it, our goal is to love people as Christ does and to serve their needs. Through this we can cast not our own vision, but God's vision.

—Nicholas Lozito, youth pastor, Fresno Sunnyside Seventh-day Adventist Church

"God brought us together for such a time as this."

Two Ethnically Diverse Churches Worship Together in Denver

hen two pastors of ethnically diverse churches became close friends, they decided to bring their congregations together in a joint worship experience.

Aware of COVID-19 pandemic regulations, the attending believers registered ahead for the worship service, and more than 300 of them from the Littleton and Denver Park Hill churches spread out on the Mile High Academy sports field on Sabbath, October 3, 2020.

The church service bulletin explained the reason for the gathering. Pastors Andy Nash, Chris Morris, and Alise Weber from the Littleton church, and Kelby "Mac" McCottry from the Denver Park Hill congregation, talked with their church leaders about a joint service and the response to the idea was "overwhelming" among all ages. "If our Savior, Jesus Christ, prayed for us to be together, and if we'll be together in heaven, why shouldn't we be [together] on earth?" they asked.

Many congregants sported "Together, John 17:23" T-shirts, distributed to registered worshippers. The joy on their faces, a mosaic of ethnicities worshipping together, was in clear evidence.

The worship featured a 20-minute sermon by each pastor; their theme based on 2 Timothy 1:1-14. Each congregant received a vintage booklet provided at no cost by Thomas Nelson Bibles. "When Thomas Nelson heard about our event today, they immediately said they wanted to be a sponsor," Nash informed the congregation.

A livestream of the event began with a welcome message by Ed Barnett and Roger Bernard, presidents of the Rocky Mountain Conference and Central States Conference, respectively. They expressed their joy at see-



ing believers from both territories of the Seventh-day Adventist Church come together.

"It's up to us not to do it in a symbolic manner only, but also to cooperate in joint projects. We are neighbors, serving our community in Denver, aren't we?" said George Pelote, stewardship director from the Park Hill church.

The gathering of fellow Christians more than met the expectations of both pastor friends. Following the Sabbath service, they shared their personal comments. McCottry said: "Oh, yes. [We need to do this] way more. Way more. Just to see people coming, worshipping, and fellowshipping together—regardless of membership, regardless of color of skin. This is what I wanted to see."

Nash said that the days of preparation were worth the effort and shared what many people said most: "We should do this more. Why haven't we done this more? This began out of friendship for Pastor Mac and me, and now we see other friendships forming. That's the work of the Holy Spirit."

As pastors, they recognize a need to encourage and bring people together, and not just for one worship event.

"God brought us together for such a time as this," said McCottry. "To see what's happening in the world, in the United States, but to know that we can be a model, that we can still love each other. We may worship in different places, may have different preferences and different styles, but still we are God's children together. The whole purpose was [coming together] to show that this is how it can be; this is how it's going to be in heaven, so let's do it now."

—Rajmund Dabrowski, Rocky Mountain Conference communication director; the original version of this story appeared on the conference website.

ADVENTIST Journey



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UNLOVED? LOVE WINS

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BY ADAM FENNER

f you grew up Adventist, you may have been inundated with "time of trouble" warnings. If you were like me, you had nightmares as a 10-year-old of fleeing into the wilderness with a backpack filled with a Bible, *The Great Controversy*, and maybe a can of FriChik to sustain you and your surviving family for the next two months, or until Jesus returned.

If you can even mildly relate to this, you may have been told Jesus would return "in your lifetime," or "within a year." Maybe you sat in church and were told, as I was, that "Jesus might return right after church is over."

Perhaps my experience is different than yours, but in the past 10 years these topics seem less and less in vogue within mainstream Adventism in our territory. Why might this be the case?

There's a good chance we're mildly embarrassed, maybe even traumatized by some of our fellow church members' failed premonitions and informal predictions about the Second Coming. Or maybe we're just tired of being wrong about the "end of the world."

Revising Discourse

I'd like to put forth the idea that Adventism needs to revise its discourse surrounding end-time theology. I'm not arguing that our theology about the Apocalypse is wrong, or that it needs revising, but rather that we need to think and talk about the end-times differently.

The Adventist interpretation of Scripture, and therefore end-time prophecy, is remarkably pertinent to the twenty-first century. If we learn to contemplate the Apocalypse in more objective, modern terms, we can offer the world the invaluable biblical explanation for why the world is unraveling, and why our faith in Jesus is well placed. In other words, we need to stop saying Jesus will come in the next two years based on some dubious math, and who might be president, and instead start talking about how Jesus will save the world, and why current environmental realities actually corroborate biblical prophecies.

Mainstream North American society is saturated with imagery and discourse regarding the end of the world. A host of different films, television programs, books, articles, and news stories deal with the end of civilization as we know it. Whether zombies, disease/plague, a meteor, alien in-

ADVENTIST Summer



We Adventists have the luxury of having science actually support our end-time theology, and we can offer a perspective of Jesus that points to Him as the Savior the world needs.

ately need a savior point toward evidence that the world is hungry for hope in a heavenly Savior. The time is right for Adventists to take courage in sharing Jesus as the hope for humanity and to place emphasis on end of times prophecy. But we need to do so in a new, more relevant way.

Inserting the Good News

Our tendency is to obsess over political events and concoct elaborate conspiracy theories. But this does us few favors in a contemporary, educated society. You've seen the posters, pamphlets, DVD cases, book covers, and church bulletins with a handful of political leaders, a nuclear explosion, the Bible, maybe a Quran, and a few scary beasts from Daniel. I firmly believe that political events will be a major feature of the end-times, but they are so subjective and unpredictable that investing too much time in trying to understand how they fit into prophecy offers little return on investment. We might be scaring more people away from our denomination with prophetic political fixations than attracting them.

In place of conspiracy theories and fearmongering about the end of the world, I suggest we insert the good news of Jesus Christ in the context of objective facts about what's happening to our planet.

This will be more palatable to an informed and hypercritical society as we have in North America and more appealing to people in general, who consider scientific inquiry as a trustworthy measure of reality.

For example, Revelation has some powerful imagery for what has already happened to the earth and will continue to transpire and worsen in the last days. The trumpets mentioned there provide Adventists a powerful opportunity for talking about our end-time theology. We're told that a "third of the trees . . . and all green grass" will be "burned up." "A third of the living creatures in the sea" die. "A third of the waters" become "bitter" and many people die because of it. "A third" of the "sun," "moon," and "stars" "were darkened" (Rev. 8:7-12).

These same symbols of judgment return again with greater fury in Revelation 16. In popular media we can find evidence for the actual manifestation of these symbolic events starting to take place. Science is leading the charge in corroborating the Bible and what has and is projected to happen to our planet. We can explore these prophecies using science, which is a more effective way of framing the biblical account of the end-times than saying, "Jesus will be here within five years."

vasion, climate change, Mayan prophecies, overpopulation, or nuclear war, we're obsessed with the Apocalypse.

There's a palpable sense in our culture that the end is of the world is iust around the corner, and that we as individuals—and as a society—are fragile, at the mercy of forces outside of our control and in real need of saving. The idea of being saved from the world's destruction is what drives Hollvwood blockbuster franchises such as *Superman* and *The Avengers*, leads us to idolize inventors and wouldbe redeemers like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, and place an illogical amount of faith in the aptitude of political leaders.

The underlying forebodings present in our culture—signaling that our planet is doomed—and a general knowledge that we desper-

The time is right for Adventists to take courage in sharing Jesus as the hope for humanity.

In the Natural World

Let's frame this conversation in the current context, bearing in mind Jesus' words in Matthew 24 about an increasingly deteriorating planet full of catastrophic events.

A third of the earth will be "burned up"—our planet's plant and animal species are becoming extinct at an incredible rate. So many insects are dying that some commentators are worried about the "collapse of nature." Although we don't often have a tremendous appreciation for insects, "40 percent of insect species are declining and a third are endangered." This is a real problem when you consider their importance for plant pollination and how entire ecosystems depend on them for food.1 A recent study found that 2.9 billion birds have disappeared from North American skies since 1970. If the proverbial "canary in the coal mine" metaphor has any wisdom in it, humanity is headed for disaster. The biodiversity of our planet is experiencing a holocaust, and an estimated 1 million species "are at risk of extinction."2

It's clear that "one third of the earth" is dying. Desertification, the process by which agricultural land is degraded to infertility, is taking place at "30 to 35 times the historical rate." Two billion people "depend on ecosystems in dry

land areas," and the United Nations estimates roughly 50 million people might be "displaced" within 10 years.³ If this isn't scary enough, 18.7 million acres of forest are destroyed each year. This is the equivalent to losing "27 soccer fields of forest every minute," or losing a forest the size of Panama every year.⁴

"A third of the oceans will die"—the World Wildlife Fund released a report stating almost half of marine life found in the oceans in 1970 no longer existed in 2012.⁵ Studies from Australia indicate so many marine species are either declining or absent from their natural habit that the oceans "are on the brink of total collapse." Our world's water systems are in such disarray that the United Nations estimates that "by 2025, 1.8 billion people will experience absolute water scarcity, and 2/3 of the world will be living under water-stressed conditions."

The prophecy about "a third" of the sun, moon, and stars going dark could be interpreted in number of different ways, but it could easily point toward ecological problems with our planet.8 Our air is so bad that worldwide 4.2 million people die each year from being exposed to outside air. Some 91 percent of the world's population live where the air quality doesn't meet World Health Organization standards.9 When we look up, we no longer see the heavens in the way God intended. Many of us are harmed by the air we breathe.

North America is home to a fairly wealthy, educated, and increasingly secular society. Our minds are bombarded by 34 terabytes of data each day. We simply don't have the time or energy to entertain information that isn't immediately relevant to our changing needs and whims of the moment. With so much data available, we are forced to make snap judgments, cull irrelevant ideas, concepts, and narratives that seem implausible or unsupported by logic or scientific evidence. Our society generally doesn't have much patience or need for conspiracy theories and fearmongering. What does make sense to Westerners is that the world is dying, and we need a savior, a hero.

We Adventists have the luxury of having science actually support our end-time theology, and we can offer a perspective of Jesus that points to Him as the Savior the world needs. Let's start talking about the end of the world again, but in such a way that is Christ-centered and data-driven.

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²Brian Resnick, "A Million Species Are at Risk of Extinction. Humans Are to Blame," Vax, May 7, 2019, www.vox.com/science-and-health/2019/5/7/18531171/1-million-species-extinction-ipbes-un-biodiversity-crisis, accessed Oct. 15, 2020.

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⁵jennifer Gray, "Report: Marine Life Has Taken Devastating Hit Over 40 Years," CNN, Sept. 17, 2015, www.cnn.com/2015/09/17/world/oceans-re-port/index.html, accessed Oct, 15, 2020.

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⁷United Nations, "Land and Drought," www.unced.int/issues/land-and-drought, accessed Oct. 15, 2020.

"Some Adventists have interpreted the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars to specific astronomical events in the nineteenth century. My purpose is not to discount these interpretations, but rather to offer the idea that these prophecies may have double applications or interpretations. "World Health Organization, "Air Pollution," www.who.int/airpollution/en/, accessed Oct. 15, 2020.

¹⁸Nick Bilton, "The American Diet: 34 Gigabytes a Day," *Bits*, Dec. 9, 2009, bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/12/09/the-american-diet-34-gigabytes-a-day/, accessed Oct. 15, 2020.

Adam Fenner is director of the Adventist Learning Community.



DECEMBER 12, 2020

Adventist Community Services Offering

Responding to COVID-19—Giving Hope Together!

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed overwhelming demand on food banks throughout the North American Division. Adventist Community Services Centers quickly adapted and are responding to meet the tremendous need. Over 1,300 ACS Centers across NAD are providing millions of meals this year, demonstrating God's love through service.

You can make a difference today!

GIVE YOUR OFFERING at your local church, marking "ACS Offering" on your tithe envelope, or give online at **www.communityservices.org**.



NAD NEWS BRIEFS

Andrews University Releases Daniel/ Revelation Bible Study Journal

In what may be a first for Adventist publishing, Andrews University has released a small, journal-styled book titled *The Great Prophetic Books of Daniel and Revelation: A Bible Study Journal.*

According to Andrea Luxton, president of Andrews University and chair of the Andrews University Press board, the book is already receiving wide appreciation from church leaders and pastors who see its immediate usefulness



for public evangelism, small group ministry, and personal spiritual revival.

More than 5,000 pastors in North America will receive the book during the next few months, with financial sponsorship from Andrews, The Foundation

for Adventist Education (established by the Zinke family), and the North American Division (NAD) Ministerial Association.

"We see the immediate value of this little book for helping our members sharpen the essential prophetic focus of our faith," said Ivan Williams, director of the NAD Ministerial Association. "Our pastors across this great division are in a good position to know how to use it in their churches and in their outreach."

—Jeff Boyd, media relations manager, Andrews University Communication



SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY AWARDED \$483,900 TITLE GRANT

Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU) has been awarded a Title V grant by the U.S. Department of Education's Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions program. For the next five years SWAU will receive around a half million dollars each year, for a total of a little more than \$2.5 million, which will be used to improve student outcomes through Pathways to Student Success. SWAU was one of about half dozen schools in the Dallas-Fort Worth area to be selected as recipient of this competitive grant. The funding went into effect on October 1, 2020.

The university is proud to be a Hispanic-serving institution, with 48 percent of the student body being of a Hispanic or Latino background. The funds are inclusive for all students, and the initiatives made possible through the funds from this grant will benefit not only its Hispanic population, but also the entire student body.

"We knew a large portion of our students were the first in their families to attend college and would benefit from a strong support system," said Renata Ocampo, director of the Southwestern Adventist University Center for Academic Success and Advising. "We sat here and dreamed of all the things we could do if we only had the money. Now we have the opportunity to make those things happen."

-Brisa Ramirez

LIFETALK RADIO LAUNCHES ONLINE CHANNEL FOR KIDS

ifeTalk Radio, a media ministry of the North American Division, has launched a daily, 24-hour, online radio channel designed especially for children. The division's only owned and operated radio networks now features LifeTalkKids, which offers a variety of Bible-based, character-building, educational programs for children of all ages.

The programs on LifeTalkKids include adventure stories from

Your Story Hour, Adventures in Odyssey, and Discovery Mountain; Bible-based programs such as The Bible in Living Sound, GraceLink, and The Bible Story; and legacy programs such as Stories From the Book, by H.M.S. Richards, Jr. Additional programs include Awesome Science, Nature Corner, and Ranger Bill. The dedicated website LifeTalkKids.net features a "fun" section with links for special resources.

"We've had this project in the works for many months," said John Geli, manager/director of LifeTalk Radio. "But when the pandemic hit things slowed down, We praise the Lord everything finally launched."

"This has been a collaborative effort with many hands helping to make this stellar resource a reality," added Geli. "We especially thank the It Is Written media ministry for hosting the servers that make this new venture possible."

BY DAN WEBER

Goodbye, Mr. Scrooge

really don't like Christmas. I hate to say it, but through the years I have gotten grumpy once Thanksgiving ends.

This spirit of "nonjoy" is unpopular with my family. My wife and daughters think Christmas is the best time of the year, and they take great joy in letting me know how much of a Grinch and Scrooge I am. But before you cast me away as a holiday hater, let me explain a few things.

As a child I loved Christmas. What wasn't to like? Time off school; and where I lived, it always meant snow to go play in—often a lot of it. Christmas also meant large family gatherings. I would get to see aunts, uncles, and cousins I never saw outside of the holiday season. Sometimes we even got to travel to my grand-parents' house in Illinois. My mom's family had a special tradition of reading *The Other Wise Man*, by Henry van Dyke, on Christmas Eve. When I was 10 years old, they let me participate and read some of the passages. Christmas was really a memorable experience. But it didn't remain that way.

When I was 13 years old, my parents started to have problems, and their marriage became strained. To escape the conflict at home, I went to boarding school, which was a welcome relief. I could focus on school and not the troubles at home. But that all changed in 1984. I came home for the holiday break and found my parents had split and my dad had moved out.

From that point on, every Christmas was ruined for me. Each year, when everyone else was celebrating, I was mourning. As the years passed, my sorrow grew. The pain became apparent to me when my wife and I "celebrated" our first Christmas. That's when I really understand how much Christmas bothered me. I would end up in a depressed state once the calendar hit December 1 and continue into each new year.

My pain culminated in 2016, when my father suddenly passed away 10 days before Christmas. Even though I was in my late 40s by then, the pain of the crushed Christmas in 1984 hit me hard. His death took several years for me to overcome. And each

Christmas afterward my wife became apprehensive, knowing how much I suffered with this annual reminder of a painful period in my life. We ended up having good conversations about my dislike of Christmas, and she understood where I was coming from. Then the change happened.

Last Christmas I decided I needed to change my attitude. It wasn't healthy for me or my family, and I couldn't continue. I reflected on my life and all the blessings God has given me and my family. I realized I was focusing on the negative and not the positive things in my life. Christmas is a celebration of family, and I had been focusing on what I didn't have instead of what I had been blessed with.

Through much prayer I decided to try not to hate Christmas and to

celebrate with my family and enjoy the season as I had when I was a boy. God has blessed our lives in many ways; to spend

Through much prayer I decided to try not to hate Christmas.

time not focusing on those wonderful things is a detriment to my relationship with Him.

Even though we know that Jesus wasn't born at Christmastime, it is still a celebration of His birth and the wonderful gift God gave us. Christmas is now a time for me to make new, positive memories that can replace the painful ones that are slipping away.

Dan Weber is communication director for the North American Division.

ADVENTIST DUMP 13



Into All the World

55 Years of AMAZING FACTS



In 1965, a pair of passionate clergymen founded a regional radio program called *Amazing Facts*. They had no idea that over the next 55 years, their small ministry, located in a basement in Maryland, would soon grow to become an international evangelism center.

Today, Amazing Facts International is headquartered at the all-new W.O.R.D. Center campus outside Sacramento—and while it has changed in size and scope, its Christ-centered mission remains the same: to proclaim a distinct last-day message of hope and salvation to every corner of the globe.

Every facet of ministry is designed to introduce people to Jesus in a way that speaks directly to their lives and needs ...



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Center of Evangelism: Online (afcoe.org) and in-person outreach training for church members who want to become bold and effective soul-winners.



Internet: From amazingfacts.org to helltruth.com, Amazing Facts offers thousands of online articles, books, and video and audio resources to help surfing seekers discover Bible truth.



Bible School: More than 100,000 students have enrolled in our Internet and mail-based Bible course (amazingbiblestudies.com).



Publishing: From sharing magazines and books to DVDs and digital downloads, Amazing Facts publishes hundreds of resources and distributes them worldwide (afbookstore.com).



Global Evangelism: From India and China to all across the United States, our team of evangelists travels the globe sharing Christ through live local and televised events.

God's Message Is Our Mission

Every day, through the grace of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, and our faithful donors, Amazing Facts is giving people around the world the biblical answers they need to make an intelligent and heartfelt decision for Christ—and to equip them to help others do the same.

In honor of 55 years of ministry, the Amazing Facts International leadership and staff want to thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for your continued support and prayers!





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Because of the Covid-19 crisis the many needs of these children are much, much greater this year!

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My family are excited to be a sponsor of a child with Child Impact especially at this time of the year which is devoted to children and goodwill to all.

Shawn Boonstva Speaker/Director Voice of Prophecy



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